

## Campaign Strategy Newsletter No. 87      October 2013

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Things posted at my 'three worlds' blog which may be of interest:

### [Magic Boxes](#)

Here's a new tool for you. A quick, cheap and easy way to winnow out the content of a idea for a campaign or to engage the public from all the background on 'why we are doing it'. All too often the internal stuff dominates the discussion so an idea is never properly developed from an external audience's perspective before it is sent out into the real world. Just use three boxes one inside another.

The inside box is the 'little picture' – the activities and events which people will actually experience. This is where you can use all your communications tools and knowledge about how to get people to do those things, whether it's you or others.

Outside it lies the hoped-for effects. What we think (or hope) those activities will cause to happen – which 'theories of change' need to be tested and validated but that's a separate task. Outside that is the effects of the effects. The 'big picture', the why we are doing this and how in the end we hope it will deliver the result.

Do try it and [let me know](#) what you think – I've used it and it seems to work.

### [Three Stories](#)

Nikki Williams at the Woodland Trust contributed this [guest Case Study](#) of how their campaign 'Dear Danny' aimed at reminding UK Treasury Minister Danny Alexander of the value of Britain's woodlands, using the Three Stories: the Public, the Political and the Professional. See the blog for an explanation, or find it in [How To Win Campaigns: Communications for Change](#).

The campaign featured bespoke [Bank of Woodland](#) notes featuring Danny Alexander's face. Nikki reports that "one Treasury advisor who told us he loved the campaign so much, he'd taken hard copies home for his mother in law to send back in to the Treasury!"

### [Don't Play The 'China Card'](#)

The experiences of Greenpeace China give them unique insights into the interplay between Chinese public opinion, massive use of social media, the subtle nature of media restrictions and

the hunger of government officials, citizens and international businesses investing in China for facts on issues such as air pollution and water quality.

Harri Lami of Greenpeace argues that there are two good reasons for advocates in the 'West' not to play the 'China Card' and blame global environmental problems on China. First Chinese policy is transforming the energy impacts of that country, and second, that policy partly depends on the aspirations of Chinese citizens to enjoy 'western-style' cleaner air and bluer skies but not everyone is convinced that the 'West' is, for its part, really serious about energy transformation. Playing the China card could backfire on anyone who wants to tackle climate change.

### [The Cornered Dinosaur and the Carbon Hostages](#)

Seven reasons why the fossil fuel industry might turn nasty (or nastier) because it's feeling cornered (having given up on green energy).

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### **Beware Those Who Call You Powerful**

Back in the dark days of the Cold War, the shadow-watchers had a dictum that 'once is an accident, twice is a coincidence, three times is enemy action'. I know most readers of this *Newsletter* live outside the UK and I don't know what it's like where you are but here in Britain, there seems to be a new vogue for aggressively criticising campaigns and 'activist' groups, and questioning their legitimacy. It is a sinister fashion because it threatens to cut one of the vital arteries of democracy: the freedom of the public to organise and articulate public opinion.

Others may have noticed something much earlier but I first began to think something odd might be going on, after someone sent me a link to a blog in *The Guardian* on 8 October entitled ['Environmental activism – power without accountability ?'](#). You can get the gist from the set-up which read: *'Activists' emotive soundbites tend to win the PR war over companies' technical jargon. But while activism is valuable, it's not always accountable*, writes **Joseph Zammit-Lucia**'.

I confess I'd never heard of Mr Zammit who turns out to be a member of the [IUCN](#) Commission for Education and Communication, former Special Adviser to IUCN's Director General, and a partner at [Camunico](#), a consultancy which is oddly opaque about who its clients are. However he launched into his critique of 'activism' by attacking the 1990s Greenpeace campaign that prevented Shell from dumping the Brent Spar oil installation at sea. I was one of the leaders of that campaign and reading his blog was like hearing a sour old song, half forgotten from twenty years ago.

Because Mr Zammit's article made some basic errors, I responded and you can read that and our ensuing exchanges at *The Guardian* website, [here](#). But why dig up this ancient history at all? Who might benefit from that?

### **No Accident**

The timing was obviously no accident, because at that moment, Greenpeace was in the headlines due to the [‘Arctic 30’](#), being held under lock and key in Russia, after protesting against a Gazprom rig which is conducting the [first oil drilling](#) in the Arctic. So that would have been topical, yet strangely, the article did not mention the Arctic. Instead it set up its premise that activists are less accountable and more powerful than corporations, with a fundamentally inaccurate account of the antique 1995 Greenpeace campaign.

Why might that be ? Well in Moscow today, Greenpeace doesn’t look very powerful does it ? Its activists are powerless, under lock and key. But back in 1995, it won against Shell who backed down from their plans because of public outcry, and in so doing, Shell enraged the British Government whose own plans were seriously inconvenienced as a result, not to mention suffering the humiliation of seeing a NGO campaign succeed against their own best endeavours.

[Describing](#) himself as a ‘compulsive contrarian’, it seems Joe Zammit has a beef against activists because he sees them as blocking the more worthwhile conversations about sustainability which he and others take part in. His *Guardian* blog was recycled from an earlier online [article](#) in which he wrote: “...*herein lies the problem. Activism is a confrontational attitude that always risks descending into the wish to win at any cost—even if winning is detrimental to the cause*”.

To ‘prove’ this he claimed of the Brent Spar that: “Later investigation showed that disposing of Brent Spar at sea would have been the best environmental option”. A shame then that later investigation commissioned and accepted by Shell, [actually showed](#) the exact opposite.

It’s perhaps odd that Mr Zammit didn’t know that because Camunico has several former Shell executives on its [Advisory Council](#), and Camunico describes [its role](#) in helping set up the IUCN [Global Business and Biodiversity Programme](#) which has included numerous [projects](#) with Shell. The company has been a [partner/donor](#) of IUCN [since 2002](#), although new projects are currently [on hold](#). What all this means for the future of ‘sustainable business’ must wait for another time.

## **Fracking ?**

Shortly after the exchange at *The Guardian* website, I got a call telling me that say that the oil (or rather now, gas) industry is getting worried that the NGOs are ‘winning’ on fracking, and that they are particularly concerned about the forthcoming EU ‘shale gas directive’. (This, the issue of ‘unconventional’ oil and gas, indeed has been [cited](#) by IUCN as projects with Shell are on hold pending a meeting next month). Apparently, at least some in the industry have met and decided that rather than directly engage on ‘the issue’ in public debate, it might be more effective to question the legitimacy of campaign groups, even to go after their funding. They are said to be in the process of hiring help to make this happen. If that is the case, then whether it was by accident or design, Joe’s piece must have delighted the industry because it involved an IUCN Commissioner criticising environmental organisations.

If indeed there was an orchestrated attempt to undermine campaign organisations, you might expect to see a coincidental trickle of media commentary, with a common theme. Maybe like Dominic Lawson’s piece on the ‘Arctic 30’ in the *Mail on Sunday* (22 October): [‘Yes, Putin's a brute, but it's Greenpeace who are the bigger menace to our future’](#). Dominic is son of former

Conservative politician, Nigel Lawson, founder of the climate sceptic 'Global Warming Policy Foundation'.

That article also misrepresents the 'Spar campaign, only by changing the order of events. Lawson takes the infamous wrong estimate of oil in the Spar tanks made right at the end of the campaign (which went almost unreported at the time), and puts it up front, then adding "Greenpeace duly occupied Brent Spar", implying that Greenpeace deliberately misled people. Seeing as Greenpeace only sampled the oil tank after it was on the Spar, that is impossible. Like Zammit, he also claims wrongly that 'Brent Spar was brought back onshore, where its contents were disposed of — for no net environmental gain'.

The point is of course that because of the sustained backlash encouraged by outraged British politicians and pundits and BBC bosses (who had been given a good kicking by the government over the Spar) after Shell's decision, there are many in the media who have never bothered to check the facts and believe that it is an example of an environmentalist mistake. It provides obvious propaganda material, by playing on existing beliefs.

It's unsurprising if the gas and oil industry and their climate sceptic outriders take the opportunity of media salience to attack their more prominent environmentalist opponents. And there are many reasons why the fossil fuel industry may fear for its future profits - in [The Cornered Dinosaur and the Carbon Hostages](#), I recently listed seven of them (closing coal markets, renewables eating their share in the electricity market because of falling costs, electric cars, disinvestment campaigns, regulation and policies (eg China, World Bank, US), public belief in climate change, and competition between gas and renewables). On top of that the industry has cornered itself by abandoning green energy, except in its advertising.

### **Attacking the RSPCA**

What is perhaps more surprising is that similar attacks are being made on quite different NGOs but for similar reasons. Take the RSPCA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Unusually, and as the result of a long gone [campaign](#), the RSPCA has the legal right in the UK to bring prosecutions for animal cruelty (ie it actually does have some power, not just influence).

When the RSPCA prosecuted the Heythrop Hunt in Oxfordshire [in 2012](#) for illegal fox hunting, it came under increasing criticism, from rightwing media such as the *Daily Mail*. Foxhunting is socially divisive in Britain and was banned by the last Labour Government. While large public [majorities](#) oppose hunting, many of the rich elite living in the Prime Ministers' Oxfordshire constituency would like it brought back.

A series of unflattering articles appeared in the right-wing *Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph* drawing attention to the cost of bringing the prosecution and starting a storm of social media debate about the charity's objectives and priorities, including amongst its own animal loving supporters. In January 2013 pollsters You Gov [found](#) a steady decline in favourable public comment about the RSPCA, which it attributed to the media coverage.

The coverage has continued ever since. In July the *Daily Mail* [criticised](#) the pay of the RSPCA CEO, Gavin Grant. In September its Sunday paper [reported](#) that the Charity Commission, the government regulator for the charity sector, was “investigating” the RSPCA. In August, it cited critics describing the RSPCA as ‘militant’, quoted a Conservative MP who attacked it as ‘[political](#)’, and criticised its legal right to access information on police databases in researching prosecutions.

In August, the [Daily Telegraph](#) broadened the attack on voluntary sector pay, criticising more than 30 CEOs.

On 11 October, Justice Minister Chris Grayling [announced](#), before calling for restrictions on the ability of campaigns to use the law to question implementation of government policy, that “*The professional campaigners of Britain are growing in number, taking over charities, dominating BBC programmes and swarming around Westminster. Often, they are better paid than the people they lobby as they articulate a Left-wing vision which is neither affordable nor deliverable*”.

On 13 October Environment Minister Owen Paterson called campaign groups “wicked” for opposing GM ‘golden rice’. *The Independent* newspaper [reported](#): ‘In the strongest attack yet on the anti-GM lobby Mr Paterson told *The Independent* that NGOs such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth that oppose GM technology were “casting a dark shadow over attempts to feed the world”.’ Paterson blamed a “hang-up by a small number of people” for the opposition. In reality polls suggest opinion is split, with only a [minority favouring](#) GM crops.

## **The UK Lobbying Bill**

Here in Britain all this comes as campaign groups also face [new restrictions](#) on their activities through a proposed [Lobbying Bill](#) which would prevent a lot of campaigning in any run up to a General Election. It’s hard to imagine a clearer attempt to ‘clip the wings’ of campaigners and prevent them connecting public opinion to the formal political process. Ostensibly it is to stop them being (party) ‘political’, in practice it is to stop them being effective. It could for example, stop campaigners standing up for survival of the great whales, a ban on landmines, votes for women or a host of other ‘good causes’ now seen as ‘common sense reforms’ by politicians and public alike but which owe their existence to campaigns.

## **What Should The Voluntary Sector Do ?**

An article from [Spears](#) Magazine [republished](#) in the left-wing magazine *New Statesman* on 10 October described the UK voluntary sector as “individually strong, collectively weak” and called for it to ‘start fighting back’ against political ‘bullying’, even resurrecting the idea of an ‘[International Charity Defence League](#)’.

The newly formed [Independent Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement](#) is one very broad church response to the UK Lobbying Bill. In his [opening submission](#), former government special adviser and Chairman of E3G Tom Burke writes:

*“This is a modern version of the Combination Acts of the 18th and 19th Century. These were enacted to prevent individuals combining together to argue for better pay and conditions in their*

*workplaces. The effect of these Acts was simply to drive collective bargaining underground and to increase mistrust and conflict between workforces and their employers. The Acts were eventually repealed when politicians of the day found dialogue to be more productive than repression. It seems this lesson must be learnt all over again. There are no more than 400,000 members of all the political parties in Britain. There are many millions of members and supporters of civil society organisations. It is now arguable who is best placed to understand and speak for the interests of our 60 million citizens. It is hard to suppress the thought that the real intent of this Bill is to render the 400,000 less accountable to their fellow citizens."*

As their critics say, voluntary groups tend to have a single focus and can develop tunnel vision just like corporations. The natural response to even a wide scale threat is to set up a single 'campaign', not least so they can continue to 'focus', for instance on fighting cancer, or conserving woodlands or rural poverty in Africa or climate change. The interest of policy specialists, and campaigners tends to match that of the supporters rather well, and the fundraisers do not like changing the dialogue with the donors. So it is easier to leave these 'broader issues' to someone else.

In this case that would be the wrong response because voluntary groups face a systemic threat. There are many [other recent examples](#) of UK voluntary groups coming under public criticism. Guardian journalist Polly Toynbee wrote (of the Lobbying Bill) on 18 October: 'Several I spoke to were strongly opposed but afraid to have their organisation mentioned, relying on trenchant advocacy from NCVO and charity leaders' network Acevo, whose head, [Stephen Bubb](#), says, "They're scared, the general atmosphere has made the political terrain too tough,"'.

At the moment the mood of political intolerance and the fashion for NGO-bashing is mainly concentrated in the political right, its media and probably, a few industries which also feel threatened by campaigning. The real threat for NGOs and for the role they play in achieving open societies, is if the rest of the political class, itself suffering huge public disenchantment in almost every democratic country, decides to do nothing about the stifling of campaign groups because they themselves would like to sustain the illusion that they and not 'civil society', are more genuinely representative of public opinion.

So, unappetizing as it may be, NGOs need to engage the public in making the case for articulating public opinion, and do so in a way that positively engages those in formal politics. There may be corporate conspiracies and even political ones but they are not so threatening as disinterest in democracy.

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### **Other Stuff ... A Treasure Trove**

Australian communications maven Sharon Ede has put her Crux Catalyst project on ice while she pursues other challenges but you can find her amazing collection of resources [here](#) in her *Treasure Trove for Change Agents*.

### **A Rainforest Campaign Case Study**

[Download](#) 'Down to Zero' to get the story of the 2001 – 2013 campaign by Greenpeace in Indonesia and in distant markets to stop deforestation for pulp & paper and palm oil products. And read what John Sauven from Greenpeace told me about it [here](#).

### **Move The Money !**

Find more about why I at least think political climate campaigns should now focus on changing the fiscal regime for energy investment, and Daphne Wysham's remarkable 16 year campaign to change World Bank policy on coal, [here](#).

### **Visual Story Telling Guide**

[See here](#) for a really good guide to visual storytelling from San Fransisco-based Resource Media: what I've been telling people for years ... only with better pictures.

**An Education...** in what tv viewers really make of stuff they see on tv: the reality tv show Channel 4's [Goggle Box](#) watches features tv-fanatics as they watch tv. An antidote for any UK campaigners who spend too much time talking to people just-like-themselves, and an inadvertent tv laboratory for students of [motivational values](#). I don't suppose you can view it from outside the UK but there are probably similar programmes elsewhere (?)

### **The 29 Stages Of A Twitterstorm:**

All too true. Read it [here](#).

### **'The Energy of Nations'**

by Jeremy Leggett: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415857826/>. Probably very worth reading (I have ordered it but not yet read it ...)

### **And finally ... connecting children to nature via magic:**

The Real Halloween, Holt Hall, Norfolk, UK 26/7 October – see here: [www.fairylandtrust.org](http://www.fairylandtrust.org) A family event in the woods, and Halloween as it was before the plastic got at it.

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**Books By Chris Rose:** [How to Win Campaigns: Communications For Change](#) (edn 2) Earthscan/Taylor and Francis 2010,

*What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers*, Troubador (2011) at <http://www.campaignstrategy.org/threeworlds/> post and packaging free in the UK ([contact me](#) for costs outside the UK), or [UK Amazon](#) or in [Kindle](#), [itunes](#) or from the [publisher](#)