

## Gap Campaign 2001 – Doing Larger Demos: Props, Skits, Group Process!

***Purpose:** Following are guidelines for doing more elaborate demos, including ideas for props and a skit. This packet also includes what we have learned from putting on so many demos (an average of three per month in 2000) and guidelines for consensus process when working as a group on more involved actions. Use them as a point of departure, but remember that a simple leafleting action without props or fanfare is powerful and effective—and is all we ask of you!*

**About our Gap actions.** The Save the Redwoods/Boycott the Gap (SRBG) Core Group and Friends has put on Gap actions throughout California, in Seattle at the WTO showdown, and in Washington, D.C., at the IMF/World Bank showdown. Our actions have garnered national and international media coverage of the critical issues of Fisher deforestation and Gap sweatshops, and they have inspired worldwide support for the Gap Boycott! We've learned that incorporating wit, humor, and fun—or beauty, imagination, and ritual—into an action wins over the hearts of the public, while also greatly diffusing any potential for violence (on the part of police or observers), especially when masses of people and/or civil disobedience is involved. We've also found that when you put on an outrageous, funny, powerful action—with attention-grabbing props—you don't need large numbers of demonstrators to get media coverage—this affords you greater flexibility: You can stage a headline-grabbing demo overnight with a few people and some great props and clever slogans! Finally, we've found that creating an action as a group is the most fun and gets great results!

**About consensus process.** SRBG Core Group uses group process and consensus process when planning involved actions. Group process means that you make decisions as a group, with respect for all members. Consensus process within the group allows all voices to be heard—all ideas, all concerns. Group dynamics are such that no one person or organization dominates—everyone guards against this in a cheerful way. Facilitating meetings is passed from person to person; volunteers are called for every task—anyone may volunteer for anything, and people are encouraged to try everything. The idea is for everyone to feel empowered. It was through consensus process that thousands of people coordinated their actions and shut down the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November 1999! It was a fabulous thing to see and be part of—and we did it again in D.C. in April 2000—and we'll do it again and again until we see an end to corporate domination and exploitation of planet and people!!! Consensus process guidelines follow at the end of this packet.

**About props and costumes.** One picture is worth a thousand words—try to *show* it, as well as say it. Our costumes have included redwood tree outfits, cubes that spell out slogans, Santa suits, Wizard of Oz costumes, men in drag, pin-stripe suits, underwear or no clothes whatsoever (our “We'd Rather Wear Nothing Than Wear Gap” action), and so on. Our props have included a 200-year-old redwood stump (courtesy of the Gap Fishers), giant cardboard sewing machines, a twenty-foot sack of money, giant 4x4 pennies, a “money” bed on wheels, painted toilets, a 200-foot clothesline, huge “Uncle Sam” top hats, giant coho salmon and marbled murrelets on poles, gigantic placards, beautiful banners, and so on. We try to use discarded or recycled materials, including fabric and paint, for our props whenever possible (at least 80% of the time). Mine the dumpsters after conventions for foam core board; check out the trash cans at appliance stores—refrigerator boxes are great; check out recycling centers, “salvage” stores, and second-hand stores. We try to use bamboo (a beautiful, tropical grass) for our banner poles—if it's not available, we use metal rods or recycled wood.

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**About skits.** SRBG & Friends has written and produced a half dozen skits. We've found that short, witty skits, with eye-catching props and costumes, in which one character does most of the talking through a megaphone and/or a chorus of people do a lot of singing, work best. Most of our skits are designed to be performed at many different points during a single action (like during a march). The one below was filmed live in the streets of San Francisco by the BBC on June 3, 2000—we did it three times that day—at a Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy stores within walking distance of each other—and we've done it many times since!

### A Fisher Family Picnic

TWELVE REDWOOD TREES stand in a semi-circle around a GIGANTIC OLD-GROWTH REDWOOD STUMP in front of the GAP FLAGSHIP. The FISHER FAMILY—DON, DORIS, BOBBY, & JOHNNY—all dressed in bell-bottoms, while Don, bald, sports wide sideburns, are preparing to have a picnic. DORIS fusses with the BASKET, while BOBBY playfully throws a dirt clod at JOHNNY, and DON surveys the forest that will someday be his... all under:

NARRATOR

It's 1971. Don and Doris Fisher founded the Gap clothing store some years earlier in San Francisco. Here we see them enjoying a family outing with sons Bobby and Johnny.

JOHNNY

(pointing to stump)  
Gee, Dad, what's this?!

DON

That's a tree, Son.

JOHNNY

Gee, I thought trees were tall?!

DON

It's a tree that's been made into money!

JOHNNY

(skipping around the stump singing)  
It's a money tree! It's a money tree! It's a money tree! It's a money—

DON

(interrupts, jumping up on the stump)  
Kids! Maybe someday we'll buy this forest and turn it all into money!  
How would ya like that?!

ALL

(skipping around the tree with renewed enthusiasm)  
A money forest! A money forest! A money forest!

THEY stop in their tracks at the sound of a strange loud voice....

SACRAMENTO (NARRATOR)

This is Sacramento! We just passed the Forest Practice Act to protect the environment from overlogging!

JOHNNY

Gee, Dad, Does that mean we're not gonna make any money?

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DON

No, Son, laws are for poor people. If you give them enough money, the politicians will do anything you want! ...Just you wait, someday the Mendocino redwood forest will all be ours. In its place we'll put in Gap stores... housing developments!... vineyards! ...and... parking lots!!!

(All the FISHERS CHEER)

BOBBY

But, Dad, How are we gonna make the money to do all that?!

DON

(looking out over the horizon)

Son, I see sewing machines... Lot's of 'em.

(trees hold sewing machines above their heads)

...I see factories across the Pacific...

(trees start to sway rhythmically with sewing machines)

...where people are so poor they're willing to make our jeans for...  
11 cents an hour! Then we'll sell 'em here at a huge profit!

BOBBY

Gee, Dad, you're so groovy!

(ALL Exit except TREES)

TREES

(sway and sing with sewing machines overhead)

Workin' in a sweatshop, sewing khaki pants—

Workin' in a sweatshop, thanks to the Gap.

I've been workin' in a sweatshop, sewing lots a vests—

Workin' in a sweatshop, thanks to the Gap.

(repeat)

I've been workin' ... sewin' ... workin' ... sewin' ...

(trees collapse under:)

and I'm...so...tired!

NARRATOR

It's 1998. The Gap Empire now includes Banana Republic, Old Navy, Gap Kids, and Baby Gap—over 2,000 stores world-wide. And Bobby and Johnny grew up to be just like their parents...

ENTER JOHN and BOB, now bald, from opposite sides of the stage, wearing SUITS & TIES. They JUMP UP ON THE STUMP and greet each other, while DON and DORIS in the background behind stump BEAM proudly at their sons.

BOB

Hey, Bro! Gimme Five!

(give each other five)

JOHN

Hey, Bro! Guess what? We're worth...

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JOHN & BOB

12 Billion Dollars!!!

(give each other five)

BOB

Yeah! Made on the backs of sweatshop labor!

(give each other five)

DON

(Sons face parents, center stump)

Sons, we're proud of you!

DORIS

But aren't you forgetting something...

(D&D point to stump)

DON

Time to make some more...money!!!

DORIS

Time to expand the Gap Empire—North!!!

(trees quiver, huddle, and moan in fear)

JOHN & BOB

(link arms, face outwards and sing to Monty Python tune)

I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK! I do it in my office from far away!

EVERYONE

He's a lumberjack and He's OK! He does it in his office from far away!

JOHN & BOB

I cut down trees, I kill species, I log to infinity!

On Wednesdays I go banking, and see what's there for me!

EVERYONE

He cuts down trees, he kills species, he logs to infinity!

On Wednesdays he goes banking, and see what's there for he!

JOHN & BOB

I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK! I do it in my office from far away!

EVERYONE

He's a lumberjack and He's OK! He does it in his office from far away!

JOHN & BOB

I kill the fish, the birdies, too, and every last big tree!

And now in place of forests, big houses you will see!

EVERYONE

He kills the fish, the birdies, too, and every last big tree!

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And now in place of forests, big houses you will see!

JOHN & BOB

I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK! I do it in my office from far away!

EVERYONE

He's a lumberjack and He's OK! He does it in his office from... far... a-way!

ALL EXIT; then Don and Doris and GRANDKIDS enter, under:

NARRATOR

A Fisher Family Picnic in the Present Day—the year 2001. It's just Don and Doris and the GRAND KIDS. Bob and John are off overseeing the final liquidation of the redwood forest in Mendocino County, California.

GRANDSON  
(pointing to stump)

Gee, Grandpa, what's that?!

DON

That's a tree, Sonny!

GRANDSON

But I thought trees were tall!

DON  
(with a sly twinkle)

That's a tree that's been turned into money!

GRANDSON

Huh?! I like 'em better tall! Why do we need more money, anyway?!

DON

Well, er, uh...

GRANDDAUGHTER

Grandpa, Don't you know that forests stabilize the climate, purify the air, and provide water for the entire world!

DON

What the—!

GRANDDAUGHTER

Furthermore, forests mitigate global warming and provide habitat for thousands of species!

DON

Doris, What's gotten into these kids!

DORIS

Honey, can't you see... It's a ...generation gap!  
(Don slaps his face in Oedipal realization)

GRANDKIDS

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(alternating)

Grandma and Grandpa, us guys—the trees and everybody—have something to say to you!

ALL

(sing at D & D, while they look guilty and contrite)

Old Man Fisher had a store. Money! Money! Money!

And that store was called the Gap. Money! Money! Money!

With a sweatshop here, and a sweatshop there!

Here a shop! There a shop! Everywhere a sweatshop!

Old Man Fisher had a store. Money! Money! Money!

Old Man Fisher bought a forest. Going! Going! Gone!

And all the creatures in that forest are Going! Going! Gone!

With a clearcut here and a clearcut there!

Here a cut! There a cut! Everywhere a clearcut!

Old Man Fisher bought a forest! Going! Going! Gone!

We the People then fought back! Boycott! Boycott! Boycott!

We won't buy that heartless crap! Boycott! Boycott! Boycott!

Don't shop here! Don't shop there! Corporate Greed is Everywhere!

We the People—fighting back! Boycott! Boycott! Boycott!

The End

**Consensus guidelines.** It's really quite simple and effective (there's a funny bit from Starhawk, a wonderful activist in the global movement, demystifying the consensus process at the end of this description). Here's how it works at a meeting.

- 1.) There's a call for volunteers to be facilitator, note-keeper, time keeper.
- 2.) The facilitator will ask for agenda items. The facilitator will then go through the list and make a first cut at assigning times to the agenda items—people will object or agree—all will then try to keep within the time allocations or jointly agree to change those allocations in the course of the meeting.
- 3.) During the meeting, people raise their hands to express their view on an agenda item (the facilitator creates a stack as people raise their hands to speak.) People speak in turn, as the facilitator recognizes them, the facilitator gives priority to people who have not yet spoken. Eventually someone, often the facilitator, suggests a proposal given the views on a given point--this may be deferred till the very end of the discussion, if the proposal has to take into account many agenda items.
- 4.) Once a proposal is out there, participants then express "concerns" or ask for "clarification" or express "objections" about the proposal in turn; others speak to these concerns in turn; the facilitator suggests amendments to the proposal and takes quick "straw polls" as to the acceptability of the revised proposal. Participants may "stand aside" when they don't like parts of a proposal, but don't object that strongly and want to move ahead; a more extreme option a participant can take when she or he has moral objections to a proposal is "blocking," which is rarely used, but effectively kills all or part of a proposal. Participants can interrupt the process when they feel the

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process is being violated, making a triangle with hands; the facilitator typically gives a point-of-process interruption priority.

Participants can express their views silently while someone is speaking. For example, people can "twinkle" or give the "thumbs up" when they agree; shake their heads or give the thumbs down, people can "roll their hands like a wheel," when someone is repeating what has already been said. This sign language helps the facilitator when he or she is trying to determine when it is time to make a proposal or move on to the next speaker.

Below is from Starhawk, demystifying the consensus process, at a recent FTAA organizing meeting:

>Starhawk: When a consensus process is good, it's very good and when it's bad, it's horrible. Consensus at its best is a creative thinking process. It differs from voting in the following respect: in voting, one has only the option to make a choice between two alternatives. For example, your option may be to choose between carrots or potatoes. In consensus, other options are opened up; for example, rather than choosing carrots or potatoes, the group might decide to make vegetable soup. The group hears as many different viewpoints as it can and then someone makes a proposal and group members respond to that.

Consensus doesn't mean unanimity; it doesn't mean you will always agree; it does mean you will be heard. You can object, you can stand aside or, in extreme cases, you can block. Blocking is only to be used if you have a moral objection. When consensus is done correctly, blocking rarely occurs as a person's concern is heard early in the process and the final solution is often responsive to that concern. e.g., Sue will die if she eats carrots and so

. . .More on the process: A raised hand indicates that you want to speak. Indicate agreement by wiggling fingers (American sign language for clapping).

>Starhawk: Any other comments?

>Juliette: If someone says what you were going to say, it's helpful to the overall process if you do not repeat it.

> Starhawk: Based on the views being presented in the group, the facilitator may make a proposal for the group to consider, e.g., I propose this group make vegetable soup. The group will then hear clarifying questions, concerns, objections. Then the facilitator will restate the proposal and ask the group whether they have consensus on the proposal. The proposal agreed upon should then be written down and the group should figure out who is going to implement it.

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