

## **Symbolic Protests and Friends of the Earth**

### **Introductory note, 2012**

From 1972 to 1977, Friends of the Earth in Australia was involved in an epic struggle to stop the mining and export of uranium . One small sideshow was the symbolic protest organized in 1977 to challenge Mary Kathleen Uranium Mine at its Annual General Meeting.

Having returned from working in Kenya the previous year, I was peripherally involved with FOE that year. I wrote this report in 1997 as part of Friends of the Earth's self-reflexive approach to organization social protests. The results were not anticipated...that the protest would achieve its public media exposure objectives, but that it would be judged the loser in the contest with Mary Kathleen Uranium in the struggle for popular hearts and minds, by the media itself.

As a Friends of the Earth activist at the time, I also partook in the planning, event, and post-event evaluation. I am not sure if my report changed anyone's minds about the utility of symbolic protests, although it certainly changed my own.

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San Francisco  
February 13, 2012

BY PETER HAYES.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Catrina's Dream

Catrina is RC's younger sister, seven or eight years old. Catrina's dream was recorded during my interview with RC.

- PH: What was the dream about?
- CC: Well me sister, me and Jill were having a car, we were going around in the car and, well, we had these cow dippers that you dip the cows with and ...
- RC: Dip the cows' teats with?
- CC: Yeah, and well, we were throwing them around and we saw that they, they blew up the paddock. And well, we threw one on a hill, and the hill blew up. And well, I accidentally threw one and, but it rolled so much it blew up. Well, um, ah.
- PH: That was to do with uranium? How do you know that?
- CC: I don't know.
- RC: The teats, didn't you say there was uranium in the teat cups?
- CC: Yes.
- PH: So where was the uranium?
- CC: In the teat cups.
- PH: In the teat cups. So you were throwing the teat cups with uranium in them ...
- CC: Yeah.
- PH: And they were blowing up. How did you know that uranium blew up? Someone tell you that?
- CC: He hum. Me sister!
- RC: I said that they make bombs out of uranium.
- PH: That was the first part of the dream. Was that the whole dream?
- CC: Think so.
- RC: Didn't you say you threw some uranium and you blew up?
- CC: Oh yeah, and, well, I accidentally threw some and we all blew up and went everywhere.
- RC: In little pieces.
- CC: Yeah.

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CC: Yeah.

xxxxx



Friends of the earth (FOE) seem to know what they are doing. Everything from their literature, the food cooperative in their Carlton offices, to their stated beliefs show a remarkable unanimity of interest. Their slogan along with Friends of the Earth across Australia and on three other continents is "The conservation, restoration and rational use of the ecosphere". Since the inception in Australia in 1974 Friends of the Earth have organised a series of actions similar to the subject of this study. FOE has played politics by sending a 30 foot yacht to Mururoa Atoll in a ludicrously illmatched show of strength against the might of the French military (1974). Other actions <sup>include</sup> ~~indicate~~ the establishment of the Atom Free Embassy outside the AAEC (1976-77) and of Camp concern in the uranium prpvnce (in 1975-76-77), the people's rides to Canberra (1975-76-77), the occupation of the toilets at Tullamarine Airport (1975), the presentation of a home-made atomic bomb to a Minister of Government, mass die-ins, a 30 year Hiroshima 1-ton concrete birthday cake replete with **I.C.B.M.** candles, and many others. Obviously, an idea has caught on.

Much has been written about ritual in societies where fundamental consensus about ethos and worldview is found. Cultural axioms are accepted as what must be and is, rather than what ought to be. The rituals of rebellion express the conflicts and contradictions underlying social cooperation, but reaffirm social unity (M. Gluckman, 1963). In an era of bewildering change and social dislocation, symbolic interaction also serves to challenge the prevailing myths and ideologies of dominant social groups (C. Geertz, 1975. p.218). Where participants are at cross-purposes over values, norms of behaviour and world-view, the symbolic interaction which characterises rituals of protest and revolutionary intent are complex.

I have not managed to disentangle all the threads of meaning or the significance of this social event. However, in undertaking the study I formulated and tested two hypotheses.

The first is that the event was a ritual of protest to be enacted (C. Geertz, 1975. p.116), a dramatization of the conflict by Friends of the Earth with uranium miners. The actions are symbolic 'in the sense of any physical, social or cultural act or object that serves as a vehicle for a conception' (C. Geertz, 1975. p.208). The various disruptive efforts were mainly iconic in form, in that the transgression of ritual purpose and rules by FOE to express intent were contained within the format of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Mary Kathleen Uranium Ltd. (MKU). As MC put it, FOE 'was using the General Meeting, the style of the meeting to put across their point of view, rather than completely break it up into another form of mass get-together' (2B.305). In the sense of debasing ritual ~~it was~~ FOE's actions were iconoclastic. The MKU-AGM ~~itself~~ is ritual in the sense of 'culturally defined sets of behaviour [that] function as language' (E. Leach, 1968. p.524) and 'attempt to create and maintain a particular culture, a particular set of assumptions by which experience is controlled' (M. Douglas, 1976, p.128). Just as there are regularities in the political style of FOE, so the corporate AGM recurs each year. The task is to establish how the two became intermixed in a ritual clash or skirmish on the 24th floor of the CRA building in Collins Street. The event is exemplative of the peculiar dilemma of those opposed to a dominant value system and its manifestations. The FOE's are continually forced to express their values (or preferential ordering, after T. La Porte, 1975) by confronting and appropriating symbolic forms and instruments of communication (R. Firth, 1973, p.76) of those whom they oppose. This gives rise to a tension between the value position and the instrumental means adopted by the Friends of the Earth, which is manifested as a debilitating intra-group incohesion.



The second hypothesis is that the intentions of FOE to communicate their ideas to 'the public' via the mass media are not borne out by the results, and, to put it simply, that FOE has yet to learn that short cuts are not always the shortest way, or even the surest way, to achieve a goal.

The Friends of the Earth seem particularly attuned - and averse - to the threat of 30,000 megatons of atomic TNT, 3 million times the explosive force which vapourized Hiroshima, primed for immediate use in war. The future for the post-Hiroshima generation in Nuttall's memorable words, is a void - (J. Nuttall, 1970, p.67). Pahner agrees 'that the nuclear power plant is an actual and symbolic threat of death on a scale not previously known and in a manner not previously envisioned. It poses a considerable strain on the individual's perception of his life, its meaning and its future. The potential of living under such a psychological burden may be such as to ~~initially~~ <sup>consequently</sup> undermine creative processes in the individual and in societies'. (P. Pahner, 1976, p.17).

Friends of the Earth confront that reality daily. They exert themselves to break the complacency which has seized the imagination of the contemporary mandarins. Anxiety enters their dreams and spills over into outrageous actions. 'I was born in a non-nuclear future' says Friend of the Earth, Mary Elliott. 'I remember a non-nuclear future. I am haunted by the memory of a non-nuclear war and a non-nuclear future. It is almost inconceivable to me how children can think at all about growing up, as I once did, thinking only to survive and live on after that war. If children cannot and dare not think about their own adulthood, if they must put on a mask at birth, then they will not have the answers. We must stop the nuclear madness now, in our generation, and gently wipe away from the faces of our children the psychologically polluting mask of fear'. (M. Elliott, 1976, p.37).

The real problem in writing an ethnography is to divorce intent from form, politics from art. Insofar as I push barrows, I fail. Insofar as the barrows push themselves, I succeed. In politics, the same as in art. Now why is that?

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

1. I intended to produce an aural version of this study on magnetic tape. This involved the cross-editing of 30 interviews, demanding 3-400 dubs or about 60 hours of technical work. This was precluded by time constraints and by the refusal of MKU to permit me to tape-record the AGM, or to provide access to the tape recording made by MKU. Such are the problems of observer-participant approach to political field work.
2. The analysis of the event draws on historical records and on interviews recorded at different times. Whilst the description and analysis is primarily structural and synchronic, the event plainly has both historical and psychological dimensions which I have not undertaken to demonstrate.
3. Tape references are to facilitate future access to the material. Each cassette is numbered 1-12, side A or B, and the exact reference is obtained by a standard numerical marker on a Sony JC-152S1) recorder.
4. Initials have been used to identify informants. All informants knew that the taped interviews were intended for public use. I do not believe that this changed the content of the interviews. Friends of the Earch are publicly disarmingly honest about their motivations.
5. To obtain better perspectives on the "abuse" of the AGM, the author should have observed other AGM's to establish a baseline of 'normal' AGM behaviour. This was not possible.





MARY KATHLEEN URANIUM LTD.

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95 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE, 3000

P.O. BOX 384D

TELEPHONE 63 0491

TELEGRAMS "CONRIO"

TELEX AA30108

4th May, 1977.

Mr. P. Hayes,  
61 MacArthur Place,  
CARLTON. 3053

Dear Sir,

Your letter addressed to Mr. Carnegie has been handed to me for reply. Unfortunately, we are not able to assist your study with any tape but we would like to offer you any reasonable assistance in your study. If there are any questions or other material you would like to submit in writing, the Company will consider them and respond thereto.

Yours faithfully,

R.J. Knott,  
Secretary.

## 2.0 PREPARING THE EVENT

### 1 The origins of the event

Virtually all participants agreed that the origins of the event lay in the successful protest at the EZ Ltd. AGM in 1975 (in fact FOE first took up the AGM role at the Queensland Mines Ltd. AGM in 1974). A contract note dated February 4, 1974 reveals that Peter Baird had acquired 500 MKU shares for FOE on 19th March. HW updated a list of small MKU shareholders. Each were mailed a letter dated 6th April and signed by PM requesting proxy entitlements to the MKU AGM for members of FOE. NB's role was advisory (1A:250), initiating the action and approaching PM to work as full-time paid coordinator (1A.299). Permission for this was sought and successfully obtained from the open ECOM\* on 13th April (1A.299). PM, assisted by a volunteer HW, organised proxy forms, administrative details, motions for the AGM and planned tactics (NB.1A.316). This work was done in consultation with about 4 others and put to a 'broad-cross section' of FOE at a meeting of about 20 members on 16th April (PM.1A.105). Seven motions for MKU AGM were delivered to MKU on 16th April, and a press release stating that 'we think it is time the company accepted a social responsibility for its actions. We will be there as its conscience' was telexed to fourteen mass media outlets on the night of 17th April from the G.P.O. The total non-redeemable cost to FOE was calculated on 20th April after the AGM at \$261.70.

### 2 The construction of the event

The group effort on the Friday night (15th April) decided 'to concentrate on 1 or 2 or a small number of issues and hammer them in various ways as much as possible rather than to bring up a whole diverse range of points involved in the issue. The few that were agreed upon to be raised either in motions or in statements from the floor or more visually were based around Justice Fox's statement that uranium mining is contributing to an increased risk of nuclear war, the nuclear poliferation question, that the chance of getting our point through more clearly on the media would be increased if we kept to one or two points'. (MC.2B.183)

There is a great deal of creative artistry in concocting a political action (A. Cohen, 1969, p.220). As MC put it 'In general, the Uranium Moratorium Movement relies a lot on original ideas as far as publicity goes, on original ideas, it hasn't the money and I'm not sure even if it had the money whether it'd be interested in going along with the normal techniques of conveying an idea to the public generally through advertising. So we are reliant to get our point of view across to the public on media events that are more or less unique and specifically staged for the media .... And therefore new ideas and new ways of doing this that are extraordinary are more likely to get our message across' (2B.363). The following edited extracts from the group discussion (Tapes 3A,3B,4A) reveal this creative effort. One can see the evolution of the iconic action-forms adopted by FOE, the casting around for ideas and the consideration of the social context in which FOE hoped to lodge their message. As SH put it 'If you're going to be outrageous you've got to be original'!

\* OPEN ECOM: Executive Committee, fortnightly open meeting which establishes priorities and makes allocational decisions, implemented in part by an elected and fluctuating ECOM, with 'executive' functions.



3 A cast of millions

NB: originator of event. Obtained megaphone, rang RC to speak.

PB: organised shares.

RR: spoke at rally.

PM: coordinated event for a fortnight, full-time, paid.  
Released press telex, wrote motions.

HW: full-time volunteer-assistant to PM. Obtained the mutant dummy. Did banners.

PJ: rang FOE members to come. Organised community radio advertisements.

RC: rang FOE members.

PB: acted John Kathleen.

EY: acted Mary Kathleen.

Espie: Chairman of MKU Board of Directors and AGM.

And other active Friends of the Earth worked over the weekend prior to the event, and 20 odd friends entered the AGM with proxies. Other participants in the event included:

CRA staff, MKU 'chairman' and directors.

Police.

Street observers.

Media industry personnel.

Lawyers to FOE.

FOE members who demonstrated outside.

Other shareholders and proxies (about 150).

The readerships of daily newspapers and TV audiences (running possibly into the millions).

xxxxxx

4 Group Planning Session

- NB: We've got to work out the overall motif that we're going to use, like whether its going to have a humourous sort of a tinge or a deadly serious one. We've been criticised in the past for trivializing things ...
- MC: I'm not sure, but has the aim of the whole thing, like what is hoped to be achieved, is it just press or is it just muddling up the company to a great extent, or what?
- NB: Well, I'd say ... Perhaps we should talk about that just first off before we talk about anything else, eh ...
- DA: I think everything hinges on what your main object is. Once that's sorted out then all those details ...
- NB: Well quite a bit does, yeah... Well, shall we talk a bit about the aim of the thing? ...
- PM: All I can see as the aim is a bit of press, media.
- NB: Well the important thing there is that last yeat we held a similar thing and it got massive publicity, every media organisation in Melbourne covered it and it got pretty front up on the news ...
- DA: I think we should get on to the basics of what you want out of it, do you want for instance to cause the company enormous frustration and harm or, you know, internally for instance by gagging several of the directors or something like that, or do you want press coverage?
- NB: Press coverage as responsible very concerned critics and there might be, like, there's a friend of mine, a woman coming down from the country, and she's just a really passionate old thing and she wants to get up and do a speech and that sort of thing could get a lot of publicity, it could, depending on quite how it is handled ... Look we get publicity just by being out there out the front, that's an important thing.

xxxxx

- MS: Wouldn't it be better that the group be well dressed rather than (inaudible) and jeans?
- PB: I think so.
- NB: Oh.
- PJ: I think be as outrageous as possible!
- NB: I think just be bloody natural and just be and there'll be a lot of people who'll identify with those who are there doing it. I'm not so much in favour of putting on poses. Oh, it is good for one or two people to do it, and that can be outrageous in itself if somebody gets dressed up in a bowler hat, like a guy last year had 20 dollar notes pinned all over him and hanging off his hat!
- MS: Yeah!
- NB: And hanging off his hat.
- SH: Were there any stunts pulled?



NB: That's what we need to talk about that sort of thing. Well, look, can we leave it there just at the moment. We know that we can do a lot of things inside the meeting... I think we all agreed that we all do as much of that messing around as is reasonable to string the meeting out for two hours or something.

SH: What is the purpose of doing this?

NB: The whole thing?

SH: The stringing out the meeting, which is achieved by it? I mean, apart from a good time is had by all?

NB: The mere fact the fact that it is stretched out, that's just another little attack on them. It is a big nuisance for them. This should take 20 minutes and then for drinks after, you know, a sort of celebration for the year, and here's these bloody longhairs carrying on. I don't think it is much more important than that really. O yeah, it makes it more of a press thing too, I think. We want to be careful not to bore the tears out of people too.

MS: Yeah.

xxxxxx

NB: We keep on <sup>coming</sup> ~~counting~~ every now and then to this thing of what are we there for anyway, verging between that and going into more detail. What do people feel, do we want to keep on talking about mechanics?

xxxxxx

NB: Um, yeah, well, OK, I think the next question<sup>15</sup> do we want to do something outrageous? Last time Bill Garnett from the Pram Factory came along dressed in brown suit with dollar notes all over him, nice short hair from his television appearance and he got up and he made a really good short speech and then threw money over the directors, down the aisle, 30 pieces of silver and all that, and that was the main thing the media really focused in on although they would have found something else probably if he hadn't done that. But I thought this time we could do something else sort of equally peaceful perhaps but different. And one idea we had last time that we didn't follow through on was the pound of flesh idea, you know, the company's into everything for their pound of flesh, so we'll give 'em their pound of flesh. So you have a pound of oozing steak to just put on their table or if you're into vegetarian ideals you have a soy patty!

SH: Oh no, it is not quite the impact.

NB: Not quite the impact. Um, what do people think of that ... They wouldn't know what to do with it would they!! They couldn't leave it sitting on the desk, they wouldn't want to pick it up...

PJ: It could be quite messy actually if you wanted it to be.

DA: Oh, it would be revoltingly repugnant, you could smell the whole meeting out!!



NB: Oh, make it bad!

DA: If you bought the meat today.

SH: Oh, don't!

MS: (inaudible) It get's a **write-up** in the press that someone took a pound of oozing meat in there or something?

PM: You don't even have to buy it like there's some three week or three month old meat in the fridge upstairs. I'm not sure.

NB: You don't see the point of it?

MS: I don't see ...

NB: Okay ...

PJ: One of the more effective things in the Vietnam Movement was dumping blood all over the files, military files, and it can be effective if it is handled right.

PB: Yeah, but that is very much more direct where you've actually got death being symbolized in a much more direct way.

PJ: I reckon every Australian knows about the pound of flesh. They've all done it at school in that bloody play.

NB: I must admit when I heard Jim Falk just suggest it I was a bit vague as to quite what it meant. It was in a, Socrates... Merchant of Venice.

HW: Sure.

NB: The idea is you'll get your pound of flesh at someone else's expense.

MC: If you obviously made a statement, said ...

NB: Oh you'd have to, whoever did it would have to get up and say what it is about ....

PJ: Have you got a good performer?

NB: There's how many good performers round here? Don't know about willing performers! Um, anyone like to do it? Peter, you'd do it really well.

PB: Look, I'm not sure about that. In principle I'm prepared to do something but I'm not sure I want to be involved in putting a pound of flesh ...

NB: Well, let's think of others. Um.

PM: I think its detracting too much, its getting a bit vague.

NB: I think we've got to have something pretty symbolic, pretty heavy, if we're going to get much publicity out of it, like 20 people turning up to a meeting and asking questions and another 50 outside with banners is not big news.

PJ: Well, everyone could die. That would be pretty effective.  
NB: Yeah.  
SH: Oh we could do everywhere.  
MC: What proportion of the meeting in terms of numbers would we be if everybody died, would it be insignificant or ...  
DA: We could present them with a yellowcake.  
NB: No they won't, they probably won't allow objects inside ... which is interesting, how can they stop person's property going in with them.  
MS: You could take it in a briefcase or something?  
NB: Yeah, they can't, they won't search people surely.  
MS: Not this year.  
NB: They might search.  
MS: They know EZ.  
NB: They bloody well might.  
MS: They're not silly.  
NB: They might.  
MS: They know about EZ.  
NB: Look they must be stupid having allowed this whole thing through, then maybe they want publicity to be detracted from the bad news of their meeting. That's another thing we need to, ah, have a look at actually ... They've lost 12 million dollars in the last year and the prospects for this year are no better.  
DA: You could go in as MKU shareholders, begging, gone broke ....

xxxxx

NB: Stuff like money or meat does sort of emphasize something serious about it. Um.  
PM: Well we have got the uranium dollars to hand out to the shareholders as they go in.  
PB: Those might be quite good actually, they've got the message on them.  
NB: Yeah, they're good, that's a good stunt that one.  
PB: Well, you could link that to the payout actually, since there's no dividend this year ....  
NB: Should put that in the press statement, we'll be handing out uranium dollars for 'em. Good, not petrodollars, uranium dollars, yeah.



MS: Give them in a proportionate number to their shareholding, so the Chairman would get how many hundred thousand?

NB: We've got six thousand have we? ...

PJ: It could be quite spectacular if everyone threw the uranium dollars all at once.

HW: Yeah. Need a photograph of that.

NB: What about hydrogen balloons with uranium dollars laying on them floating around the room all the time.

PJ: They couldn't get 'em down! Get an air gun or something.

MS: Well, little ones, no? No way?

MS: What do you think about making a comedy of it though, you know...

xxxxx

NC: Well, any other possible actions come to mind? There must, you know, we should be able to come up with quite a range. What about the way people go in and dress? Like together some people could dress up. Now one idea is to have, remember at the rally there were two guys getting around in the same set of clothing and something like mutate now written on their back.

HW: Yeah!

NB: And they passed themselves off as one individual on the tram and only paid a single tram fare.

(general laughter)

PM: Another thing we can possibly look at is what was tried at Parliament House - everybody having one letter or a few letters of a sign and line up against the wall and pull it out of their shirts and say stop uranium mining you know ...

NB: Yeah, we'd have enough people for that too wouldn't we.

? Is there any point in that if there's no TV cameras in there?

NB: I think actually this time we've got more, that was the most we could do in Parliament House, that was the most radical thing. I think this time we've got opportunity to do much more that ... That was outrageous in Parliament House. It wouldn't be so outrageous here ...

xxxxx

NB: What about someone getting a sort of skeleton outfit, or, something really, the great reaper.

PJ: A wet suit?

NB: Well that thing Monash have got of the nuclear holocaust trip. Is that still in good order?

DA: The radiation suit?

NB: Is that still in good order?

DA: Oh yes.

NB: They couldn't refuse to have someone on grounds of dress I don't think, would they?

PM: That would be, that would be <sup>too</sup> much.

NB: Yeah, can someone look after getting that. Would you be prepared to wear it?

DA: Oh yeah ....

xxxxxx

NB: Nada, this friend of mine up near Bendigo, is going to come down, she's got two little kids, she might try to get both of them in, like aged one and three. Ah, and she's prepared to get up and give a talk on all on behalf of women and children: Ah, now what chance do you think there is of being able to get in with two kids?

SL: I don't see why not, its not a legal question.

NB: But they don't allow ordinary members of the public to go do they. EZ were very strict ...

PJ: We're going to have to have a lawyer at the door, to really heavy them.

PM: Could we use the potential of having two kids in the room?

NB: Oh yeah, she'd go up the front and give a talk just with the two kids beside and refer to them I would think, because that does really genuinely concern her.

SH: How old are the kids?

NB: Oh, one and three. We've gotta be careful we don't do things that freak them out though ...

xxxxxx

PB: I think maybe if we think in terms of what questions we could get, maybe two or three people get together and write a list of questions. Really aim for a question strategy as opposed to one question and back-up evidence and if they say there is no danger we say are the Board of Directors aware of the research of so and so to and so.

NB: We wrote out a lot of questions last time and handed out a photocopy of them all to each person that went in. ... David, I think I heard that you found that it wasn't necessary, it all flowed and people just really got into it.

DA: Oh yeah. You know, once you particularly after ...

NB: It's the old story of planning for something and it never really is necessary anyway.



DA: I think you've got something really specific and one of the things I think would be more or less, I don't know how you can do it, but to play, get stuck into a particular Director, or something like that ... Get in and ...

NB: Edgerton 'd be a good guy too, he's really an old clown.

DA: Yeah, and say, get stuck into them.

NB: And you get outrageous responses from him, he'd get up and start into you, ...

SH: The press would pick that up.

NB: The others are all much more ...

DA: I think we should really have a go at Edgerton.

PJ: One way they could make it a dead duck would be not to respond at all.

NB: Yeah that's what they did at EZ, they were very clever, weren't they?

DA: I think Edgerton, it 'd be interesting to know ...

PJ: So everyone should concentrate on Edgerton.

DA: Edgerton 'd get really ....

MS: He gets the pound of flesh!

DA: Trade union sell-out merchant! And particularly accuse, saying, would Sir John, in the interests of the trade union movement and all this stuff, do x, y, and z.

PW: Well can you fill us in on a bit of background on Sir John Edgerton then?

DA: Oh, we'd have to look through a few things over the weekend. But I think it might be really good if we really went in there and attacked Sir John Edgerton ... He's the odd one out.

NB: We can ask him if he's glad that he hasn't bought any shares, he's the only one that doesn't own any shares.

SH: Is he? Seeing Mary Kathleen's going broke ...

NB: Yeah, would he advise the Australian working class to buy shares in Mary Kathleen? Hewitt's there too by the way, the old Lennox.

PB: There's a whole lot of nasty questions, isn't there?

NB: Perhaps we can leave all the questions eh, and just think about them.... The questions are going to flow ...

xxxxx

NB: I'm still concerned about the idea of a stunt inside, whether we've really resolved that one. That seems to me to be more important than resolving questions and all that stuff. That stuff will flow.



DA: I think we should really go for Edgerton. You know, I think it's a new angle, to really get stuck into him.

PJ: He actually lied at Terrigal [ALP Federal Policy Conference 1975], I can't remember the exact point but, an actual lie, and then a week later he was appointed a director...

NB: That's right.

DA: Oh, this is one for instance. The Board wishes to express its appreciation for the long services and contribution of Mr. Maloney to the Company. Then raise, you know, the disastrous Mr. Maloney, being...

PB: Well, is he?

DA: Yeah.

PB: Yeah, I think the dangerous thing is discrediting yourself by putting yourself in the position of being shown to be presenting false information, whether directly or by impute. And I think that any information, one of the things that I think that's needed is for groups, this one, to present as being totally honest, and put themselves as the honest broker, amid the gang of thieves, you know.

NB: Yeah, I agree with that.

MS: We don't print literature that we haven't got back-up information for, do we? I mean, you know.

NB: At the same time, we're an organisation that has in the past done somewhat outrageous symbolic stunts.

PB: It's a different issue.

NB: I know, I know, but that's what we want to talk about now. David's gonna go along in a suit, right, so that's pretty good, people are gonna have kids with them. Um, do we want to do other things? We're gonna hand out dollar notes. Is there anything really outrageous that we can do?

PB: Hold mass?

NB: We can die.

HW: No.

NB: Walk down the front and just sort of lie at their feet. We can mutate.

HW: Can we get somebody to send a telegram to the Director, a priority telegram, saying that missiles are coming from Russia?

PB: Could we have a prayer against nuclear war, or something.

SH: What was that?

- PB: This is a bit odd in this company!, I think, asking that we have a prayer against nuclear war.
- HW: You could ask a question as to whether the CRA building is bombproof in the event of ...
- DA: No that's not a big stunt.
- NB: We're looking for something really good, and its gonna involve something colourful probably, you know, in terms of dress or what people are actually doing, rather than talking, I think...
- SL: What's the general feeling on, you know, that at one stage you were suggesting a bucket of blood ... I'm not in favour of it myself, but ah, what does everyone else feel about it?
- PJ: I'm very wary of going that far with that kind of messy stuff because Australians are so heavily into damage against property. You know, you'll put an instant blinker, that's the way to get people to close their eyes, it's better, um...
- NB: The time may come though when that...
- PJ: Yeah, but the pound of flesh is a lot less messy, I mean you could almost put it on a plate and put it on the thing for them.
- NB: No, just put it on the desk, a bit of blood on the floor is alright.
- PJ: Yeah, that would be okay but a bucket of blood's getting pretty hairy.
- NB: Um, can the pound of flesh, could the pound of flesh idea be made clear enough as to what its about?... If you did it the press would be at pains I would have thought to try and explain what it was to people.
- SH: No, no, they may not, they may be at pains to make it seem a quite revolting act.
- NB: Well, no, they couldn't, it's not a quite revolting act. It's not all that revolting. All the people eat the stuff. It's revolting if its terribly smelly, that's true. And therefore I think it should be quite fresh.
- SH: It could give us really bad publicity unless you clearly explained what your intention is.
- NB: Yeah.
- ? Have the ZOOLOGY department at Melbourne Uni got any nice mutants?
- NB: Probably don't let 'em out of jars though.
- PH: Well that's one thing actually having somebody dressed as a mutant.



7  
? No ... Just so the baby comes in with no arms. But it'd be pretty hard to dress them.

NB: Well, that's an interesting angle, isn't it! The mutation trip. Anyone like to, ah, do it?

xxxxx

DA: Is there anything that's relatively, the other thing of course that would get good reportage is something that if we knew much about their, you know, some fairly sensible speech attacking the economics of the Company, in some reasonable detail, saying that the whole thing is never likely? Something the press would take up, you know, quite a serious comment. For instance, we do have some of this stuff that they no longer have credence with their bank ...

NB: I'm very careful about emphasizing this whole economic trip, because it gets into their values and one of things...

MS: You're trying to relate to people.

NB: Well you're at a shareholders' meeting. Sure but we're, part of the idea I think <sup>is</sup> that we're putting forward a different set of ideas to people and we get sucked in ...

SH: But we can do it quite scornfully and say, you suckers, you know, your're creating all this havoc for nothing.

PJ: That's not what was being suggested. It was being suggested that we play them at their own game, on their own ground.

DA: No, no, you'd introduce some solid sort of information criticizing them and relate it to what you like.

NB: Like look at Uren now, it came out in a report the other day that his main reason for opposing uranium mining was economic, that's what it suggested, and that's really playing to the concern of certain interests, isn't it? Maybe its okay if certain people are doing that. I think we should, well I think we should not concentrate on that. If others want to do it, sure enough, because it does appeal to some gut interests around.

MS: What are you getting at Neil, what would you prefer as a substitute for that.

SH: I don't think it's wrong for Friends of the Earth to point out the taxpayers are being used to subsidize ....

NB: No, no, it's a matter of emphasis, that's all. The difficult thing of something like this that's aimed at the media is, we found this recently with something, I can't remember. You can, it's useful to just have one or two really heavy points that your're focusing on in this demonstration, preferably just one, and bang, that's the one that'll really get pushed. Oh yeah, where we found it was with the book. We put out a book and didn't really just concentrate on a few things that we'd said. And so it didn't really get taken up as a news-worthy thing. It was a book on uranium mining. We did say it makes the following points and put five down. If we'd had've put it out sensationally saying it says Bang!, this point, it would have got more coverage ... We got talking today about doing a number of things outside the meeting but it



started to look as if you're then giving the press quite a choice as to what they want to cover, and in the end, they might say a lot of things happened, you know?

xxxxxx

PB: I think the giving out of the uranium bills is enough of a stunt. I really do.

PJ: We haven't got any stunt related to the atomic war.

? We've got plenty of uranium dollars.

SH: We've got David in his suit.

HW: Yeah.

NB: David will need some. Look, perhaps you should be the only one going around handing out uranium bills. But, no, look, the victim. What about the mutant stuff, ... We could have you in the suit carrying or walking along with someone without a suit that's really been.

DA: An MKU director ...

SH: It's getting to be a long meeting.

NB: I know, look, it is getting to be a long meeting, but I just felt that other people seemed to want to keep it going.

HW: We haven't resolved what we're going to do, use as our theme yet.

NB: Jesus.

xxxxxx

NB: Well, what about the mutant thing, is it worth doing anything about that? Peter, could you?

PB: I just don't know what to do actually to get it effective.

NB: Well, you get around crouched and bent up with a hideous look on your face and your hair hanging down one side and put upon the other ....

PB: I tell you what'd I prefer to do as my role. I prefer to wear a suit and ask very serious questions and play the role of a very straight shareholder. Because that would be the easiest role for me to do, it's simply what I'm used to.

? It goes well with the accent and everything.

PB: Yeah, I mean, well I can play the funny man if you like but I just feel that you know, that wearing my standard consultancy double, you know, waistcoat and the lot, gives it a sort of authenticity.

? And show no direct link with the rest of the ah...

PB: Right, that's the role I'd prefer to play.

SH: But you, you could sort of really play it straight and say, um, you think that Mary Kathleen has been sort of very good for the Australian community or something, and really sort



of, but there is one thing that really bothers me. You know.

HW: And we'd like to compliment the management on the ...

PB: Very difficult trading year!

NB: Yeah, my, ah.

PB: I think a very straight serious question not looking as if it's motivated in any way, and then pushing it a bit further if they...

NB: I have reaction though against doing what you suggested, like um, you know, I think the Company's doing a good job - but I think we just, we just <sup>be</sup> genuine and say look we are here because we're bloody concerned and your're putting questions very seriously based on those ...

SH: Yeah, but you're giving Peter a theatrical role aren't you?

NB: Are we? Isn't ...

MS: He might prefer to do that anyway.

PB: No, that's my normal role, I mean, shit, this is my theatrical role!

(laughter)

PB: Sorry, no, that's a role I am very accustomed to because I've done it everywhere from Geneva to, you know, Canberra.

DA: I think, we really challenge, ... Friends of the Earth challenging MKU to answer about their contribution to nuclear proliferation. I think you'd get all you're going to get. I don't think there's going to be big publicity, but it could get some reporter interested in doing a bit on proliferation.

PJ: It's not outrageous though.

NB: No, there's nothing, um. Like the mutant trip.

SH: But all those things have been done before to death, you know, if you're going to be outrageous you've got to be original.

NB: No, but to have someone just constantly shuffling around in the Company meeting, looking absolutely horrific ...

MS: I'd be prepared to dress up as that mutant only I can't think of how I can ... it'd have to look good, you know. I can't think how to get a costume together to do it.

PJ: Shave off half your beard.

(general hilarity)

PM: I think maybe we've had enough discussion on what we're going to do inside the meeting ... We can't really work out what they're going to do, to say inside the meeting 'cos there's people gonna get up and talk and raise various things but we can't really work out exactly what they're going to say in the meeting. They're going to do it themselves. But we've got a rally organised outside hopefully. We've got street theatre people who've said they'll come along. We've possibly, hopefully, will have more than 50 people but what that depends



on is there's gonna be people in here tomorrow morning phoning up members and giving 'em each 10 other members to phone ....

NB: I 'spose it's been valuable. We've talked about a lot of things. We haven't yet felt sure we've got anything to get really big publicity inside ...

? I really think that dollars and ....

NB: Alright, perhaps we just leave it at that.

xxxxx

PM: Well, there's a banner coming together.

HW: And there's a mutant on a ... Mary Kathleen's baby on a wheel chair.

PJ: MKU's baby. If we had a mutant we could call it MKU's baby.

NB: Mary Kathleen's baby.

HW: That's right, yeah.

PB: Ha, Mary Kathleen's baby. That's very good actually.

NB: We had <sup>one</sup> before and I think it's still in there, a mutant, but it's, we'll have to have a look ...

DA: That'd be quite a good thing, the press'd love Mary Kathleen's baby.

MS: Yeah, that'd be good actually.

HW: Well look, I've got one made up on a wheel chair ... It's, it's a stage prop and its got an old face - like this - and it's only got one leg - it's on a wheel chair, Mary Kathleen's baby is a paraplegic.

NB: It'd have to stay outside, it wouldn't...

PB: Oh that's okay, because the press are going to be outside.

DA: They'll love that ...

PB: That, that would just be ...

HW: It's made up, ready for us to ...

SH: Who's going to be Mary Kathleen?

RC: Can I be Mary Kathleen.

NB: Oh, really, yeah!

DA: And then, Mr. Kathleen, and Mary Kathleen !!

NB: Oh, really!

PB: What about Sir John Kathleen?!

DA: Sir John!

MB: Oh ho ho, ooh yes!

DA: That'd be quite a good piece of street theatre. You know, Mum and Dad talking about what do we do, ooooooh!!!

NB: The, what, would you have a bit of a thing at Mary Hathleen's feet, at the baby's feet, saying what it is?

DA: The whole Kathleen family there, The nuclear family is here! All could have a few of those posters, people holding them, the Kathleen family, the nuclear family.

MS: The nuclear should be munching yellow cake. [uranium oxide].

PJ: Mary Kathleen's family would be fantastic.

NB: Look. I think you could leave the yellow cake out now, we've got so many things happening that it could become confusing.

xxxxx

PJ: Could we have someone, a woman called Mary Kathleen getting there on a proxy, then standing up and introducing herself as Mary Kathleen, and talking.

NB: Yeah, she could. Nada would do that.

? While pulling a baby from under her coat or something.

DA: Look what you've done to my baby ...

PB: Really Monty Python stuff, the parrott is dead!!

(hilarity)

NB: Ooh no! Oh oooooh, phew, oh, Jesus Christ .... It's terribly funny, but I wonder if it's the right sort of, ah, atmosphere...

DA: Emotional ratbags.

NB: It might just trivialize it.

HW: It will depend on the feeling of the meeting at the time. I think whoever would be doing it would have enough discretion.

MS: It just depends whether we think the mutant thing's a real public issue, I guess. You know, whether people will take that more seriously than the threat of a nuclear war.

NB: No, they don't, generally they don't know much that happens I think.

PJ: If we could get a mutant on a proxy and have Mary Kathleen's family outside...

PB: It's got to be really clear. Uranium mutants got to be pushed, Mary Kathleen, uranium mutant. It's a much better message.

HW: Can we get...

NB: Can we get a what?

HW: Can we get a midget, a genuine person?

NB: Oh,

DA: That's a bit hard.



- PB: I thought, what about this thing you've got, that seems to be pretty good.
- HW: Yeah, but that's only for outside.
- DA: That's all that's needed.
- PB: But the press are going to be outside. I think too many stunts is going to detract, but if you really push that thing, Mary Kathleen, uranium mutant, Mary Kathleen's baby, uranium mutant, that's a really powerful sort of ...
- DA: I think if outside, we just have the street theatre, the Kathleen family, with Mary Kathleen.
- NB: Who can get that, Herb can you get that together or will you need someone else, like you've got the wheelchair already. Can you get together a guy and a woman, particularly older people preferably?
- HW: Tomorrow.
- ? And how big's the figure in the wheel chair?
- HW: Ah, well the head is elongated about that long [NB snorts] and the baby's just child size.
- MS: Oh jeez.
- NB: Can you take an arm off... oh no, it's got a hook!!
- PB: I think that's superb and particularly if you can get that message across so that they'll, the press will actually write it down.
- MS: Yeah, you need a bit of background information ....
- PB: You've got to have a slogan across it - Mary Kathleen's baby - that'll attract the press, they'll love it. Uranium mutant.
- ? How about Mary Kathleen's nuclear family, and you having the whole lot of them?
- PB: I think you want to be careful of pushing the nuclear family because it looks as if we're attacking the nuclear family which ...
- NB: Yeah, it's a bit subtle that one for the general public perhaps. Sir John and Mary Kathleen, eh?, with the baby right? And the baby's got something at the feet saying uranium mutant.
- PB: Ooh, lovely.
- NB: We've got to get a symbol for Sir John.
- PB: Who's got a top hat?
- NB: Heh, he'll have to have a thing on him saying Sir John Kathleen won't he?, right.

DA: Oh yeah, little signs, little signs. Mary Kathleen, Sir John Kathleen.

NB: Yeah.

? Mary Kathleen's baby, where are you going to put that?

NB: Sir John Kathleen can have a few dollar notes hanging off him.

DA: It's alright dear, I've got the money!

xxxxx

PB: The thing is, if you're having a mutant baby, you want two normal parents having a mutant baby, you want the parents that people seeing it on the television screen can identify with.... If you want to get the television coverage which is what you're trying to get more than anything. They're not going to film inside, they're filming outside, you see, you're trying to get television coverage or press photographic coverage.

NB: It's gotta be outside.

PB: It's got to be outside. So most of your press coverage is going to be outside the meeting.

HW: That's right, that's right.

PB: Um, because the photographers are there, and I think two very normal looking parents with a mutant baby is the best way to sort of get the identification.

xxxxx

PB: I think we should learn a lesson from the uranium demo, that the demo got quite good publicity but in none of the publicity that I came across was there any explanation of the issues.

HW: That's right.

PB: None at all, I mean none, none, none, there wasn't even a mention of mutation or war or anything. So at least if we're pushing one line that, you know, Mary Kathleen's baby, you know, and mutations....

MS: Uranium can cause mutants.

PB: That's one line, if they just repeat that, that one line ...

NB: Yeah.

PB: Look. The press are sure to take that up, Mary Kathleen's baby was a mutant, you know, they're sure to put that in, 'cos it's about the only thing that's witty, that ...

NB: Wow - Mary Kathleen's baby was a mutant ... Put it on a banner, okay, Mary Kathleen's baby was a mutant, is a mutant and his name is Rod Carnegie ... Red light for uranium and Mary Kathleen's baby is a mutant. That'll then be the highlight of the thing.

HW: There's definitely an association there.



PB: Maybe we need someone, one of us, to volunteer as Sir John.  
I don't mind.

NB: You'll be Sir John.

PB: I don't mind.

NB: It'd be better probably to have someone without a beard.

PJ: He's in a straight suit though.

NB: You've got a suit haven't you?

PB: Oh yes, several.

NB: You don't look like a Knight, but I 'spose you could just be John Kathleen, an ordinary citizen, right?

MS: He's got a good TV face!

NB: I think John'd be better. Just John Kathleen and Mary.

PB: Yeah. All we need then is Mary.

NB: Anyone here? You do it?

PB: I think it's important to capture the middle ground, and that's the straight society, 'cos I think if we don't catch the straight society, we won't win.

HW: That's right.

xxxxx

## 5 Purpose and Interviews

The conscious and deliberate (latent) function (P. Berger, 1963, p.40) of 'the whole procedure is a "media stunt" to get your message across (Sic)' \* As LS stated, 'the most important thing about it is it will get press coverage because it's a different type of activity and therefore you reach a few people, even if through the press you won't tell them the details of why you're doing it, but they'll see that you're doing it for some reason and perhaps be interested to find out for themselves.' (IB.470). Virtually every informant saw 'the whole thing as basically a play for the media coverage which we seem to be relying quite a lot upon' (RC.2A.263). The full-time coordinator felt that 'the most we can expect is a bit of press coverage. We can't really expect to influence any of the shareholders. We can't expect to have any influence on the Company itself. So essentially what we're doing is ... a media exercise.' (PM.IA.144). It was hoped that this 'media effect' would stimulate 'people to think about uranium' and would further bring them 'generally to think about ways they can challenge the prevailing authority in companies and government' (NB.IA.387).

The discussion group evolved a strategy and set of tactics to achieve this explicit objective. It was determined that friends intended to be honest and deceitful at the same time. Honest in so far as the value position indicated by verbal and non-verbal actions would concentrate on exposing those held by MKU and held objectionable by <sup>the</sup> friends. And deceitful in so far as the vehicle of expression required a delicate balancing of tactics with context. The twenty or thirty tactics considered were each analyzed in the light of possible reactions and recognizance. An action was found to be useful if it took into account the various imperatives of simplifying the presentation (one issue) to the media in the right location (no TV inside) so that the media could take advantage of the actions, and if it achieved a synthesis of different levels of meaning by considering a number of themes into one action-image (A.Willener, 1970, p.109) in a recognisable way. \*\* The action-image selected (some actions were deemed too obscure or subtle) was isomorphic with the social value systems and structures in which the event occurred. FOE thus concentrated on associating the problem (a cognitive dissonance or frustration, UIA, 1976) with the source of the problem (MKU, uranium) with consequences (malformation of children) in an image with which FOE felt people could identify with (the nuclear family). Actions which would block the message by raising other issues (destruction of property, violence) were rejected. As NB put it, media exposure 'will have a beneficial impact provided that we act somewhat responsibly. This is a very confusing area. Like the awareness of the whole issue might be raised if we do something rather outrageous but some people are going to be turned against us. That would have a polarising effect. Perhaps awareness of the issue may not be raised so much if we act responsibly and do things and have lots of motions for discussion and perhaps draw out the meeting, and have a symbolic protest but one that's not outrageously disgusting. But that may bring a lot more people genuinely on side too'. (IA.398)

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\* Planning notes in FOE MKU file.



\*\* Note the lack of an explicit "Foe policy" (NB. Section 6.1 below). A. Willener noted of the May 1968 movement that there was "a virtual absence of written programmes, the growth of an action-image in the course of a continuous development, the difficulty of presenting this action-image rationally - which is due particularly to its character as meaning expressed in action. The object is empty to begin with - it must be projected upon - but as it is 'acted out', the form of the process sends back the projections that were directed upon it...Action is therefore the exteriorization (vergegenständlichung) of a meaning. Although it is not made explicit and precise a priori...the meaning cannot be called 'aleatory', simply because it emerges through a process of growth in which all, or most, take part." (1970, p.190). The FOE group discussion was the functionally unifying equivalent of the "process of growth", although the French students managed to compress this development of the image and the expression of the image into one act.

\*\*\* Union of International Associations, 1976, K0832. Isomorphism is a "one-to-one correspondence between elements in different systems such that the relationship between the elements is preserved". I use it in the sense of structural integration across system levels.



### 3.0 THE OPPORTUNITY

#### 1 Mary Kathleen Uranium Limited

MKU Ltd. is a corporate entity under the Queensland Company Act and registered with the Share Registers in Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne. The company Conzinc Riotinto of Australia Ltd. owns 51% of the shareholdings and thereby directs company policy in so far as it could at any time convene an extraordinary meeting to consider the Company's actions and even revise the objects of the company as stated in its corporate constitution. Rio Tinto-Zinc Ltd. (UK) in turn has a 72.62% controlling interest in CRA. The Federal Government Agency, the Australian Atomic Energy Commission controls 41.64% of the MKU shareholdings (MKU, 1977, p.12). A total of 2400 people subscribe to MKU as shareholders, with the 20 largest shareholdings controlling 96.17% of the corporate subscriptions. MKU considered as a social formation is thus tightly interlocked with international capital and Australian ruling groups. MKU operates a uranium mine and milling plant in Queensland, and has contracts to supply uranium to like minds in Japan, the United States and Western Germany.

NB sees MKU 'as very few people, just the Directors or maybe, you know, Carnegie and Espie'. But of course if they die tomorrow, someone replaces them, so you get a new couple of bogey persons ... They're the guys who are effectively making the decision.' (11A.670). MC regards MKU as 'a whole way of thinking that's pretty insensitive... You just wonder how those guys' brains tick, if it is, if they are genuinely concerned about specific things ... and yet they continue their existence in the Company to reinforce and build into the problem about which they have doubts.' EY regards the Company as 'so insensitive, you know they're so deeply embroiled in their social outlook on life, where their home is, and what kind of car they drive, what their position is within the Company, and the money which they are going to make, that is just so much the way that they think that they can't see anything broader than that or more personal than that ... You can get angry after a while because it's just like, you know, trying to chip away at a bloody brick wall, they just won't listen. It seems the more emotional you get the harder they are, you can just see their face tightening up because they just don't want to know, they just don't want to know that what they could possibly have invested their whole lifetime in is - is wrong.' (5B.316).

#### 2 Annual General Meeting

'Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Members of Mary Kathleen Uranium Ltd. will be held on the 24th Floor, C.R.A. Building, 95 Collins Street, Melbourne on Monday, 18th April, 1977 at 11.00 a.m.' (MKU.1977.p.1).

FOE's lawyer adviser put the matter succinctly when he said 'In a Company meeting the idea of a company is to do business, is to do the business of the company, the records and that' (SL.3A.330). NB termed it 'a public charade'. 'It's an occasion where those guys get together because they've got to get together and do an annual report. Like they don't consider it a valuable exercise at all, it's just a legal requirement' (11A.680). MC described it



exactly as 'an event in time where the company formally states to its shareholders details of the year's business. It's a formal situation I guess, required, necessary to be noted down in the books as it were. It's also the place where Friends of the Earth can go along and ask questions and do other things!' (10A.622).

### 3 Symbolic referents

PM believes 'it's important that we express our displeasure at the activities of Mary Kathleen Uranium, to put it mildly. It would probably look quite bad if we didn't do something at the Annual General Meeting when they're the only company mining uranium. And we really are obliged to have some sort of protest' (1A.135). MC saw FOE's action as 'a broadening of the meaning of the definition of Mary Kathleen from one just in financial terms to one involving an explanation of the consequences of the mining which gave them the money' (10A.735). For RC, 'MKU's activities are very very relevant to what Friends of the Earth is on about ... because it is perhaps the bastion of what we're fighting against, the mining of uranium. A place where we can contrast and highlight and make a stand. It's necessary to find an area in which we can actually have confrontation' (2A.300). To the degree that MKU-AGM was deemed 'rather appropriate because Mary Kathleen is also ... the only company actually mining uranium at the moment' and that 'happens to be coincidental', the choice of MKU-AGM as the scene for a showdown was arbitrary. MKU represents a social entity (object) found in a form (AGM) to which FOE attached meaning by creating an action-image. The relationship between the connotations attached to MKU by FOE and MKU is therefore extrinsic to MKU. FOE's act was therefore symbolic.\*

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\* I expand on the relationships between the sign (the vehicle of meaning), the referent (the object to which the sign refers), and the meaning achieved by linking or conjoining disparate referents in one sign in section 4.3 below. This is however a thorny philosophical question as can be confirmed by reference to the article on "Meaning" in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, or by B. Russell in his "On Denoting" in ed. J. Margolis, "An Introduction to Philosophical Inquiry", Alfred A Knopf, 1968. A further useful explication of the debate is found in S. Gorovitz and R. Williams, "Philosophical Analysis", Random House NY 1963, p.79 wherein it is stated that "We call the meaning of a word or phrase its sense or intension and the object (or objects) to which the word or phrase refers its reference or extension." The problem is complicated in our case by the fact that the press mediated the meaning so that it is necessary to distinguish between the intended meaning of the event for FOE and the final result in the media. If the action is the form (the equivalent to the sign-token of language), are there two referents (uranium-mutancy, MKU-mutancy) which are conjoined in the action-image? If so, does the meaning (or the sense which can be made out of the FOE image by the recipients) derive from the recognition of the properties of the object-referents (MKU, uranium) as being those of "mutant-producing" (the class of properties is intensional, the class of objects denoted is extensional, cf. U. Weinrich, 1968, p.165). This is after all the essence of symbolization, a process lodged in the minds of the public by this definition. If this is the case and symbolism is a conceptual process evoked by symbols, rather than a representation of a meaning (D. Spleen, 'Rethinking Symbolism', CUP, 1974, p.147), then my own presentation would require radical revision.



MKU personnel had various rituals to act out on the 24th floor, where they were to be confronted by the friends. But first FOE had to enter the temple of monopoly capital, passing through various stages of physical demarcation of corporate sacrality. Adopting Leach's schemata (1976,p.86), we can represent these categories which articulate the corporate space in terms of power and endow them with varying levels of required respect - beginning with public pavement and culminating in the dais of Directors on the 24th floor.

As FOE proxies entered, there was 'some tense of awe about the fact of being able to enter, one shall say, the stronghold of the enemy' (HW.9A.190). Another felt 'here I was together with friends, breaking through their little - ah - they couldn't legally stop us getting in, a bit of ego or something there' (MC.10A.498), and 'a sort of, ha ha!, we can never walk in here ordinarily but you've got to let us in today don't you, you buggers, because you never get through those doors if you look anything like a protester normally.' (NB.11A.610).

Armed with proxies, FOE were able to circumvent the rules of exclusion, the first demarcation of social space (Z.Baumen, 1973, p.121). As one friend noticed, 'they looked on us as being something of an upstart group who had dared to invade their castle, their sacred precincts, and in so doing I felt that they were almost incapable of handling it' (HW.1DA.309).

## 2 Inside and Outside

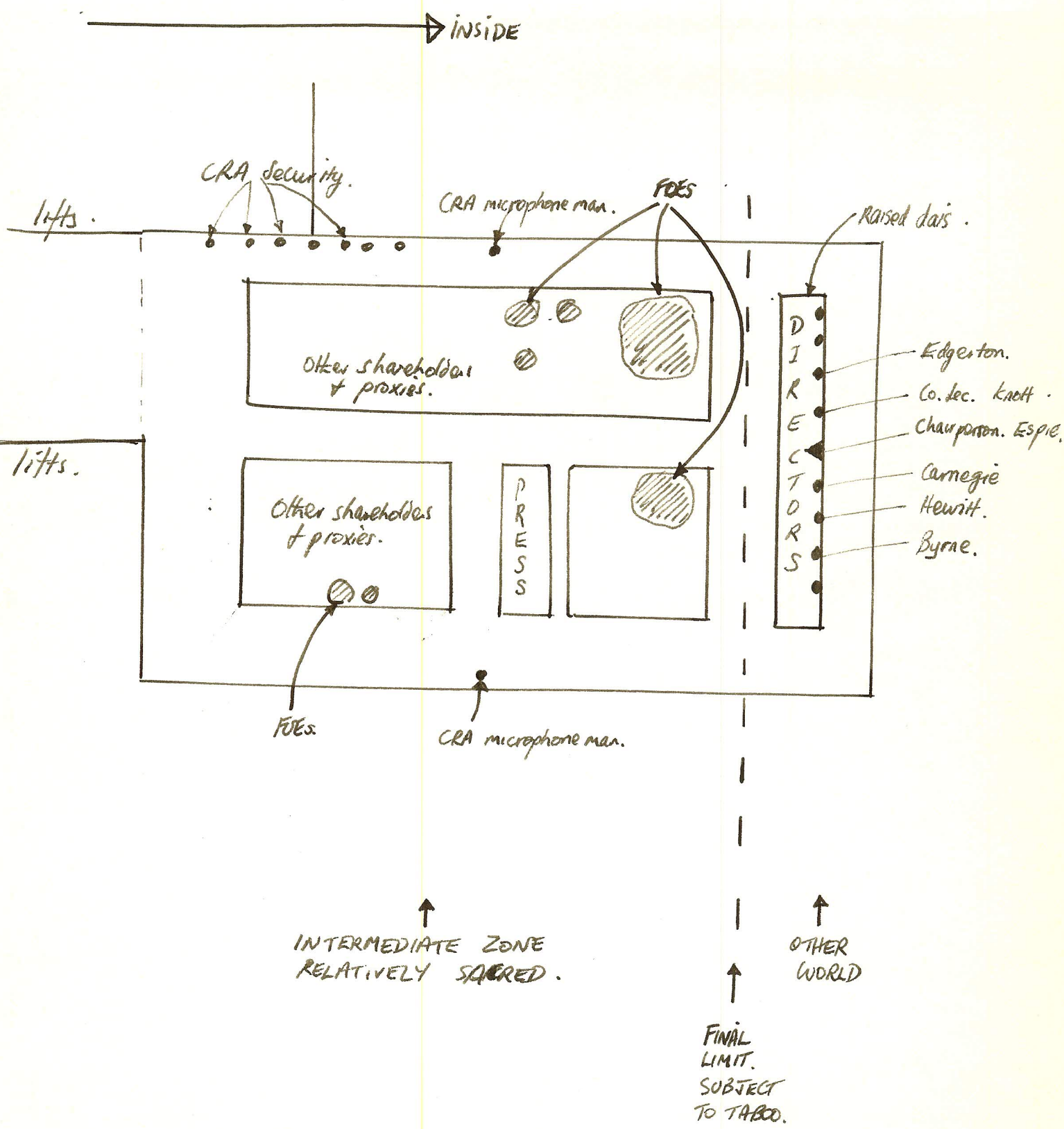
Almost all Friends of the Earth drew a sharp distinction between the "outside" and the "inside" of the event. 'On a simply pragmatic level, I think the media, the TV cameras will not be allowed in the meeting so most of the visual activity that we're planning will take place outside the meeting through a couple of forms of street theatre. And so, the main point of the meeting is to get media coverage so as well as the activities inside being reported presumably in the press, they'll be offset by activities outside the meeting which could be more easily recorded by the TV media' (MC.2B.285). LS said that 'the people outside are just expressing their support for what the people inside are saying. They're not saying it.' (1B.405).



4.0 THE EVENT1 The Setting

Outside the CRA Building, monolith to capitalism.





THE INNER SANCTUM.

SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT ON THE 24th FLOOR  
IN THE 'MEETING ROOM'



# DIAGRAM I.

OUTSIDE



## FOOTPATH

- Public.
- The realm of the great unwashed (and unwanted) - FOE.
- (Outside 'The Camp').



## PLAZA

- The boundary line.
- CRA reassert their control against barbarian invaders by pushing them back onto the pavement.



MARY KATHLEEN URANIUM LTD.  
(Incorporated in Queensland)

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please admit BEARER to the  
above meeting.

R. J. KNOTT  
Secretary

## LOBBY

- Private
- Threshold zone.
- Enter 'the camp.'
- Recognised by issuance of entry pass.
- Negotiate security guards.
- Take lift to 24th floor of stadel.



EY: I'm quite confident that the imagery of Mr. and Mrs. with Radiance is going to be enough perhaps even without saying anything. Just a good photograph on the front page - hopefully - of the newspapers with her sign, we're gonna have, Mary Kathleen, Mary Kathleen's baby. Will your baby be the next uranium mutant? .... I think that our image will reach a lot of people, more than just talking about banning uranium or the Fox report, or the economics ... A lot of people just don't understand that but they can understand a man and a woman and a child. They can understand the family thing, they can relate to that very well, children, the possibility of birth defects, and if my husband, Sir John and I, talk about the genetic problems tomorrow which I think we will and how it is possible to create a mutant baby, I think that'll start more people thinking seriously about this particular problem.

xxxxx

PH: Mary Mary quite contrary - ~~My little girl~~

EY: How does your baby grow!

PH: Could I ask you what you're doing here?

EY: Sir John and I have brought our child, our mutant daughter named Radiance.

PH: This is Radiance? Say hello Radiance.

EY: She doesn't know how to speak.

PH: She doesn't know how to speak?

EY: No, she has teeth. She has enough calcium in her body to produce teeth but she has no tongue. We can't feed her.

PH: How did she end up like this?

EY: Well, we're not sure. We just aren't sure. We think it might be connected with uranium, but we didn't know and we felt we'd leave it up to the experts.

PH: We're you insured against this?

EY: No - they don't insure you against birth defects ....

xxxxx

PB: I did pose, as it were, for a number of photographs, press photographs mainly, not altogether and also gave interviews and talked to some press people.... Actually, I didn't give the interviews in role. I talked as me. I gave it in simple terms, the problem of having an economy based on plutonium, on nuclear power .... The point of the dummy was quite simple. A few people walked past deliberately as if they didn't see it and a lot of people were clearly sympathetic, you can see, there weren't many really hostile people ... There was one old guy who said we're a bunch of commos which I assumed was negative. Some people smiled, somebody said good on yer mate you tell'em, there was a whole range of things but people actually took notice and people typically looked twice, they'd look, they'd walk on, they'd look again. There was enormous interest. It was a very compelling image, it really was.

xxxxx



The Mary Kathleen family image was 'a symbolic representation of a genetic mutation' (PB.7B). EY explained that they 'were right out in front of the building of Mary Kathleen obviously, that's what it's about, being able to relate not so much the name Mary Kathleen as a person, but also relating it to the Company and what the Company does, and what the Company has done and will do. And me representing a citizen trying to say with their mining uranium that it goes into making bombs, it's genetic problems as well and this is what came out of it'. (EY.5B.208). PB explained: 'It's a theatrical sort of approach to publicity. It presents in very simple graphic terms the sorts of things that people are fighting against.... The whole thing is likely to be picked up by the press and the thing is that we want to be picked up is not just the fact that there were a few people demonstrating, but that there was an issue at stake. And even if we're not trying to get the whole complex thing of the issue, I just want to get linked - Mary Kathleen mines uranium which causes genetic mutation. It's a very simple message. And I want essentially to bring it home at the family level by having what is a family, two parents plus a child, and a child who's a genetic mutant' (5A.213).

An icon is a relation 'of planned resemblance' (E.Leach, 1976, p.15) in which the image a structural relationship to the designatum\* (F.Emery et al, 1975, p.47). The symbol was not wholly conventional or significant. The message had to be spelt out.



The meaning of the image was extrinsic to the object (MKU-AGM) and therefore symbolic. But 'mutancy' is not intrinsic to MKU in the public mind, and this association had to be spelt out by the visual device of the family (with which the public supposedly identified with) and the literal devices (explanatory banners). Only after the arbitrary association of uranium with death, mutancy, etc. becomes habitual does it become fully 'symbolic' and the uranium miners find they have a PR problem.

---

\* The designatum is "the class of denotata for which the sign vehicle is the name" (U. Weinrich, 1968, p.165). The form retains iconic status because it is similar to that which it refers even though the meaning it denotes is conceptual and therefore symbolic. (F. Emery et al, 1975, p.47).



3 Creation of an Icon



Sir John, Mary and Radiance Kathleen.



X 'The public' and press  
 Concept lodged.  
 Link Uranium and MKU Ltd with  
 death, mutancy.  
 Link MKU Ltd with threat to  
 security of nuclear family.  
 Show protest of victim against  
 assailant, MKU Ltd.

Z Mary Kathleen Uranium  
 Ltd.  
 Object in the external  
 world.

Symbolic linkage

Y Mary, John and Radiance  
 Kathleen.  
 Image for passers-by,  
 photographs, TV screen.

Diagram 3

The icon represented in conceptual space  
 (after E. Leach, 1976, p.19)

The image was more than merely iconic. It was at the same time iconoclastic. By adopting the name of MKU Ltd. and transforming it into a nuclear family which produced death, mutancy, etc., it abused the object 'MKU' while simultaneously stealing its form.\*

(in witchcraft) \* The appropriation of name and the association of a name with death has a long tradition and it has obviously not ended with the passing of tribal societies. To control a name was to own the personal identity designated by it; and to reveal one's name was to become vulnerable (cf. T. Kroeber, "Ishi in Two Worlds", University of California Press, 1976, p.138-39). Corporations are renowned for keeping a low profile. FOE's action was threatening in two senses then. It publicized the name MKU, and it associated the name with mutancy and death symbols (the skulls for example). This is not a gentle thing to do with any name.



#### 4 Formations

Friends of the Earth. Seating of FOE inside 'was fairly random... The speakers were fairly random as well ... The Board were obviously down the front, higher up than everyone else. And the Company officials who were helping them out with information that they wanted to have at their fingertips were all down the front' (MS.11A.276). NB 'was quite agitated for a start because I thought, now, we've really been beaten already. We were dispersed. We hadn't got in there early enough to be sitting mostly together. We were scattered in about five different spaces. Even our solicitor was sitting by himself. The different ones that initiated the whole thing were sitting in different spaces. So I started to, to rally the noises a little bit...' (NB.11A.251). It was only halfway through the Chairman's (Espie) address that NB began 'throwing verbal darts' (PB.7B.420). FOE used five tactics inside the meeting: interjections; speaking against the motions; questioning; prolongation of the meeting, and transgression of behavioural norms.

MKU. Espie 'finished his speech with reference a couple of times to interjectors and he was trying to put, I think there were two motions the Company wanted to put, and he was putting the first one and reading out a statement concerning that and our people started. From then on it was just a barrage of questions, put to Espie and others but always answered by Espie, he carefully didn't, he took the whole barrage face on shielding the other Directors, but from then on it was just a barrage of questions from our people without consideration for the niceties of meeting procedure' (MC.10A.092). The concentration of pressure on Espie 'was not really a tactic which was chosen by the FOE people ... it was a tactic which the Chairman managed to force upon the group because when people asked particular Directors to make comments the Chairman said we have discussed this beforehand and we've reached agreement within the Board, and the Directors agree with this statement which I am now making' (HW.9A.584). Yet 'Espie' was pretty troubled, I think personally, just because he felt inadequate. He is a simple mining engineer and he's not a man who can deal with philosophical questions or with abstract questions...[For example] with the question what information would we need to give you to convince you that you should change your position' (NB.11A.538). The tight formation exhibited by MKU deflected most of the telling questions in the following sequence:

- (i) Espie speaks on behalf of all Directors.
- (ii) Espie states he is a simple mining engineer. Refuses to respond.
- (iii) Espie refuses to refer questions on.

'Perhaps it was felt that just having one person would not leave them open for, having to force us to always go to him, whereas if it was open to a number it would sort of fragment their face' (MC.10A.167).



5 Verbal Tactics

Interjection

Espie: Any damage to Australia's reputation as a reliable supplier will inevitably reduce the ability of all mining in Australia to gain new contracts. This will have the end result of a lower standard of living for all Australians...

NB: Especially the mining companies!

xxxxx

HW: We were probably waiting for somebody to catalyze the whole thing. There was one person also I can remember well from up the far righthand corner from where I was sitting made an interjection which was met with a stunned silence for a few seconds. (9A.219).

xxxxx

Espie: The consequences of frustration through union action would directly affect the lives of people throughout Australia. If companies are not allowed to perform the end result must be the loss of jobs. This affects workers and management, and their families.

PM: What about loss of life?

xxxxx

MC: 'After the start I was broken up a bit by some of the interjections, they ah, they were quite, sort of coming across in such a situation where I was awed, they were really, well they broke down the awe and I could see it in more realistic terms' (10A.511).

xxxxx

Espie: A present safeguard against proliferation of nuclear weapons is the Government's condition that future Australian sales will be made only to customers whose countries are signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

PJ: It's a piece of paper!

NB: Fox said it provides an illusion of protection. You and your safeguards! What rubbish!

xxxxx

MS: At first I couldn't conceive how people could upset it because I had such a rigid idea in my mind now formal and straight it'd be. But when it started, when it started, when Neil and people did start heckling it just sort of, I knew it was going to happen ... I think it's only formal if the people there accept its formality (HA.248).



Speaking against the motions

JF: I believe that the first thing and the most effective thing you can do right now is indeed to reject this statement of the accounts. Now my concern about the operations of this Company and the results both internationally and nationally stand on a whole series of issues, although of course, I am only able to refer to them briefly here given, unless we want to be here until the same time tomorrow.

FOE: Right!

Floor: What's your question?

JF: I'm not asking a question. I think I made it clear to the Chairperson that I am speaking against the acceptance of the accounts... My major concern, my first concern at least, is that it is a terrible blunder to fuel the world's nuclear industry... I refer to that greenie, that environmentalist, that nut, Justice Fox, whom in his Ranger Report made a series of statements about these hazards, hazards which appear to be ignored or minimized by the mining industry.

Floor: What is your question?

PJ: He hasn't got a question.

JF: I'm speaking against the adoption of the accounts. I haven't got a question ...

I come down on the side of Justice Fox, and I believe you should too, and all the other stockholders here. He says this ... it is in Australia's interest to aid and assist the world community to do everything practicable to avoid or where unavoidable to control the development of unescapable reliance on nuclear power. Now I would suggest that it is not just in the interests of the world. It is also <sup>not</sup> in the interests of this Company. You're a part of the world, stockholders are a part of the world. We do not want a future highly centralized around capital-intensive reactors controlled by only a small number of companies providing almost unimaginable possible hazards... The stockholder I represent doesn't want these (inaudible). I very strongly advocate that for our sake and our children's sake and children's children's children's sake that we should abandon the nuclear programme, we should abandon uranium mining and treatment and we here today should reject this statement as well.

xxxxx

At MKU a point of order was put early to show the relevance between the Notes forming part of the accounts, the continuance of the Company as a going concern, and environmental impact. It was formally (and wrongly) ruled against. Yet when the points were raised individually during debate, the Chair did not continue to rule against the speakers on that ground ... Tying, at the least loosely, the questions and orations to the items labelled 'provisions' (which generally appear under a statement of income and expenditure), seemed successful at the MKU meeting. \*

\*xxxx\*

\* Letter from Lawyer to FOE, 22nd April, 1977, p.1.



Nada: I don't want my daughter to maybe make a decision [to procreate] at sometime in the future knowing she would have been exposed to inordinate amounts of radioactive material from the environment and you just do not know at this point of time what level that is going to be.. I do not understand how you and the shareholders here can sit in this room and argue for a Company which deals with such incredibly dangerous materials. You simply don't know what the effects of these in the environment is going to be and you have no right whatsoever to take any course of action which can possibly endanger the children ... It is quite totally and completely immoral ... I am particularly concerned at the kind of society in which my child is growing. And this is the reason why I urge shareholders at this meeting to reject the accounts. In fact, the whole purpose of uranium mining and operations is leading and is going to lead into the development of an unreliable social organisation. I do not want my child growing up in a kind of society which is going to be produced because you want to make money from this ... I urge the Directors of the Company and the Shareholders of the Company to tell people just how dangerous uranium mining is. I urge one the Shareholders in this Company to reject the accounts and wind up this Company. It is totally wrong.'



xxxxxx

Espie: Well ladies and gentlemen, you live in a country where you are free to put your point of view and ah, I think the person who's just been speaking obviously has deep conviction in what she says ... Your Board has taken a considerable amount of time to (inaudible) both sides, and has, on balance, as I said to you, decided to honour the contracts. And, I'm sorry, but that's the decision of the Board. Obviously there are some people here who don't agree with it. They do not live in a country where they are able to have another view and good luck to them. Now I did try very hard early to keep questions close to the accounts. We strayed quite a way, but there was another time when those questions could have been asked as you've been told on several occasions.'

xxxxxx



# Prolongation

PJ: Mr. Chairperson, you hardly answered my question. My question was exactly what cutoff point, is it an atomic war, is it a meltdown, is it a major nuclear accident in a plutonium reprocessing plant which could contaminate say, half an American State, at what point would you decide as a matter of principle, not as a matter of economics, as a matter of principle, that the atomic fuel cycle's gone too far? I mean, have you done any thinking about alternative scenarios for the future in which your investments might have to be handled?

Espie: This is a situation which we would have to face when the time comes.

xxxxxx

It lasted for over two and a half hours, 2½ hours of fairly high-level climax because if you think about it there was [sic] quite a number of incidents during the questioning, during the statements, which were of tremendous intensity. So perhaps if it did lack a climax it was merely because ... after the climax comes the relaxation (PB.7A.572).

I thought it went on for an extremely long time but at the same time although it was sometimes even boring and a bit tedious, I think it was well worth holding them up and just doing that to them. I 'spose there's a bit of vindictiveness, you know, it's just nice to be holding those bastards up for a time and giving them a bit of a grilling and making them uncomfortable.(DA.8B.408).

I feel like probably the major victory was making them spend, listen to people who don't believe in what their Company's doing, making them listen to those arguments for three hours (MS.11A.168).

I was surprised that they didn't try to censor us actually. I was surprised it went on as long as it did, because discretion was with the Chair as to when he ended it or not. (PM.7A.737).

He in a way got overwhelmed. He wasn't able to cope. He was being examined by something like fifteen different people about half of whom were probably more informed about particular aspects of the uranium issue than he was himself. So when he came out with inaccurate statements as he frequently did when he tried to field questions back, people came back... So he was really up against quite a formidable range of intellectual talent.... The original strategy broke down. The strategy of not to allow questions prior so you could have as many questions as you like after the accounts was bust. So they had questions at both times... having let some through the gate he finished up letting the lot through the gate (PB.7B.360).

He lost control I 'spose.... but all the time he knew underneath we pull the last punch. We were sort of sparring around there,



throwing these, sort of like a pygmy trying to punch up a giant. Basically in that situation, causing a lot of trouble because they didn't really want to step on us because that'd be a rather cruel thing to do. (DA.8B.420).

As a tactic I think the only value in it was that added greatly to the media coverage, that we had questioned them. Like if you listened to the interview on PM, that was what Jefferson thought was very significant, that they were grilled, you know, if it was only ten minutes of hard questioning it would have got very little coverage at all. (NB.11A.700).

## 6 Non-verbal tactics

### Appearance

Most Friends of the Earth wore their normal attire. However, some wore suits or were abnormally tidy for friends. This was not out of deference to the situation, but was based on the 'feeling that one has to cause some confusion in the camp' (HW.10A.467). One friend shaved off half his beard, retaining the other half of the beard. MS did this 'because we were talking about dressing up as mutants on Friday night and I didn't ... have the energy to organise a complete rigout so I did that as a gesture I guess' (11A.554).

### Voting

'Any votes that they had to have were lost on a show of hands because there were more people from Friends of the Earth there than from the Company itself and they had to have a poll or all of those' (MS.11A.151). The final results at the poll were : 68,492,019 votes for to 2,675 votes against the resolutions to receive and adopt the financial report and reports of the Company,\* and similarly with the reinstatement of a director. The failure of the other 150 shareholders to show any support for MKU in the show of hands visibly surprised Espie. FOE's presence seems to have precipitated this failure of corporate solidarity, which highlighted even further the FOE-MKU conflict being enacted.

### Symbolic gestures

PM: If you've only read both sides of the argument by reading these reports and rubbish like Uranium on Trial, then you're sadly lacking in information.

Nada: I would like to present you with a copy of Redlight for Uranium in the hope that you'll read it.

Espie: Thank you very much.

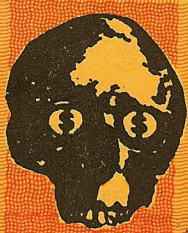
PM: To follow on that generous offer I'd like to offer something that the Company may be interested in ... You have an interest in dollars. Well I've got some uranium dollars here which I'd like to offer as a protest to the Board of Directors, with comments from the Ranger Enquiry which I hope they'll read and find interesting.

\* MKU 'Results of Poll' in 'Address to Annual General Meeting of Shareholders' 1977.



# ONE URANIUM DOLLAR

ONE URANIUM DOLLAR



## THE FOX REPORT FINDINGS

"It is clear that it is incorrect to suggest that there are energy impoverished nations which need Australian uranium to survive."

"The value of uranium exports would rise from less than 0.1 per cent of the projected national income in 1980-81 to about 0.5 per cent in 1990-91."

"The Ranger uranium mine would employ about 600 people during the construction period of about two years... thereafter about 250 people. Its contribution to employment in Australia would be small compared to the total Australian workforce."

## FOOLS GOLD



FOE (02) 698 9714 (03) 347 6630



"The nuclear power industry is contributing to an increased risk of nuclear war."

"Japan is the country most likely to need Australian uranium and it has already contracted for all of its future requirements until 1985, almost entirely with countries other than Australia."

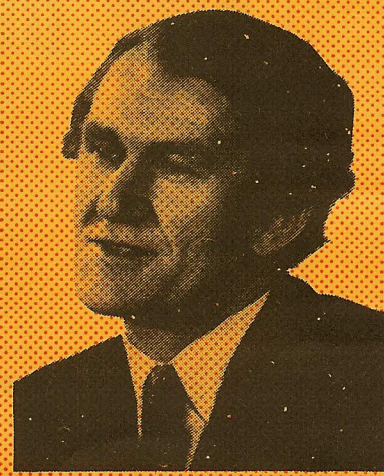
"The Non-proliferation Treaty does not prevent Japan from selling nuclear material to another state."

"Nuclear power is unlikely to contribute on a large scale to the energy needs of the less affluent countries."

"The dangers inherent in the spread of nuclear technology, particularly those associated with the routine production of large quantities of plutonium, are such that we believe it should be consciously avoided."

"Policy respecting Australian uranium should be based on a full recognition of the hazards, dangers and problems of and associated with the production of nuclear energy, and should therefore seek to limit or restrict expansion of that production."

FOX REPORT



# STOP URANIUM MINING

"No safe method for disposing of high level radioactive wastes exists. High level radioactive wastes are at present mainly stored in liquid form, and some constituents will remain dangerously radioactive for thousands of years."

"The dangers of the creation of large quantities of plutonium in conditions of increased world unrest are genuine and serious. We should not rely for energy supply on a process that produces such a hazardous substance as plutonium unless there is no reasonable alternative."

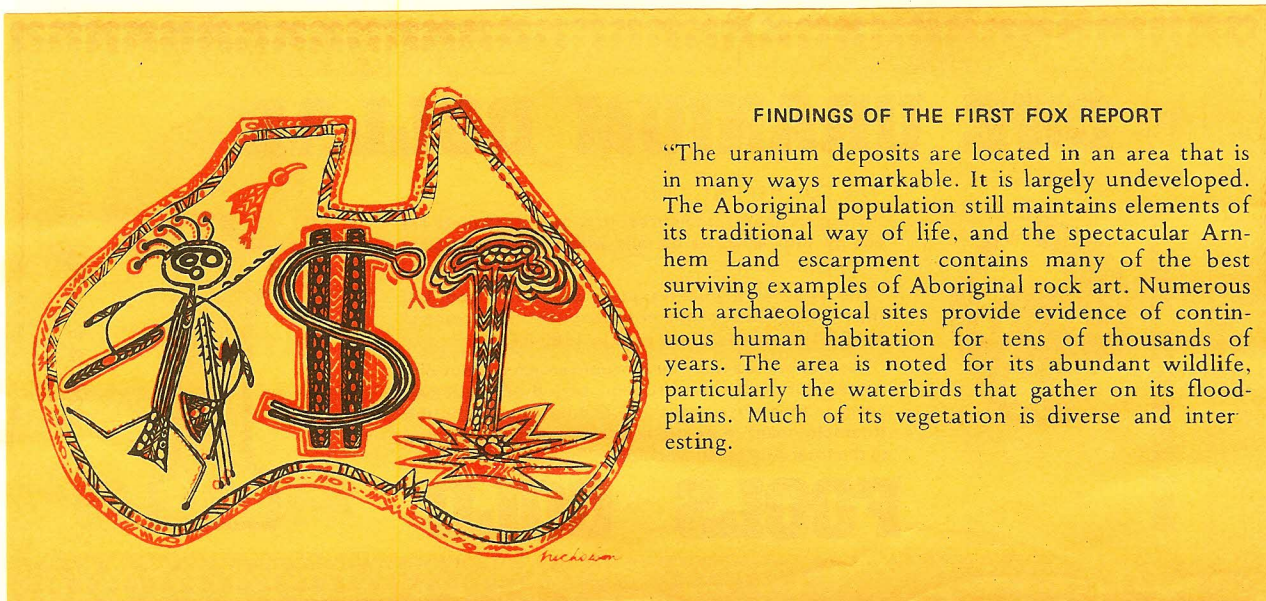
"Steps should be taken to immediately institute full and energetic programs of research and development into (a) liquid fuels to replace petroleum, and (b) energy sources other than fossil fuels and nuclear fission."

"In the longer term, further development of the technology to utilize solar energy in low and intermediate grade heat applications, in generating electricity and thence in the manufacture of liquid fuels such as methanol, appear desirable."

FOX REPORT

# GO SOLAR POWERED





#### FINDINGS OF THE FIRST FOX REPORT

"The uranium deposits are located in an area that is in many ways remarkable. It is largely undeveloped. The Aboriginal population still maintains elements of its traditional way of life, and the spectacular Arnhem Land escarpment contains many of the best surviving examples of Aboriginal rock art. Numerous rich archaeological sites provide evidence of continuous human habitation for tens of thousands of years. The area is noted for its abundant wildlife, particularly the waterbirds that gather on its floodplains. Much of its vegetation is diverse and interesting.

NB: I felt ... extreme disappointment and to some extent anger that some of our people just hadn't carried through with the stunts that we'd worked out beforehand, like someone had forgotten to bring the radiation suit. It was sheer forgetting, and you know, then the person said it was at Monash anyway, and I said of course it was at Monash but you still, you get a bloody taxi it's worth ten dollars, if someone just sneaks a thing like that on quietly and just walks up the front and sort of dies. But it needed something like that ... Someone else, another person, forgot to take in the uranium dollars - bills - in, the fools' gold, so we're left with no visual graphical material we could throw at them. (11A.570).

#### 7 Departure

There was no real end devised by us, the pound of flesh had not gone ahead, so there was no real end point, say all of us walking out, or some dramatic gesture, so, questions seemed to be coming on just in order to drag out the meeting with perhaps less and less purpose, less and less thought behind them. They seemed to be just made up on the spot perhaps whereas earlier ones had been more considered and in that sense it got a bit, not boring, but pointless. I thought we weren't getting anywhere. (MC.10A.320).

After the meeting had dragged on for a couple of hours I think my feeling was somewhat akin to a relaxation... Everything had happened that was going to happen at the MKU and it was time to leave. There was nobody to talk to so we just got into the lift. (HW.10A.360).



Going out was just a sort of replay of, in reverse as it were, of the going-in thing, sort of, you know, we've broken through your barriers, I've beaten you, that sort of slight sense. Very much playing it, like they were really setting the basic rules like, for the situation because it was in their territory, and it was their annual general meeting. So I was very much under their influence in that sense. (MC.10A.560).

PB was 'slightly exhausted and slightly on the high and by that I mean, it's a fairly stimulating experience, and that stimulation stays with you for a little while afterwards you're thinking very quickly, you're sort of speeding along a little bit more than usual and I had to consciously stop and slow myself down to a reasonable pace' (7B.400).

## 8 Media presentation

### Coverage

All the major dailies ran the story except for The Herald. 'TV was minimal' (MC.11A.255).

The Mary Kathleen family - mutant image was used in The Age: 'Why won't Kathy go home, thought the Board', with photographs used in The Age and The Australian. The press focussed mainly on the themes of protest and the exhibition of hostility to the corporate entity ('The moment could have been historic because it must be the first time a shareholder at an Australian company has said he wants to see a company brought to its knees', AFR 22.4.77, p.2); on the failing economics of MKU; on the barrage of questions and the length of the meeting; the forcing of a poll; and a reaffirmation of the myth of corporate democracy.. (MKU showed 'great forbearance in hearing them out for 2½ hours' The Age 19.4.77, p.2; 'FOE also chose the right venue', AFR, 22.4.77 p.2). Whilst the newspapers reported the poll along with MKU's tolerant handling of FOE, there was no effort 'to say it's a plutocratic corporate system in which money or access to power given to you by someone who has money as in the case of proxies is the basic criteria for anyone to say something in the company's meeting' (PB.7A.630). FOE's distinctive style of contestation was absorbed back into the financial community's own value system.

There were also a number of 'haywire' messages. (The Toorak Times referred to FOE as an 'upstart group'; 'It is an insult to a person's privacy when people such as Paul Marshall, self-styled convenor of Friends of the Earth, can annoy shareholders of mining companies such as Mary Kathleen with unsoliciting [sic] mail'. 20.4.77).

'Channel 7 chose to mention that there was some sort of a protest and then immediately they took off on this guy who had strung up the independence flag, the Eureka flag and then had it taken down by a company official and then got into a scuffle with him. So that was Channel 7 coverage which just shows how you can be manipulated' (NB.11A.630). The Sydney Morning Herald simply quoted Friends of the Earth: 'We have already put 20,000 people on the street and we are only just starting' (23.4.77, p.10) with not even a mention of MKU or uranium!



## Evaluation

'None of the newspapers really got to grips with problems of nuclear war, waste disposal, or the insurance laid aside for these eventualities and these sorts of questions. So the most important questions were missed by everybody' (PM.7A.174). Instead, they picked 'the sensational pieces out of it, so if there's a woman standing up with her kid they pick that out rather than what a man might say about genetic mutations' (NB.11A.255). 'We were in a sense communicating to millions of people although not necessarily in the words we would have liked to have communicated' (PB.8A.648). 'It would be described as a weak form of action because we're not actually getting our viewpoint across the way we want it, and we are relying on the media to manipulate, to interpret, and to get our point of view across, to feed people with our point of view' (RC.8A.425).

## Media

The primary aim of the Mary Kathleen family image was 'to initiate some response from the press' (MS.11A.060). Without the effort outside 'HSV 7 couldn't have put its Eureka Stockade thing up'. But the basic problem remains 'that there are just too many facets of [an issue] for people to understand, and the object of anybody who's interested in communicating is to reduce that to a manageable number of issues' (PB.7B.585). The public image of FOE and their value positions are thus the property of the media. The media will create a spokesperson if there isn't one. The whole action was structured with the media in mind. As DA put it, the constraint on how far FOE went at MKU-AGM was the risk of losing press support (8B.302). The press were the umpire in the verbal battle. Thus it was The Sun who designated FOE as losing 'the day at Mary K.' (19.477, p.56). 'There were no winners in the clash' (The Australian, 19.4.77, p.12).



## 5.0 ANALYSIS

### 1 Private and Public

JW stated that FOE 'went to them because it showed we weren't afraid of going into their building, onto their property. It's a very powerful place but they're starting to recognise that we're pretty powerful too, in our own way. We haven't got much money' (JW.11B.403).

'They're caught by the law' and 'even though John Edgerton might spend all of his time drawing pictures, he still can't dissociate himself from what's going on around him. They do have to face that confrontation' (MS.11A.445). As can be seen in the polls, the real power of FOE members the MKU corporate decision is virtually nil, whereas Directors of MKU are very powerful. Only in public does Friends of the Earth challenge even exist. Thus the

Role \ Power.	Private Individual.	Public Organizational
Potent	MKU officials	FOEs/MKULTA
Impotent	FOEs.	MKU officials

Power distribution in MKU corporate decisions.

Diagram 4.

crucial importance of the press. It was only in so far as MKU Directors were put 'on public display' (PM.7A.167) that FOEs manifest power. 'Many of the worst decisions in terms of affecting people go on at very unspectacular meetings' (PB.5A.337). 'We put across a particular public image and they have their own image, so we're challenging their image, and the credibility of that challenge is what they're worried about' (PM.5A.170). It was never possible that the accounts could have been rejected, and the Company's existence, its entry into the new year's business and the role of its incumbents suspended. What was humiliating was the note of discord struck in the secular AGM rites of the season, and that this was reverberated publicly.\* 'It isn't by itself an act of power. It's an act of publicity' (PB.5A.378).

### 2 Individuals and authority

EY did not 'know if these people, these men, if they are feeling people, that they would go home or possibly even reflect on it an hour after the meeting was over with, what we said. I really don't know if we actually get through to them' (5B.137). 'They're in a position where they're pretty comfortable, most probably got a lot of status, got a lot of power, and it would be hurting their egos to admit that some bunch of rirraff were more right than they were. They're obviously more powerful but their own egos would like them to think that we're always right... Anyway, even if we

\* The MKU AGM was of course secular ritual. But all ritual or "conventional acts of display" which transmit information rely upon sanctity to hide the arbitrariness of social conventions "in a cloak of seeming necessity" (R. Rapoport, "The Sacred in Human Evolution", in edited R. Johnston, Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics, 1971, pp.25-37). Sanctity permits the progressive centralisation of regulatory hierarchy, that is, the centralisation of power in the hands of a few. To desanctify (to demystify in leftist jargon) or to make transparent the power relationships is to politicize the relationship and ultimately forces authority to rely upon more repressive apparatus (that is, coercion) in order to obtain compliance (J. Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Revolutions", Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1974, p.65).



did damage their ego to such an extent and changed their mind, they might piss off but someone else would step into their place' (DA.8B.440). MKU 'just let it go on because they knew they obviously had at the end of it all the power to do what they wanted. Though we said what we liked when it came down to the crunch, it obviously wasn't affecting, you know, making a dint in their armour at all' (DA.8B.050). 'One could have seen it as capitalist society in a microcosm. Basically you had all these people saying yes we want this and they got their way for a little while and then when it came to the crunch it was no mucking around, it was 68 million 500 thousand votes to 2 thousand.' (PB.7B.350).

'To tell the truth, I was quite awed by the situation at the start of the meeting, sitting there in front of one of the biggest crook capitalists in the country, one of the biggest union guys in the country, and one of the biggest public 'service' bureaucrats... It was quite a formidable line up' (MC.10A.450). Another found it valuable to 'see the actual opposition in the flesh which is of some import when your're thinking in terms - we are in many ways directly opposing them ... just to see them, you realise there is a very human element in it' (DA.8B.285).

Firth (1973, p.365) states that the unorthodox use or abuse of symbol is undertaken at times 'to assert moral value over existing power value'. In this act, the private and the public, the individual and the institutional, authority and morality clash and intertwine. 'I guess to a degree we're trying to impose on those directors what we feel ourselves. If we feel like some of their actions are contributing to some event that is in some way destructive environmentally or socially or otherwise, we're trying to impose on them our standards or our levels of consciousness ... I think that's quite reasonable 'cos by their mining efforts they're imposing their standards and their shareholders' values on us. I'm sure it get's mixed up, the attacking of Mary Kathleen Uranium and the attacking of individual people who have got a lot of power. I don't see any real way around that' (MS.11A.410).



## 6.0 IMAGES AND ACTION

### 1 Friends of the Earth

FOE works 'on behalf of everyone who disagrees with mining uranium in Australia ... I think that most of their activity would be on behalf of everyone who agrees with their opinion' (LS.1B.414). Defined by purpose, it is for 'The conservation, restoration and rational use of the Ecosphere and to stimulate a movement of social change towards an ecologically viable self-managed society' (PM.7A). NB saw FOE as 'a loosely defined organization that has somehow got a building as a centre with certain facilities that people can operate from. The actions that are carried out don't conform to any stated policy because there aren't any, but are merely consistent with the views at any point in time of the majority of the people working in the building' (NB.12A.258). Nevertheless, 'FOE represents a sector of community, the community isn't eight people that might be in the office, it is a sector of society and a school of thought' (DA.8B.200).

Spontaneity is at the heart of the actions. At MKU, it was 'just all very spontaneous because we haven't done it that often' (EY.5A.097). The MKU action depended on how people are feeling at the time, so in that way it will be a rather spontaneous affair' (NB.1A.220). Politics is personalized and enjoyable: 'it's of the nature of FOE that they're much more attuned to that type of situation... which has got that sort of militant aspect to it, or very angry aspect or very active challenging, which relies on the individual taking his action and expressing his anger or his wishes. They've perhaps been attuned to getting press coverage. But it's in many ways because that sort of thing's quite an imaginative thing. In FOE, you'll find people who have a deal of imagination who don't want to follow the traditional what you may call campaign programmes that are undertaken. I think that they want to vere away from that and also I think FOE people enjoy, I mean rather obviously that MKU meeting was a lot of fun' (DA.8B.125).

This emphasis on spontaneity has its costs, detracting from the efficiency with which the act is executed and the image successfully propagated. This may be the cost of political creativity. Somewhere behind it all lies the thesis that there is strength in disorganisation.

### 2 Information and Education

FOE thrives on flirting with current value systems, prodding here and jabbing there. The MKU action is an example of the tension at the heart of such cultural-structural radicalism; put simply, between means employed and ends pursued. To reiterate: FOE believes that mass media coverage of the MKU action was valuable and that information received is conative - that it will move people to action. The assumption is that that information received is also provocative and educational.

Many friends are aware that this may not be so. Even prior to the action, PB stated that the newspapers tend to trivialize issues 'by publicizing manifest actions without a serious appraisal of the underlying issues.' (5A.397).



MC felt that the public would 'have to accept a lot of what was said. What was said was just that Mary Kathleen's baby, child, was a mutant. And so they just, the idea would be put into their mind that uranium mining somehow had an association with or caused, could cause malformed children' (10A.730). DA suggested that 'what we do is once again we throw the uranium issue out at people and obviously they're going to have to scratch their heads about it again and begin to think about it for themselves, and to that degree we manipulate the press, but not manipulate the press for them to manipulate the people' (8B.330). MS had a different version: 'The press quite often does manipulate people, and by us using the press, I guess at times we are manipulating people' (11A.660).

FOE seems to operate in the interstice between the power of the mass media, the form of which may positively inhibit understanding and action (F. Emery et al, 1976, p.68), and the capacity of a few people amongst millions to respond to that message. FOE tries to drive a wedge between the image presented by the mass media (between the gaggle box and the somnambulant viewer for example) and the content of the message. It is the broadcast of information, a random dispersal, grounded in faith that people do have the ability to critically evaluate the message and in the belief that a few individuals will be strongly moved. For it is 'not the message that is important but the transformation of the image which is produced' (K. Boulding 1959, p.90). The tension may emanate more from the press than from FOE. Whilst FOE may have a 'gift of theatre' which certainly people think [in] terms of how you can capture press attention. I'm not so sure that's generated by FOE as by the media.... In so far as you're talking about mutant dolls, say, I don't think it's simply because these people, that FOE have a sort of delight in playing theatre so much as a recognition that objectively, that is a requirement. The contradiction emerges with FOE's own media. For many members, 'the only change in their consciousness is an adherence to 'expert opinion' of FOE instead of the 'expert opinion' of the establishment (the Government, the media, etc.)' \* Ultimately, 'the basic assumption that all that people need is information without the control and responsibility for processing and producing that information seems to lie in a misunderstanding of the nature of information and of the purposeful nature of people themselves' (F. Emery et al, 1975, p.63).

### 3 Cultural and structural radicalism

To date FOE has primarily utilized information, restructuring it and deploying it to increase uncertainty in elite groups and anxiety in the masses of people. It has been a self-organizing structure\*\* which generates new images. The actions themselves were the vehicles of information. The exemplary actions undertaken are determined by structure: 'At the present time FOE is not capable of organizing a continuing campaign. The flux of people is just too high. That is, people coming and going and perhaps travelling through Melbourne, we rely a lot on volunteers who are doing what's right for them at the moment but are not prepared to stay around when their personal needs are somewhat different. And so there is that whole, the element of spontaneity is very important in FOE

\* K. Veal, 'Position Paper on Friends of the Earth', 1977, p.2.

\*\* In J. Galting's sense of structure as patterns of interaction or observed invariance in social events. 1976, p.2.



at the moment... I think FOE can conduct bicycle rides, demonstrations such as this company meeting very effectively where a high level of enthusiasm to work around the clock for a few days is necessary. In a way it's a bit unfortunate that that's the state of the counter cultural environment movement' (NB.1A.420).

#### 4 Instrumentalism

'I think that possibly one of the great personal conflicts within FOE is actually, is for people who are asking for a different lifestyle and a different form of government and public interaction is that they have to relate to the present system when they're calling for another one which is almost against their, it's perhaps being very hypocritical, but a hypocrisy that's almost unavoidable' (RC.10A.685). MC admitted that the existence of FOE is in a sense a hoax: 'just in the way in which we go, and people think, really honestly it's a deception, but for ease of survival, communication, it's easier for [people] to see a group of individuals more easily definable if they're seen as embodying one unit. We ourselves have created that impression too. It's not just, we have obviously put forward the name Friends of the Earth and such things [as letterhead, spokespeople]. They're compromises those sorts of things I think. That's life though isn't it? I think it is necessary' (10A.717).

FOE is manifested materially, but it exists in people's minds, as a reflection of current values, a looking glass for society. In order to achieve this, the functions of coordination (synchronisation of action), financial, publications and distribution, media liaison, education, research and production are necessarily undertaken.\* Ultimately FOE will only break loose from being an adjunct to the media institution by simultaneously preventing and innovating as well as reacting and defending. In seeking to realign social structures with ecological realities and social justice, FOE undertakes 'two processes actually. There are a set of people at this particular time who are taking decisions and what you're doing is [changing] the basis of who takes those decisions because you realise then you're going to get saner decisions... But I don't think you should focus in on those very top ones, you may well get change in a slightly slower fashion by focusing on the greater mass of decision makers which is the ordinary citizen' (DA.8B.220). Ultimately, 'it's really essential that we become able, everyone of us ideally, to be able to represent FOE cohesively, strongly, assertively, when coming in contact with the media'. (RC.2A.345).

As FOE moves beyond cultural raids to structural re-creation of the material ideology with which Australian society has encumbered itself, what will become of the mass media? To whom will a thousand spokespeople speak? Therein lies the secret of the potential power of Friends of the Earth.

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\* H. May & P. Watson, 'Position Paper on Friends of the Earth', 1977.



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