

COALITION BUILDING BETWEEN NATIVE AMERICAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN OPPOSITION TO DEVELOPMENT

The Case of the New Los Padres Dam Project

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Coalitions between Native American and environmental organizations in opposition to ecologically destructive projects have been an important recent development in environmental actions. This article explores one such coalition, which was organized in resistance to a large dam project, the New Los Padres Dam, planned for the Carmel River, California. Social movement theorists have, in the past, emphasized the importance of material resources for the success of social movements (the resource mobilization perspective) and more recently, have placed attention on symbolic resources (ideas and beliefs) as key factors in mobilizing support for a movement. In the coalition studied here, the significance of traditional Native American philosophy (the indigenist vision) as a symbolic resource both for Native American and non-native activists is investigated, and the respective contributions of Native American and environmental organizations to the struggle against the New Los Padres Dam are outlined, exploring both collaborations and differing strategies.

In recent decades, Native American and environmental organizations have found considerable common ground in the shared goal of preserving wild and relatively wild areas from environmentally destructive development. In his study of native and environmentalist struggles against multinational corporations, Al Gedicks (1993) states:

The integral connections between native survival and environmental protection have become apparent to even the most conservative environmental organizations. Now the assertion of native land rights takes place in the context of an environmental movement that is prepared to appreciate the knowledge native people have about their own environment and to accept native leadership in environmental battles. (p. 203)

Gedicks documents a number of coalitions between indigenous people's organizations and environmental groups, such as the struggle by Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and Wisconsin environmentalists to prevent Kennecott Copper Corporation from constructing a massive open-pit copper mine in Northern Wisconsin (Gedicks, 1993). More recently, Native American organizations and environmental groups are working closely together to protect Ward Valley, California, from becoming the site of a low level nuclear waste dump. Ward Valley is considered a sacred place by Native Americans, and the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance has been

working together with non-native support groups and environmental justice organizations, such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, and the California Communities Against Toxics coalition, to prevent the opening of the radioactive dump there (Woodward, 1998). The coming together of Native American and environmental movements is also illustrated by the fact that the Sierra Club's (1996) magazine recently devoted an entire issue to Native Americans and environmental movements. In this issue, prominent Native American activist Winona La Duke (1996) wrote about the growth of native environmentalism, saying:

We have close to 200 grassroots Native organizations in North America resisting the environmental destruction of our homelands. Most of these groups are small, perhaps five or ten volunteers working out of their homes. Many operate in remote areas without phones or cars. . . . Despite our meager resources, we are winning many hard-fought battles at the local level. (p. 38)

In trying to describe and understand social movements, sociologists have drawn on the resource mobilization perspective, which focuses on the ability of organizations to make use of resources such as money, the availability of office space and communication equipment, access to professional organizing, administrative and legal expertise, political and media connections, and other assets as the most significant factor in explaining the success of a social movement (Gamson, 1975; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). Recently, the resource mobilization perspective has been criticized by authors drawing on European new social movement theory (see Habermas, 1981; Touraine, 1981, 1988) for failing to give enough attention to the role of ideas, beliefs, and counter-discursive language and behavior (Ingalsbee, 1996; McClurg-Mueller, 1992). Carol McClurg-Mueller (1992) has argued that the resource mobilization approach focused on institutional change at the expense of personal change and that to understand social movements, it is also necessary to understand the beliefs and meanings that are created and interpreted by individuals within the micromobilization context. In his study of Earth First! activism, Timothy Ingalsbee (1996) has illustrated that the character of this environmental movement cannot be captured by simply attending to the mobilization of monetary and material resources; symbolic resources, meaning "socially constructed cognitive frameworks" (p. 264), or beliefs and ideas that provide an explanatory vision that guides action and that are represented and communicated through counterdiscursive symbolic means such as costume and theatrical direct actions, are also important. "The social-psychological aspects of movements are among the most sociologically interesting and qualitatively new elements of contemporary activism, particularly in radical movements such as Earth First!" (Ingalsbee, 1996, p. 264). Where do these symbolic meaning resources and ideational materials (Tarrow, 1992), which are so important for creating commitment and motivation among social movement activists, derive from, and how are they communicated and actualized within the micromobilization context, the face-to-face interactions between movement activists?

One source of symbolic resources for environmental movements today is the *indigenist vision* (Churchill, 1993, p. 441), the traditional belief systems and practices of the native peoples of America. In his article, "I am Indigenist," Native American writer and activist Ward Churchill (1993) defines himself as indigenist in outlook, meaning that he

draws upon the traditions—the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of values—evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over. This is the basis upon which I not only advance critiques of, but conceptualize alternatives to the present social, political, economic and philosophical status quo. (p. 403)

Although it may be contended that there are numerous and very different cultures within the indigenous peoples of America, Churchill responds that there is also much internal variety within Western civilization, and that the differences between indigenous peoples have been exaggerated and exploited by colonizers as part of a strategy of domination. What characterizes the indigenist vision compared to the outlook associated with the dominant society? Churchill refers to the work of Mexican anthropologist, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1981), who writes:

Fundamentally, the difference can be summed up in terms of [humanity's] relationship with the natural world. For the West . . . the concept of nature is that of an enemy to be overcome, with man as boss on a cosmic scale. . . . The converse is true in Indian civilization, where [humans are] part of an indivisible cosmos and fully aware of [their] harmonious relationship with the universal order of nature. (as cited in Churchill, 1993, p. 409)

Native American beliefs about the relationship to the natural world focus on connection and communication. The natural world is not seen as separate from the human world but as animate and related to humans. Winona La Duke talks about how the Chippewa have a philosophical value system—*mino bimaatisiwin*—that guides relations with others, with plants, with animals, and with the ecosystem as a whole, based on principles of reciprocity. She has written that “ ‘the resources’ of the ecosystem, whether corn, rocks, or deer, are viewed as ‘animate’, and as such gifts from the Creator. Thus one could not take life without a reciprocal offering” (cited in Gedicks, 1993, pp. x-xi). Because of this relationship to the natural world, it becomes, according to Arthur Versluis (1993), “a theatre of religious revelation. . . . birds, animals, plants, stars, all can have a spiritual significance. Naturally the same is true of the landscape itself” (p. 67).

In the context of actions to protect the environment, the spiritual significance of the land is thus often a prime motivating factor of Native American resistance movements. In the Ward Valley case mentioned earlier, the area is seen as sacred because of its proximity to Spirit Mountain, the birthplace of the ancestors of the tribes in the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance, because the entire valley is a spirit path (along which spirits travel), and because it is home to the desert tortoise, which is revered as a brother. These beliefs may be seen as fanciful, irrational, childish, or crazy by members of the dominant society, but they are extremely important, deeply held, and passionately embraced by followers of the indigenist vision, beliefs for which in many cases they are prepared to die. With the increase of coalitions between environmental organizations and Native American groups to resist particular development or industrial projects that threaten wild lands, these beliefs and the practices through which they are communicated are taking on an increased significance as symbolic resources that provide psychological empowerment to movement activists, both native and non-native.

The opposition movement that was organized to a proposed large dam, the New Los Padres Dam, on the Carmel River in Monterey County, California, is examined here as an example of this contemporary alliance building between Native Ameri-

can and environmental organizations in resistance to development projects and of the role of the indigenist vision and Native American leadership in such coalition movements.

DAM CONSTRUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Dam-construction projects have increasingly come to be seen both as major environmental despoilers and as threats to indigenous peoples and cultures and, therefore, have become the target of powerful opposition coalitions. At the same time, the building of large dams has been presented by their promoters and admirers as a miracle of modern engineering and also as a metaphor for the triumph of human society over the unpredictable forces of nature. Giant dams in themselves may be viewed as products of what Leslie Sklair (1994) calls *cultural-ideological transnational practices* in which a central assumption is that the domination and control of nature is an essential, even a spiritual, duty. This, of course, is more or less the complete antithesis of the indigenist vision described above. Patrick McCully (1996), who is campaigns director for the California-based International Rivers Network, part of an emerging international anti-dam movement, has identified several recurrent ideological themes in the arguments of dam-building corporations and government bureaucracies. These include the ideas that undammed rivers are wasted, that wild or turbulent rivers should be tamed, that rivers have no value unless they are controlled, and that dams are comparable to temples or other places of worship. Dam promoters see their projects as improving on an imperfect nature. Camille Dagenais, former head of the Canadian dam-building firm SNC, once stated, "In my view, nature is awful and what we do is cure it" (cited in McCully, 1996, p. 47). As McCully points out, "When a dam is given such a powerful symbolic role, its economic and technical rationale and potential negative impacts fade into insignificance in the decision-making process" (p. 237). However, the potential negative impacts of dams are considerable. Dams, far from being modern marvels, have a huge human and environmental cost. McCully estimates that 30 to 60 million people worldwide have been forced from their lands as a result of dam construction (McCully, 1996). There has also been a devastating impact on wildlife; for example, in the United States, dam construction is the main reason two fifths of freshwater fish are endangered or extinct (McCully, 1996). Also in the United States, irrigation water from major dam projects has enabled direct beneficiaries to grow cheaper crops but at the expense of established producers who are no longer able to compete. Richard L. Berkman and W. Kip Viscusi (1973), in their study of the Bureau of Reclamation's dam projects in the Western United States, point out that federally subsidized agriculture has made fortunes for growers in California while putting smaller scale farmers in the North and South of the United States out of business. They conclude that "all Reclamation vegetables . . . have brought substantial harm to previously existing American farms" (Berkman & Viscusi, 1973, p. 22).

This leads to a significant insight about the human cost of large dam construction. As Donald Worster (1983) puts it, "the domination of nature leads inescapably to the domination of some people by others" (p. 169). The giant dams that supposedly control wild and wasted rivers and put them to work for human society are usually devices for expropriating common resources from some users and turning them over to others. Patrick McCully (1996) writes:

The domination of rivers is one of the clearest indications of the link between the control of nature and the control of people. Large dams are not built and operated by all the society but by an elite with bureaucratic, political or economic power. The dams give this elite the ability to direct water for their own benefit, depriving the previous users of some or all of their access to riverine resources. (p. 24)

Certainly, in the case of the New Los Padres Dam Project, a key issue raised by its opponents was the question of who would truly benefit from the project—the community as a whole or a small group of developers and other business interests, at the expense of the further loss of common riverine resources in particular places that were of outstanding significance for the descendants of the indigenous population of the area, the Esselen.

The impact of large dam construction on the indigenous peoples of North America includes numerous examples of the expropriation of common riverine resources for the benefit of powerful economic interests. Dams frequently threaten not only the natural environment, but also those for whom the natural environment is the source of sustenance, material and spiritual. In the case of Hydro-Quebec's James Bay Phase II Project (McCutcheon, 1991), the costs, as Gedicks (1993) points out, "would fall heavily on both the region's native people and the delicate ecosystems that the natives depend on for their economy and culture" (p. 16). Contamination of fish by methyl mercury, one consequence of damming the rivers, threatens core cultural values of the Cree. It is not only that the fish are a source of food for the Cree, but also that fish and fishing hold a fundamental cultural and spiritual significance for them. "Telling us we'll be OK if we don't eat fish is like telling us we will be OK if we just cut our own legs off," commented a Cree elder, Andrew Natachequan (cited in Verhovek, 1992, p. 20). Environmental racism means not only that the costs of environmental depredation tend to be borne disproportionately by disadvantaged, lower-income, minority groups in society (see, for example, Bullard, 1990, 1993; Pinderhughes, 1996; United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987), but also that the culture, especially the spiritual values and meanings, of native populations is threatened because environmental destruction is simultaneously the destruction of that which sustains the native culture, namely, natural places and wildlife. For natives, these are not so much resources as animate and communicative presences and beings that are the foundation of their culture and their spiritual well-being. Environmental racism is not only a health issue, but also a mental health issue. Gedicks (1993) quotes Matthew Coon-Come, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Cree, as saying:

We think of these projects as a form of racism. Our way of life, our lands, our communities, and our people would be sacrificed if these projects are allowed to go ahead. . . . We call this environmental racism because of the vast environmental impacts of these projects and because the review processes are not properly implemented when the development occurs on indigenous lands. (pp. 18-19)

Similar sentiments about the lack of proper review and the washing away of Native American interests and concerns were expressed by Esselen representatives in their opposition to the New Los Padres Project (see, for example, Escobar-Wyer, cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b).

There are many other examples of environmental racism in the history of water development in North America, where places of sacred and material significance for Native American populations have been inundated for the common good (see

Berkman & Viscusi, 1973; McCutcheon, 1991; Reisner, 1993; Versluis, 1993). From the Native Americans' perspective, the fact that it is their lands that are sacrificed while White settlements and places of significance and value to White Americans are preserved is further evidence of a historical pattern of the violation of and disregard for Native American rights by the dominant society. In their survey of the Bureau of Reclamation's water projects in the Western United States, Berkman and Viscusi (1973) conclude:

The Bureau of Reclamation has never tried to serve Indians, because it has never needed to. Traditionally the servant of the large Western land and water magnates seeking government water to enhance their economic power, the Bureau of Reclamation has always viewed Indians and their water rights as obstacles in the path of Reclamation projects. (p. 151)

Within the context of this history of environmental racism, trampled rights, and native distrust of major water projects, the New Los Padres Dam was first proposed in 1989 as a solution to long-term water problems on the Monterey Peninsula in California. As soon as they became aware of it, the indigenous peoples of the area, the Esselen, began a passionate and outraged resistance and together with predominantly White environmental organizations, formed an effective coalition opposing the dam project. This coalition was ultimately successful in at least temporarily derailing the large dam proposal; the story of the alliance, and in particular, the role of the indigenist vision and Native American leadership in the alliance, is the focus of the research reported here.

THE NEW LOS PADRES DAM PROJECT

California, including the Monterey Bay area, experienced one of the most prolonged droughts in recent history during the years 1987 through 1992. During this period, mandatory water rationing was introduced on the Monterey Peninsula. In addition, because of overpumping of groundwater from the Carmel River basin by the Cal-Am Water Company, the primary water supplier in the area, the Carmel River dried up in the summer and fall, even during wet years, resulting in damage to the riparian environment and to the steelhead fish run. In response to this situation, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (the water district), which is the elected local regulatory agency legislated to manage water resources and promote water conservation, defined its mission as developing a long-term water-supply project that would provide an adequate water supply in drought years and that would restore year-round streamflow to the Carmel River to repair the environmental damage that had occurred. A number of water-supply alternatives were looked at, including a small seawater desalination plant. On June 8, 1993, voters rejected the proposed desalination plant, and the Water District focused its energies on planning and promoting a new dam on the Carmel River. The existing dam, the Los Padres Dam, had been built in 1948 to 1949, but this dam and its reservoir would disappear under the proposed new reservoir, approximately 10 times larger, held back by the 274-foot high, roller-compacted, concrete dam, the New Los Padres Dam. According to the definition employed by the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD), the leading dam-industry association, this would be a large dam, one of 40,000 worldwide, of which the majority (35,000) have been constructed since 1950 (McCully, 1996). Both its size and its environmental impact were to be of considerable proportions. To get state and federal

approval and public support for this large project, the water district began a lengthy process of clearing the planned dam through various regulatory and legal hurdles, a process that gathered speed through 1994 and 1995, the period covered by this research. Some of the most significant stages in this process included completing an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), of which two draft documents were published in 1991 and 1993, followed by the Final EIR/EIS, a 1,700-page document that was publicly distributed in March 1994. In addition, the dam required a lengthy and extensively documented application for the so-called 404 Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers (the federal agency that would construct the dam), which was also completed in 1994. The dam project also had to fulfill the requirements of Section 106 on the National Historic Preservation Act and had to receive a permit from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). All of these requirements were opportunities for the opposition to present their arguments against the dam and were used as such. Throughout 1993, 1994, and 1995, at a number of public meetings, during consultations with various agencies, and in communications to the Water District, opposition groups and individuals made their case against the dam. In addition to the EIR/EIS investigations, the water district also initiated an archaeological survey of the area affected by the dam project, conducted by a local firm called Archaeological Consulting. Their preliminary report was released in 1992, and their Phase II report, which was more detailed, was published in April 1993. These reports were also opportunities for descendants of the indigenous population, the Esselen, to present something of their case against the dam.

In 1994, a large number of state and federal agencies expressed support for the dam. In February, the Environmental Protection Agency declared that it was the least environmentally damaging practical alternative. In May, the six cities in the water district passed unanimous resolutions supporting permits for the project. In November, the California Department of Fish and Game testified in favor of the project at hearings at the State Water Resources Control Board, largely because they believed that it would benefit the steelhead fish run in the Carmel River. In December, the California Coastal Commission voted unanimously to certify that the project complies with the Coastal Zone Management Act. In 1995, with permit approval from the Army Corps of Engineers, approval from the State Water Resources Control Board, and completion of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act process, all the New Los Padres Dam required was approval by the voters of Measure C on the November 8, 1995 ballot, which would authorize funding for the dam. Throughout 1995, opposition efforts were therefore focused on building up resistance to the dam with the goal of achieving a rejection of Measure C by the voters in November.

The New Los Padres Dam Project was the stated mission of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District and was also obviously strongly supported by the Cal-Am Water Company. In addition, prodevelopment and growth interests, both in the area and from outside, contributed funding to the campaign to convince voters to approve the dam in the November election. The biggest spender in the period leading up to the election was a real estate interest group called Issues Mobilization Political Action Committee, based in Los Angeles, whereas local support came from a large construction company (which would probably be involved in building roads and other support structures around the dam), local real estate interests, and the hotel industry. By October 21, the last reporting period to the Monterey County Elections Department prior to the election, supporters had outspent opponents by 2 to 1, collecting \$107,215, whereas the opposition alliance

had raised \$41,255, the largest amount coming from the local chapter of the Sierra Club (Wolf, 1995). Who were the groups and individuals who organized the opposition to this large dam project, what was the nature of their alliance, and what kind of ideational materials did they draw on to mobilize resistance to the New Los Padres Dam Project? These questions were addressed in the research reported here.

METHODS

The data employed here were collected in an 18-month period of fieldwork on the New Los Padres Dam controversy, which began in the Fall of 1994. Three main sources of data were used: (a) archival and documentary materials, (b) in-depth interviews with 12 people involved in the dam dispute and/or the Native American cultural renewal movement, and (c) observation and participant observation of relevant community events and actions.

Because the dam project involved extensive planning and research by the water district and the Army Corps of Engineers and was a highly contentious project widely reported in the press, a large amount of documentary material was available for study. This included the water district's 404 Permit Application, their Final Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) that included letters from both supporters and opponents of the dam, and the Phase II Cultural Resources Investigations Report submitted to the water district by Archaeological Consulting. Other documentary materials that were helpful came from the many reports published in the local print media (the *Monterey County Herald* and the *Carmel Valley Pine Cone*) and the newsletter of the local chapter of the Sierra Club, *The Ventana*. The documentary materials helped provide background information, a chronology of key events, and an overview of the conflict as well as written testimony from proponents and opponents of the dam project which illuminated the character of pivotal issues in the dispute.

In-depth, focused interviews (Merton & Kendall, 1946) were conducted with 12 individuals who played public roles in the planning of the dam and resistance to it or who were involved in Native American cultural renewal activities and who included the water district's senior planner, the chair of the Sierra Club subcommittee dealing with the dam, a leader of the Citizens for Alternative Water Solutions Group, a prominent local environmental activist, the attorney for the Esselen tribe of Monterey County, the tribal chairperson of the Esselen tribe, the archaeologist conducting the cultural resources investigations, a Native American leader in the cultural renewal movement, and non-native supporters of Native American organizations and actions. Interviews ranged in length from half an hour to 2 hours, and initial interviews were followed up by additional interviews up to, in one case, a total of eight interviews, so that altogether the data base included material from 24 interviews. The focused interview is an open-ended approach to social research, allowing the preconceptions of the researcher to be challenged by the information gathered as well as providing the opportunity for the informant to put ideas, concerns, and accounts of events in their own terms (May, 1997). Notes were taken during the interview or immediately afterwards, but a decision was made not to use a tape recorder to facilitate the building of trust with the interviewee. The focused interview was chosen as a methodology because one goal of the research was to gain an understanding of the ideational materials and symbolic resources (socially constructed cognitive frameworks) being drawn on and constituted by participants in the dispute. The focused (sometimes called *unstructured*) interview offers

opportunities for the researcher to be much more flexible during the interview than is the case with a standardized schedule, thus enabling a more subtle grasp of the informant's "reality-constituting interpretive practice" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 262).

The interview, as Aaron Cicourel (1964) has pointed out, is a social interaction whose features affect the quality of data generated. There may be a tension between the need to develop and maintain the social interaction and the need to acquire social-scientific data. In focused interviews, a delicate balance needs to be established between the social and the sociological, as too ruthless a pursuit of the latter puts the former at risk. Especially when researching a sensitive topic (Renzetti & Lee, 1993), and certainly Native American interpretive practice (which has often been attacked as crazy) would fall in this category, the researcher needs to work at establishing and maintaining trust, which may at times entail forgoing the opportunity to gather information.

The process of establishing trust with informants was aided by the observation and participant-observation research, which additionally provided information about Native American and environmental organizations' strategies and symbolic resources. Over the 18-month period of the field research, I attended as an observer public meetings about the New Los Padres Dam project organized by local environmental groups and activists and participated in Native American-led actions including prayer circles at sacred sites, a sacred hike along the Carmel River, visits to sites affected by the dam, and a traditional feast. Additionally, I observed a Native American-organized gathering opposing the dam that included ceremonial dancing and talks by local Native American leaders and participated in Native American sweat-lodge ceremonies. My participation in and observation of these events helped provide an understanding of the way in which participants interpreted and ascribed meaning to unfolding events as well as an opportunity to record significant features of these actions. Participation also gave me access to informants (for example, non-native supporters were interviewed at the traditional feast) and allowed me to develop a rapport with them. Participating in sweat-lodge ceremonies and prayer circles assisted in establishing an intersubjective understanding with Native American spokespersons, because it demonstrated that whatever conceptual knowledge I had of the indigenist viewpoint was augmented by direct experience and as Native Americans put it to me, what is known with the mind is only part of the story. Therefore, my participation in ceremonies helped the process of building trust and gaining access, which made the interviews possible, besides giving me insight into the resources with which participants constitute and interpret experiences and events. As Adler and Adler (1987) point out, field research may involve the researcher in roles in the social setting studied that range on a continuum from "the empathic but less involved participant who establishes a peripheral membership role within the group, to the fully committed convert or prior participant" (p. 8). In this research, my role was at the peripheral end of that continuum, with the resultant advantage mentioned by Adler and Adler of being able to maintain academic self-identity, although at a cost of the access to unconstrained data associated with the complete membership role (Adler & Adler, 1987).

The research data were thus gathered in a number of settings, using a number of methods, and although there are important stories to tell about gaining access and building trust, the focus of this article is more what John Van Maanen (1988) would describe as a realist tale in which the field-worker "simply vanishes behind a steady descriptive narrative" (p. 46). This is so because I think the struggle against the

New Los Padres Dam is an important story to tell because of what it says about the role of Native American beliefs and leadership in environmental battles today.

OPPOSITION TO THE DAM

Environmental and Neighborhood Organizations

Part of the successful opposition came from individuals who, although not acting completely alone, initiated oppositional actions and events, such as letters written to the water district or the Army Corps of Engineers protesting the dam, under their own auspices. One prominent opponent was a local environmental activist named Noel Mapstead who, in 1994, brought litigation against the Cal-Am Water Company in the Monterey County, accusing them of illegally pumping groundwater from the Carmel River basin, and who organized a public meeting in Monterey in November 1994, addressed by nationally known anti-dam activist David Brower. Organizations and groups opposing the dam included the Cachagua Area Property Owners Association, which represented residents in the area where the dam would be constructed and was effective at providing funding for the opposition's campaign; Citizens for Alternative Water Solutions, which was a grassroots citizens' action organization with overlapping membership with both the Sierra Club and the Esselen tribe, whose strategy was to oppose the dam by arguing that less costly conservation techniques would solve the water problems faced by the Water District; and the local Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, which set up a New Los Padres Dam subcommittee chaired by Don Gruber who organized an extensive publicity campaign against the dam, including public forums and advertising in the local print media, and who also did research into the validity of the water district's claims and alternative water supply solutions. The aboriginal inhabitants of the region, the Esselen, whose descendants still live in areas neighboring the proposed reservoir as well as in the Salinas Valley and in San Jose, less than 50 miles from the dam site, also provided a highly active resistance to the New Los Padres Dam project.

The Esselen, the Dam, and the Cultural Renewal Process

At the time of the arrival of the Spanish Empire in the Monterey Bay area in 1769, the Esselen inhabited the mountainous area, now known as the Ventana Wilderness, on the fringes of which the dam was to be constructed. Esselen village and burial sites exist on the land that would be inundated by the New Los Padres Dam reservoir, and radiocarbon dating at sites elsewhere in the Ventana Wilderness indicates they were occupied at least 4,630 years ago (Breschini & Haversat, 1993). Genealogical research by the archaeologists who carried out the Phase I and Phase II cultural resources investigations for the water district confirmed that descendants of Esselen who were at the Carmel Mission still reside in the region, and one of their spokespersons, Tom Little Bear Nason, told me that they numbered 80 people (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, February 23, 1995). "We are small, but we're coming back," he said a number of times at public meetings. The Esselen were represented by two organizations, both of which were recognized by the water district in their efforts to fulfill requirements for the 404 Permit and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Esselen tribe of Monterey County had

close associations with the immediate neighborhood of the dam because some of their most prominent members, the Nason family, owned a 500-acre homestead of mostly mountain land a few miles upstream of the dam site. When they first began to communicate their opposition to the dam to the Water District and the Army Corps of Engineers, their tribal chairperson was Fred Nason, who died in 1993, at which time Tom Little Bear Nason took on that position. Another grouping, the Esselen nation, affiliated with the United Tribal Families of the Central Coast of California, was chaired by Loretta Escobar-Wyer. Both organizations protested against the construction of the dam and both for the same basic reason, that it would inundate places sacred and in other ways significant to the Esselen, but there were some differences of approach and emphasis.

Neither organization was federally recognized as an Indian Tribe, and lack of federal recognition was an important issue for both groupings and for other tribes on the central coast of California, which predated the dam project. Historically, the lack of recognition is connected to the fact that for a long time, many central coast tribes were believed by official and academic opinion to have become extinct. No less an authority than a renowned ethnographer, A. L. Kroeber (1925), pronounced that the Esselen were “the first to become entirely extinct, and in consequence are now as good as unknown . . . a name rather than a people of whom anything can be said” (p. 544). After the initial decimation of the Native American population in the 50 years following the establishment of the Spanish Missions in the 1770s, the surviving indigenous population, sometimes married to White settlers, elected to conceal their Indian roots. Nason recounted to me how the Esselen, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hid their origins: “They hunted us down. So we were told, ‘Don’t tell them you’re an Indian, tell them you’re Mexican’ ” (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). This concealment continued into the childhood of present-day Native American leaders on the central coast of California. At an Esselen-organized public meeting, the leader of the Humaya Native Dancers, who performed traditional dances at the gathering, paused during a dance to tell the audience about his childhood: “I knew I was an Indian, but that’s all I knew. I couldn’t understand how blonde and blue-eyed people could say they were Native Californians. . . . Because one time we were ashamed of who we really are” (Humaya dancer, personal communication, November 3, 1995). Nason informed me that “in the eighties, we were nonexistent . . . but we’ve been living here, holding on to our tradition” (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, December 29, 1995). The influence of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the area was to help initiate a cultural revitalization process among central coast tribes, which included a push for federal recognition and deliberate actions to renew and rediscover traditional tribal cultures. Not only the Esselen, but also other central coast tribes such as the Ohlone, Rumsen, Salinan, and Mutsen are all active in this cultural revitalization movement, and there is considerable coordination of activities and cooperation between tribal leaders (for example, on March 25, 1995, tribal leaders from these groups gathered together to discuss several issues local Native Americans were facing, including the New Los Padres Dam). The opposition to the dam was thus a part of this broader cultural renewal effort that involved the other local tribes and their applications for federal recognition, which had been bogged down in federal bureaucracy since 1978. One of the differences between the Esselen tribe of Monterey County and the Esselen nation was that the Esselen tribe, chaired by Nason, seemed to place less value on federal recognition. “We don’t want to have a Tribal Council. Its all about protecting the land. . . . We don’t need a piece of paper” (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, December 29, 1995).

The fact that the Esselen were engaged in this cultural revitalization process and that there were gaps in their cultural tradition made a questioning of their authenticity a likely tactic to undercut the credibility of their testimony about the traditional and sacred places, although the genealogical research carried out by the archaeological consultants clearly showed that the members of the two groupings were in fact what they said they were, descendants of the Esselen. Nason, early in our first meeting, told me that he got tired of constantly being disbelieved and of having to prove his authenticity. "You're put on trial continually. . . . We're being studied to see if we're Esselen." He let me know that it was very painful to be repeatedly examined and questioned and that they were private people, but now there was a giant exposure. "Why do I have to prove I'm Native American?" he asked me (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). For the Esselen, one of the struggles connected with the New Los Padres Dam Project was to be believed and taken seriously when they talked of the significance of the places threatened with destruction by construction of the dam. Both in interviews for this research and in written comments submitted to official agencies during the review process, Esselen leaders complained of the lack of understanding and respect accorded to the views of the native population.

Non-Native Supporters

The Esselen groups as activists in the anti-dam movement were also joined by many non-native supporters who participated in the Esselen organized anti-dam actions. Such non-native supporters are also significant in other Native American environmental actions, such as the occupation of Ward Valley. In the course of this research, I interviewed some of the non-native supporters about their reasons for their involvement with Native American activities. Their reasoning illustrated the significance of Native American symbolic resources as motivating ideas and meaningful cognitive frameworks for activists. One activist, Elizabeth Williams (personal communication, October 15, 1995), described that when she heard Native American leaders speak, "I thought, this is how I always felt, oh yeah, this is home." A Jewish man, Mark Hershon, talked about how he went to Jewish Sunday School, but that it did not have an essential message for him. "There's a purity to what Native Americans teach. I'm attracted to a universal message—no sense of ownership of the land. Our connection to the land is the most important message, and more important, we are all connected to each other" (M. Hershon, personal communication, November 3, 1995). A Latino male, Steve Castaneda, talked about how "Hispanics are getting in touch with their indigenous roots" and that Hispanic Americans have a lot of trouble figuring out their identity. "What about the first 5,000 years? . . . The kernel is the sacred land. We're poopooing Native American religion, but I've been up there [the sacred Esselen sites] with Little Bear and I feel it" (S. Castaneda, personal communication, November 3, 1995). These non-native supporters helped in the organization of Esselen-led anti-dam actions. It should be apparent that for at least these individuals interviewed, but presumably also for other non-native supporters, Native American teachings informed their actions to oppose environmentally destructive development and were also significant in constructing their sense of identity and their outlooks on life.

The status of non-native supporters of Native American organizations and actions is controversial. For some, they represent the frivolous appropriation of Native American culture. Nason mentioned how AIM leaders were saying, "They took our land. Now they want our religion," and went on to say, "I've argued against

that. The prophecies tell us that the Red, Black, Yellow, and White nations will come together" (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, December 29, 1995). In central coast of California cultural renewal activities and in the struggle against the New Los Padres Dam project, a strategy of deliberately reaching out to non-natives is being followed. Anne Marie Sayers (personal communication, November 3, 1995), prominent Costanoan/Mutsun tribal leader, stated at a Native American organized anti-dam gathering, "We are allowing people to become aware of our existence. We educate people of our existence. We are all Native Americans, now let us unite and become one earth and one people."

Esselen groups, with their non-native supporters and environmental and neighbourhood organizations, formed an effective coalition that defeated the proposed New Los Padres Dam. However, the arguments of the predominantly environmentalist groups and the Native American groups differed in important respects. Whereas the Esselen were opposed to building a dam in this particular place because of the threat to their sacred sites, the environmental groups were opposed to any dam, on the grounds that increasing the water supply would lead to more development and growth on the Monterey Peninsula. What were some of the pivotal issues in the struggle against the New Los Padres Dam Project? One of the most fundamental disputes was the issue of growth.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE NEW LOS PADRES DAM OPPOSITION MOVEMENT

Environmental Dam or Developers' Dam?

The water district, following the voters' rejection of the desalination plant in 1993, concluded that there was no alternative solution to the peninsula's water problems other than the construction of the dam. The features of the dam that they chose to emphasize in public meetings and communications to the media were that it would provide a secure water supply in times of drought and that it would be environmentally beneficial. When I met with Henrietta Stern, senior planner for the water district, she emphasized to me a number of times that it was an environmental dam. "The key is restoring stream flow in the Carmel River," she told me (H. Stern, personal communication, January 18, 1995). In an article published in a local newspaper, Stern (1994) made this argument about the benefits of the dam:

How will the dam affect the environment? The NLP project would provide year-round stream flow to the Carmel River Lagoon [at the mouth of the river] in 75 percent of water years. It would benefit about 24 miles of riverbank vegetation and wildlife, steelhead habitat, recreational and aesthetic resources, and the Carmel River Lagoon in nearly all years. (p. 6)

However, the environmental benefits of the dam were simply not believed by the Sierra Club and Citizens for Alternative Waters Solutions (CAWS) activists, and they sought to publicly discredit them. In an interview with Gruber, chair of the Sierra Club's New Los Padres Dam subcommittee, he told me: "We're calling it the *developers' dam*. It'll lead to 14,000 new homes being built. In the drought years, they'll suck up the extra water that is supposed to restore the river. Every development around here is called an environmental development" (D. Gruber, personal communication, October 12, 1995). This last comment referred to the fact that in the Monterey Bay area, controlled-growth advocates and elected repre-

sentatives had been so successful in restricting development projects that such projects needed to be packaged in ways that made them more palatable to the public. Presenting them as environmental was one strategy; a similar manoeuvre, used elsewhere, was presenting them as promoting the performing arts (see Whitt, 1987). Richard Gendron (1996) has explored this approach in neighboring Santa Cruz County, which he described as “the developer’s canny tactic of using an arts-based growth strategy as a means of . . . driving a wedge into a progressive coalition that has successfully opposed every large-scale development in the previous 20 years” (p. 551). The Sierra Club and CAWS activists were not deceived by such canny tactics and focused on the growth potential of the dam. For them, it was unquestionably not an environmental dam. One of the Sierra Club campaigners, Arthur Mitteldorf (1995), wrote in the club’s local magazine:

Environmentally, the worst solution to the water shortage problem on the Monterey Peninsula is the proposed 24,000 acre feet New Los Padres Dam. It would provide excess water, that essential missing ingredient for sprawling growth. You can safely bet that it would not rescue the almost depleted steelhead population. (p. 7)

Gruber (1995a) wrote in the Sierra Club’s local newsletter, “We disbelieve the arguments that the flow from the dam would restore damage to the lower river” (p. 28), whereas another activist in the Sierra Club, Mark Langner (1995a), concluded, “The Water District’s interest in the environment is sudden and questionable. The proposed dam is definitely not an environmentally friendly project” (p. 4). Sierra Club and CAWS campaigners emphasized that the water district’s own Environmental Impact Report made clear the dam’s potential for growth. In that report, it states, “If the long-term water supply project is not built, growth that is now planned for the peninsula would be constrained . . . it is clear that expansion of the water supply system would remove one obstacle to district growth” (Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994a, chap. 19, p. 1). The additional water supply would make possible “roughly a 20 percent increase in housing, population and water demand” (Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994a, chap. 19, p. 5). It is not that the Sierra Club was against any development. Gruber told me, “Most everybody agrees we can’t just chop off and say nobody can come in, but we should have moderate, thoughtful development” (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). Their opposition to the dam was based on the belief that it would not result in thoughtful development and that, in Gruber’s words: “The first order of benefit was not to the river; the first order of benefit was to development” (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). On the basis of this analysis, the Sierra Club strategy in mobilizing opposition to the project was to emphasize the growth potential of the dam. The success of this strategy is illustrated by the fact that the latest dam proposal for the Carmel River (following the rejection of the New Los Padres Dam by voters) is being presented by the water district as the no-growth dam.

The Annual Death of the Carmel River

A second major dispute concerned the fact that the lower course of the Carmel River dries up every year, causing damage to vegetation and wildlife, including the steelhead fish run. For the Esselen, this was a desecration of the river, and it was also the reason for lawsuits complaints from both the Sierra Club and the California

Department of Fish and Game to the State Water Resources Control Board, arguing that the Cal-Am water company was illegally pumping out underflow of the Carmel River to supply its customers and that this unpermitted diversion was causing the death of the river. After lengthy hearings, the State Water Resources Control Board ruled on July 6, 1995, that Cal-Am was indeed illegally diverting the underflow and should seek alternative sources to reduce this diversion. This ruling was then used by the water district to argue that the only alternative source was the New Los Padres Dam, whereas the opposition pointed out that the diversion could be reduced in other ways to restore the streamflow, including increased conservation. Sierra Club, CAWS, and Esselen activists all pointed out that golf courses alone in the Carmel Valley used a full 8% of the river's water. In one action that involved a hike and horse ride organized by Native American leaders up the dried up streambed, Nason led participants up the river bank to stand on the edge of a verdant golf course. The scene involved a striking contrast between the Esselen, Rumsen, Salinan, and Ohlone riders with their headbands, feathers, buckskin shirts, traditional beads, and amulets and the affluent, White golfers traveling from golf green to golf green in their automatic golfing carts. On this action, Nason made the point a number of times to the participants, "They're playing games with our water." To restore stream flow to the Carmel River was a goal shared by all parties involved in the conflict, but the Native American and environmental groups opposing the dam argued that there were other ways to restore the Carmel River; for them, it was not so much a water supply problem as a water use problem, and it was what they saw the precious water being used for that fueled their opposition to the dam project.

The Sacred Sites of the Esselen

For the Esselen, the pivotal issue pertaining to the New Los Padres Dam was the destruction of their sacred places by the reservoir and dam construction. Sierra Club and CAWS activists certainly shared this concern, but for them it was one of a number of issues. For the Esselen, it was unquestionably the predominant one. In their arguments to the water district, the Army Corps of Engineers, other official agencies, and the general public, they did not oppose building a new dam per se; they opposed building it at this site, because this site was in an area that had been occupied by the Esselen for thousands of years and included numerous sites, locations, and objects of deep significance for the Esselen. Because of this, Esselen leaders argued that it was "local Esselen Native Americans who are and will always be the ones most affected by the proposed New Los Padres Reservoir project development" (Nason, 1993, cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 161).

Although the term *environmental racism* was never used by the Esselen, their comments on the dam project clearly indicated that they viewed it as another example of the disrespect and disregard for Native American rights that they had so long experienced in their contacts with the dominant White society. Escobar-Wyer, chairwoman of the Esselen nation, writing to the Army Corps of Engineers, eloquently set the dam project in the context of the history of dominant society/ Native American relations and argued that it created an opportunity to reverse the pattern of mistreatment, build trust between Native Americans and the dominant society, and "gain a true balance of respect" (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 162). She urged the Army Corps of Engineers to deny the 404 permit, because "in doing so trust may gain a foothold and a difficult journey of bridging two worlds can begin" (L. Escobar-Wyer, 1994, cited in

Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 162). However, in the matter of the sacred sites, the Esselen nation's chairwoman believed that the water district and other agencies had ignored, disregarded, and in other ways shown lack of respect for the Esselen's testimony about the significance of the threatened places. Commenting on the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), she stated that it "does nothing to guarantee Indian people that they will be dealt with fairly and enjoy rights under the U.S. Constitution" and that "the lack of response and professionalism by the lead authors of this EIR demonstrates a classic example of a process of continued American Apartheidic, tokenistic and disenfranchisement policies as practiced by Federal agencies" (L. Escobar-Wyer, 1994, cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994c, letter no. 13).

The process of bridging two worlds ran into problems because of fundamental differences between the indigenist vision and the dominant worldview of western society. Learning from nature and from a spirit world that inhabited the natural environment are precious and deeply meaningful elements of the indigenist viewpoint that inspired and motivated Esselen-led actions to defeat the dam project. Escobar-Wyer, in an interview with the press, asked, "Why can't people relate to the spirituality of this massive structure that is Earth? It is where we learn the essentials of life. It is sacred to us" (Cone, 1994, p. A16). Because Native Americans on the central coast of California are in a process of renewing their traditional culture, the traditionally inhabited places, plant-gathering and hunting areas, ceremonial sites, and sacred places have taken on a supreme importance because they constitute a link to that culture and also to ancestral spirits who can communicate that culture to descendants today in ways not easily grasped by the Western mind. When I first arrived to talk to Nason about the threatened sacred sites, he told me that he would give me information. Then, he looked at me and said, "You'll also get information from the ancestors. They will come through you. You will feel it" (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). After I had spent a day conversing with Little Bear and participating in a sweat-lodge ceremony, I set off to drive home, but no matter what I did, I could not get my car to start, which was unusual for this extremely reliable vehicle. I camped out for the night and called on Little Bear in the morning and told him the story. "The ancestors wouldn't let you go," he laughed. "They wanted you to sleep on the ground." It was clear to me that for Little Bear and for other Native Americans I encountered in the course of this research, there was an indigenist vision that emphasized connectedness with a communicative and animate natural environment (and thus, for Little Bear, I was learning not just from what he said, but by being on the land). The leader of the Humaya dancers, while dancing at one of the Native American-organized actions opposing the dam project, paused while dancing to inform the audience, "We learned our language through the birds. There's many secret things that we know. . . . Look to the trees, look to the Heavens, your culture's there, it has always been there." Because the culture was viewed as being discoverable in the rocks, trees, bluffs, birds, flowers, and animals of the Carmel River, it followed that Esselen activists would vehemently oppose a dam project that would irrevocably cut off access to these cultural resources. Anne McGowan (1993), the attorney representing the Esselen tribe of Monterey County, wrote to the water district to point out: "The Esselen are opposed to mitigation measures, because they believe the NLP dam should not be built; the dam will destroy irreplaceable burial sites, sacred ceremonial areas and hunting and gathering areas critical to the revival of

Esselen Native American culture” (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 125).

However, in trying to communicate the meaning of these irreplaceable sites to official agencies, the Esselen experienced a constant battle to be believed and taken seriously. Nason recounted a story to me of how at a hearing in Sacramento (the location of the state government of California), an official impatiently said, “We are not going to listen to this Indian lunacy fantasy” (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). Little Bear also told me that with regard to one of the sacred sites, a place where, traditionally, babies were buried, “They don’t believe us when we say babies are buried there. They want to dig it up and see. We don’t want it disturbed. We say people are buried there, but they don’t believe us” (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). Both in my personal contacts with the Esselen and through a reading of their letters to official agencies, it became obvious that one of the principal issues for the Esselen regarding the dam project was to get respect for their beliefs about the significance of the sacred lands threatened with inundation by the proposed reservoir. One metaphor they used in trying to convey the meaning of the sacred lands was to compare them to a church building. It was pointed out to me a number of times by activists that nobody would dream of threatening the Carmel Mission (the Spanish-built church at the mouth of the Carmel River) with destruction, and yet, the Native American sacred sites were not viewed in the same way. John Polomo Brennan (1994), who was a link between the Esselen tribe and CAWS, functioning as tribal engineer and as a leader in CAWS, explained in a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers: “This area, the river, the sites, the streambed, the hillsides, the living and inanimate objects, constitutes a locus of objects having the same contextual meaning as do churches, temples, mosques, and the sanctuaries of other religions” (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 150). At the conclusion of one of my meetings with Nason, Nason took my notebook and drew a diagram of the project area, showing the river overlain with the shape of a church. He told me:

What they want to do is build a dam right at the gate of our church. The site of the dam is the beginning of our cosmology, the beginning of everything that is sacred to me and my ancestors. I grew up with those places, all those places that my father showed me. That is what was handed down to us, and all that place is sacred. That’s our church there. The walls are the mountains, the roof is the sky, and the aisle is the river, going up to the Western Gate, which is like the window at the end of the church above the altar. And they want to take everything out of our church and leave a burnt-out shell. (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 5, 1995)

For the Esselen, there were many specific sites that had particular significance; one of the most important was the birthing rock, a prominent, free-standing natural rock monolith in the flood plain of the Carmel River, a place where traditionally Esselen women had gone to give birth and where ceremonies and dances were still held. This was located in what the dam engineers designated as the borrow area, from which rock would be quarried and crushed to provide construction material for the dam. Polomo Brennan told me how at a meeting at the dam site, one of the engineers, in earshot of Esselen representatives, had pointed to the birthing rock as a good source of construction material (J. Polomo Brennan, personal communication, March 4, 1995). He told this story to illustrate the insensitivity of the dam builders to Native American sentiments and went on to add:

I'll make my last stand at the birthing rock. That's not going to happen in my lifetime. That's utter sacrilege. The fish altar [another sacred site] would also go. They say it'll be covered with water and so it'll be protected, but that's like saying if the Sistine Chapel were flooded, you could visit it using scuba gear. (J. Polomo Brennan, personal communication, March 4, 1995)

Close to the birthing rock was another place that the Esselen held to be especially sacred, which they called the baby burial area. In addition to a large number of specific sites, the entire course of the Carmel River was viewed as sacred by the Esselen, a spirit trail, along which the spirits of the dead travel on their way to the Western gate, the door to the land of the dead. Nason spoke of how there were many spirits along the river and as a result, "people have powerful visions and dreams here" (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). The construction of the dam would block the path of the spirits and destroy a spiritual connection of supreme significance for the Esselen.

The Esselen believed that the water district did not have a full understanding of or respect for their sacred places. They noted that the Final Environmental Impact Report had devoted more pages to animal and plant life than to Native American cultural resources. It seemed to them that the steelhead fish were given more attention than the beliefs of the Esselen. Their attorney, McGowan (1993), pointed out that "too little time was allocated to obtaining the oral history necessary for weaving together the traditions and activities associated with the identified sites" (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 114). Escobar-Wyer (1994), chairwoman of the Esselen nation, raised the concern that sites had been ignored by the archaeological investigation team (Archaeological Consultants) because of insufficient money to conduct a complete evaluation. "As a result," she wrote, "how can we as the aboriginal people of this region sanction ACs [*sic*] [Archaeological Consulting] report and undernourished information that attempts to undermine our sense of well-being as a tribal society" (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 142). Although the water district argued that the Esselen's loss of cultural resources could be mitigated by standard procedures (for example, bedrock mortars could be removed to another site; an Esselen Cultural Center could be established), Esselen activists believed otherwise. "It's not mitigatable," Nason told me. Polomo Brennan (1994) wrote to the Army Corps of Engineers,

The desecration, through total destruction, of two sacred sites below and under the dam is impossible to mitigate. . . . the cumulative impact of destruction, desecration, inundation, blinding, burial, translocation and other mitigation measures is the catastrophic loss of Resources of immense spiritual importance to the Esselen people. (cited in Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, 1994b, p. 149)

THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT TO THE NEW LOS PADRES DAM: STRATEGIES AND ALLIANCES

Opposition to the New Los Padres Dam project gathered momentum as more and more official agencies gave the project their approval during 1994 and 1995, and the only significant hurdle remaining was the November 8 election in which voters would decide on a bond measure to provide funding for the dam. The various

opposition groups and individuals adopted a number of strategies, working both together and independently to mobilize public opinion against the project.

David Brower

One of the earliest oppositional events was a public meeting in November 1994, organized by the environmental activist, Mapstead. Mapstead was known personally to Nason and, a year later, was working with him to lead a sacred hike and ride up the Carmel River. Mapstead along with many other non-native activists participated in a medicine circle preceding the hike that included Native American ceremonies. The public meeting about the dam was addressed by David Brower. Brower has played a highly visible role in the anti-dam movement in the United States and in the environmental movement in general. McCully calls him "probably the second most influential figure of the twentieth-century environmental movement" (McCully, 1996, p. 283). Brower, as executive director of the Sierra Club, was a central figure in the opposition to Bureau of Reclamation proposals for dams on rivers in the Colorado Basin, beginning with resistance to the Echo Park Dam, planned for the Green River in the 1950s (Gottlieb, 1993, p. 41; McCully, 1996, pp. 283-285; Reisner, 1993, pp. 284-285). Indeed, Gottlieb (1993) calls the Echo Park Dam fight a turning point for environmentalism. At the meeting, which was widely advertised and well-attended, Brower set opposition to the New Los Padres Dam in the context of a broader philosophy questioning the value of economic growth. "How do we handle growth? What does it cost? How can we control it? We need to do a cost-benefit analysis of growth. Growth isn't all that great if it costs more than we can afford." When Brower stated emphatically in a sonorous voice, "No more growth," the audience broke into sustained and enthusiastic applause. "We don't have to grow any more. We get more growth and then we'll need more water," he continued. Brower's talk raised fundamental questions that went far beyond the dam issue to tackle the sustainability of human society's current economic relationship with the environment. "The earth cannot sustain what we've been doing," stated Brower. Bron Taylor (1995) has identified "the rejection of economic growth and industrialization as desirable social goals" to be a common denominator of ecological resistance movements (p. 340), and this was certainly a strong theme in Brower's thinking and, to a major extent, in the Sierra Club's campaign against the dam, which constantly attacked the growth potential of the project. Questioning the sustainability of industrial society because of its devastating impact on the planet's ecosystems was also a theme of the indigenist vision, although expressed in more animate terms. "Mother Earth is sick and she needs healing" was a statement I commonly heard at Native American actions or, as Costanoan/Mutsun tribal leader Anne Marie Sayers put it at one of these events, "Everything comes from the Mother, and she's tired and weak."

Sierra Club and CAWS Strategies

The compatibility of Native American and environmental thinking enabled extensive cooperation and sharing of personnel between the groups in opposition to the dam to take place. Gruber, who chaired the Sierra Club's subcommittee, told me about how he worked together with Nason during 1995 to conduct tours of the proposed dam site for members of the Sierra Club and other interested members of the general public. Usually, such tours involved a medicine circle at the birthing

rock during which Nason or other Esselen representatives would talk about the meaning of the place for the Esselen. Gruber told me, "Native American thinking and ecology are similar. Their philosophy matches ecological thinking" (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). The similarity for Gruber was based partly on the need to go beyond purely rational, scientific arguments to directly experience the land and view the sacred sites. "You can argue back and forth at the rational level," he told me, "but it comes down to emotions; you know it's not right at an emotional level" (D. Gruber, personal communication, October 12, 1995). This was why he considered it important to take people up to the proposed dam site so that they could feel the emotions brought on by the natural beauty of the place. "I do believe in powers beyond ones we recognize. I feel that . . . the place is so evidently beautiful, along the river; we tried to get people to make their way across the stream, to the infant burial site" (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). These Sierra Club/Esselen-led events were advertised through the Sierra Club's local newsletter, *The Ventana*, through 1994 and 1995, the last one taking place on October 8, 1 month before the election, and were attended by 35 to 75 (according to D. Gruber's estimate, personal communication, February 16, 1996) predominantly Sierra Club members and non-native allies and supporters of the Esselen.

Only a tiny minority of the Monterey Peninsula population ever made it to the dam site. To reach the majority, the Sierra Club spent \$5,000 on a publicity campaign including advertising, mailing to the general public, organizing forums, and addressing public meetings. The purpose of this campaign, according to Gruber, was to "present ideas and quality-of-life issues. It was a matter of what do you want for life around here?" (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). The information about the dam that they tried to communicate was that it was not about solving environmental issues, but rather about growth. Many people who were Sierra Club members were also members of Citizens For Alternative Water Solutions (CAWS), and both organizations presented ideas to the public that challenged the water district's claims for the dam and proposed different ways to deal with the water problems on the Peninsula. CAWS was also linked to the Esselen through Polomo Brennan, who was both a campaigner and spokesperson for the citizens' action group as well as the Esselen's tribal engineer. One of the strategies of CAWS, as their name implies, was to propose various methods through which the water district could augment the water supply without building the dam. On a public radio discussion program aired just prior to the November election, Polomo Brennan pointed out (personal communication, November 2, 1995), "If we looked at retrofitting toilets, if we looked at dredging, . . . and if we looked at desal, we would create something of the order of 15,000 acre feet of available water for whatever purposes is needed, for drought reserve, certainly." At the same time, CAWS argued that the dam would provide water for unplanned environmentally damaging growth, increase consumers' water bills by 30% over 4 years, degrade the quality of life, irreparably harm several world-class vineyards, and permanently end Esselen culture and religion through flooding. The Sierra Club campaign made similar kinds of arguments, not only focusing on the negative impact of the dam on the environment and quality of life on the Monterey Peninsula, but also proposing alternative solutions to the water issues. Sierra Club activist Mitteldorf (1995), writing in the local chapter's newsletter, *The Ventana*, proposed specific methods through which the water supply could be increased, including many ideas also promoted by CAWS, such as dredging the existing reservoir, building a small

desalination plant to operate in drought years, and requiring dual-plumbing systems that would enable dwellings to make use of rainwater that currently runs off through storm drains. Another activist, Langner, linked the local dam issue to the broader problems of a high water-consumption society in a relatively arid area (almost no rain falls in the Monterey Peninsula between April and October), which have been addressed by such water theorists as Reisner (1993) and Bowden (1977). Also writing in *The Ventana*, he observed:

Cities have become increasingly dependent on water obtained from distant sources. People have become so disconnected from their own water networks that few can tell you where their water supply comes from and how it reaches them. . . . A society that is artificially bouyed [*sic*] by “easy” water will certainly be in for some rough times when Mother Nature comes bill-collecting. (Langner, 1995b, p. 7)

This approach, similar to Brower’s, moved beyond discussing specific problems with the New Los Padres Dam to a critique of an unsustainable society dependent on continual growth, achieved only at the expense of unacceptable environmental degradation. The notion that Mother Nature would call this society to account has obvious parallels with what I have been describing as the indigenist vision.

In the publicity campaign organized by the Sierra Club, such philosophies informed activists but were not in the forefront of the ideas presented to the general public. This campaign, which ran through 1994 and 1995 up to the November election, involved the organization of forums and public meetings (such as a debate on the dam in August 1995 at Monterey’s Navy Postgraduate School), mailing information to Sierra Club members and to the general public, display ads in the local print media, including a series of what Gruber called *mosquito* ads, which ran in *The Monterey County Herald* (the biggest local circulation daily) for 30 days before the ballot. These ads were short and to the point, such as “Would John Muir vote for the developers’ dam?” “Quarter billion \$ developers’ dam = 100 dollar water bills: We can’t afford them!” and “Developers’ dam, environmental disaster.” Both the Sierra Club and CAWS focused on the excessive development and growth issues. In reviewing the campaign, Gruber told me, “Growth is equivalent to a change in the quality of life, and people didn’t like it” (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). CAWS ran an ad in *The Monterey County Herald* on the Saturday before the vote, which emphasized the negative impact of growth. Beside a photo of congested traffic, copy declared, “Traffic is bad enough already. The growth allowed by the dam will make it even worse. . . . GROWTH. It’s what the dam is all about” (*Monterey County Herald*, 1995, p. A9).

Esselen Strategies and Actions

For both Esselen organizations, the first line of resistance to the dam project was to communicate to the water district, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other official agencies their opposition to the dam project. This was done through meetings, some which took place in Sacramento, and through formal letters, many of which, for the Esselen tribe, came from their attorney, McGowan. Settlement meetings with the water district were held as early as 1992, hearings were conducted with the Army Corps of Engineers and with the State Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento, and letters were written during 1993 and 1994 in response to the draft and final Environmental Impact reports and the report prepared by

Archaeological Consulting. Commenting on these lengthy bureaucratic procedures, Nason told me: "They want us to go Western. Join the White world and go to meetings and sit on committees. I've done that. I've got burnt out on that. I'm going native now. I don't want to get sucked in" (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). He also pointed out to me that there was a huge inequality of resources between the water district and the Esselen tribe; the water district had spent \$10 million researching and promoting the project, whereas the Esselen did not have access to that level of financial resources (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, February 23, 1995). McGowan also pointed out to me the relative poverty of the Esselen. To attend hearings in Sacramento was not easy for them, as it involved taking time off work, finding low-cost accommodation and food in the city, and crowding into a van to save on transportation costs (A. McGowan, personal communication, February 21, 1995). As a result, Esselen leaders placed a great value on their traditional ways, including various ceremonies in which they prayed to spirits and ancestors for help. "It's all we have, the spirits, the ancestors. We have no other help," Nason told me (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). Going native was seen as an effective tactic in dealing with a powerful, well-funded bureaucracy, partly because the Esselen were not wealthy but also because cultural renewal was so important to them, and cultural renewal involved the use of traditional methods. To illustrate this, Nason told me a story of how, prior to a meeting in Sacramento with state officials, dam proponents, and their attorneys, Esselen spokespersons held a medicine circle, burning smudge (sage) and praying to their ancestors. The smoke traveled into the building, set off fire alarms, and officials and attendees of the hearing came running out, some fearing a bomb attack. Following this, during the meeting, the attorney for the water district, according to Nason, "was unable to do all his usual nit-picking things, spilt his water, and became all flustered" (T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, March 4, 1995). All Esselen actions that I attended involved prayer and traditional ceremony, and these customs were the behavioral expression of a philosophy that emphasized interconnectedness with an animate and communicative universe. Their practice reaffirmed the importance and validity of the indigenist vision within a dominant society that questioned the relevance and even the sanity of Native American views.

Such symbolic-meaning resources are as significant for social movement mobilization as the time, money, access to media, services of professional organizers, and other such resources focused on by resource mobilization theorists such as McCarthy and Zald (1977; Tilly, 1978). According to Ingalsbee (1996), they help to "psychologically and physically organize, unify, and empower members for collective action" (p. 264). For the Native Americans opposing the New Los Padres Dam, as has been pointed out, given the lack of financial resources and professional expertise, traditional and often thoroughly symbolic practices and ceremonies played an important role in mobilizing support for their cause.

During the weekend before the crucial November 8th election, the Esselen tribe organized a string of public actions including a prayer ceremony at the mouth of the Carmel River attended by local spiritual leaders, both native and non-native, a reception and Native American feast, a gathering attended by traditional Native American dancers and addressed by many local Native American leaders, a sacred ride and hike along the lower 15 miles of the Carmel River, a pilgrimage to the birthing rock and the baby burial area, and a prayer circle and storytelling around a campfire, followed by sweat-lodge ceremonies. These events were attended by many of the activists in the struggle against the New Los Padres Dam, including Polomo Brennan and other CAWS members, Mapstead, and Sierra Club members;

they were also attended by activists in the Native American cultural revitalization process from the Ohlone, Western Shoshone, Rumsen, Pomo, Mutsun, and Salinan tribes.

At the feast held on November 3rd, a Sierra Club member showed slides of the area of the Carmel River threatened by the dam, to which Nason provided a commentary. These were not massively attended events; for example, there were 60 or 70 people present at the feast and about 50 hikers and horse riders on the sacred hike, but they included many of the most active leaders and exemplified the cooperation between Native American and environmental groups that had characterized opposition to the New Los Padres Dam. They were also important as an opportunity for Native Americans to share their traditional beliefs, which they saw as the solution not only to the issue of the dam, but also to the much larger scale problem of the sustainability of human society on an environmentally degrading planet. A representative of the San Juan Bautista, California, Indian Council addressed the gathering at the feast, saying that he was excited about the fulfillment of American Indian prophecy that the White nation would learn from the Red nation the wisdom of being caretakers of the earth. He went on:

The food is sacred, you are sacred, the earth, sky, hills, mountains, and streams are all sacred. A major part of our trauma is that we have forgotten that we live in a sacred place. . . . The issue with the dam is serving as a platform to help us renew. Let us agree to be friends with each other and agree to be friends with nature. We can't put it off any more. For the future of our children. For the future of life.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the November 8, 1995, election the measure approving funding for the dam was voted down by a margin of 57% to 43%. Gruber's assessment of the meaning of the election result was that it was a "referendum on growth" and that it indicated that people on the Monterey Peninsula valued "a relatively small and uncrowded civilization, with wild areas close by" (Gruber, 1995b, p. 5). The cost of the dam and its potential for increasing the monthly water bill was significant, and he also believed that concern for the Esselen sacred sites swayed voters against the dam. "People were concerned about racism, about running over the Indians once again" (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). However, whereas the Native American issues were certainly not the only or even the major issues that decided the vote, for many of the activists and leaders of the opposition movement, Native American beliefs and methods were important, particularly as symbolic resources that could be drawn on in constructing psychologically empowering cognitive frameworks that provide a counter to the dominant rationality of development and growth represented by the water district. In his analysis of Earth First! symbolic actions, Ingalsbee (1996) argues that "they are both a means and ends of subverting the dominant technocratic worldview" and that activists' social-interactional networks offer "temporary liberated zones where dominant discourses and cultural norms can be symbolically countered, and alternative discursive practices . . . can be socially created" (pp. 272-273). This application of new social movement theory to an understanding of the Earth First! actions can also be extended to the Native American actions resisting the dam. In my interview with McGowan, attorney for the Esselen tribe and in my first contact with Gruber, both recommended going to visit the lands threatened by the dam. "You must go up there," said McGowan. "You really feel something" (A. McGowan, personal

communication, February 21, 1995). Gruber, as has been mentioned, thought it important to take people to the dam site. "If you can take a few key people up there, they can reconvey the meaning of the place" (D. Gruber, personal communication, February 16, 1996). This was not a strategy for reaching the mass of the electorate but for affecting the thinking and actions of key activists. Organized trips to the dam site involved Esselen-led prayer circles at the birthing rock in which Esselen representatives offered prayers to the four directions and purified participants with the smoke of burning sage. Such traditional ceremonies functioned as symbolic actions in the way Ingalsbee (1996) has described, operating as a micromobilization context defined by McClurg-Mueller (1992) as a "context in which face-to-face interaction is the social setting from which meanings, critical to the interpretation of collective identities, grievances, and opportunities are created, interpreted and transformed" (p. 2). Prayer circles at the birthing rock helped construct its meaning as a highly valuable sacred place imbued with significance and memory and symbolically moved the birthing rock from a context (the dominant technocratic world-view) in which it could be merely seen as a source of crushed rock in the borrow area of the New Los Padres Dam. Native American actions frequently used symbolic means that conveyed the indigenist vision to participants. For example, on the November 4, 1995, sacred hike up the Carmel River, Nason asked participants (including Mapstead, Polomo Brennan—the CAWS activist—Sierra Club members, and other non-native supporters of the Esselen) to "make an offering of a piece of yourself, such as some hair from your head, to Mother Earth, especially at places that have been desecrated." These symbolic methods play a role in changing both personal and collective consciousness by providing an alternative cognitive framework to dominant discourses, in this case, the indigenist vision with its emphasis on relationship with, rather than domination of, nature. A more detailed understanding of the way Native American symbolic practices construct and transform meanings for participants, native and non-native, in environmental actions and their significance in mobilization efforts would certainly benefit from further empirical research.

The social movement theory developed from the resource mobilization perspective is effective at describing and explaining the operation of a mainstream environmental organization, such as the Sierra Club, for which resources such as money, access to media, and professional expertise emphasized by that perspective are certainly significant. In this case, the Sierra Club spent the most of any oppositional grouping, brought legal actions, and ran an extensive and expensive print media campaign. The Native American groups also employed professional legal expertise, were adept at communicating with the media, and participated in the bureaucratic review process through the presentation of reasoned and researched written and verbal testimony. In addition, they also depended heavily on traditional and often symbolic practices that served the opposition movement as what Ingalsbee (1996) calls "social-psychological symbolic resources that help facilitate and frame the ongoing mobilization of action" (pp. 265-266). The insight from new social movement theorists, in contrast to the resource mobilization perspective, is that "the new social conflicts are struggles over meanings as well as resources" (Tarrow, 1992, p. 197). In these struggles over meanings, the existence of an alternative worldview, such as traditional Native American beliefs, that can be constituted and interpreted in the micromobilization context through symbolic actions is an important factor in the success of the social movement. The contention here is that Esselen actions that employed the indigenist vision played a very significant role, which is hard to quantify, in mobilizing activists against the New Los Padres Dam. Native

American beliefs may not have been the most crucial factor for voters in the election, but they were certainly influential for key activists. Taylor (1995), in his study of popular ecological resistance movements, has asserted that such movements "cannot be accounted for if moral and religious variables are overlooked" (p. 336). In this case, Esselen leaders provided what may be called religious variables (but not by them; "we don't like to call it a religion. It's a way of life, its everything we do," T.L.B. Nason, personal communication, November 4, 1995). These religious variables were significant in the construction and affirmation of alternative meanings.

Many sociologists have argued the need for sociology to address the issue of fundamental ecological limits on the long-term viability of contemporary industrial/postindustrial society. Michael Redclift and Graham Woodgate (1994) have recommended the necessity of considering "whether our ways of exploiting nature are sustainable under any existing political or economic system" (p. 53). John Bellamy Foster (1994), in his economic history of environmental degradation, points out:

We must begin by recognizing that the crisis of earth is not a crisis of nature but a crisis of society. The chief causes of environmental destruction . . . are social and historical, rooted in the productive relations, technological imperatives, and historically conditioned demographic trends that characterize the dominant system. (p. 12)

It follows that an end to environmental destruction comes with a transformation of society. Touraine (1981), often credited as an originator of new social movement theory, has asked "which social movement in post-industrial society will occupy the central role held by the workers' movement in industrial society?" (p. 95) and has suggested that the ecological movement "might easily provide the mould in which the main struggles that will later stir through history are to be formed" (p. 24). As Churchill (1993) points out, "indigenism stands in diametrical opposition to the totality of what might be termed 'Eurocentric business as usual' " (p. 407), and so provides a potent vision of a sustainable society based on a different value system. The role of this vision in contemporary coalitions between Native American and environmental groups opposing various kinds of development projects could usefully be explored further, and it is hoped that this research constitutes a starting point. Such coalitions, because they simultaneously address issues of environmental depredation and racism, may well have the potential for fundamental social transformation.

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