until he moved to California in 1973 “to live somewhere else and try somewhere different.” Once there, he gravitated toward the politically active, San Francisco-based Sierra Club, founded in 1892. Over the years, he has worked as a lobbyist, community organizer, fundraiser, and analyst. He co-wrote what is known as California’s Proposition 65, the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, and has written widely for environmental magazines; in 1983 he coauthored *Hazardous Waste in America*, published by Sierra Club Books.

During his tenure, Pope has seen the organization grow from 139,000 members to more than 700,000 members and a staff of 500, which he oversees. “I never actually planned to be the executive director,” he concedes. “I was always two or three years away from leaving, and then my job would change. Eventually I outlasted almost everybody else. I found myself in senior levels,” and in 1992 got the job. As the organization’s highest-ranking staff member (the presidency job, held by Jennifer Fer gan, is voluntary), Pope is also its most vocal and visible representative.

The Sierra Club ranks as less political and left-leaning than Greenpeace, but more so than the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation, the other U.S. environmental groups with which it is most closely aligned. John Flicker, president of the National Audubon Society, calls Pope “a visionary in public-policy thinking.” The two have worked together on a variety of issues since Flicker took his post seven years ago. “Carl is usually on the cutting edge for advocacy for the environment. He’s extremely articulate and especially adept at turning a phrase to make it sink in with the public,” Flicker adds. “When it comes to a debate on environmental policy, I’m glad he’s on our side. He is good.”

Pope says “shortsightedness” is the biggest, most frustrating obstacle to enacting environmental changes. “The hardest projects are those that have the longest time horizons and the least urgency, even if they are very important,” he says. “Our political leaders are less and less likely, in both parties, to look at the overall, long-term needs of the nation, and more likely to put parochial, narrow, partisan, and local short-term needs ahead of what the nation needs. This was most spectacularly shown by the [March 2002] vote on fuel economy,” he says, referring to congressional rejection of a bill that would have raised mileage standards for sport-utility and other vehicles—requiring, for example, that a Ford Explorer get 34 miles per gallon, not 19.

The Sierra Club is launching a major, multiyear campaign to get American auto consumers to demand that the industry offer an option called the “Freedom Package” on all models. “It’s a set of technologies like multivalve injection and variable-speed transmissions that would,” Pope says, “enable cars to get dramatically more miles per gallon, would save drivers thousands of dollars over the life of a vehicle, would eliminate millions of tons of the carbon pollution that causes global warming, and would reduce our dependence on Middle East oil.” (For the record, he drives a 1995 Ford Aspire—“41 mpg,” he adds.)

Pope counts among his accomplishments “beating back the Newt Gingrich ‘Contract with America’” in 1995, which virtually every major environmental group called an attack against the laws that protect natural resources. As for the current Bush administration, Pope declares that it “is the most diligently opposed to long-range protection of the air, water, and lands of this nation of any we have had in my lifetime.” He also faults the Clinton administration for “the decision in 1995 to sign the clear-cut logging rider that delayed for years the reform of the National Forest Service.”

Pope is encouraged, however, by a “renewed commitment of America’s churches, synagogues, and mosques to do their part in protecting the environment, and the similar dramatic upswing in direct involvement by African-American, Hispanic, and Asian communities all over the country.” Though the environmental movement “is still far, far too white,” he says, “environmental issues are now engaging a much more diverse cross-section of America.”

One of the challenges the Sierra Club faces in broadening its predominantly white, middle-class base, is that “it’s quite difficult to get people comfortable with working in a multiclass, multietnic context,” Pope says. For example, “most of our members are well-educated, and better at talking than at listening. That’s pretty intimidating for someone without a formal education who comes to a first meeting. Unless we’re careful—and we haven’t been careful enough—that person is not going to have a positive experience, and won’t come back.”

The Sierra Club recently announced that it would place more emphasis on what it stands for, instead of what it is against. “We have a tendency to act as if people are motivated mainly by anger or fear, when in fact we know better—that hope and optimism are more critical motivational factors,” Pope explains. “We have a large body of data suggesting, for example, that as long as we keep telling people all the awful things that will happen if we don’t deal with global warming, they just get depressed, and depressed people don’t take action. But if we start emphasizing that they can make a difference just by making sure that they ask their local auto dealer for the ‘Freedom Package’ when they buy a car, or changing the kind of light bulbs they use, this empowers them to take action.”

Meanwhile, along with its book-publishing arm, the Sierra Club is moving into television production. This year it coproduced (with Ric Burns) the documentary *Ansel Adams*, which first aired in April on