



# THE STATE, ILLEGAL LOGGING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs IN THE PHILIPPINES

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**T**he struggle for political power has transcended the boundaries of traditional institutions. New terrains for interest articulation in Philippine society are fast emerging as new movements are rallying behind new causes. The long-held dream of a free and open society in which citizens can equitably share the fruits of the earth has turned into a nightmare. Mother Earth herself has fallen victim to human greed and rapaciousness.

The effects of massive environmental destruction are now being felt worldwide and ecological awareness, advocacy, and activism are permeating global consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In the United States, environmentalism is differentiated from ecological advocacy; the former is considered as a form of conservationism, while the latter is a new form of environmental radicalism which is composed of a diverse set of ideas and doctrines that include bioregionalism, Green politics, deep ecology, animal liberationism, ecofeminism, permaculture, steady-state economics, ecophilosophy, native spiritualism, and social ecology.

The distinction is derived from the philosophical and political extension of the biological notion of ecology which refers to the interaction of organisms within an environment. This implies that interdependence should include (and thus limit) the activities of, the human species in order to preserve the environment. See Kirkpatrick Sale, "Schism in Environmentalism" in *American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History*, ed. Roderick Frazier Nash, 3rd ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), pp. 285 - 293.

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**"A cursory look at the European experience shows the myriad of possibilities for green politics in the Philippines. Initially, 'the green movement seems to cut across ideological and class barriers. It may be the sole issue where landlords and peasants, capitalists and workers, the extreme Right and the far Left can come together and link up arms with a common cause to protect the environment'."**

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The formation of environmental organizations offer a lot of potential in the current restructuring of institutions of power. A cursory look at the European experience shows the myriad of possibilities for green politics in the Philippines. Initially, "the green movement seems to cut across ideological and class barriers. It may be the sole issue where landlords and peasants, capitalists and workers, the extreme Right and the far Left, can come together and link up arms with a common cause to protect the environment."<sup>2</sup>

However, the exploitation of nature involves a complex set of relationships, which in turn is enveloped with vested interests and hidden agenda. Thus, any organization espousing conservation and management of natural resources will have to deal with those who currently benefit financially from its exploitation. In a society "where money easily translates into economic power, dealing with the men who make enormous profits out of nature would eventually lead . . . to dealing with the politicians and military officials [whom] they control."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the issues which the environmental organizations face cannot be divorced from the structural ills facing the society as a whole.

This paper will probe into the nascent green movement in the Philippines by looking at four non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Haribon Foundation, Green Forum, World Ecologists and the Earth Savers. It will draw out the organizations' view of the State by exploring its goals, vision, and strategies.

### **Deforestation: The Impending Crisis**

The Philippines is facing an ecological crisis. The tragedy of Ormoc in November 1991 is but a harbinger of things to come. The magnitude of destruction in Central Visayas serves as a reminder of the urgency of addressing

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<sup>2</sup>Eric U. Gutierrez, "Girding for a Green Offensive," *Conjuncture*, August 1989, pp. 8, 15.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

the issue of forest denudation.<sup>4</sup> According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), three-fourths of the archipelago was covered with forests in the 1950s. This figure shrank by half in 1972, and by 1988 only a quarter remained leaving a tiny fraction of virgin forest.<sup>5</sup> Ecologist Peter Walpole of the Institute of Church and Social Issues says that each year, logging firms are clearing 50,000 of the remaining 988,000 hectares of virgin forests.<sup>6</sup> As much as 40 per cent of the country's virgin forests, estimated at thirty million hectares in the 1930s, were destroyed between 1945 and 1985.<sup>7</sup>

The unwarranted destruction of the country's forests has resulted in "long-term irreversible environmental damage like decreased soil fertility, loss of groundwater, and extended dry seasons."<sup>8</sup> At the heart of the problem is the lucrative nature of logging — both legal and illegal. An average logger, according to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimate, can net up to P100,000 per hectare at first cutting. From the period of 1972 to 1988, "the Philippine logging industry amassed \$42.85 billion (at the rate of \$2.65 billion a year) by levelling 8.57 million hectares of forest. During the same period, the industry devastated 3.88 million hectares of forest, profiting with a cool \$19.4 billion."<sup>9</sup>

### Politics of Logging

The protection of the country's forests and the regulation of its exploitation are the primary tasks of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). This governmental agency was established "to assure the availability and sustainability of the country's natural resources."<sup>10</sup> However, the general perception is that it has been remiss in its fundamental responsibilities. This view is not without basis. The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism reported that the profitability of logging has attracted a mutually supporting cabal of vested interests. Logging companies have ties with government officials, politicians, the military, and sometimes, the communist rebels as well. And any of those parties, particularly the politicians, can themselves be loggers.

<sup>4</sup> Logging activities have been blamed for the tragedy in which an estimated 120,000 people lost their homes and some 8,000 were killed in a sudden and massive flood triggered by heavy rains. See Michael Dueñas, "Stop Deforestation - Now!", *Philippines Free Press*, November 1991, pp. 8 - 9.

<sup>5</sup> "The Rape of the Forests: An Ecological Crisis" in *Saving the Earth: The Philippine Experience*, (Manila, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1991), pp. 1-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> James Putzel and John Cunningham, *Gaining Ground: Agrarian Reform in the Philippines*, as quoted by Gene Romero in "Environmentalists Make Plea to Save the Country's Forests," *Haribon Update*, Jan.-Feb. 1992, pp. 6, 5.

<sup>8</sup> "The Rape . . ." *op cit.*, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Interview with DENR Undersecretary Celso R. Roque, *Dilliman Review*, Vol. 36 No. 2 (1988), pp. 43 - 45.



When alliances like these function in communities literally distant from the central government, they easily overpower whatever vestigial government authority exists. A classic excuse of DENR officials is that they have no funds, no equipment, and little manpower, whereas the loggers have ample supply of all these. Loggers often coopt government officials supposed to be watching logging camps, courtesy of the companies.

Those who are not coopted risk being killed. In some portions of the country, the only law prevailing is that of the local military commander; and sometimes, government force is used to support the loggers.<sup>11</sup>

Gareth Porter of the World Institute and Dr. Delfin Ganapin of the University of the Philippines elaborated the role of patronage politics in the exploitation of Philippine natural resources:

[T]he system of timber concessions illustrates the ways in which Philippine politics provided incentives for the depletion of forest resources: concessions allocated on the basis of political influence, and the political elite, along with their allies in the private sector, reaped windfall profits from log exports. The interest of elite politicians lay in getting a share of profits from logging, not in establishing a system of timber management that would [e]nsure the sustainability of future generations.<sup>12</sup>

Commercial loggers operate on the basis of Timber License Agreements (TLAs) granted by the government. These concessions are usually purchased at extremely low rates. Former President Ferdinand Marcos, for example, distributed 25-year TLAs to his cronies and close associates. The right to cut up to 100,000 hectares of forest was acquired for P1 per hectare! As DENR Undersecretary Victor Ramos said, "the TLA was a privilege of the powerful."<sup>13</sup>

Since March 1987, the DENR has not issued any license and reduced the number of TLA holders from 137 to 56 in March 1992.<sup>14</sup> A study made by the Washington-based Environmental Policy Institute revealed that only ninety-seven companies or families possess TLAs.<sup>15</sup> The licenses were prone to much abuse as "[l]oggers cut outside of their concessions, venture into ancestral lands, or ingeniously expand the area of their TLAs by strategic positioning. They under-report their cut, subcontract their TLAs to other loggers, use very destructive equipment, and smuggle logs."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup>"The Rape . . .," *op cit.*, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>12</sup>As quoted by Gutierrez; *op cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>Marites Danguilan-Vitug, "Danding, Mitra, Ramos Linked to Logging," *Philippine Daily Globe*, May 1, 1992, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>As quoted by Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>16</sup>"The Rape . . .", p. 5.

As much as the DENR would like to curb abuses, some of the practices during the Marcos Administration were carried over to the Aquino period. In spite of the adoption of strict environmental standards, difficulties in its enforcement emerged for three reasons:

1.) The laws meant to govern environment management activities may run counter to the economic interests, not only of private decision-makers, but also of society in general. For example, too much concern for the environmental amenities may be socially uneconomic.

2.) In some instances, the laws or regulations are non-implementable. For example, how can the government effectively patrol 15 million hectares of land?

3.) Some rules were never meant to be implemented. For example, the rules for sustainable exploitation of forests were meant to allow gross underpinning of forest resources, thereby creating the basis for excessive earnings by a favored few who were allocated these resources.<sup>17</sup>

The inability of the DENR to effectively assert itself *vis-a-vis* legal and illegal loggers reflects the continuing tension between State and society. In his work, *Strong Societies and Weak State*, Joel Migdal asserts that the structure of society affects the capabilities of the State. These capabilities "include the capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in [a] determined way."<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty of state leaders in implementing intended policies is a result of strong resistance within society, especially on the local level in which the opposition is led by 'strongmen' (bosses, landlords, chiefs, clan leaders, etc.). Migdal states that most Third World countries are 'weblike' in the sense that they host a melange of fairly autonomous social organizations.<sup>19</sup>

State leaders and local strongmen are continuously locked in a struggle for social control. Each trying to implement its own 'rules of the game' rather than policies emanating from the State or organizations authorized by it, e.g., DENR. The fragmentation of social control oftentimes leads to the 'politics of survival' and forces State leaders to enter into an accommodation with local strongmen.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Wilfrido Cruz, "Ecology and Economics," as quoted in *Our Environment Needs Media: The Philippine Case*, ed. Helmut Kurth (Manila: Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak State*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*



Ironically, the key to strengthening State capabilities in the Philippines is anchored on the devolution of power to the communities and a process that enhances "people's control over the forces which shape their lives."<sup>21</sup>

## Green Offensive

At the core of the green movement in the Philippines are the NGOs which are actively involved in environmental protection and management. However, environmentalism has become a catch-phrase for a gamut of issues such as resource destructive development plans, pollution, nuclear weapons, and the proliferation of junk foods.<sup>22</sup> In a report entitled "The Institutional Strengthening of Indigenous Environmental NGOs," Antonio Quizon reported that NGO involvement in environmental issues emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and was bolstered by the process of conscientization during the period of martial law. Two streams from which present-day environmental NGOs originated were identified. The first stream is composed of 'nature lovers' such as conservationist societies and hobby groups which later expanded their concerns to socio-political issues related to environment and government policies. The second stream consists of "field-based activist groups concerned with human rights issues of tribal communities and poor settlers being displaced by environmentally-destructive projects of the martial law regime such as the Chico River Dam project and the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant."<sup>23</sup>

In recent years, additional groups have joined the environmental bandwagon – the rural development NGOs, business corporations, and businessmen associations. The establishment of the Philippine Federation for Environmental Concerns (PFEC) in 1979 marked the first effort at coordination and networking among environmental NGOs. Two other national federations have emerged since then – the Philippine Environmental Action Network (PEAN) and the Lingkod Tao Kalikasan (LTK).<sup>24</sup> Throughout the years, the environmental cause has been bolstered with the formation of the Haribon Foundation, World Ecologists, Green Forum, and Earth Savers.

### Haribon Foundation

The Haribon Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Resources, Inc. (Haribon) was organized in 1972 by Alicia Busset, Dr. Robert S. Kennedy, and

<sup>21</sup> A.R. Magno, "Development and Democratization," in *Power Without Form: Essays on the Filipino State and Politics* (Manila, Kalikasan Press, 1991), p. 242.

<sup>22</sup> Gutierrez, *op cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Eric U. Gutierrez, "A Brief History of NGO Involvement in Environmentalism," in *Conjuncture*, Vol. II No. 9, August 1989, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Pedro C. Gonzales as a bird-watching society. It metamorphosed into a nature and wildlife conservation society and was transformed into a conservation foundation in 1983. The name Haribon was derived from the words 'Hari' and 'ibon' which means 'King of Birds,' referring to the Philippine eagle.<sup>25</sup>

The main vision of Haribon is sustainable development for the Philippines. This means that "the needs for the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>26</sup> Haribon believes that in order to address poverty, there is a "need for management of natural resource to be community-based, socially equitable, and scientifically sound. Haribon's vision is life-centered, nature-promoting, and pro-Filipino."<sup>27</sup> It aims to achieve its vision by:

1.) promoting and undertaking community-based resource management strategies in specific sites;

2.) conducting scientific and socio-economic researches on natural ecosystems to benefit communities and to promote sustainable approaches to development; and,

3.) raising the national consciousness on sustainable development to promote a constituency for environmental issues and membership for Haribon.<sup>28</sup>

Haribon has been in the forefront of wildlife protection and conservation. Headed by former hunter Maximo Kalaw, Jr., it has waged a relentless crusade against illegal loggers in Palawan, daring even the powers that be.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Interview with Maximo Kalaw, Jr., in *Our Environment Needs Media: The Philippine Case*, *op cit.*, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> See Haribon brochure entitled "Save Our Only Planet Earth."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Fourteen members of the Haribon Foundation in Puerto Princesa were arrested allegedly without warrants by elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) on February 15, 1991. They were released only after being charged with violation of Republic Act 1700, otherwise known as the Anti-Subversion law. See *Haribon Update*, Vol. VI No. 2 (March - April 1991), pp. 1,4.

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### **World Ecologists**

The World Ecologists (WE) was established in January 30, 1988, by Charley Barreto, founder of the Science of Mind and Man movement. Originally known as Women Ecologists, WE was organized as a citizen's action group with the objective of informing Filipinos about the ecological issues and mobilizing them for immediate action toward their solutions.<sup>30</sup>

WE believes that there is already adequate legislation for the protection of natural resources—it remains for the citizenry to abide by and carry them out.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the organization has worked closely with the DENR, military, local governments, and state agencies in its various projects. WE is known for its tree-planting projects. It takes pride in

having planted one million trees in Metro Manila and the countryside in three years.<sup>32</sup> Its major projects include the following: 1.) Fruitopia -- mass tree-planting; 2.) Seedling banks -- established in cooperation with the military at Villamor Air Base; 3.) Reforestation; 4.) Punong Yaman -- livelihood projects; 5.) Information dissemination campaign; 6.) Technical consultancy; and, 7.) Design/implementation of educational programs on ecology.<sup>33</sup>

WE differentiates itself from other ecological movements in terms of focus and ideology. Charley Barreto, WE founder and president, does not agree with the idea that “each and every species must be preserved at the expense of technology.”<sup>34</sup> She believes that the extinction of a particular species is a natural part of evolution and that some species evolve at the expense of others. She cites the fact that though no fault of humans, the dinosaurs became extinct. She asserts that “[i]ndustrialists are benefactors to society, they too can be equally important benefactors to the ecological cause.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, one should not look at factories and industrial firms automatically

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<sup>30</sup> *Our Environmental Needs Media: The Philippine Case*, *op cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> See WE brochure entitled “WE Invites You To Be A Part Of An Ecological Movement.”

<sup>32</sup> For this feat, Charley Barreto has been honored as one of the Global 500 Awardees of the United Nations Environment Programme.

<sup>33</sup> WE brochure.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Charley Barreto in *The Newsletter of the World Ecologists*, July 1990, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



as threats to humans and nature. As part of a natural process, humans utilize rationality and invents technology in order to replace the work of many creatures on earth.

One should not condemn the extinction of certain species, as some ecology groups do. Barreto is vehemently against the age-old concept that man should be sacrificed for something. Man should not feel guilty about promoting his well-being even at the expense of other species. She said that "[m]an's real solution to ecology is technology."<sup>36</sup> She further added that:

[m]an will always have to cut down trees. He must just produce through technology fast growing species to accommodate his requirements -- or a lumber substitute. Man's life depends on his production and goods. Man is not born with fur. He has to produce things to survive. He depends on technology to survive. . . . We just have to realize that nature is not a static thing and place our focus on what we can do about creating the new.<sup>37</sup>

### Green Forum

Green Forum was organized on December 7, 1989 as a result of the participation of ten non-governmental organizations in the deliberation of the Philippine Aid Plan or Multilateral Aid Initiative before American legislators and the public.<sup>38</sup> The Philippine delegation which represented a cross-section of the local NGO circuit were composed of the following: Haribon; Foundation for Community Organizing and Management Technology (FCOMT), Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PHILDHARRA), Inter-NGO Network for Participatory Development (INPD), Foundation for Educational Evolution and Development, Inc. (FEED), Cordillera News Agency (CNA), Visayas Cooperative Development Center (VICTO), Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), and the Federation of People's Organization (KASAMA). Upon returning from the United States, the mission members met and formulated the articles and by-laws of the NGO-PO-Church Forum on Social Equity, Sustainable Development, and Environment or simply Green Forum.<sup>39</sup>

The organization is envisioned as "a forum where organizations concerned with human rights, development, and social justice can exchange views and

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Malou F. Hipolito, "Visions of Green," *Conjuncture*, Vol. 3 No. 9 (August - September ?), pp. 6, 12.

<sup>39</sup> E.M. Hilario, "Color Us Green," *Conjuncture*, Vol. 3 No. 5 (March - April 1990), pp. 4, 11.

insights on current issues, reach a consensus or position on these issues, and generate participation in programs and projects."<sup>40</sup> As a movement, Green Forum would like to attract the widest possible range of NGOs, people's and church organizations for a paradigm of community-centered development articulated in a framework of sustainable development. The forum aims for "the creation and articulation of a national vision through the forging and implementation of policies, strategies, and action towards peace and sustainable development."<sup>41</sup>

Green Forum consists of 155 non-governmental organizations, 83 people's organization, and 6 church/spiritual groups for a total of 248 institutions. Its composition runs from the left, to the conservative, and to avowed 'apolitical' groups. Not surprisingly, some of its members have, at one time or another, been in disagreement with each other on certain points.<sup>42</sup>

Maximo Kalaw, Jr. of Haribon is the president of the Forum. He believes that:

sustainability needs force the acknowledgement of environment, not ideology, as the bottomline for survival; power shifts away from the state to persons in the community. The shift throws into relief participation in equity and protection of natural resources as the twin factors for sustaining a society/community. What is required, in effect, is an evolution of authority from an ideology to an ecology and a devolution of power from state to persons. And what is envisioned as the main functions of NGO is the empowerment of people and communities toward self-development and self-government.<sup>43</sup>

He proposes another view of power:

Authority when it proceeds from an ecological consciousness carries with it a different view of power. It sees power as the flow of life within the whole. As a concept, it is the polar opposite of the view of power as accumulation, for unnecessary accumulation deprives the people downstream.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> The forum broadens the definition of sustainable development by describing it as, "beyond physical sustainability, a development course that is not prone to interruption by forces of its own creation which push environmental destruction to intolerable limits, exhaust economic resources, and exacerbate social inequalities to the point of revolution of disruptive conflict. See Green Forum pamphlets "Creating a Common Future" and "An Alternative Development Economics: Economic White Paper."

<sup>42</sup> Hipolito, *op cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Maximo Kalaw, Jr., "Philippine NGO's Role in Sustainable Development" in Green Forum pamphlet.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



## Earth Savers

Earth Savers Philippines was organized on April 21, 1990 when Senator Heherson Alvarez, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Ecology, called the First Earth Savers Conference of environmentally-concerned citizens, groups, scientists, farmers, fisherfolk, youth, and indigenes. Its formation was the culmination of yearly environment-related activities sponsored by the Committee. These included the inauguration of the Sining Kalikasan Gallery (Eco-Arts) and the Ninoy Aquino Youth Talent Awards (NAYTA) at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Nature Center on World Environment Month, June 1987; the International Conference - Festival on Indigenes and Traditional Cultures from November 23 - 27, 1988; and the Young Earth Savers Painting Contest and Tribal Arts exhibit on June 14, 1989.<sup>45</sup>

According to Lorna Dipasupil, secretary of the Natural Resources Committee, "the movement hopes to implement within the decade of environmental activism an 'agenda for action' to make our environment cleaner, healthier, safer, and more livable."<sup>46</sup>

Earth Savers describes itself as an "independent yet dynamic partner of the government."<sup>47</sup> Aside from the various associations, foundations, and non-governmental organizations supportive of the movement, it maintains close collaboration with various governmental agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Education, Culture, and Sports, Department of Interior and Local Government, and the Philippine Information Agency.<sup>48</sup>

## Log Ban-Issue: Enter the NGOs

Participants in the debate over the log ban issue were not limited to members of the Senate. Various non-governmental organizations actively participated in its deliberation, each one lobbying for their preferred position. Sen. Alvarez drew support from the Earth Savers, while Sen. Mercado galvanized the support of a hundred organizations, legislators, and representatives from the academe and scientific community to form the Green Coalition.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup>See Earth Savers pamphlet "National Report to UN Conference on Environment and Development and Global Sustainable Development."

<sup>46</sup>Benjie Guevarra, "Greens Vs. Greens," *Philippines Free Press*, September 29, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>See Earth Savers pamphlet "Towards A Clean, Healthy and Peaceful Environment For Our Children."

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>Guevarra, *op cit.*



Aside from these initiatives, several environmental NGOs and support groups formed a coalition known as Task Force Total Commercial Log Ban (TFTCLB). The coalition members included Haribon Foundation, Green Coalition, Green Forum, Lingkod Tao Kalikasan, Philippine Environmental Action Network, and other kindred organizations.<sup>50</sup> Although listed as a member of TFTCLB and a signatory to several manifestoes for a total log ban, the WE's official stand was to "stop talking and start planting... if everyone planted a tree every week, there'd be nothing to fight about."<sup>51</sup>

The TFTCLB was organized to consolidate member groups into active participation in activities and projections. Part of its objective is to draw in more sectors into the log ban campaign. The Task Force has set as its maximum objective the imposition of a total log ban policy through legislation and executive action. It has also enumerated the minimum objectives of the coalition:

- 1.) To uplift the public's consciousness on environmental issues, specifically on the forestry crisis;
- 2.) To influence people in power, for the passage of the TCLB bill; and,
- 3.) To consolidate the environment sector (NGOs and POs) behind the flagship issue of logging.<sup>52</sup>

R.J. Johnston noted that environmental organizations can be identified as attitude groups which "comprise people of a like mind, irrespective of social and/or economic background and characteristics, and which have much more open membership."<sup>53</sup> The nature of attitude groups brings about certain organizational problems given the fact that they have no clear constituency upon whom to draw support, membership, and resource base.<sup>54</sup>

The primary task of organizations which deal with an environmental problem is to create the awareness that the problem exists. Aside from the general public, among those who should be aware of existing environmental problems are individuals and groups within the state apparatus. Thus, 'lobbying' is one of the activities that environmental organizations should undertake in order to influence state policies.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>"Environmental Groups Stage Rallies," *Haribon Update*, November - December 1991, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup>"The Logging Ban Bill: It's Over, But Who Wins?" *The Newsletter of the World Ecologists Foundation*, November 1990, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Excerpt from the minutes of the June 2 meeting of the TFTCLB.

<sup>53</sup> R.J. Johnston, *Environmental Problems: Nature, Economy and State* (London, Belhaven Press, 1989), pp. 171-173.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

People in government, most especially the politicians, are conscious of social issues which they believe would bring them political benefits (if they act on it) or political costs (if they fail to address it). Oftentimes, most environmental organizations face the difficulty of proving their case to the politicians. This is primarily the result of their lack of necessary resources *vis-a-vis* organized interests (e.g. the logging industry). The organized interests can always utilize their large resources to refute whatever claims made by the environmentalists. Even if they back their assertions with scientific research, the organized interests can fund yet larger research efforts to refute their stand.<sup>56</sup>

### Log Ban Bill Chopped Down

After two years of bitter debates, proponents of a total log ban succeeded in passing a 'killer amendment' which deleted the phrase 'selective log ban' from the title of Senate Bill 1404 and changed it to 'total commercial log ban.' Twelve senators, led by Orlando Mercado, approved the amendment on October 23, 1990.<sup>57</sup>

Senate Bill 1404 was approved on third reading on September 2, 1991. The bill provides for a national policy banning commercial logging in the Philippines for a period of 25 years. As a reaction to the tragedy in Ormoc, a majority of the senators approved the bill. Sen. Alvarez voted in favor of the bill, while three registered negative votes.<sup>58</sup>

On September 31, 1991, the bill was sent to the House of Representatives for concurrence. The House requested for the convening of a conference committee to reconcile Senate Bill 1404 and House Bill 21223. The lower chamber's version grants the Department of Environment and Natural

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<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> The senators which supported the amendment were John Osmena, Ernesto Maceda, Vicente Paterno, Sotero Laurel, Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Santanina Rasul, Rene Saguisag, Ernesto Hererra, Leticia Shahani, Wigberto Tanada and Juan Ponce Enrile.

Those who voted against it were Heherson Alvarez, Neptali Gonzales, Edgardo Angara, Teofisto Guingona, Alberto Romulo, Jose Lina, Victor Ziga and Agapito Aquino. See "Senate Approves Total Log Ban," *Haribon Update*, September - October, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> The three were Senators Aquino, Lina and Gonzales. *Ibid.*



Resources the power to declare a total log ban in bio-regions if the forest cover in such areas fall below 40 per cent.<sup>59</sup>

However, the Conference Committee failed to come out with a consolidated bill due to the failure of the Chairman of the House panel, Rep. Jerome Paras, to submit a Bicameral Report after the Senate transmitted a consolidated bill to the House panel two weeks before Congress recessed on February 7, 1992. Paras was a vocal critic of the total log ban position. Speaker Ramon Mitra designated Rep. Ponce de Leon to finalize the Committee report. Congress was expected to approve the consolidated bill on May 25, 1992.<sup>60</sup>

Eventually, Congress failed to pass the bill due to its preoccupation over the canvassing of the results of the May 11 presidential elections. As a symbolic gesture, the Senate approved the incomplete bill. Again, nature fell victim to politics.

For its part, the DENR has issued an order banning logging in the remaining virgin forests. But this is not enough to prevent the further destruction of the country's forest. A solid legislation is the only key to the preservation of the remaining resources.

Upon his ascension to power, President Fidel V. Ramos made some overtures to the public about protecting the environment. The Senate recently passed another bill which bans commercial logging for 25 years. Again, the bill faces rough sailing in the Lower House. How the present administration will handle the issue remains to be seen, meanwhile the rape of the country's forest remains unabated.

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<sup>59</sup> See the manifesto of *Tanggol Kalikasan*, Environmental Defense Law Office of Haribon, entitled "Immediate Action on Total Commercial Logging Ban" in *Haribon Update*, Jan. - Feb. 1992, p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> The House delegation to the Conference Committee were composed of Representatives Paras, Bengson III, Ponce de Leon, Puey, Loreto, Matti, del Mar, Nalupta and Agana. The Senate delegation were composed of Senators Alvarez, Mercado, Pimentel, Angara, Romulo, Guingona, Enrile, Maceda, Paterno and Laurel.

<sup>61</sup> The state is seen as more than "government," in the sense that it "is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure relationships *between* civil society and public authority in a polity but also to structure many crucial relationships *within* civil society as well." See Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. xii.



## State and the Environmental NGOs

The state is both the steward and manager of natural resources. It is the only institution in society with the capacity to address environmental issues through the formulation and implementation of public policies.<sup>61</sup> However, most states in post-colonial societies are burdened by their inability to implement preferred goals and objectives since they are continuously locked in a struggle with several fairly autonomous organizations within society. This is aggravated by the fact that the state itself is not autonomous from the dominant classes in society.

To strengthen state capabilities, the state leaders must successfully muster support from the citizenry. This can only be achieved through political mobilization. And yet, most state leaders in Third World societies have been unable to mobilize broad segments of the population through political parties and state agencies. In order to mobilize and sustain political support, the state must be able to convince the citizenry that the goals of the state are essential to their well-being. It must also provide the necessary channels for the expression of support. The failure of the state to institutionalize such channels would result in the narrowing of its mass base and an increased dependence on specific social groupings (e.g. local warlords) for maintaining social stability.<sup>62</sup>

Since there is a lack of structural support for the state leaders, it is drawn by the centrifugal forces that emerge when there is a growth of a few select agencies (e.g. bureaucracies). The absence of centripetal forces to check any large concentration of power from emerging within the state apparatus results in state leaders intentionally weakening the arms of the state that would have given them the ability to mobilize public support.<sup>63</sup>

The inability of the state to mobilize societal support results in the narrowing of its basis for legitimacy. To avoid accelerating the erosion of its legitimacy, the decision-making processes of the state involve the development of rules and regulations that will enable the state to avoid or manage societal problems that might delegitimize it. This forces the state to translate public concerns into national policies, not for the purpose of addressing the root of societal problems, but to maintain the smooth functioning of its governance.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Joel S. Migdal, "Strong States, Weak States: Power and Accommodation" in *Understanding Political Development*, Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntington (Editors), (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1987), p. 405.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>Chris C. Park, "Environmental Policies in Perspective" in *Environmental Policies: An International Review*, Chris C. Park (Editor), (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 38.

In the case of the log ban issue, the negative effects brought about by the utilization of forest resources in the Philippines has resulted in the emergence of a sense of urgency among state leaders to address the problem. By taking the initiative in calling for a ban on commercial logging, some state leaders are avoiding the evolution of another challenge to their legitimacy (e.g. environmental activism). Thus, it attempts to bind the social players within the parameters of its institutional boundaries.

However, the lack of state autonomy from the dominant classes in society has made it difficult for environmental NGOs to compete with organized logging interests within state boundaries. To compound matters, the inherent weakness of the Philippine state has resulted in its reliance on local strongmen for the maintenance of social stability at the local level instead of institutionalizing its own organs. This results in the further weakening of state capabilities that renders it inutile in answering the logging problem.

There is also a danger that the perpetrators of ecological destruction may take the form of large corporations, governmental agencies, and even non-governmental organizations. Ecological rhetorics can be used by the power structures (corporate interests and their underlings) to mislead and confuse the general public.<sup>65</sup>

The non-ecological elites, although realizing that something is wrong with the environment, still insist on maintaining the dominant economic and cultural system backed by political and military mechanisms. From their point of view, 'sustainable development' means "how to continue to sustain the supply of raw materials when existing sources of raw material run out."<sup>66</sup>

The key to strengthening state capabilities in the Philippines is for it to widen its base of legitimacy that will enable it to draw societal support. This can only be achieved by empowering the local communities through non-governmental organizations that are genuinely concerned about the environment. From this, the state can politically mobilize the NGOs to help weaken, if not totally obliterate, the clout of local strongmen.

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<sup>65</sup>S.M. Mohammed Idris, "What Green Really Means For The Third World," *Feedback*, September - October 1990, pp. 12-13, 11.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*