

New Social Movements, Class, and the Environment

New Social Movements, Class,
and the Environment:
A Case Study of Greenpeace Canada

By

John-Henry Harter

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

On 30 November 1999, in Seattle, Washington, an explosion of outrage against globalization led to massive protest against the World Trade Organization and its millennial round of talks.¹ For the first time in decades, an American city was brought to a standstill by the mobilization of left-wing forces. While remarkable in its own right, the “Battle in Seattle” was significant for the enormous presence of the organized working class. The working class mobilized in force, with over 50,000 trade unionists coming to the city to protest the WTO. Alongside these unionists were new social movement activists from, among others, the student, environmental, and feminist movements. A popular theme written on one of the thousands of placards was “Teamsters and Turtles together at last,” signifying the coming together of workers and environmentalists geographically, if not entirely ideologically.² While the majority of the labour march did not converge directly on the WTO site, thousands of workers did and it was the size and scope of the labour presence that helped bring so much attention to the protest. The protest in Seattle demonstrated the power of a convergence of class, environmental, and other new social movement politics, while hinting at the inherent difficulties of such a union. This was encouraging and a bright spot in the struggle for social justice to mark the end of the twentieth century.

The “Battle in Seattle” illustrates that the divide between working class and identity politics is not unbridgeable. However, if one believed all the euphoric claims in the days after Seattle, it would seem the collapse of capitalism had occurred on the city streets. While I am loathe to dispel this idea it does need to be put into context. The whole force of the labour march did not converge with the other activists who had shut down the WTO earlier in the day. Alexander Cockburn, a writer for *The Nation*, notes that the legions of labour did not show up for the confrontation in

¹ For a thorough account of Seattle from a variety of perspectives, see *Monthly Review*, 52:3 (2000); C.Pearson, “Peaceful in Seattle,” *Our Times*, 19 (December/January 1999); Alexander Cockburn, Jeffery St.Clair, and Alan Sekula, *5 Days That Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (London 2000).

² Placard as seen by author, 30 November 1999 Seattle Washington. Also documented in John Charlton, “Talking Seattle,” *International Socialism*, 86, (2000), 10.

front of the WTO meetings. He wonders what could have happened if they had and fantasizes that it would have been, a humiliation for imperial power of historic proportions, like the famous scene the Wobblies organized to greet Woodrow Wilson after the Seattle general strike had been broken in 1919 – workers and their families lining the streets block after block, standing in furious silence as his motorcade passed by.³

Yet Cockburn's analogy misses a very important point. The Wobblies were lining up in the streets after an historic defeat. The marchers in Seattle of 1999 won an historic victory. They shut down a meeting of the world's representatives of capital and the state and they did it in the belly of the beast: the last remaining super power in the world, the United States of America. It is perhaps more correct to see this as a beginning, not an end.

Taking the idea of not just understanding history but changing it, I set out with hundreds of others from Vancouver to join the struggle against the WTO. I went as a member of my union, the Teaching Support Staff Union based at Simon Fraser University, along for the ride with a busload of teachers from the British Columbia Teachers Federation. I attended the labour rally held a number of blocks from the site of the WTO, where the police were at a standoff with the protesters. Much like Cockburn stated, the more than 50,000 at the labour march did not storm the barricades of the police lines. However, the streets between the labour rally and the site of the action were devoid of cars, deserted except for protesters going back and forth. The city was shut down at its core and the left controlled the streets. This was no small feat. As well, while the labour rally was in progress, I managed to make the walk between the two sites in a matter of minutes, as did thousands of others who left the labour rally to join the protest. The Battle in Seattle was shored up by thousands of teamsters, nurses, sheet metal workers, teachers, longshore workers, and at least a handful of university teaching assistants. This is important in that it really was a convergence of new social movements and what some have deemed an old social movement, the working class.

Having a perspective on Seattle is important. Capitalism was not overthrown that day. While the majority of the labour march did not converge on the WTO site thousands did and it was the size and scope of the labour presence that brought so much attention to the protest. One lesson from Seattle was that it demonstrated that working class issues can transcend "narrow economic interests", while it also shows the limits of a labour movement not controlled by a militant, class-conscious rank and file. In addition, it shows how crucial it is to unite class and environmental

³ Alexander Cockburn, "Trade Wars, Trade Truths" *The Nation*, 20, (1999).

and other new social movement politics while suggesting how difficult it will be. The protests against the WTO in Seattle while providing some instructive lessons about workers and new social movements exercising the political power of protest, the day also brings up some serious questions. Why were teamsters and turtles apart in the first place? When did the gulf between new social movements and the working class begin? What were the causes of this split and can they be remedied?

In a study comparing new social movements and old social movements, specifically unions, William K. Carroll and R.S. Ratner note that, "in the social scientific literature of recent years, unions have often been interpreted as social organizations bereft of transformative potential."⁴ Since Seattle it has become almost axiomatic in the analysis of anti-globalization protest to lay the blame of any failures, perceived or real, within the anti-globalization movement on organized labour. Often only organized labour's faults and the problems of working class organizations have been examined. For example, in a recent article on the mass mobilization against the Quebec City Summit, Kevin MacKay argues, "much of the conflict between labour and newer social movement groups can be attributed to the conservative, bureaucratized structure of unions."⁵ While union bureaucracy is an important area of study and has engendered much debate within labour history, it is too easy to blame organized labour and its bureaucracy for the tensions between itself and other social movements.⁶ While Greenpeace is an older, and more bureaucratic, expression of new social movements than the affinity based, anarchistic leaning, anti-globalization movement it does not negate the fact that new social movements need to look at themselves as a whole with a critical eye. John

⁴William K. Carroll and R.S. Ratner, "Old Unions and New Social Movements," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 195.

⁵Kevin MacKay, "Solidarity and Symbolic Protest: Lessons for Labour from the Quebec City Summit of the Americas," *Labour/Le Travail*, 50 (Fall 2002), 22.

⁶On labour bureaucracy see, Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape: The making of a labour bureaucracy* (Toronto, 1995). On how labour bureaucracy operates and the consequences see, Paul Buhle, *Taking care of business : Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999). For a slightly different but related debate on labour aristocracy see, Michael Piva, "The Aristocracy of the English Working Class: Help for an Historical Debate in Difficulties" *Histoire sociale/Social History* 7, 14 (1974) Eric Hobsbawm "Debating the Labour Aristocracy" and "The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered" *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London 1984) Richard Price, "The Segmentation of Work and the Labour Aristocracy" *Labour/Le Travail* 17 (Spring 1986): 267-72

Bellamy Foster argues that it is both “the narrow conservationist thrust of most environmentalism in the United States” and the “unimaginative business union response of organized labour” that is the problem when attempting to form coalitions.⁷ This book addresses the environmental side of the equation. Business unionism, or social unionism for that matter, is not above reproach. However, the environmental movement is seldom held up to the same scrutiny as the labour movement when discussing the split between labour and environmentalists. Therefore, instead of reprising the labour bureaucracy debates, my focus is on new social movements and how they relate to the working-class in actual campaigns. What, historically, has the relationship been between new social movements and organized labour? How have the structure, composition, and actions of new social movements contributed to the relations between workers and new social movements?

In order to address these questions, this book explores the history of Greenpeace Canada from 1971 to 2010 and its relationship to the working-class. I chose Greenpeace for two main reasons: it has become a brand name for environmentalism and it was formed at the beginning of the era of new social movements. I will examine Greenpeace’s structure, personnel, and class origins of its leadership to better understand its actions. I will also look at two of its most famous actions: its opposition to the seal hunt, and its actions against forestry in British Columbia. I also examine a lesser-known Greenpeace campaign against its own workers who were forming a union in Toronto. While a case study of one organization in one social movement cannot test the claims of all new social movements or new social movement literature, I hope to provoke questions about new social movements and the theories that often make assertions about the nature of social movements without historical reference or case studies.⁸ In this way I will provide a different lens

⁷ John Bellamy Foster, “The Limits of Environmentalism without Class: Lessons From the Ancient Forest Struggle in the Pacific Northwest” in *The Struggle for Ecological Democracy: Environmental Justice Movements in the United States* ed. Daniel Faber (New York: The Guilford Press 1998) p.189.

⁸William K. Carroll notes that “there has been a dearth of available texts that probe the meaning of movements in a distinctly Canadian context.” William K. Carroll, “Introduction,” *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice* (Victoria: Garamond Press, 1992), 3. Laurie Adkin also remarks on this lack of actual case studies, stating “A reader of ‘orthodox Marxist’ versus ‘post Marxist’ interpretations of trade unions to radical social change, of the historical meaning of the new social movements, cannot but be struck by the general absence of analyses of actually existing social movements. New Social

through which to look at new social movement actions and helps reinsert class into the discourse around social movements through case study of specific environmental campaigns.

I outline the history of Greenpeace and its place as a new social movement in Chapter one. In order to understand the ideas and themes discussed in the book, Chapter one also looks at the history and theory of new social movements. Chapter two explores Greenpeace by examining its structure, personnel, and class in order to better understand the ideology behind the actions of Greenpeace. Chapter three looks at one of Greenpeace's most famous actions, its opposition to the seal hunt, to see the effects of its ideology on its actions. Chapter four looks at Greenpeace's actions against forestry in British Columbia. In Chapter five I examine how Greenpeace deals with its own workers in Toronto to see how it has dealt with internal labour issues. In Chapter six, I look at two of the main claims on which Greenpeace, and new social movement theorists as a whole, base their politics: first, that working class movements are obsolete; and second, that the only agents of progressive social change are new social movements acting in the interests of all humanity. Greenpeace and new social movements generally claim their interests are universal and beyond the concerns of class, yet this is contradicted by their actions. By using Greenpeace as a case study, I explore the contradiction between new social movement theory and action that occurs when dealing with issues of class. The questions raised by the Battle of Seattle should not be answered abstractly. If there is to be a successful movement against globalization and against the forces of capitalism moving that agenda, then one has to look at the history that has stopped that movement from being successful in the past. In that way this book contributes not only to a better understanding of the history of Greenpeace, but also of how new social movements have historically dealt with class and how it could be done differently in the future.

Movements and unions have been much theorized about, but little studied from 'ground level.'" *The Politics of Sustainable Development: Citizens, Unions and the Corporations* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998), xiii.

CHAPTER ONE

GREENPEACE AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Thirty years have passed since Vancouver's *Georgia Straight* carried the one word headline: "Greenpeace." The accompanying article outlined plans for the first voyage of what was then called the "Don't Make a Wave Committee":

Saturday the group formalized plans to send a ship they'll rename *Greenpeace* into the Amchitka area before the next test. Greenpeace is an ambitious and maybe impossible project, but so is anything that tries to promote a sane approach to the world we live in.¹

This was the beginning of Greenpeace, a prototypical new social movement. Started as the "Don't Make a Wave Committee" in order to oppose American nuclear testing, it was incorporated as Greenpeace in 1972. The original Greenpeace document consisted of a slip of paper noting the change of name stapled to a photocopy of the standard structure for societies as directed by the BC government regulations in the Society Act.² The first campaign consisted of a crew of twelve men who chartered the now famous boat *Phyllis Cormack* on 15 September 1971 to "bear witness" to the nuclear test on the island Amchitka in the North West Pacific. The blast at Amchitka was not prevented, but Greenpeace declared the action a victory since the American government never used the

¹ *Georgia Straight*, 18-25 February 1970.

² The name Greenpeace apparently originated when a Don't Make a Wave Committee meeting was ended by saying "Peace." Social worker Bill Darnell responded "Make it a Green Peace." Mark Warford, ed. *Greenpeace: Witness, Twenty-Five Years on the Environmental Front Line* (London: Andre Deutsh, 1996), 9; Michael Brown and John May, *The Greenpeace Story* (Scarborough Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1989), 9; Robert Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow: A Chronicle of the Greenpeace Movement* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 7; and Karl and Dona Sturmanis, *The Greenpeace Book* (Vancouver: Orca Sound Publications, 1978).

Amchitka site again and because of the extensive media coverage Greenpeace received.³ Greenpeace has grown exponentially since its beginnings in Vancouver and its first campaign opposing nuclear testing: it now has international offices, a wide breadth of involvement in the ecology movement, and international media exposure.

The development of Greenpeace was not unique and was similar to other groups that fall under the rubric of new social movements. New social movements were the products of the break-up of the New Left at the end of the 1960s. The New Left fractured into a multitude of single issue groups representing the peace movement, the environmental movement, the student movement, the women's movement, and the gay liberation movement.⁴ The creation of these single issue groups were seen by some academics as an indication that "old" social action groups, especially the "old left," composed of workers and unions, were incapable of addressing these issues. It was in this fractured socio-political context that the 1970s saw an explosion of new social movement theory and activism.⁵ Before

³ For comment on the media savvy of Greenpeace see Stephen Dale, *McLuhan's Children: the Greenpeace Message and the Media* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990).

⁴ In many ways the definitive book on the New Left, one which encompasses all the formations on the left, remains to be written. One prevalent theme in the literature on the New Left is the reduction of the scope of the New Left to a study of white middle class students. In his chapter on the "Beginnings of the New Left," Milton Cantor notes that the participants were, "mostly white, well-educated, suburban youth of similar backgrounds." Milton Cantor, *The Divided Left: American Radicalism 1900-1975* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 183. James O'Brien states at the beginning of his study of the New Left that, "One self-imposed limitation of this study which should be made clear is that it is a study of white students." James O'Brien, *The Development of a New Left in the United States, 1960-1965*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971, ii. One American book of primary documents separates the documents on the 1960s into a section on Black Liberation and a section on the New Left. Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr, eds., *The University Crisis Reader: Volume I and II* (New York: Random House, 1971). The term New Left appears to only apply to white middle class activists. This ignores the important contributions to the Left by Blacks organized in the Southern Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and then the Black Panther Party; the white working class participation in labour struggles and grass roots anti-imperialist groups (for example, the George Jackson Brigade); black students organized under Black Student Alliance umbrella groups; and Native Americans organized in the American Indian Movement (AIM). None of those groups are usually referred to as New Left.

⁵ New social movement theory was first put forward by French sociologist Alain Touraine. See Alain Touraine, *The Voice and Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*

Greenpeace can be thoroughly examined as a new social movement, the question of what defines new social movements needs to be explored further. New social movement theorists have put forward a variety of models to explain exactly how new social movements work in theory and practice.⁶

The roots of new social movement theory can be traced to the attempt by Marxists to explain different social formations within capitalism in the post-war era and the supposed “failure” of the working class in the pre- and post-war periods. Particularly influenced by Herbert Marcuse and Louis Althusser, sociologists began to work on theories that embraced the idea of a “new working class” as a revolutionary agent.⁷ Pressed to explain

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are often associated with the first works on new social movement theory, however, Touraine’s first foray into this field can be traced to his book *The May Movement Revolt and Reform: May 1968 – The Student Rebellion and Workers’ Strikes – the Birth of a Social Movement* (New York: Random House, 1971). See also John A. Hannigan, “Alaine Touraine, Manuel Castells and Social Movement Theory: A Critical Appraisal,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 26: 4 (1985): 435-454.

⁶ The development of social movement theory has not been uniform. One of the first attempts of American sociologists to understand social movement formation is the collective behavior model. This model puts forward two explanatory models to explain mass movement participation. The first is the normative breakdown thesis which explains movement formation as an irrational response to a sudden societal change. Closely associated with this theory are Neil J. Smelser and Chalmers Johnson. See Neil J. Smelser, *The Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1963); and Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966). The other model argues that it is the group response to relative deprivation that is the impetus for movement formation. Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970). Resource Mobilization Theory is a more current theory; it is sometimes used instead of, and sometimes in conjunction with, new social movement theory. For articles comparing NSM and RMT see Barry D. Adam, “Post-Marxism and the New Social Movements,” *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 30, (1993), 316-36; and Hannigan, “Alaine Touraine.” Resource Mobilization Theory examines how people with shared interests pool their resources – money, skills, labour – to achieve a specific goal. Unlike the collective behaviour model, in this theory the participants are rational actors. The theorist most associated with Resource Mobilization Theory is Charles Tilly. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978); and *As Sociology Meets History*, (New York: Academic Press, 1981).

⁷ Canadian sociologist William K. Carroll notes that in Canada the influence of Harold Innis and his staples theory and the adaptation of Marxist theories of uneven development into a hinterland/urban centre model fueled Canadian sociology. Carroll, *Organizing Dissent*, 3-39.

the revolutionary activity of French students, professionals, and petit bourgeoisie in May of 1968, these Marxists began to explore how to account for these activists, and explain their alleged failure of the working class. Althusser shifted the attention of Marxists from the “economic base,” or the forces of production in society, to the “superstructure,” which is everything else including politics, religion, and culture. He focused on culture, part of the superstructure, in order to explain the development of this new way of struggle and new revolutionary agent. However, Althusser did not completely abandon class, and believed that class was the determinant in the last instance.⁸ What the last instance was, or how it was determined, was never fully explained.

The theorist who expanded these ideas into the theory of the “new working class” was French sociologist Alain Touraine. In *The May Movement: Revolt and Reform: May 1968 – the Student Rebellion and Workers’ Strikes – the Birth of a Social Movement*, Touraine theorized that a new working class developed out of the current era of capitalism as illustrated by the May Movement. Touraine differed from orthodox Marxism, arguing that modern industrial capitalism had created a new working class. In his opinion this new working class was made up of professionals, not industrial workers. As Touraine puts it, “The main actor in the May movement was not the working class but the totality of those whom we may call the professionals.”⁹ Since ’68 Touraine has become something of a specialist on social movements and has founded the *Centre d’analyse et d’intervention sociologiques* in Paris (CADIS). Touraine has applied his theory of a new working class to the anti-nuclear movement in France and the Solidarity movement in Poland.¹⁰ A major theme in Touraine’s analysis is that class relations have changed within modern advanced industrial capitalist society. Within advanced capitalism, Touraine argues, a new relationship between capital and labour is forged where professionals replace traditional workers. This new relationship occurs as professionals become responsible for tending the technologically

⁸ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (London: New Left Books, 1971).

⁹ Touraine, *The May Movement*. The debate of where to put the “professionals,” or some sections of white collar workers is not new. Karl Kautsky used the term “new middle class” to describe this group in 1899 and the debate ensued from there. On Kautsky and earlier debates around the new middle class see Bob Carter, *Capitalism, Class Conflict, and the New Middle Class* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) particularly the section “The German Debate,” 16-31.

¹⁰ Alain Touraine, *Anti-nuclear Protest: The Opposition to Nuclear Energy in France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

sophisticated machinery necessary for advanced capitalist industry. According to Touraine, in May '68, these technicians, civil servants, engineers, researchers, scientists, and students training to be in those professions, formed not only a new social movement but also a new class.

While Touraine's argument appears to explain the events of May '68, there are inconsistencies in the facts he presents and some flaws in his conclusions. For instance, Touraine states that, "The profound unity of the movement was due to the fact that it was no longer fighting a ruling group defending private interests but generalized power over social and cultural life."¹¹ Touraine's claims of a profound unity are contrary to many other works on May '68.¹² Touraine's theory of a new working class is also questionable. What he is really talking about is the fluidity of an old class, the professional managerial class, exaggerated to explain a whole new social formation reliant more on subtle differences in how capitalism is managed and how the workers relate to the tools of production. This new class argument is premised on the notion that those responsible for tending to the technologically sophisticated capitalist machinery, are different because they tend different machinery. However, although new technology can throw some workers out of work, or create a new craft or trade it does not make a new class. In the printing industry, for example, the change from hand-set type to Linotypes to computers has changed the medium of typography, not the class position of workers in the trade.

Nor does Touraine's analysis explain how his "new working class" automatically displaces the "old" working class or why it should be substituted for already existing class distinctions. When Touraine talks about professionals or managers he does not show why they are not part of the professional managerial class. When he talks about computer technicians, or mechanics who service the new technology, he does not explain why they are not part of the working class. In many ways, Touraine shows instead that that it is possible for the members of the

¹¹ Touraine, *The May Movement*, 58.

¹² For numerous books, from a variety of ideological perspectives, that contradict Touraine's claim of profound unity see: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, trans. Arnold Pomerans, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968); Roger Salloch, *In Pursuit of Ideology: The French Student Revolt, May/June 1968* (United States: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Center for International Studies, 1969); Jean Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *The Spirit of May* trans. Ronald Steel, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968); and Raymond Aron, *The Elusive Revolution: Anatomy of a Student Revolt* trans. Gordon Clough, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969).

middle class to achieve class consciousness and band together with the working class.¹³

One question the new social movements arguments fail to address is what happened to the “old working class?” It is still at work, still alienated, and still without ownership of the means of production. Even in May '68 one of the main sites of struggle was the auto factories. In Italy, the huge upsurge in workers' activity was referred to as the “Hot Autumn” of 1969 and continued through to 1974 with workers organizing outside of the mainstream unions and the Communist Party. Groups such as *Lotta Continua* (LC or Continuous Struggle) advocated Council Communism, “believing that workers can make their own decisions regarding how society should be run without any assistance from vanguard parties.”¹⁴ At its peak LC had over 50,000 activists and branches in every one of Italy's ninety-four provinces. In Rome alone they had twenty-one neighbourhood offices.¹⁵ Including other autonomous workers groups such as *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power), *Il Manifesto*, and *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers' Autonomy), the Italian working class movements in the 1970s had millions of members and sympathizers. One example of the size and militancy of the working class at the time was on 9 February 1973 when approximately 500,000 workers marched in Rome. This was the largest gathering of workers since World War II. Their slogans included “Power to the Workers!” and “Factory, School, Community – Our Struggle Is for Power!”¹⁶

In the United States, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement started organizing resistance to the conditions in Detroit auto plants. A wildcat strike against Chrysler at the Detroit Dodge Main Plant inspired many other revolutionary movement groups across Detroit. This eventually led to the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and then the Black Workers Congress.¹⁷ In Canada, there was a huge upswing in workers' mobilization: one-quarter of job actions after 1900 took place between 1971 and 1975. In 1976, one and a half million

¹³ Klaus Eder similarly argues that the middle class has a central role in the restructuring of the classes in his book, *The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies* (London: Sage, 1993).

¹⁴ George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), 24.

¹⁵ Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 24.

¹⁶ Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 26.

¹⁷ Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press 1998).

workers went on strike accounting for 11.6 million person-days lost. Significantly, three out of ten strikes in the 1970s were wildcats. Italy was said to be the only Western country in the world to match Canadian workers' militancy.¹⁸ Within the context of these protests, it is difficult to understand how new social movement theorists could insist that the working class was no longer relevant to social change. Perhaps the real problem was one of identification. The working class has never been homogenous, and in order to gain a clear understanding of the working class it is necessary to go beyond the incomplete and incorrect definition that it is only male, industrial, blue collar workers. However, instead of formulating a more accurate definition of the working class, most new social movement theorists have given up using class as a relevant subject of analysis.

Alberto Melucci, one of the first new social movement theorists, explicitly rejects class as a tool of analysis. "I have gradually abandoned the concept of class relationships," he states. "In systems like contemporary ones, where classes as real social groups are withering away, more appropriate concepts are required."¹⁹ Melucci deserts historical materialism for "slices of experience, past history, and memory."²⁰ Laurie Adkin, a Canadian sociologist, follows Melucci's abandonment of class as a key social relation and claims that the key to understanding new social movements is grasping that "class identity and culture of a previous era no longer encompass the experiences of enough persons to constitute the core identity of a mass movement for profound social change."²¹

The idea that the working class is dead is premised on false assumptions and an ahistorical view of the composition of the working class. In her book, *A Question of Class*, British socialist Lindsey German details this stereotype as a "classic view of the working class – almost exclusively male, working in heavy industry."²² She also notes that "total employment in manufacturing industry never, at any time, amounted to one half of the employed population, although it was, until recently the

¹⁸ Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* 2nd edition (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), 94.

¹⁹ Alberto Melucci, "A Strange Kind of Newness: What's 'New' in New Social Movements?" *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield, eds.. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 103.

²⁰ Melucci, "A Strange Kind," 115.

²¹ Adkin, *Sustainable Development*, 10.

²² Lindsey German, *A Question of Class* (London: Bookmarks, 1996), 24.

largest single sector.”²³ Another important point German makes is that service sector jobs are not new or only in fast food restaurants or retail sales. Historically, “transport workers, postal workers, dockers and telecom engineers all fall into the services category. They have always made up a substantial proportion of the workforce even in the heyday of manufacturing.”²⁴ Indeed, when Karl Marx wrote *Capital*, the largest single occupational group was that of domestic workers, largely female and certainly in the service sector.

This is also the case in Canada. The advent of a female, low waged, office clerk occurred over a period of thirty years, from the turn of the century to the 1930s. “Up until the end of the 1910s offices were run by generalist male bookkeepers but by the 1920s they had been replaced by female functionaries with adding machines who had less status, less wages, and monotonously repetitive jobs.”²⁵ The introduction of a deskilled female work force “was part of a massive restructuring of the means of administration.”²⁶ While nominally “white collar” it is only by contrasting these workers against the “classic” male industrial worker that these workers could somehow be seen as middle class. A more accurate identification is “pink collar workers,” denoting a largely female job sector that is part of the working class. Bryan Palmer recognizes that, “by 1971 the clerical subsection of white-collar workers was the largest occupational grouping in the country, with over 1.3 million working members.”²⁷ This was not the disappearance of the working class; rather, it was a massive influx in the ranks of the working class. These workers were very far removed from the professional managerial class. A union official coined the term “quiet factories” to describe their workplaces, making the link between the industrial and the non- industrial working class.²⁸ Far from the working class becoming obsolete, replaced by a “new working class,” the reality was and is that some traditionally middle class and professional groups were becoming proletarianized.

²³ German, *Class*, 25.

²⁴ German, *Class*, 29.

²⁵ Graham S. Lowe, “Mechanization, Feminization and Managerial Control in the Early Twentieth-Century Canadian Office,” *On The Job: Confronting the labour process in Canada* Craig Heron and Robert Storey eds. (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 194.

²⁶ Lowe, “Mechanization,” 179.

²⁷ Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*. 2nd Ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 323.

²⁸ Palmer, *Working-Class*, 324.

Why do new social movements ignore class despite its obvious existence? How can new social movement theorists and activists ignore the working class mobilizations of the past and present to argue the so-called death of the working class in the 1970s to present? Their argument is directly tied to the idea that the working class can not address issues of identity. The importance of addressing identity has become the most pervasive argument put forward by new social movement theorists to explain why single issue movements or new social movements are more effective tools for organizing in a “post modern” society. Laurie Adkin, for example, cites Chantal Mouffe who writes, “In order that the defense of the interests of workers’ interests is not pursued at the cost of the rights of women, immigrants, or consumers, it is necessary to establish an equivalence between these different struggles.”²⁹ This is a very narrow conception of the terms worker and workers’ interest. Again, the stereotypical male, white, industrial worker is invoked as a representative of the working class as a whole. Mouffe, and in turn Adkin, are creating a dichotomy where one does not naturally exist. Of course not all women are workers but the way Mouffe frames the issue, none of them are. She also presupposes that women, immigrants, and consumers of all classes have something inherently more important in common than do working class men and women; she places identity above the interests of the working class.³⁰ The new social movement theorists use the notion of diversity within the working class to claim that it means fragmentation, yet this is not inevitable nor is it readily apparent.

This theory’s disassociation from class in favour of identity has been put forward as post-Marxism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and more recently “radical democracy.” Put succinctly, the argument is that

new social movements are based not in material interests but in the discursive practices that construct new political subjects, create new political spaces in which to act, and may ultimately lead people to rethink what we mean by community, or power, or reason, or power, or consciousness or energy, or security, or development or democracy.³¹

Ernesto Laclau, a leading theorist on social movements, in his 1990 book *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, agrees:

²⁹ Chantal Mouffe, cited in Adkin, *Sustainable Development*, 10.

³⁰ It is ironic that Mouffe includes “consumer” in her list of important identities as it is only in capitalism that the role of consumer would be considered an identity in the same way as gender and race.

³¹ Carroll, *Organizing Dissent*, 8.

The demands of a lesbian group, a neighbors' association, or a black self-defense group are therefore all situated on the same ontological level as working class demands. In this way the absence of a global emancipation of humanity allows the constant expansion and diversification of concrete emancipatory struggles.³²

This focus on discourse reduces class to an identity that is not differentiated from neighborhood associations or self-defence classes. This reduction through equivalence makes the retreat from class complete. Laclau does not identify the class nature of the groups, their goals, purpose, or statements of principles and yet somehow these groups' demands are seen as no different than working class demands. If this is the case, then demanding a stop sign at an intersection in your neighborhood is revolutionary. It is this exclusion of any class analysis that seems to have predominated in the thinking of Greenpeace and has become pervasive in new social movements on the whole. Occasionally members of the working class may be useful allies but that is the extent of it.

There is dissent against the theories put forward by new social movement theorists. Those dissenting argue that the intellectual move away from so-called "foundational"³³ narratives to explore the fractured identities and multiplicity of experience characterized by postmodernism and framed in new social movements represents a retreat from class and is essentially re-framing bourgeois liberalism in a different guise.³⁴ Ellen Meiksins Wood identifies this trend within the left that dissociates politics from class and socialist politics from the interests and struggles of the working class. Those who subscribe to this theoretical turn, Wood asserts, are really only arguing for an extension of bourgeois democratic forms.³⁵ Wood's assertion applies to the new social movement theorists who argue that class is irrelevant and thus, theoretically, erases class stratification through discourse. Similarly, according to Melucci, "the goal is to render power visible not to challenge it because conflicts have no winners, but they may produce innovation, modernization and reform."³⁶ At its core,

³² Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 216.

³³ See Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1991), 773-797.

³⁴ See Bryan Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990) for a critique of this trend and Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," for an example of it.

³⁵ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986).

³⁶ Melucci, *Nomads of the Present*, 77-78.

the new social movement argument is really about modest reforms to capitalism. By deeming class struggle irrelevant, capitalism is never challenged, just altered to allow access to a few more groups. Thus class struggle is contained and the hegemony of capitalism maintained.

In their attempt to discredit both class as an explanatory tool and the working class as a revolutionary agent, new social movement theorists create a straw argument against Marx. New social movement theory rests on the idea that there is a discontinuity in capitalism; while class once mattered, it is not important now in the post modern era. However, this discontinuity does not exist. As Wood points out, the logic of capitalism – accumulation, commodification, profit-maximization, and competition – has not changed: it has only adapted to current conditions. As Wood states,

If we have been seeing something new since the 1970s it's not a major discontinuity in capitalism but, on the contrary, capitalism itself reaching maturity. It may be that we're seeing the first real efforts of capitalism as a comprehensive system.³⁷

Wood is arguing that rather than a discontinuity in capitalism we are seeing a realization of capitalism's goal, a comprehensive capitalist system.

In her book *The Politics of Sustainable Development*, Laurie Adkin criticizes Ellen Meiksins Wood for privileging workers in the anti-capitalist struggle as the “people who are the direct objects of class exploitation.”³⁸ Adkin claims this “reflects an old dichotomous way of thinking on the left in which all practice is either labelled ‘social democratic reformist’ or ‘revolutionary.’”³⁹ What Adkin overlooks is that the people who are the direct objects of capitalist exploitation are, and can only be, the working class. This does not mean, as Adkin claims, that the women's struggle, or anti-racism, or any other struggle against oppression should wait until after the class struggle: rather, they are part of the class struggle. As capitalism attempts to divide the working class along other lines, the class struggle must include the entirety of the working class and resist divisions.

³⁷ Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Modernity, Postmodernity, or Capitalism?” *Monthly Review* 48: 3 (July-August 1996), 37.

³⁸ Adkin, *Sustainable Development*, 7.

³⁹ Adkin, *Sustainable Development*, 7.

CHAPTER TWO

GREENPEACE, DEMOCRACY, AND CLASS

The structure of Greenpeace is important to investigate in order to understand how decisions are made and whether there is a potential for class issues to be raised within the group. It is also necessary to analyze the class position of those within Greenpeace in order to open up the question of how their class may affect the politics of Greenpeace. Illustrating the middle class biographies of new social movement actors is not new; however there has been little analysis of how the class composition of new social movements affects their actual campaigns. I use the theory of the professional managerial class in this chapter in an attempt to understand how class influenced the ideology and actions of Greenpeace.

The theory of the professional managerial class allows an understanding of the motivations and the class interests of Greenpeace and makes explicable their ideology and actions. The term professional managerial class best describes the class position of Greenpeace officials. Barbara and John Ehrenreich identify the professional managerial class as “consisting of salaried menial workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations.”¹ This is a useful starting point. However, Erik Olin Wright argues that the Ehrenreichs’ professional managerial class model is functionalist and falters as a complete analysis because it defines the professional managerial class by its function of reproducing capitalist culture and class relations but does not adequately consider the relationship to the means of production. Instead, Wright asserts that the professional managerial class occupies contradictory class locations: between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in the case of supervisors and managers; and between the petit bourgeoisie and the working class, in the case of semi-autonomous employees. A synthesis of these two analyses

¹ Barbara and John Ehrenreich, “The Professional-Manual Class,” *Radical America* 11: 2 (1977): 13.

provides an excellent definition of the professional managerial class. The Ehrenreichs' functional analysis is important as it clearly states the role of the professional managerial class, while the contradictory class locations analysis is necessary as it explains the relationship of the professional managerial class to the means of production. The term professional managerial class is preferable to middle class, new middle class, or other vague terms because it more carefully describes who comprises this class. Alex Callinicos helps expand the understanding of the professional managerial class by explaining Stanley Aronowitz's idea that the professional managerial class is not static.

It means the new middle class is not hermetically sealed off from other classes. At the top it shades off into the higher echelons of management and administration, which are effectively part of the ruling class. At the lower end it merges into the working class.²

The professional managerial class was the predominant constituency with Greenpeace from the beginning and bears more scrutiny than it has been previously accorded.

Among the founding members of Greenpeace, and those who would become the most well known initially, were those who went out on the first Greenpeace action to stop the atom bomb tests at Amchitka. The group was composed of three journalists: Robert Hunter, from the *Vancouver Sun*; Ben Metcalfe, a theatre critic for the CBC; and Bob Cummings from the *Georgia Straight*. The journalists were there as members of the protest group, though their role as media personalities would greatly enhance their media coverage. The other crew members were Jim Bohlen, a forest products researcher; Patrick Moore, a graduate student at UBC; Bill Darnell, a social worker; Dr. Lyle Thruston, a medical practitioner; Terry Simmons, a cultural geographer; and Richard Fineberg, a political science professor.³ All of these men fit within the professional managerial class as semi-autonomous employees, with the exception perhaps of the grad student, who was a professional manager in training so to speak, and the doctor, who depending upon his practice could have been in the supervisor, manager role of the professional managerial class. The class composition of the executive of Greenpeace changed little over the years. In 1994, the board of directors for

² Alex Callinicos, "The 'New Middle Class' and Socialist Politics," *International Socialism* 2:20 (1985): 104.

³ This list of members of the original crew is compiled from Brown and May, *The Greenpeace Story*, 11; and Hunter, *Warriors*, 16-17. See also *Vancouver Sun* "Greenpeace sailors ready to face the test" 15 September 1971, 43.

Greenpeace Canada were Olivier Deleuze, an agronomic engineer; Joanne Dufay, a health professional; Harvey MacKinnon, a fundraising consultant; Janet Patterson, an accountant; Trudie Richards, a university professor; Steve Sawyer, an Executive Director of Greenpeace International; and Steve Shrybman, a lawyer.⁴

The professional managerial class base of Greenpeace's officers is consistent with the new social movement theory literature that often embraces the middle class as the agent of change in society.⁵ Theorists have tended to argue that new social movements have displaced the working class as the agent of positive social change in society.⁶ The Ehrenreichs argue the class interests of the professional managerial class are achieved by a "PMC radicalism" which,

emerges out of PMC class interests, which include the PMC's interest in extending its technological and cultural superiority over the working class. Thus the possibility exists in the PMC for the emergence of what may at first sight seem to be a contradiction in terms: anti-working class radicalism. This possibility finds its fullest expression in the PMC radical's recurring vision of a technocratic socialism, a socialism in which the bourgeoisie has been replaced by bureaucrats, planners, and experts of various sorts.⁷

The point is not that anti-working class radicalism is inevitable nor does it mean that groups like Greenpeace are inherently regressive. The point is that the possibility for anti-working class radicalism exists within the professional managerial class and that new social movements made up largely of the professional managerial class could easily fall into such behaviour. The possibility of anti-working class radicalism is ignored

⁴ Greenpeace Annual Review, 1994.

⁵ On new social movement and the middle class see: Russell Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, eds. *Challenging the Political Order*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Klaus Eder, "Green Politics and the New Class," *Political Studies*, 37: 2, (1989), 205-223; Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Beacon Halfmann, Jost, 1987); and Herbert Kitschelt, "New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States," *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5: 310, (1985).

⁶ Klaus Eder, "The New Social Movements: Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?" *Social Research* 52: 4 (1985): .869-890; Claus Offe, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics" *Social Research* 52: 4 (1985): 831-832; Warren Magnusson and R. Walker, "De-Centring the State: Political Theory and Canadian Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy* 26, (1988), 37-71.

⁷ Barbara and John Ehrenreich, as quoted in Callinicos, "Socialist Politics," 109.

when new social movements are painted as acting in a benevolent, altruistic, and classless manner. This idea co-exists with the idea that new social movements are inherently more inclusive and democratic than old social movements. While I cannot address the broader claims of classlessness of new social movements, I can show how these assumptions play out in specific campaigns.

It is important to look at the organizational structure of Greenpeace as well as the class composition of its leadership to see how different voices are heard within the organization. This helps us see if working class issues could be addressed within the structure of Greenpeace. This is particularly important because inclusion and democratic structures are given much importance in new social movements' theory.⁸ Lawrence Wilde notes that new social movements emphasize "radical democratic internal structures and processes, including rotation of offices, open meetings, and limitation of rewards."⁹ Greenpeace appeared to reflect these ideas in their structure. According to Robert Hunter, one of the founders of Greenpeace, by 1977:

Virtually anybody could set themselves up as a Greenpeace office, taking more or less full credit for all the achievements to date, and appoint himself or herself to a position, using no formulas more elaborate than the one we had used ourselves in Vancouver: simply, you get a bunch of your friends in a room and proclaim yourselves.¹⁰

The founders of Greenpeace believed that their lack of formal structures allowed Greenpeace to create a group that was non-hierarchical, decentralized, and democratic.¹¹ However Greenpeace was not organized using alternative structures. In fact, it was structureless. Decisions in the fledgling Greenpeace were made on an *ad hoc* basis. There were no structural mechanisms for decision making. While this likely suited the small nature of the group at the founding, it created the basis for a fundamentally undemocratic organization in which decisions were made by a small group of people, predominately men from the professional

⁸Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power* (Philadelphia 1986); Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (Philadelphia 1989); Alan Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (London 1990); and Joachim Hirsch, "The Crisis of Fordism, Transformations of the 'Keynesian' Security State and the New Social Movements." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 10: 43-55.

⁹ Lawrence Wilde, "Class Analysis and the Politics of New Social Movements," *Capital and Class*. 42, (1990), 55.

¹⁰ Hunter, *Warriors*, 365.

¹¹ See Hunter, *Warriors*.