

Editorial

by Dave Foreman



This Publication

—Dave Foreman, Editor

I'd like to apologize for any failings in layout and content in this issue of EARTH FIRST! as well as its late arrival in your mailbox. The issue was already late when our previous editor, Pete Dustrud, left in mid-stream.

If you sit still too long, you stagnate. If you don't move, you become a bureaucracy. So, as the new editor, I'd like to say there will be some changes. First, this publication will no longer be called a newsletter. Its name is simply EARTH FIRST!

This paper will not be a one-person show. Bart Koehler is Associate Editor, Art Goodtimes poetry editor, and the Jackson WY group of EF! is in charge of mailing. We want to encourage many more contributions of news, local reports, opinions, regular columns, cartoons, art work, and photographs. We'd like help in layout. We particularly would like a person to be in charge of our mailing list.

Beginning with the September 21st issue, this paper will be better organized and less cluttered. Regular features will be in regular places. There will always be a description of EF! and subscription blank in the back.

Besides the mechanics of the paper, we need to confront the philosophy of it. We claim EF! to be a non-organization, a group without hierarchy, a movement. But within this anarchistic ideal we have a publication, maintain a mailing list, and organize events. We have positions and political stands. How does all this square? And, how do you make hard decisions in such a situation? How do you deal with the legal requirements? I am particularly interested in how the publication, EF!, ties in with the movement, EF!

Because EF! is not legally a formal organization, this paper is a private business to meet the requirements of the law. And that may be the solution to our questions. Let EARTH FIRST! be a movement, a non-organization. But within that movement is the publication *EARTH FIRST!*, an independent entity serving the movement as a communication medium. Subscribing to it does not necessarily make you a "member" of EF!. Nor does one have to subscribe to it to be an EF!er. Despite this differentiation, work on the paper is volunteer and all subscription money (including "profits") goes to fund the issues work of the movement.

We'd like to hear your opinion on this. We'd like to have your help in putting this paper out.

Dear Readers, You now have a New Editor

July 29, 1982

For the past nine months, it has been my pleasure to serve you as the editor of the Earth First! Newsletter. I was excited to get involved with Earth First!, and I was delighted to be appointed editor of this publication. For once, I felt my interests and skills were being put to something worthwhile. It was a lot of work that I didn't mind doing because I was thrilled to be doing something I thought mattered. But the thrill is gone. The new editor(s) of this newsletter has allowed me this space to explain why:

Up until a few days before I would have taken this issue of the EF! Newsletter to press, I had been under the impression that part of my responsibility as editor was that of exercising final approval (or denial) of what goes into print. During the course of the previous five issues, I sent to press a wide array of articles, letters and other items, and though I have not agreed with all opinions and points of view expressed in those pieces, I nonetheless have gone ahead and published them.

One aspect of this newsletter which has always presented problems for me, however, has been the eco-tactics or Ned Ludd column. On several occasions, I expressed my concerns to the EF! Circle over the legal and ethical implications of presenting a column devoted to printing such tactics. During that time, the few "eco-tactic" submissions I did receive progressed from relatively harmless and humorous pranks to ones which I feel border on outright violence. In addition, most of the few reader responses on this subject seemed to reinforce my concerns.

In light of this, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the notion that such a column was productive at all. I now feel an eco-tactics column, such as Ned Ludd, is silly at best, suicidal at worst.

This feeling was especially pronounced when I was confronted with a metal punji stake, or "road-spiking" tactic. Since it has been Dave Foreman who has been most concerned with the Dear Ned Ludd column, I called to tell him that I didn't want to publish the road-spiking tactic, whereupon I found out just how much editorial discretion I had: none. The feeling that my role concerning the newsletter was being reduced from that of "editor" to that of "graphic artist-in-residence" suddenly became very obvious.

I then dropped out of the thirteen-member Earth First! Circle and told them I would also resign as editor if they did not support my right to reject material I didn't see fit to print.

I went back to get on with the already overdue production of this issue, but just prior to press-time, several members of the Circle arrived in town and they

decided, after having read the galley-proofs, that all of the critical letters-to-the-editor, combined with my long editorial, produced too much of a "negative" image of Earth First!

So, after all the work I put into what would have been this issue, considerable pressure came to bear upon me, and I reluctantly consented to hand over the production of the newsletter to Dave Foreman and the other Circle members who were present. Some of the stories and photos in this issue might be mine, but I now have no further involvement with the Earth First! Newsletter, nor do I call myself an Earth First!er.

Once I pick up the pieces from this experience, I will be attempting to start up a new publication which I am calling "Free Earth: A Journal of the Environmental Movement." (I have grown very fond of this kind of work.) If any of you would be interested in contributing to Free Earth, or would like a free copy when it comes out, or if you would just like to write to me, here's my address from now on:

Pete Dustrud
PO Box 25041
Salt Lake City, UT
84125

Please note that whether you see this message printed in the EF! Newsletter, or read it in the form of a direct letter, this will be my last opportunity to correspond with you: I will be handing over the subscriber index to the new editor(s) as soon as this message is in the mails to you.

Pete Dustrud

Letters

Dear Dave,

Thanks for the invitation to join in the July 4th Wyoming Earth First! rally. I heard about it at many points in February and March when I was traveling and visiting with people in Wyoming and Montana. I'd really like to come. We are finishing up a construction project here (community-built Zendo) and are working right up through that weekend. So I can't make it.

I've been meaning to write you, both to praise and to criticize. The reasons for praise are obvious—Earth First! and its little paper have brought a great breath of fresh air and commitment to the environmental movement. I've been subscriber from the first issue. As fine as it is to see the sense of humour and the spirit of playfulness of Earth First! though, the underlying seriousness you all present is even more inspiring and more important. So what I must address is the issue of seriousness: If one is truly serious about the potentiality of virtual biological holocaust, one is deadly deliberate and impeccable in one's choice of strategies. Mere theatrics are not enough, and too much of the "monkey-wrench gang" stance is simply theatrics. Thus, in your editorial,