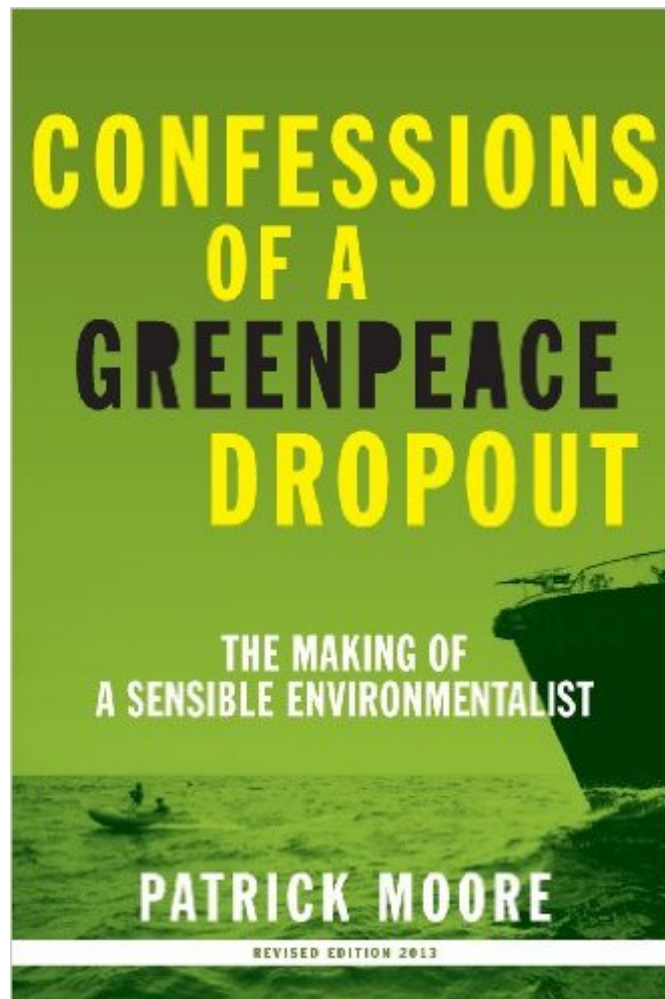


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Confessions Of A Greenpeace Dropout: The Making Of A Sensible Environmentalist



Synopsis

Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout: The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist is Dr. Patrick Moore's engaging firsthand account of his many years spent as the ultimate Greenpeace insider, a co-founder and leader in the organization's top committee. Moore explains why, 15 years after co-founding it, he left Greenpeace to establish a more sensible, science-based approach to environmentalism. From energy independence to climate change, genetic engineering to aquaculture, Moore sheds new light on some of the most controversial subjects in the news today.

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Customer Reviews

The book chronicles Patrick Moore's involvement with Greenpeace and his eventual disillusionment with it. The first half looks at all the now famous activities of Greenpeace and his involvement with them. There are all the stories of anti-nuclear activism, anti-whaling programs, campaigns against chemicals, and so on. We learn about how he became involved in radical environmentalism; how he became president of Greenpeace in 1977; how he reacted to the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland; how he grew aware of ideological and politicised agendas amongst his peers; and how he eventually decided he had had enough of a once important organisation. He describes in detail his growing disillusionment with Greenpeace. He came to see that these people were ideologically-driven activists, not scientists, so they were often going off half-cocked, lambasting things which were not in fact harmful or dangerous. The last straw was when Greenpeace decided to run with a global ban on chlorine. "This is when Greenpeace really lost me. As a student of

advanced biochemistry, I realized chlorine was one of the 92 natural elements in the periodic table and that it is essential for life. You don't just go around banning entire elements, especially when life without them would be impossible!" A number of related concerns eventually led to his decision to leave. He was tired of the politics, the grandstanding, the propaganda, and the radical, inflexible warfare mentality of Greenpeace. He knew there must be a better way to have genuine sustainable environmental outcomes. "I wanted to move from constant confrontation, always telling people what they should stop doing, to trying to find consensus about what we should do instead.

Patrick Moore takes us on an autobiographical journey which charts his maturation from a young, eager and idealistic environmentalist to an adult, rational and realistic environmentalist. Being on the spot as a co-founder of Greenpeace, we get the inside view on the world of environmentalism as it rose to prominence in the world. The first part of his book deals with his early formative experiences, friendships forged, campaigns that were run (including to save the baby seals) and the general we-are-changing-the-world euphoria of the young man on a mission. It is a fascinating account and gives us a valuable insight into the personal relationships, the highs and lows and the motivations his group of young and idealistic people who helped to change our world. Then at a 1982 UNEP sponsored conference in Nairobi attended by 85 NGO environmentalists Moore's world-view was altered forever. He came away from Nairobi still a committed environmentalist but with a new more nuanced and sophisticated approach. The concept of "sustainability/sustainable development" entered his consciousness for the first time. This new concept required a compromise between environmentalism and industrial civilisation: a balancing of environmental, social and economic values; and a recognition that there were around 7 billion people on the planet who had needs and rights that ought to be considered and accommodated. This shift in Moore's thinking began to put him at odds with the hard-line, uncompromising, 'black and white' line taken by Greenpeace (and other environmental groups). The group he helped found had become deeply ideological and intolerant.

I just finished reading "Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout - The Making of a Sensible Environmentalist" by the founder (one of a handful, but he was the driving force by far) Patrick Moore. After a short chapter of introductory frustration over the change of course Greenpeace has made, which made him drop out, he gives a great history of how they single-handedly launched successful campaigns against atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, illegal hunting of whales, clubbing of tens of thousands of seal pups, and quite a few other activities that I think were worthy

endeavors in protecting our environment. He also protested building nuclear power plants, but has now done an about face on that. One could skip over this and start with page 37, "The Beginnings," if the introductory part hasn't enough interest. Much of the book is spent on refuting the reasons Greenpeace has for their campaigns on genetic alteration of crops and animals, use of chemicals in industrial products, global climate change, and so forth. He states (very correctly) that the evolved Greenpeace bases nearly nothing on science or real data (or what I would call "common sense"), but is obsessed with winning converts and battling authorities and industries. His writing about forestry is very well done, as he was raised in a lumber town in British Columbia and has been involved in forestry most of his life. His contention is that lumber is our greatest renewable resource and that the forestry industry is NOT destroying the forests, but expanding them. He makes great arguments in favor of nuclear power (he didn't mention this, but I love the bumper sticker I've often seen "more people have died in the back seat of Ted Kennedy's car than in US nuclear accidents").

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