

# FORWARD!

by Edward Abbey

If a stranger batters your door down with an axe, threatens your family and yourself with deadly weapons, and proceeds to loot your home of whatever he wants, he is committing what is universally recognized—by law and morality—as a crime. In such a situation the householder has both the right and the obligation to defend himself, his family, and his property by whatever means are necessary. This right and this obligation is universally recognized, justified and even praised by all civilized human communities. Self-defense against attack is one of the basic laws not only of human society but of life itself, not only of human life but of all life.

The American wilderness, what little remains, is now undergoing exactly such an assault. Dave Foreman has summarized the character and scale of the assault in the first chapter of this excellent and essential book. With bulldozer, earth mover, chainsaw and dynamite the international timber, mining and beef industries are invading our public lands—property of all Americans—bashing their way into our forests, mountains and rangelands and looting them for everything they can get away with. This for the sake of short-term profits in the corporate sector and multi-million dollar annual salaries for the three-piece-suited gangsters (M.B.A., Harvard, Yale, University of Tokyo, *et alia*) who control and manage these bandit enterprises. Cheered on, naturally, by *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *Wall Street Journal*, actively encouraged by those jellyfish Government agencies which are supposed to protect the public lands, and as always aided and abetted in every way possible by the quisling politicians of our Western states (such as Babbitt, DeConcini, Goldwater, Hatch, Garn, Symms, Hansen, Wallop, Domenici—to name but a few) who would sell the graves of their own mothers if there's a quick buck in the deal, over or under the table, what do they care.

Representative democracy in the United States has broken down. Our legislators do not represent those who elected them but rather the minority who finance their political campaigns and who control the organs of communication—the Tee Vee, the newspapers, the billboards, the radio—that have made politics a game for the rich only. Representative government in the USA represents money not people and therefore has forfeited our allegiance and moral support. We owe it nothing but the taxation it extorts from us under threats of seizure of property, or prison, or in some cases already, when resisted, a sudden and violent death by gunfire.

Such is the nature and structure of the industrial megamachine (in Lewis Mumford's term) which is now attacking the American wilderness. That wilderness is our ancestral home, the primordial homeland of all living creatures including the human, and the present final dwelling place of such noble beings as

the grizzly bear, the mountain lion, the eagle and the condor, the moose and the elk and the pronghorn antelope, the redwood tree, the yellowpine, the bristlecone pine, even the aspen, and yes, why not say it?, the streams, waterfalls, rivers, the very bedrock itself of our hills, canyons, deserts, mountains.

For many of us, perhaps for most of us, the wilderness is as much our home or a lot more so, than the wretched little stucco boxes, plywood apartments and wallboard condominiums in which we are mostly confined by the insatiable demands of an overcrowded and ever-expanding industrial culture. And if the wilderness is our true home, and if it is threatened with invasion, pillage and destruction—as it certainly is—then we have the right to defend that home, as we would our private rooms, by whatever means are necessary. (An Englishman's home is his castle; an American's home is his favorite fishing stream, his favorite mountain range, his favorite desert canyon, his favorite swamp or patch of woods or God-created lake.)

The majority of the American people have demonstrated on every possible occasion that they support the ideal of wilderness preservation; even our politicians are forced by popular opinion to *pretend* to support the idea; as they have learned, a vote against wilderness is a vote against their own re-election. We are justified in defending our homes—our private home and public home—not only by common law and common morality but also by common belief. We are the majority; they—the greedy and powerful—are the minority.

How best defend our wilderness home? Well, that is a matter of strategy, tactics and technique, which is what this little book is about. Dave Foreman explains the principles of ecological defense in the complete, compact and conclusive pages of his short introduction. I can think of nothing I could add nor of anything I would subtract; he says exactly what needs to be said, no more and no less.

I am happy to endorse the publication of *Ecodefense*. Never was such a book so needed, by so many, for such good reason, as here and now. Tomorrow might well be too late. This is a book that will fit handily in any saddlebag, in any creel, in any backpack, in any river runner's ammo can—and in any picnicker's picnic basket. No good American should ever go into the woods again without this book and, for example, a hammer and a few pounds of 60-penny nails. Spike a few trees now and then whenever you enter an area condemned to chainsaw massacre by Louisiana Pacific and its affiliated subsidiary the U.S. Forest Service. You won't hurt the trees; they'll be grateful for the protection; and you may save the forest. My Aunt Emma back in West Virginia has been enjoying this pleasant exercise for years. She swears by it. It's good for the trees, it's good for the woods, it's good for the earth, and it's good for the human soul. Spread the word—and **carry on!**

Edward Abbey  
July 1984  
Oracle, Arizona