

# ... and it's all on video



Carry on camcording: the video activist presses the 'on' button when the going gets tough

old tree being destroyed, I'll be the first one to video it. That's not spying on people – that's justice!"

One of the biggest kicks for video activists is getting their recordings on to television. But it is a lot easier to get pictures on regional bulletins than on national programmes. Network news bosses have tended to treat tapes from video activists as suspect packages.

"I cannot remember when we last used that sort of material," says Richard Tait, editor-in-chief of ITN. "I know it sounds terribly pro-establishment, but we want to have our own reporters and camera crews on the spot shooting our own pictures."

But ITN did adopt some of the techniques of video activism to record the Manchester Airport protest. After a week in a tree house, Stewart Webb, an ITN producer, had footage of which any video activist would have been proud.

Peter Horrocks, editor of *Newsnight*, says he and his colleagues are always open to experimenting with news-gathering technology. "However, we're suspicious of people who offer us their pictures. We'll only use it if it's the only way we can cover a story and we're sure of its bona fides. Even then, we'll always be careful to label the source of the material when it appears on screen."

No national news station snubbed the video activist Paul O'Connor on 4 November 1994, when he shot exclusive footage of six protesters climbing on to the roof of the Houses of Parliament to oppose the Criminal Justice Bill, which was being passed that day.

At 28, Thomas Harding is disillusioned with the mainstream media. Just over three years ago, Harding integrated his television career and activist work by launching Britain's first alternative news service distributed on video cassette. The service, called *undercurrents*, bills itself as "news you don't see on the news", and was hailed as "the Pathe News of the Nineties" by *Time Out* and "compelling" by *The Independent*. More than 2,000 copies of each video are sold and it reaches an audience of more than 40,000 through group screenings.

The Oxford-based outfit has trained 500 people on how to use camcorders in their campaigns. Harding hopes that his book will perform the same educational function.

"When I started to use video for change," he says, "I had to learn everything by trial and error. I couldn't find a book that provided the tips I needed for my activist work. There were plenty of guides telling me how to make a wedding video, but none on how to become a video activist. With this book I hope to fill that gap" ■

Brown, Rob. "I protest . . . and it's all on video." Media+. Independent, 4 Aug. 1997, pp. 6+. The Independent Historical Archive, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/FQ4201086539/INDA?u=nlw\\_ttda&sid=bookmark-INDA&xid=2297478a](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/FQ4201086539/INDA?u=nlw_ttda&sid=bookmark-INDA&xid=2297478a). Accessed 7 Dec. 2022.