



NGOs

Greenpeace

By Roxy Wacyk

Introduction

Congratulations on joining Greenpeace International! As a member of this NGO, you are committing yourself to the effort of protecting the environment from imminent threats and promoting peace. Since its creation in 1972, Greenpeace International has pursued its agenda through research, campaigning, lobbying, and nonviolent direct action. At a critical moment in history, our environment is currently facing unprecedented dangers. It is your responsibility to continue the mission for peace and environmental conservation by educating others and convincing them to act.

History

In 1971, a small team of activists unknowingly set out on the **inaugural** Greenpeace mission on an old fishing boat. They were outraged that the United States was planning to conduct underground nuclear testing at **Amchitka, Alaska**. These early founders of Greenpeace were ultimately intercepted and their efforts thwarted- the nuclear testing continued as originally planned. However, their efforts did not go unnoticed. The activists captured enough media attention that Amchitka was declared a bird sanctuary that year, which caused future testing to be put to a stop.

In the proceeding years, Greenpeace continued its tradition of taking to the seas and challenging large corporations and government departments, sometimes with the same effect as its maiden voyage. Several determined activists adopted a similar strategy to try to stop the French from testing nuclear weapons at sea. Though they were forcibly removed and the test proceeded as scheduled, the incident drew international attention and strengthened the movement against nuclear testing.

One of the most notable Greenpeace victories came in 1995, when a boat of Greenpeace activists stood their ground in the North Sea against Shell Oil Company and the government of the United Kingdom to prevent it from being polluted. The dramatic form of protest spurred others to join the Greenpeace cause to pressure Shell to not dump their oil storage facility in the ocean and try instead to recycle it on land. Shell eventually **relented**, and a ban on the ocean disposal of oilrigs followed.

The stand-down against Shell is certainly one of Greenpeace's most dramatic victories, but change can also be brought about on a

inaugural—*initial or first.*

Amchitka, Alaska— *a tiny island off the coast of Alaska that is home to otters, eagles, peregrine falcons, and other endangered animals.*

relented— *to become less severe or harsh*

smaller scale and on a much more regular basis. These successes can entail anything from convincing a corporation to adopt a more eco-friendly manufacturing process to winning a lawsuit against a corporation that ignores environmental concerns.

Hot Topics

Energy & Global Warming

Greenpeace strongly believes that it is our government's duty to help our nation break its severe oil addiction. This addiction not only cripples the economy by making it vulnerable to volatile oil prices, but it also contributes to one of the greatest environmental crises of our time: global warming. Global warming's effects include increased incidence of violent storms, rising temperatures, severe draughts and floods, and animal extinctions. **Offshore drilling** is no solution to rising oil prices; the large time lag between initiation of drilling and oil availability prevents this proposed solution from having a substantial effect on oil prices, and it only strengthens our oil addiction. Coal-generated energy also produces toxic emissions that threaten our health and contribute to global warming.

offshore drilling—
collecting oil from reserves beneath bodies of water

The government needs to pass legislation that will phase out all coal use within the next 30 years, and this phase-out must begin *now*. Contrary to coal-lobbyists' claims, coal *cannot* be made clean; government-funded or subsidized "carbon-free coal" research has proven to be a waste of our nation's resources. Instead, the government needs to subsidize research, investment and production of clean, renewable energy such as wind, solar, and bio-energy. Renewable energy potential far exceeds global energy use, and investment in this energy will both salvage our environment and boost the economy by creating new, "green" jobs. Policies promoting more efficient energy use should also be passed.

Food Safety Regulations

Genetic engineering of **foodstuffs** is Greenpeace's largest concern regarding food safety regulation. The US remains one of the only countries that do not require genetically engineered (GE) foods to be labeled as such, and that makes it nearly impossible for responsible companies who do *not* use genetically engineered products to include this information on their packaging. Thus, consumers have no protection from the dangers of GE products, including severe allergies, adverse effects on other genes, and other toxic effects that can take decades to surface. The US should emulate other nations that have taken steps to protect their citizens against these dangers, including labeling requirements, bans of GE food imports, prohibition of GE crop trials, stricter testing regulations, and even moratoriums of GE food production. Cur-

foodstuffs— *the raw material of food before processing.*

rently, there are no legal requirements of GE food testing. The government should also promote organic farming, and perhaps subsidize these products, which tend to be more expensive than their GE counterparts.

Globalization

Global warming, as indicated by its very name, is a global problem. Thus, the world must unite to succeed in the battle against it. The integration of economies allows nations to share renewable research technologies, approaches, and products, expediting this field of development. In addition, the gradual erosion of economic borders may ultimately enable the creation of a global carbon credit system, or some other form of international emissions regulation. However, GP recognizes, countries must sometimes use economic forces – specifically limiting trade – to punish the environmentally irresponsible, protect our nation’s people, and to discourage certain practices or processes. For example, the US should ban all imports of genetically engineered foods and products using very environmentally destructive processes.

Nuclear Weapons

Greenpeace condemns the US government’s support of an extension of the US nuclear program, and maintains that this is neither a safe nor cost-effective solution to the energy crisis. The first wave of nuclear energy development in the US proved to be among the most wasteful initiatives in our nation’s recent history; the estimated cost of construction was \$45 billion, while the actual cost turned out to be \$145 billion. Taxpayers were forced to foot the bill. The government is now using taxpayer dollars to subsidize the development of new nuclear power plants. This money should be immediately transferred to subsidies for clean, safe renewable energy source development.

In addition to being economically ineffective, nuclear power is associated with severe environmental and health risks. There is no way to dispose of nuclear waste, there is always a risk of **Chernobyl**-repeats resulting from accidental but catastrophic nuclear melt-downs, and there is a great threat of nuclear terrorism. Radioactive material causes cancer, still-births, miscarriages, and other severe health effects. People living in regions that had nuclear facilities decades ago are still suffering from these effects. The government must immediately stop all nuclear production and being nuclear disarmament and radioactive clean-up worldwide.

Chernobyl– Ukrainian city that suffered a nuclear disaster in 1986.

Clean Water and Sanitation in Africa

Greenpeace generally supports political intervention that aims to

increase accessibility to clean water and to reverse water pollution damage, provided that these interventions do not cause further short-term or long-term environmental damage. Dams disrupt ecosystems and wildlife mating processes, and thus the group may not support this solution, depending on the extent of such damage. The group maintains that pollution is the root cause of the clean water shortage, and that the most time and resources should be invested in preventing the continuation of practices that contribute to this pollution, in this case, poor sanitation.

Conclusion

To be a successful advocate for Greenpeace, you must be able to persuade other to understand the urgency of your cause. You will encounter opposition on many fronts as you embark on this difficult journey; some won't believe your claims, while others will simply feel indifference to the information you are presenting to them. Come prepared with compelling facts and logical arguments, and anticipate possible counterpoints. Try to structure your arguments so that they contain **irrefutable** evidence that appeals to the pragmatic sides of those you are trying to influence. Ultimately, even the most **cynical** person will care about his or her environment when confronted with the stark truth that we are given only one planet; neglecting, abusing, and destroying it cannot be a viable option.

irrefutable– *not open to question.*

cynical– *a contemptuously distrustful attitude*

Guide to Further Research

Beyond reading this briefing on Greenpeace, there are two main ways to further prepare yourself for lobbying for your NGO. The most valuable resource will be Greenpeace's website (www.greenpeace.org/international). Here you can find various information on its history, their mission and goals, as well as details on their latest campaigns.

The second primary way that you can prepare further is by reviewing the issue briefings of the committees at HMCE, particularly the ones that will be considering issues that are relevant to Greenpeace. Look over the briefings and the questions that the committee will be considering. In doing so, you should be able to gain an understanding of how your organization can interact with the committee in order to further your initiatives and campaigns.