

An Excerpt from

Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout: The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist

You could call me a Greenpeace dropout, but that is not an entirely accurate description of how or why I left the organization 15 years after I helped create it. I'd like to think Greenpeace left me, rather than the other way around, but that too is not entirely correct.

The truth is Greenpeace and I underwent divergent evolutions. I became a sensible environmentalist; Greenpeace became increasingly senseless as it adopted an agenda that is antiscience, antibusiness, and downright antihuman.

This is the story of our transformations.

The last half of the 20th century was marked by a revulsion for war and a new awareness of the environment. Beatniks, hippies, eco-freaks, and greens in their turn fashioned a new philosophy that embraced peace and ecology as the overarching principles of a civilized world. Spurred by more than 30 years of ever-present fear that global nuclear holocaust would wipe out humanity and much of the living world, we led a new war—a war to save the earth. I've had the good fortune to be a general in that war.

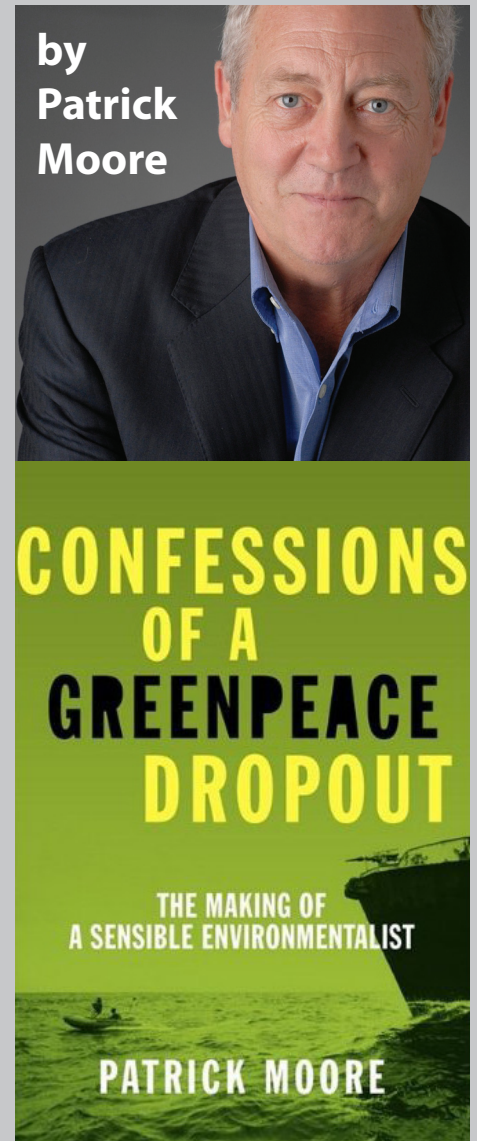
My boot camp had no screaming sergeant or rifle drills. Still, the sense of duty and purpose of mission we had at the beginning was as acute as any assault on a common enemy. We campaigned against the bomb-makers, whale-killers, polluters, and anyone else who threatened civilization or the environment. In the process we won the hearts and minds of people around the world. We were Greenpeace.

I joined Greenpeace before it was even called by that name. The Don't Make a Wave Committee was meeting weekly in the basement of the Unitarian church in Vancouver.

In April 1971 I saw a small article in the Vancouver Sun about a group planning to sail a boat from Vancouver across the North Pacific to protest U.S. hydrogen bomb testing in Alaska. I immediately realized this was something real I could do, way beyond taking ecology classes and studying at a desk. I wrote the organizers and was invited to join the weekly meetings of the small group that would soon become Greenpeace.

The early days of Greenpeace were heady indeed. It was 1971 and the height of the hippy era. I was in a bitter battle to obtain my PhD in ecology at the University of British Columbia over the objections of a few industry-backed professors who had forced their way onto my thesis committee. I became radicalized and joined the group of antinuclear activists.

We realized all-out nuclear war would be the end of both civilization and the environment—hence the name we soon adopted, Greenpeace, as in “let it be a green peace.” We chartered an old fishing boat to sail to ground zero to focus public attention on the nuclear tests. We believed the revolution should be a



Dr. Moore will keynote Washington Policy Center's 9th Annual Environmental Policy Conference on July 21st at Seattle's Bell Harbor Conference Center. For more information visit washingtonpolicy.org.

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celebration. We sang protest songs, drank beer, smoked pot, and had a generally good time—even while being tossed about on the notoriously dangerous waters of the North Pacific.

We survived that first voyage, but we never made it to the test site. The U.S. Coast Guard cut us off at Akutan Harbor and made us turn back. However, our mission was a success because our protest was reported in the media across North America. As a result, thousands of people from Canada and the U.S. marched on border crossings across the continent on the day of the H-bomb test and shut the crossings down. Soon after, President Nixon cancelled the remaining tests in that series. We could hardly believe what our ragtag band of peaceniks had accomplished in just a few short months. We realized that a few people could change the world if they just got up and did something.

It was the beginning of a very wild ride.

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By 1982 Greenpeace had grown into a full-fledged international movement with offices and staff around the world. We were bringing in \$100 million a year in donations and half a dozen campaigns were occurring simultaneously. During the early 1980s two things happened that altered my perspective on the direction in which environmentalism, in general, and Greenpeace, in particular, were heading. The first was my introduction to the concept of sustainable development at a global meeting of environmentalists. The second was the adoption of policies by my fellow Greenpeacers that I considered extremist and irrational. These two developments would set the stage for my transformation from a radical activist into a sensible environmentalist.

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At the same time I chose to become less militant and more diplomatic, my Greenpeace colleagues became more extreme and intolerant of dissenting opinions from within.

The collapse of world communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall during the 1980s added to the trend toward extremism. The Cold War was over and the peace movement was largely disbanded. The peace movement had been mainly Western-based and anti-American in its leanings. Many of its members moved into the environmental movement, bringing with them their neo-Marxist, far-left agendas. To a considerable extent the environmental movement was hijacked by political and social activists who learned to use green language to cloak agendas that had more to do with anticapitalism and antiglobalization than with science or ecology.

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As you will see, I believe:

- We should be growing more trees and using more wood, not cutting fewer trees and using less wood as Greenpeace and its allies contend. Wood is the most important renewable material and energy resource.
- Those countries that have reserves of potential hydroelectric energy should build the dams required to deliver that energy. There is nothing wrong with creating more lakes in this world.
- Nuclear energy is essential for our future energy supply, especially if we wish to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. It has proven to be clean safe, reliable, and cost-effective.
- Geothermal heat pumps, which too few people know about, are far more important and cost-effective than either solar panels or wind mills as a source of renewable energy. They should be required in all new buildings unless there is a

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good reason to use some other technology for heating, cooling, and making hot water.

- The most effective way to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels is to encourage the development of technologies that require less or no fossil fuels to operate. Electric cars, heat pumps, nuclear and hydroelectric energy, and biofuels are the answer, not cumbersome regulatory systems that stifle economic activity.
- Genetic science, including genetic engineering, will improve nutrition and end malnutrition, improve crop yields, reduce the environmental impact of farming, and make people and the environment healthier.
- Many activist campaigns designed to make us fear useful chemicals are based on misinformation and unwarranted fear.
- Aquaculture, including salmon and shrimp farming, will be one of our most important future sources of healthy food. It will also take pressure off depleted wild fish stocks and will employ millions of people productively.
- There is no cause for alarm about climate change. The climate is always changing. Some of the proposed “solutions” would be far worse than any imaginable consequence of global warming, which will likely be mostly positive. Cooling is what we should fear.
- Poverty is the worst environmental problem. Wealth and urbanization will stabilize the human population. Agriculture should be mechanized throughout the developing world. Disease and malnutrition can be largely eliminated by the application of modern technology. Health care, sanitation, literacy, and electrification should be provided to everyone.
- No whale or dolphin should be killed or captured anywhere, ever. This is one of my few religious beliefs. They are the only species on earth whose brains are larger than ours and it is impossible to kill or capture them humanely.

An advisor to industry and government, Dr. Patrick Moore is a co-founder and former leader of Greenpeace and Chair and Chief Scientist of Greenspirit Strategies Ltd. in Vancouver, Canada. His new book, “Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout: The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist” is available at beattystreetpublishing.com, amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.