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A Decade of Friendship: the first ten years

By Walt Patterson

Some called them Friends of the Earth. Others called them FoE, and meant it. They came into being in California; now the earth has Friends from Tokyo to Nairobi, Goteborg to Penang. Among its oldest Friends are those in the UK. This is how their Friendship came about.

David Brower was an American mountaineer and writer. A veteran of many environmental battles, he saw the need for an aggressive campaigning organization, to tackle environmental issues of every kind. He gathered a circle of like-minded people; and in 1969 they became the first Friends of the Earth. This benevolent name was counterbalanced by its pugnacious acronym - FoE. In 1970 Brower travelled to Europe, met more like-minded people and with them agreed to establish Friends of the Earth in France, Sweden and the UK.

FoE UK was to be 'a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital', with Barclay Inglis as chairman, Graham Searle as director, and Richard Sandbrook as Secretary. Existing UK wildlife and countryside bodies were 'charities', and received substantial tax advantages; but FoE did not even apply for charitable status. In law 'charities' could not work for political change; but that was precisely what the founders of FoE had in mind. In October 1970, Graham together with the other first fulltimers, Jonathan Holliman and Janet Whelan, moved into a miniscule office in King Street, Covent Garden, provided by Ballantine Books. A commission to compile and edit a UK edition of Ballantine's *Environmental Handbook* gave the embryo FoE Ltd its first income.

The early months were devoted to meetings with incipient Friends, and to research, to identify appropriate issues and prepare FoE campaigns. Such careful attention to detail was to become a FoE hallmark: FoE always did its homework. The powerful British mining corporation Rio Tinto-Zinc was proposing to dig a vast hole in the Snowdonia National Park, to extract copper. Graham, Brower's American representative Amory Lovins, and an Australian geologist named Simon Millar began to compile a case against the RTZ plan.

Meanwhile Cadbury-Schweppes, the largest soft-drink manufacturer in the UK, was switching over from returnable to nonreturnable bottles. The Friends seized on this improbable motif as a symbol of the environmentally misguided. After attempting without success to obtain an audience with the chairman of Schweppes, the Friends took to the street. On a sunny Saturday in May 1971 a procession of a hundred Friends returned 1,500 non-returnable bottles to Schweppes headquarters. The striking visual metaphor - a forecourt entirely covered with discarded glassware - received press and TV coverage not only nationally but internationally. FoE's Schweppes 'demo' gave the word a novel slant: instead of a bitter, even ugly confrontation, it was witty and engaging - though no less serious for its lightness. The Friends stressed that their bottle-return merely illustrated a much deeper point: the accelerating waste and misuse of resources in industrial society.

The idea struck a chord. In the ensuing weeks groups calling themselves 'Friends of the Earth' suddenly sprang up all over the UK. The King Street team, caught utterly by surprise, were run off their feet simply locating and contacting this spontaneous mushrooming of local FoE groups. The FoE Ltd company papers made no provision for any such development. The King Street team had to break it to new-found Friends that 'Friends of the Earth' was a registered company name and protected by law; but King Street was willing in effect to licence use of the name by local groups sharing the same aims and ground-rules as FoE Ltd. Thus began what soon became a nationwide network of FoE local groups, a grassroots movement of remarkable stamina and resilience.

[In the summer of 1971 FoE moved into a rent-free two-room office in 9 Poland Street, Soho, an office building purchased by the Joseph Rowntree Social Services Trust to provide support for pressure groups - a crucial detail unaccountably omitted from the original text of this chapter. - WP]

FoE's innovative campaign style attracted the enthusiasm of advertising agencies offering to design posters and other material. The set of four Schweppes posters published by FoE in June 1971, with slogans like 'DON'T LET THEM SCHHH ... ON BRITAIN', not only adorned many a wall but were reproduced repeatedly in the trade press, winning FoE yet more publicity. In October 1971, when Schweppes still refused to meet with FoE, the Friends repeated their bottle-return - this time simultaneously at eight different Schweppes depots around the country, the first coordinated national 'demo' involving the new local groups. The bad publicity generated by FoE at length forced the chairman of Schweppes to agree to meet with FoE Ltd to discuss the bottle business. The outcome was a national one-day conference on packaging and the environment, and a National Packaging Day in March 1972, to highlight the foolish extravagance of much modern packaging.

But back to RTZ: widespread opposition to its plans for Snowdonia had prompted it to invite Lord Zuckerman to chair an independent 'Commission on Mining and the Environment'. In January 1972 FoE submitted evidence to the Zuckerman Commission, a closely-argued document entitled *Rock Bottom: Nearing the Limits of Metal Mining in Britain*, subsequently published in full in *The Ecologist* magazine. A spate of media criticism of RTZ's plans reached its peak with a BBC 'Horizon' programme called 'Do You Dig National Parks?', for which FoE had supplied considerable assistance. Its transmission in May 1972 was followed by a live studio debate in which Graham and Amory gave two senior RTZ executives a rough ride. RTZ realised it had a battle on its hands.

While mounting its challenges to Schweppes and RTZ, FoE was also embarking on a third campaign, to protect endangered wildlife. There were to be sure already a number of well-established animal-protection bodies in the UK. But Angela King, FoE's first wildlife campaigner, noted one serious gap. No other UK group was working toward control of the international trade in endangered species and products made from them. FoE began investigating imports of endangered species, focusing first on the rare big cats. FoE's reputation for scrupulous research and effective lobbying prompted approaches from experienced Parliamentary draftsmen. Soon Angela was engaged on devising the first of a succession of Endangered Species Bills. In March 1972 FoE achieved its first clearcut victory, when the Government announced a ban on the import of skins from snow leopard, clouded leopard and tiger.

In December 1971 FoE had begun contributing a monthly newsletter to *The Ecologist*. At the UN Conference on the Human Environment, which took place in Stockholm in June 1972, FoE Ltd teamed up with *The Ecologist* and with Friends from Sweden, France and the US to produce a daily newspaper called the *Stockholm Conference Eco*. By the end of the conference the *Eco* had become required reading. It was the first of a series of *Ecos* to which FoE Ltd was to contribute; indeed the concept proved so seductive that the UN took it over and institutionalised it. In the UK, meanwhile,

David Brower and other Friends, with the help of FoE Ltd, had launched a new publishing imprint, 'Earth Island', whose first title was the landmark *Limits to Growth*. However, despite an initial list of impressive quality, Earth Island fell foul of business problems and failed to establish itself commercially.

Other FoE publications met with more success; some indeed became classics of their kind. The first such was FoE's *Whale Manual*, published in June 1972 to coincide with the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission. It was quintessential FoE material. It included a history of whaling, whale biology and population dynamics, the current state of the world whaling industry, whale products and their markets, the substitutes available, and guidelines for campaigning: that is, the relevant scientific, economic and political data, and information on how best to make use of it on behalf of the whales. The *Whale Manual* went through repeated revisions in later years, as the campaign progressed; but it remained the key document for Friends of the whale.

FoE and other whale defenders also mounted a demonstration at the IWC, the first of many; the demonstration attracted worldwide media coverage, and turned the spotlight on what would thenceforth be an acutely controversial annual gathering. A FoE Early Day Motion calling for a ban on the import of whale meat and other products was signed by 224 MPs. In July 1972 David Bowie did a benefit concert for FoE at the Royal Festival Hall, an encouraging precedent; many other celebrities were in due course to perform for FoE or take part in FoE campaigns and fund-raising. The financial boost was timely; by mid-1972 FoE had 40 local groups and eight full-time staff. The whale campaign gained further momentum from a rally in Trafalgar Square in September 1972.

The same month saw the publication of the Zuckerman report on mining and the environment. As FoE had forecast, the report ducked the issue of RTZ's proposed copper mine in Snowdonia, neither endorsing nor rejecting the proposal. Media comment was hostile, much of it directed to points raised by FoE. RTZ had meanwhile intervened at the last minute to halt publication of *Eryri, the Mountains of Longing*, by Amory Lovins and Philip Evans. RTZ claimed that Amory's commentary on the Snowdonia issue was actionable, and Allen & Unwin withdrew the book even as the first warm reviews appeared in the press. The book was finally published in November 1972, with an insert by RTZ; the dispute probably amplified rather than muted the book's impact. At the beginning of 1973 FoE submitted detailed evidence to the Government-appointed Stevens committee on National Parks.

By this time FoE was finding other campaign issues demanding involvement: for instance transport. In December 1972, after Prime Minister Edward Heath got caught in traffic, FoE seized the opportunity to deliver a gift-wrapped bicycle to No. 10 Downing Street, with an enormous Christmas card. The gift was declined, but pictures of it made front pages all over the world. It was the first shot in what would later become a major FoE campaign. More seriously, the following month FoE published its *Maplin Manifesto*, lending its voice to the chorus of protest at official plans to site a third London airport on the Essex coast. In March, after much internal discussion, FoE endorsed Labour candidates for election to the Greater London Council, because of Labour's opposition to plans for inner-London motorways. Labour won, and the plans were stopped; but the FoE endorsement created so much dissension within FoE, and so much antagonism from friends in other parties, that FoE thereafter stoutly refrained from further party-political forays.

March 1973 also brought the first victory in the whale campaign, when the Government announced a ban on the import of products from baleen whales. In June FoE organized a whale-poster competition for school-children in Battersea Park, in the presence of a lifesize inflatable whale, and

picketed the IWC conference again. *The Times* ran an ad put together by FoE, calling for a ten-year moratorium on whaling, and signed by the Duke of Edinburgh, Julian Huxley, Konrad Lorenz and other notables.

April 1973 had seen the first conference of FoE local group coordinators, with 29 groups represented. The conference was to become the biggest event on the annual FoE calendar. The same month FoE published the long-promised packaging manual, with an inimitable Searle title: *Packaging in Britain: A Policy for Containment*, by Graham Searle and Walt Patterson. It moved the Schweppes campaign on to a much broader front; for many months it was quoted and discussed not only in the popular media but also in the trade press. April also saw the culmination of one of FoE's original campaigns, in a major victory - albeit one that at first went almost unnoticed. On Easter Thursday - with no papers the next day - RTZ published its annual report; buried deep within it was the announcement that RTZ had abandoned its plans to mine copper in Snowdonia. The FoE team, like their friends in North Wales, could scarcely believe the news; but a planned council of war in Snowdonia that Easter weekend turned instead into exultant celebrations.

In May Walt Patterson and Colin Blythe from Poland Street travelled to Dundee to meet with Scottish FoE and Conservation Society members concerned about the headlong rush to develop North Sea oil, and the impact this might have on Scotland, Orkney and Shetland. They agreed to form a North Sea Oil Coalition to monitor developments and exchange information. They learned that the Government, the oil companies and the construction companies were planning to take over coastal locations for building sites for vast concrete oil-production platforms. One such site was a hamlet of 13 houses, called Drumbuie, on Loch Carron, across from the Isle of Skye. In September Walt visited the West Highlands and arranged that FoE should be the London contact for the South West Ross Action Group, to oppose the Drumbuie platform-site plan.

By that September of 1973 there were 73 local groups; one even had a full-time coordinator. FoE's lawyer, David Pedley, greeted the Government's Control of Pollution Bill by drafting 150 amendments. In October Friends staged a demo at the Motor Show; and OPEC underlined the FoE argument about the unwisdom of dependence on the car by quadrupling the price of oil. FoE was quicker to respond than any official body; at a Royal Society energy conference Friends circulated copies of *World Energy Strategies* by Amory Lovins - written before the OPEC shock. The press conference for its publication was attended by most of the Fleet Street science correspondents. It turned into a two-hour seminar led by Amory and Walt, in which the FoE pair spelled out the problems facing the light-water reactors of the US nuclear programme. Two weeks earlier the *Guardian* had revealed that the CEBG were planning to abandon British reactors in favour of Westinghouse pressurised-water reactors; and Walt had been interviewed on 'The World Tonight' on BBC Radio 4, much to the annoyance of the National Nuclear Corporation. Amory followed up the press conference with a half-page article in the *Sunday Times*; and suddenly, for the first time, there was a national public debate about nuclear power in the UK.

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Science and Technology held hearings in which the CEBG revealed that it wanted to order 32 1300-megawatt PWRs by 1983. Uproar followed. Amory and Walt prepared a 45-page memorandum on PWRs for the Select Committee it was published in February 1974, as the first appendix to the Committee's severely critical report. The miners' strike and the three-day week led to a snap election and a change of government; and at length, after further months of controversy, in July 1974, the Labour Government rejected both the PWR and the scale of programme proposed. It gave the go-ahead for just six reactors of a British heavy-water design. Two years later this design too was to be rejected. The UK nuclear programme was collapsing in disarray, with FoE in the thick of the fray.

While stirring up trouble for the nuclear industry, FoE and the local groups were also challenging official oil policy, and the plans of the Conservative Government to 'nationalize' the site at Drumbuie. With the change of government in February 1974 this legislation fell. In April Walt testified for FoE at the Drumbuie inquiry, pointing out that official plans would lead to platform-sites becoming derelict within a few years - a conclusion subsequently fully borne out. In August 1974, thanks to the efforts of the National Trust for Scotland, the South West Ross Action Group, FoE and other objectors, the Government turned down the Drumbuie application - though it almost immediately accepted another on the north side of the Loch.

In November 1973 Graham departed for New Zealand, amid a flurry of concern lest his going would leave FoE leaderless. The concern proved unwarranted. Richard Sandbrook became director, adopting a much lower profile, and leaving campaigns in the hands of the individual campaigners themselves, who were by this time amply experienced in all the various roles they had to play. Angela King arranged to deliver to the Japanese and the Russians a petition calling for them to cease their whaling activities, signed by leading figures in European management and labour. FoE's Endangered Species Bill received its First Reading in December 1973 and its Second Reading in January 1974, defeating the Government in the process. The election intervened; but the Bill was at once reintroduced, and in March 1974 received a First Reading for the second time. It still, however, had a long and convoluted Parliamentary road ahead of it.

March 1974 also saw the publication of Pete Wilkinson's *Campaigners' Manual*, an activist's guide to action. On Housewarming Weekend some 50 local groups insulated the homes of pensioners, to launch what was to become one of FoE's longest-running and most telling campaigns. The thermal insulation campaign, initiated and carried out almost entirely by the local groups, demonstrated that FoE was not interested only in 'stopping things': that as well as opposing environment malfeasance it was taking positive action to bring about improvements. Another long-running affirmative campaign was also launched that same month. Poland Street and the local groups built 40 towering 'paper mountains', including one in the forecourt of the Greater London Council, to kick off The Great Paper Chase, to collect and recycle the hundreds of thousands of tons of paper wasted every year. The FoE Paper Chase was all too successful. By 1975 so much waste paper was being collected that the paper mills could not cope with it. The economic recession depressed the market for paper, the price of waste paper plummeted, and many local FoE groups which had come to rely on the income from paper collection found themselves in financial trouble. FoE accordingly redirected its campaigning efforts toward persuading paper buyers to specify recycled paper, in order to build up a market; but it was uphill work.

For the IWC conference in June 1974 Angela and her allies arranged to have a life-size inflatable whale float down the Thames. Japanese and Russian delegates were to be invited to aim a harpoon gun at it from the Embankment. Unfortunately, the floating whale sprang a leak and began to sink. Thames River Police had to come to the rescue with adhesive tape. Angela and the others returned crestfallen to Poland Street; but the sinking whale proved to be a picture editor's dream, and made front pages all over the world with captions underlining the obvious metaphorical import. The apparent fiasco turned into one of FoE's most effective pieces of theatre.

In July 1974 FoE published *Losing Ground*, by Colin Blythe, a critique of land-use and agricultural policy in the UK. It was followed in November by *Britain and the World Food Crisis*, a brief FoE paper which provoked unexpected outrage by noting the amount of food consumed by British pets - one of the infrequent instances of maladroit FoE public relations. At the UN Food Conference in Rome FoE helped to publish a newspaper called *Pan*, which contrasted the comfortable aura of the

conference with the plight of the ill-fed. That same month FoE made a conscious decision to step outside its well-established groundrule, and break the law: by taking over a derelict bomb-site near the Old Vic and turning it into an allotment. The allotments campaign was taken up with vigour by FoE local groups, calling upon local authorities to fulfil their legal obligations to make land available. In March 1975 FoE published the *Allotments Manual*.

In January 1975 FoE's Endangered Species Bill was introduced for the third time; and the Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Bill, drafted by FoE's lawyer David Pedley, dealing with the protection of domestic species, was given a First Reading. The second edition of the *Whale Manual* was published, as was a revised edition of *Losing Ground*.

Mick Hamer's study of the roads lobby, *Wheels Within Wheels*, had been published by FoE in October 1974; in February 1975 he joined the Poland Street staff as full-time transport campaigner. In June FoE published *Give Way*, the cycle campaign manual, and linked up with other organizations for Bike Day. The police decreed that cycling along Whitehall would be 'too dangerous'; so 3000 cyclists wheeled their bikes past Downing Street, along the Embankment and over Westminster Bridge to a mass rally. The rally and the many events staged by local FoE groups received massive media coverage; thenceforth the bicycle was always identified as the Friendliest vehicle. Motorways, however, were clearly unfriendly. At the M16 inquiry Mick and John Adams launched a FoE attack on official road traffic forecasts, which was soon to have a profound influence on road planning.

On the energy front, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution had embarked on a two-year investigation of nuclear power. In December 1974 FoE published its RCEP evidence as *Nuclear Power: Technical Bases for Ethical Concern*, by Amory Lovins. Yet more controversy greeted *Dynamic Energy Analysis and Nuclear Power*, by John Price, which suggested that the rapid buildup of nuclear capacity then anticipated would actually consume more energy than it supplied. The validity of the argument was never tested, because the buildup never materialised. December also brought Bottle Day, involving 70 FoE groups, and the publication of the FoE recycling manual, *Material Gains*, by Christine Thomas.

By this time Tom Burke had moved from Merseyside FoE to Poland Street, to become the first full-time national coordinator of local groups. In January 1975 62 local groups attended the third Coordinators' Conference; and in March FoE groups from twelve countries sent representatives to the FoE International meeting in London. The pattern of decentralised cooperative campaigning in the UK had begun to extend across national boundaries, with Friends in different countries working together on issues of common concern, like energy and whales. In April 1975 Friends from several European countries, the UK included, met with EEC energy bureaucrats in Brussels to put the FoE viewpoint. In June, Friends from other countries joined FoE UK outside the IWC conference, to take part in a funeral ceremony for the whales. It may have been conceived as street theatre, but those who took part emerged shaken and moved.

By 1975 the Poland Street office was itself becoming an environmental wasteland, overcrowded, noisy, and suffocating under its own detritus. After lengthy discussions the Board decided to activate plans to put FoE's research work under the wing of a separate, charitable body - and under a separate roof. Graham Searle, back from New Zealand, took on the task of establishing Earth Resources Research. Poland Street staff working on research rather than campaigns moved with Graham to new premises at 40, James Street, and those left behind in Poland Street took their first deep breaths for months. By this time FoE and ERR together had 18 full-time staff.

In May 1975 FoE held a tenth birthday party in Belgravia for the still-unfinished Dungeness B nuclear station. At the party FoE published a tabloid *Nuclear Times*. One of its front-page articles described plans to expand reprocessing at Windscale, and to service foreign customers, which would make Windscale 'one of the world's main radioactive dustbins'. Five months later the *Daily Mirror* picked up the story and ran a black front page headline: 'PLAN TO MAKE BRITAIN WORLD'S NUCLEAR DUSTBIN'. Furore ensued, with FoE again prominent. In another innovation Poland Street and the local groups in November 1975 arranged the first of what were to become regular 'Campaign Workshops'. The workshops were to bring together full-time campaigners with local-group members wanting to focus their efforts on a particular campaign, raising the level of expertise in the local groups and helping Poland Street to keep in step with the realities of local-group campaigning. Energy was a fortunate choice for the first Workshop; the Windscale campaign was to last three years and cost FoE close to £100,000, stretching Poland Street and the local groups to the limit of their resources.

After British Nuclear Fuels Ltd staged a public debate in London, FoE decided to return the compliment, chartered a train and filled it to capacity for a 'Nuclear Excursion' to Windscale in April 1976; MPs, BNFL staff and union representatives and Friends met on the football pitch outside the security fence for a day-long debate. Throughout the summer and autumn FoE continued to press for the Windscale application to be called in for a public inquiry. Publication of the Royal Commission report - the 'Flowers report' - in September powerfully reinforced public concern about reprocessing, plutonium and the fast breeder reactor, long since the focus of the FoE campaign. *Nuclear Prospects* by Mike Flood and Robin Grove-White, co-published by FOE, the CPRE and the NCCL in October 1976, stirred yet more concern about the social and political implications of the planned 'plutonium economy'. By December 1976 the national outcry was unanswerable; on 22 December the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that there would be a public inquiry into the Windscale plan.

While the energy campaign erupted into the headlines, FoE's wildlife campaign was recording a memorable victory. In November 1976, after four years, the *Endangered Species Act* reached the statute books, severely restricting trade in many endangered species and products made from them. Other campaigns too continued to evolve. In August 1976 FoE published *Getting Nowhere Fast* by Mick Hamer, a remarkable study of mobility in modern society, as a response to the Government's consultation document on transport. The Government's White Paper on Transport, published in May 1977, reflected marked FoE influence, for instance including a commitment to reducing the amount of movement required in the UK. In June 1977 British Rail announced free rail carriage for bicycles, another victory for FoE and its cycling colleagues.

In the run-up to the Windscale Inquiry FoE UK joined with Friends from several other countries, and with many others opposed to nuclear developments, to stage the first international conference of nuclear opponents, in Salzburg, Austria, in April 1977. Called 'Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future', it took place just a block away from the vast International Atomic Energy Agency conference on 'Nuclear Energy and its Fuel Cycle'. The Non-Nuclear conference shook the IAEA delegates when a Non-Nuclear speaker revealed for the first time that 200 tonnes of uranium had been stolen in 1968, and that the responsible authorities had covered up the theft for nine years. The story made headlines all over the world.

In early June FoE and Earth Resources Research published *The Fissile Society* by Walt Patterson, a study of the social and economic implications of electronuclear plans. A week later, on 14 June, the Windscale Inquiry got under way at Whitehaven, Cumbria. By the time it ended, after exactly 100 days of sittings, in November 1977, FoE's participation had been widely acclaimed. Even before the

Inquiry ended, FoE and the Atomic Energy Authority had been co-sponsors of a two-day public conference at the Royal Institution in which, for virtually the first time, a large group of environmentalists and a large group of nuclear proponents came together, each discovering that the other did not have two heads. It was probably the high-water mark of the dialogue in the UK nuclear debate; five months later the Parker report on Windscale shattered any illusions about the force of rational argument on nuclear issues. Ironically, the efforts of Poland Street and the local groups from November 1977 to March 1978 were concentrated on achieving publication of the report, and Parliamentary debate on it, before any Government decision. FoE helped to marshal irresistible pressure to this end. Alas for the efforts: the report proved to be a numbing dismissal of every opposition argument, and could have been written without even holding the inquiry.

In the aftermath FoE published a bitter critique called *The Parker Inquiry*, detailing the inadequacy of the official report. The Parker report polarized the nuclear issue in the UK essentially beyond any hope of recovery. The Windscale Rally at the end of April, organized by Poland Street with heroic support from the FoE local groups and many others, brought over 12,000 people in a mass procession from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square. It was the largest gathering of nuclear opponents in the UK since the heyday of the old Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and it presaged an upsurge of popular anger about nuclear issues of every kind - civil and military alike.

The Windscale issue absorbed the energies of FoE to an extent previously unparalleled, for well over a year; but other FoE campaigns continued unperturbed. In January 1978 FoE's otter campaign scored a victory, winning protection for otters in England and Wales. The official Leitch report on traffic planning, published that month, was a scathing attack on the Government's traffic forecasting methods, fully vindicating FoE's long-running onslaught on the Department of Transport. In April 1978 FoE published the *Bicycle Planning Book*, which at once became a specialised bestseller among local planning authorities, not only in the UK but internationally. In June 1978 Mike Oldfield played a benefit concert for FoE and the whales, to an audience of 3,000.

In September FoE prosecuted an importer of the hawksbill turtle under the Endangered Species Act. The case was lost on a technicality but prompted changes in the law to close loopholes. In January 1979 FoE won its first such case, against an importer trying to sell a leopard skin illegally imported into the UK. In November 1978 FoE laid the foundations for similar legal challenges in another area, with the publication of *Polluters Pay* by FoE's lawyer Richard Macrory, an action guide to the Control of Pollution Act. In February 1979 FoE won its case against an application for a 'hypermarket' in Nottingham, which would have depended entirely on cars for its custom.

On the energy front FoE had gained national recognition for its commitment to energy conservation. FoE Durham had pioneered the idea of using funds from the Manpower Services Commission to hire unemployed youngsters and put them to work insulating the homes of pensioners and others in damp, draughty dwellings. Soon many local FoE groups were running insulation programmes, so successfully that the Department of the Environment endorsed the approach in a circular to local authorities, and Ministers speaking in the House of Commons acknowledged the value of FoE's contribution. In January 1978 100 FoE groups staged conservation events. Poland Street published *Rethink Electric* by Czech Conroy, and followed it with *Torness: Keep It Green* by Mike Flood, both stressing the existing surplus of power station capacity and challenging the necessity for new plant. The economic arguments against nuclear investment were thus just beginning to come to the fore, when the accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania catapulted safety back into the headlines.

Earlier that year, in March, FoE declared itself in favour of one kind of *Economic Growth*, by publishing, under this title, its allotments campaign manual. British Rail attempted to ban bikes on Southern Region, but dropped the ban in the face of protests by FoE and other cycling groups. The informal cyclists' coalition went on the offensive in June, as 6,000 people got on their bikes to 'Reclaim the Road', leaving a Trafalgar Square rally in a torrent that filled Whitehall from side-to-side and end-to-end for half an hour, to the fury of its four-wheeled presumptive owners. A month later FoE was back in Trafalgar Square, as 12,000 people gathered to Save the Whale. By this time FoE's campaign for a ban on the import of sperm oil had massive all-party support in Parliament, and even the IWC was at last giving ground. The UK Government agreed to press for an EEC ban on all whale products; and the IWC declared the Indian Ocean a whale sanctuary.

In the early weeks of the new Conservative Government, FoE people met with several Ministers, including those in the Department of Energy, and prepared an invited briefing on the role of private generation of electricity. But the Government's nuclear fixation soon became evident, culminating in its statement of December 1979 calling for 10 PWRs to be ordered by 1992. FoE responded by launching in March 1980 a five-year campaign of opposition, kicked off by a 'Harrisburg Day' rally bringing 15,000 people to Trafalgar Square, and by publication of Mike Flood's popular polemic *The Big Risk*. The new Parliamentary Select Committee on Energy undertook hearings on the Government's nuclear policy statement; FoE prepared written and oral evidence. The Select Committee's report, in February 1981, endorsed and reiterated many of the points put forward by FoE. The following month FoE in turn published *The Pressurized Water Reactor: A Critique of the Government's Nuclear Power Programme*.

In June 1980 Friends went on safari down Knightsbridge, led by a hunter in a solar topee, in search of striped and spotted cats and other threatened species in the windows of the fashionable stores. Vigorous FoE lobbying helped to bring about EEC agreement to ban most whale products. In September FoE challenged the Government's failure to protect the otter in Scotland; in December the Government accepted FoE's case. In February 1981 FoE published *Paradise Lost: the Destruction of Britain's Wildlife Habitats*, by Czech Conroy with an introduction by David Bellamy.

Other campaigns likewise rolled on; and in May 1981 FoE UK celebrated its tenth anniversary. By this time FoE had 17,000 supporters, 250 local groups, and an annual budget of 9300,000. Among the 24 national FoE organizations affiliated to Friends of the Earth International, FoE UK was one of the oldest, largest and most successful. But all was far from well. The effects of tight finances and over-extended resources had contributed to some internal friction. Some people even wondered whether, a decade old, FoE had outlived its usefulness - whether the Friends should agree to go their separate ways.

Matters came to a head at a special conference in October 1981, with FoE Birmingham, one of the strongest local groups, as hosts. Poland Street staff, Board members, and representatives from local groups all over the country convened a meeting that all knew would be crucial. Memories of the acrimony that had tainted recent coordinators' conferences made many participants acutely apprehensive. Would this be the weekend when Friends became foes?

The discussions were intense; few punches were pulled. But the results astonished even the most cynical participants. In two days of deliberations Friends of the Earth created a complete new structure for the organization. The local groups would be invited to elect members to the Board. The Board, in formulating FoE policy and in staffing the new FoE Ltd office, would thus be responsible to the local groups. The concept had to be taken back to the groups, discussed, modified and endorsed. Difficult decisions remained. But it meant a new era for the Friends. They had arrived in

Birmingham wondering whether a decade of effort was coming to an end. They left feeling that a decade of effort was just beginning - and that, whatever the problems to come, Friends of the Earth would meet them head on. It was the reaffirmation of a beautiful Friendship.

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