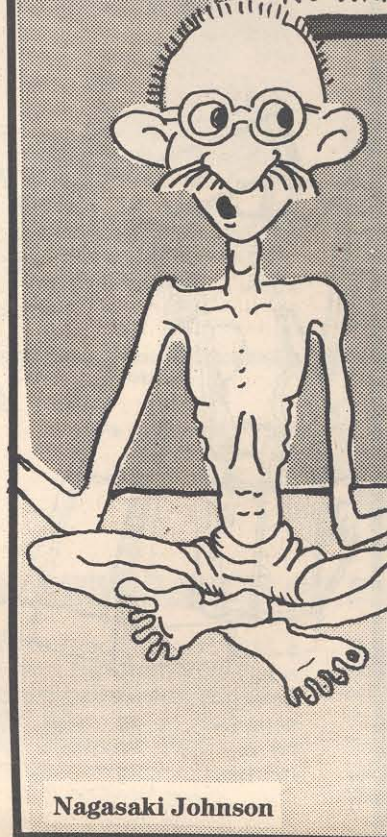


What is the role of non-violent direct action within the Earth First! movement? What is the role of Earth First! within the non-violent movement? Does the acceptance of monkeywrenching negate non-violence? Are the Earth First! logos of the Green Fist and the Monkeywrench violent? Would an acceptance of philosophical non-violence weaken and compromise the militant stance of Earth First!? Important questions. A variety of Earth First!ers and others discuss them on the following 4 pages in this special section. We would welcome comments from our readers on this important issue.



Nagasaki Johnson

Perhaps the question I am most often asked by reporters is this: "How do you reconcile non-violent actions like the Kalmiopsis Blockade with your advocacy of ecotage?" My friend, Montana, asks the question from a different angle in this issue's Letters to the Editor column. She asks, if our direction is to become the path of Gandhi, where she fits into Earth First! since she just wouldn't put up with being pushed by a bulldozer.

When I am in a flippant mood, I quote Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." But more than frivolity is required. It is in either form a fundamental question. I can only answer by saying Earth First! is not a monolith. There is not a central directorate at its helm. There are many of us, with many styles, many abilities, many callings. We are united in a belief in Earth first. There are many tools in the pursuit of that goal and many places within the broad movement that is called Earth First!. Among those tools and places (with considerable overlap) are: lifestyle, philosophy, traditional environmental activism, demonstrations, guerrilla theater, non-violent direct action and ecotage.

Some are called to experiment with lifestyles, to develop ways of living *in* the Earth as "plain citizens" instead of "Lord and Master." How can we lower our demands on the life support system of Mother Earth? How can we give plenty of room to the many other species sharing this planet with us? How can we re-inhabit the *place* in which we are? If human beings, particularly "civilized" human beings, are to continue to live on Earth, we must find a better way.

Others are drawn to philosophy, to creating a new paradigm — one of Deep Ecology or biocentrism. An Earth-compatible lifestyle must be grounded on the solid bedrock of a worldview in harmony with ecological law. So must activism to protect Earth. The intel-

lectual dust of ages must be swept away to change attitudes of "multiply and subdue" and "God put these resources here for *people* to use." Cartesian consciousness must be replaced with aboriginal consciousness.

Many Earth First!ers work within the system to protect natural diversity but from a perspective of Deep Ecology. They find their role in drawing up no-compromise wilderness boundaries, identifying lands that can be rehabilitated (roads closed, dams torn down, clear-cuts revegetated, extirpated wildlife reintroduced), testifying at hearings with intransigent stands, lobbying bureaucrats and politicians, educating the public and filing tough lawsuits. They are fighting in the same arena as do the Sierra Club and Audubon Society but without accepting the rules of the game as devised by the industrial power brokers. This may be less glamorous than direct action but it is extremely important. It was, after all, a lawsuit that stopped the Bald Mountain Road.

Many of us feel a need to take to the streets peacefully and legally — but passionately — to voice our opinions about those who would rape our Mother. Our Glen Canyon Funeral this May is a good example. Some would take this a step further into guerrilla theater as we did two years ago with our "Cracking of Glen Canyon Damn" or when Tiny Logsdon in Albuquerque smashed up the oil rig of "Earth Last!" Such demonstrations and stunts can gather much-needed media exposure. (Music and humor are critical elements of this approach.)

There are an increasing number of cases, however, where legal methods — no matter how militant — fail and the only recourse to protect wild country is to go beyond the narrow confines of what is "legal." It becomes time to place our bodies between the machine and the wilderness. To do this, we must be deliberate, we must be prepared, we must be fully com-

mitted to act non-violently. To engage in non-violent direct action, we are going beyond the laws of the state. We may be arrested. We may be fined. We may be jailed. We may be physically assaulted, even injured. But besides the courage required to face such threats, we must also be fully prepared to remain non-violent no matter what the situation. Non-violence under these conditions means not to even verbally assail those to whom we may be in "opposition." We must remain calm and peaceful even in life-threatening situations. Why? When we enter into a non-violent action, after great deliberation, we have made a public commitment. To break that bond will destroy the moral force which is the strength of *ahimsa*. It will ruin our future credibility. Moreover, it will endanger others who are engaged in the action with us at the time or who may engage in such actions in the future.

I am not by nature a pacifist. Indeed, I have ethical objections to an all-pervasive philosophical pacifism. But I am fully convinced through direct experience of the power of non-violence. I am impressed by the strength one gains by such action. I am impressed with the effect such action has on the general public, the media and one's "opponents." Nonetheless, non-violent action is most definitely *not* for everyone. Go through a non-violence preparation. You should be able to judge yourself afterwards. (I recommend a NVP even for those who do not plan to participate in such actions because

they will better understand NV actions and will become more deliberate in other things as well.) If you cannot make a full commitment to non-violence for the *specific action*, if you have any doubt, then do not do it.

There are many good reasons not to engage in a blockade or other NV action. For personal or business reasons you may not be able to be arrested. You can still help as a support person, though, if you wish. Your personality may not be right for such action. You may have philosophical or practical doubts about non-violence. You may just not want to do it. Fine. There are many other roles — just as important — in defense of Mother Earth. It is heroic, yes, to put yourself between a bulldozer and the wilderness. But it is not at all cowardly *not* to. Do not feel pushed into blockading. Do it only if it is right for you and if you are fully prepared to face the consequences.

Non-violent direct action is expensive in many ways (see the articles by Australians Trudgen and Russell in this section). We cannot do it everywhere natural diversity is threatened by the rough industrial monster. In many cases it is not applicable or practical. There is another step beyond NV direct action. This is monkeywrenching (or ecotage). I consider monkeywrenching to be non-violent since it is not aimed at harming any life. It is directed only towards machines in self-defense of Earth. Monkeywrenching is also a very deliberate action. It should not be undertaken lightly or with-

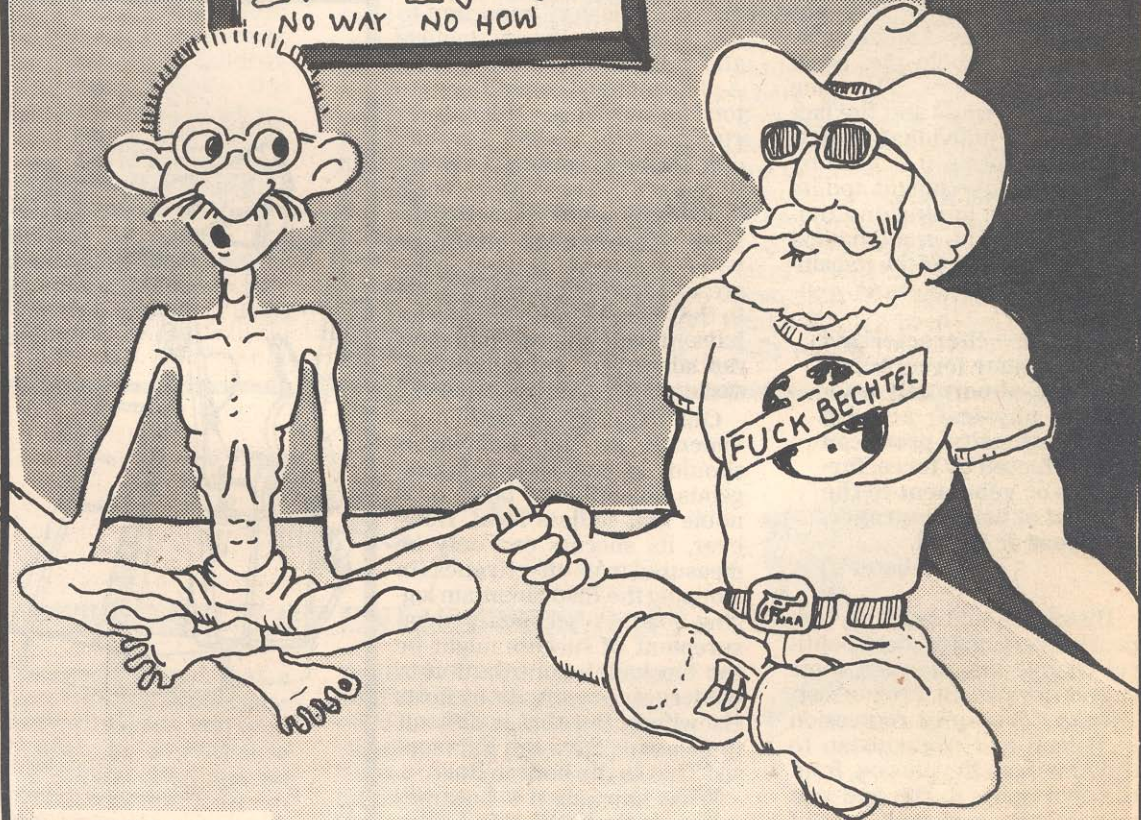
out deep consideration. But it can be very inexpensive and effective. *Earth First!* does not and cannot officially endorse such action. It is a personal decision. But it can save the wild when other methods fail. Consider, for example, the impact of several hundred people throughout the United States spiking trees or vehicle trails in threatened wild lands. That alone could effectively protect millions of acres of Forest Service and BLM roadless lands from logging, ORVs, and mineral and energy exploration and development much as the tsetse fly protects millions of acres of wildlife-rich wild lands in Africa from humans and their ravaging cattle.

Non-violent direct action and monkeywrenching are like milk and beer. They are very good individually but godawful when mixed. When a NV action is taken in defense of wilderness, we must strongly discourage any kind of ecotage. The slightest monkeywrenching will muddy the water, fog the air and destroy the whole thrust of *ahimsa*. It also may lead to those acting non-violently being physically assaulted or blamed for the monkeywrenching. If the monkeywrench is your tool, stay away from blockades! There are many other issues and places where you can practice your very important, courageous and effective art.

I see all of these as tools in a tool box. You don't drive nails with a screwdriver, you don't tighten nuts with a hammer. Use the right tool for the job. Find the role which you best fit for a particular time and place.

-DF

Thou Shalt
Not Nuke
NO WAY NO HOW



Nagasaki Johnson

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