

RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

The recent car-bomb attempt on the lives of Darryl Cherney and Judi Bari was the birth wail of a new era in the lives of Earth First! activists and the movement itself. This violent attack on the leaders and chief proponents of non-violent resistance within the movement signals the end of our ambivalence with the concept of violence as a medium of social and political protest. We can no longer argue the issue. Violence has been thrust upon us and we must deal with it and formulate a response consistent with our ideals. This is one instance in which all those involved in Earth First! must act to develop an agreement among ourselves with regards to methods of resistance and activism directed toward the authors of state repression.

Our overriding ideal is No Compromise in Defense of the Earth; we must not back down from this stand in the slightest, regardless of the threat offered by those who oppose our views. Anything less than full commitment is not Earth First! and should parade under another banner. We must continue, even increase, our demonstrations, our protests, our active resistance to those powers who would destroy the Earth. The question is not, "Should we continue our protests in the face of the opposition's willingness to bring violent means against us?" The question we must consider in contemplating this horrific attack is, "What is the proper response of Earth First! to such state-sponsored violence?"

We are at an interesting point in the development of environmental activism in this country. Because of the increasing popular support for defense of the natural world, the technocratic elite that have been in total control of the economy of the United States and the world are beginning to realize that their days of unbridled development have come to an end. The only response available to a threatened control system is to use the means of repression and thought control to discredit and scatter the opposition.

The military/business oligarchy that controls the United States has many years of experience in repressing popular revolt. Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Granada, Nicaragua, Panama and now Peru — in all these countries, and many others less visible, the United States has used covert and overt violence to destroy opposition to American business control of the economy and the people. Now we are seeing these same tactics turned on US citizens who are publicly expressing their opposition to the excesses of the business elite operating on and about Turtle Island.

Let us not kid ourselves about the future of ecologically-based, non-violent resistance. The violent response will increase. We will increasingly be singled out by the hired thugs of the ruling minority for harassment, intimidation, infiltration and arrest. The US always responds to threatening popular movements with repression, as evidenced by the anti-labor violence of the thirties, McCarthyism of the fifties, National Guard murders in the seventies and now a return to violent tactics in the nineties. Earth First!, being the most active and visible expression of ecological resistance, is the current target, the lesson being offered to the viewing American public of the price of resistance to the powers in control.

Now we face the challenge of responding to state-sponsored violence directed at our cause and against us individually. The whole world is watching. It is up to us to demonstrate the continuing leadership of EF! in developing appropriate and effective methods of resistance.

As recognized by Ghandi and others, the proper response to violence is increased and unrelenting non-violent resistance. Our stand must be based on the knowledge of the correctness of our actions and the rightness of our cause. It has been proven again and again that against such popular resistance, no violent regime can long stand. Our actions are based on a solid historical foundation of the effectiveness of passive resistance, strengthened by the sure knowledge we possess of the rightness of our actions and the increasing support being expressed in the United States and the world for

our cause.

Earth First! has become known for selection of particularly appropriate targets and means of demonstration that point out the absurdity of the powers we oppose. Guerrilla theater, merry pranks, masks and costumes allow us to make our very serious points while at the same time underscoring our connections with the Earth and her inhabitants. When a brightly colored spotted owl, timber wolf, old-growth tree or red squirrel is depicted threatened by the burly, masculine overpowering technology of mankind, the point is made effectively, peacefully and with human warmth and humor.

We also carry out direct physical intervention aimed at the tools of the oppressors, never at the oppressors themselves. Tree-spiking has been a recent divisive issue in the movement. The motivations, consequences and theoretical basis of tree-spiking must become widely known and understood for it to be used and perceived as a truly non-violent form of resistance. The people at the receiving end of tree-spiking must understand that the violence they bring to the trees is being brought back directly to them, if they persist in their actions. Without this understanding, tree-spiking is not an effective non-violent tool.

We must be exceedingly careful, in the coming volatile times, to avoid violent response to the controlling minority, whether they be official state thugs or their hired minions. Any violence on our part will be turned against us, widely publicized, and used to split and disempower our movement. If last-ditch defense of old-growth forest demands spiking, it must be thoroughly publicized, privately and publicly, so that all concerned realize the necessity of the action and the consequences of any subsequent logging.

We must maintain our decentralized lack of structure, yet, with enhanced communication among all in the movement. In this regard, we can be confident in the use of whatever technology is available, be it fax machine, computer or cellular phone. We are opposed by those who control B-52s and nuclear missiles; our available puny technology must be used effectively. We must disseminate the Journal widely and freely, to increase understanding of our cause, win allies to the movement and increase the resources available to its continuation.

But first and foremost we must increase our active opposition to the violent controlling elite. We must examine every aspect of our lives, to ensure that we are individually engaged in right livelihood, as a prerequisite for action in opposition. Those of us who can, must simplify our lives to the extreme, to become more effective eco-warriors, lessen the control of the materialistic paradigm and increase our ability to move about and take action unfettered by material things.

Cactus Ed said it good, through the words of Doc Sarvis:

"Code of the Eco-Warrior."
1) Nobody gets hurt. Nobody. Not even yourself.

2) Don't get caught.

3) If you get caught, you're on your own. Pass on the costs to the enemy. Work alone, or in a small circle of trusted friends. Expect no reward. Keep fit.

4) No domestic responsibilities. If married, do not breed.

"The eco-warrior does not fight people, he fights the institution, the planetary Empire of Growth and Greed. He fights not human beings but a monstrous megamachine never seen since the days of the Late Jurassic and the carnivorous dinosaur. He does not fight humans, he fights a runaway technology, an all-devouring entity that feeds on minerals, metals, rocks, soil, on the earth itself, on the bedrock basis of universal being!"

Such is our task; such is our reward for choosing a life guided by the Earth First! ideal. But at the same time that we are pursuing our goals with seriousness and dedication, we must also maintain our sense of humor, our joy in participation in life on Earth, and our awe and wonder at the wildness that still remains.

—Mike Lewis, Chugiak, Alaska



Sahara Club Attacks EF!

Two southern California dirt bikers have started a new anti-environmental hate group, the Sahara Club, focused on Earth First! and advocates of the California Desert Wilderness Bill.

The Sahara Club USA Inc. was formed this year by Louis "Phantom Duck" McKey and Rick "Super Hunky" Sieman. These dirt bikers organized and ran the annual Barstow to Vegas race for years after it was prohibited because of its enormous environmental impact on the desert. They say they formed the Sahara Club to keep public lands open to off-road vehicles, but their agenda goes far beyond that.

In a flyer being distributed through motorcycle shops, they brag that "The Sahara Club has formed a special division of big, ugly desert racers called the Sahara Clubbers. This elite squad will be setting up tempting targets for Earth First! to attack... and will make sure that any illegal actions are 'firmly' subdued." Their first newsletter

(three issues so far) ran names, addresses, and license plate numbers for EFers in southern California.

Their third issue reprinted the entire EF! Directory from the March EF! Journal. Their introduction to it said, "here is the latest up to the minute data on where the scum are and how to reach them. In many cases, they just have a PO Box listed, but with a little detective work, we're sure you can track them down and perhaps 'reason' with them about the error of their ways."

The newsletters are full of incitements to violence. They also display a juvenile fascination with homophobia and name-calling (EFers are called freaks, fags, wharf rats, eco-nazis ...). Their attitude toward wilderness? "Only a fool would hike more than a short distance into the desert."

If, for some bizarre reason, you want to contact them, the address is: Sahara Club, 17939 Chatsworth St. Suite S25, Granada Hills, CA 91344. Membership is \$20 per year.

So you got a death threat. . .

I suppose it was inevitable, as the Earth First! movement has become larger, more effective, and better known. EFers around the country have recently gotten a rash of harassment letters and death threats. This isn't an entirely new phenomenon, but it has gained significance in the wake of the bombing of Darryl and Judi.

The largest number of threats have come to California EF! contacts in the form of two letters. One was a hate-filled piece reeking with homophobia; gender-specific variations were sent to male and female contacts. It threatens physical violence and bears a strong resemblance to writing in the Sahara Club newsletter (see related story).

The other is a slightly more polite letter that attempts to convince the recipient that EF! is a terrorist organization and that tries to stir up conflicts within the movement.

EF! contacts have also received phone calls that range from mildly abusive to clearly threatening.

Some folks have asked for suggestions on how to deal with this kind of crap, so here is the collective opinion of the Journal staff and friends. (I won't call it collective wisdom. If we had wisdom, we'd probably spend more time chasing 'dozers from the wilderness instead of sitting in a sweaty office wondering why the FBI can't afford phone taps that don't screw up our lines.)

Some suggested responses to threatening calls and letters:

- Keep laughing. Humor is a mighty weapon that can carry a very sharp point. It's also fun. Personally, I'm looking forward to Darryl's song about the bomb in their car — it should be dynamite.

- Get a PO Box. If you distribute your name as a contact for Earth First!, it's a cheap investment for a little peace of mind.

- Keep records. Save threatening letters (try not to obscure any fingerprints); keep notes on threatening calls. Look for a pattern and expose it if you find one. It isn't paranoia if people really are out to get you.

- Press charges. Why the hell not? Give our police agencies something better to do than busting rap musicians. Of course, we've seen how the FBI responds to violence against us, but they're not the only game in town. The Postmaster General, in particular, looks askance threats sent through the mail.

- Find another group. If this gets too scary, get active with the Sierra Club or the Nature Conservancy. There's no shame to it — not everybody is ready or able to stand on the front lines, and saving life on this planet will require many different approaches.

- Keep fighting for Mother Earth. (Yeah, I know this goes without saying for any Earth Firstier. I just throw it in for those ultra-serious scholars seeking to "analyze" trends in the environmental movement, and for anybody who picks this up off a radical-chic coffee table.)

— Dale Turner

