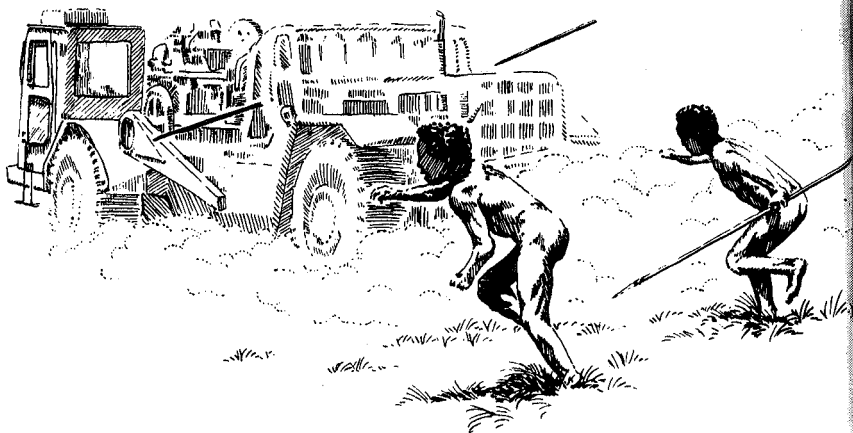


## CHAPTER 2



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# THE FUTURE OF MONKEYWRENCHING

By T.O. Hellenbach

In an era of international tensions over bombings, shootings, and acts of mass destruction, the word "terrorism" is a guaranteed headline-grabber and a simplistic brand for anyone's political opposition. As early as 1986, Democratic Representative Pat Williams of Montana used this number one media buzzword to condemn Earth First!, announcing his refusal to consider any EF wilderness proposals while tree spiking continued.

His sense of moral outrage was shared by another public official, Thomas Hutchinson, governor of Massachusetts colony. The indignant governor refused to negotiate with radical colonists whom he associated with numerous attacks on public and private property. Rebels had attacked his home and

rashed the offices of the vice-admiralty courts and the Comptroller of Customs, smashing windows and burning records. For turning a deaf ear, Hutchinson received a harbor full of tea in what came to be known as the "Boston Tea Party." No isolated incident, the destruction of what, in today's economy, would be over a hundred thousand dollars worth of private property was followed three months later by another successful nighttime raid on a tea ship at dock. Elsewhere in the area, citizens put the monkeywrench to the construction of British fortifications by sinking barges loaded with bricks, tipping over supply wagons, and burning hay intended for use as soldier's bedding.

The Tories of yesteryear lacked only the word "terrorism" with which to brand the women and men who created the United States of America. One of those founding radicals, Thomas Jefferson, warned that "strict observance of the written law is doubtless one of the highest duties of a good citizen, but it is not the highest." He further wrote, "To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law would be to lose the law itself."

Last century, the institution of slavery was only brought down by prolonged and determined protest that, at its core, was lawless and destructive of property. Slaves used work slowdowns and feigned illness to hurt cotton production. Costly supervision was necessary to prevent deliberate trampling of crops and breaking of tools. At night, cotton fields, barns, and gins were burned. Runaway slaves formed guerrilla bands with poor whites and dispossessed Indians, staging swift raids against plantations.

Even the work of white abolitionists, encouraging runaways and funneling them to safety through the "underground railroad," was destructive of the private economic concerns of those who saw the slave as just another exploitable resource. As with the former British colonial government, the sluggish minds of men in government failed to acknowledge the changing times, and another war was needed to resolve the issues.

To the west, the invasion of sacred lands was rarely welcomed by the native tribes of America. Survey markers and telegraph poles were favorite, and vulnerable, targets of sabotage. Indians attacked the railroad by unbolting the rails, or constructing barriers of stacked ties secured to the rails with freshly cut telegraph wire.

Even the peaceful Hopi were not spared the meddling of industrial society. In 1891 came a plan to move them out of their clustered mesa-top villages and onto single-family plots of private land. After survey markers were destroyed, government troops were dispatched to arrest the leaders responsible. Faced with a roadblock of warriors armed with bows and arrows, the cavalry officer in charge lured out a Hopi delegation to talk terms. The Indians were seized and marched forward as a human shield. Soldiers occupied the village, and native religious leaders made the first of many trips into imprisonment.

Elsewhere in the West, the introduction of barbed wire in the 1880s saw cattlemen attempt to dominate the formerly public grasslands. Fence cutting wars resulted, with small ranchers and farmers forming secret societies with names like the "Owls," the "Javelinas," and the "Blue Devils." Their spies passed in-

formation about new fencing at nighttime meetings protected by the use of secret passwords. Sometimes a damaged fence was posted with signs warning against rebuilding. Estimates of fence cutting damage in Texas alone ranged from 20 to 30 million dollars. Typical of government response, it became a more serious crime to cut an illegal fence than to build one.

Similarly, in New Mexico, small groups of raiders from Hispanic communities calling themselves "Gorras Blancas" ("whitecaps") cut fence to resist the takeover of their communal land grants by large Anglo cattle corporations.

Even wild animals resisted the destruction of their homelands under the hooves of invading livestock. Many of the so-called "renegade" Gray Wolves, who undertook seemingly wanton attacks on cattle and sheep, were the last surviving members of their packs and had seen their fellow pack members trapped and killed. Arizona's "Aguila Wolf" ("aguila" is Spanish for "eagle") killed up to 65 sheep in one night. Near Meeker, Colorado, "Rags the Digger" would ruin trap lines by digging up traps without tripping them. Many of these avenging wolves were trap victims themselves, bearing names like "Crip," "Two Toes," "Three Toes," "Peg Leg," and "Old Lefty."

Whole communities would marshal their resources to kill the last of the wolves. "Three Toes of Harding County" eluded over 150 men in 13 years of attacking livestock in South Dakota. As recently as 1920, a trapper worked for eight months to kill the famous "Custer Wolf." East of Trinidad, Colorado, ran a renegade wolf called "Old Three Toes," the last of 32 wolves killed in Butler Pasture. This lonely wolf befriended a rancher's collie, who was penned into a chicken run to keep him away from the wolf. One night they found freedom together by digging from opposite sides of the fence. The collie never returned home, and was killed weeks later by a poison bait. Old Three Toes and her litter of Gray Wolf-collie whelps were discovered shortly thereafter and all were killed.

Throughout most of the land, the Gray Wolf has vanished, barbed wire rules, the natives have lost their sacred soil, and we are largely slaves to the industrial culture born in the coal-fired furnaces of Europe. Resistance, both lawful and lawless, has come and gone, won and lost, and remains more "American" than apple pie. And somewhere, beyond the edge of the ever-spreading pavement, are tales of solitary wolves and Grizzlies, "traditional" who shun the missionaries, wildlands that know only freedom, and small bands of monkeywrenchers, wild-eyed and unbending. Is there a future for any of them? Or more to the point, can acts of sabotage really influence events? History has proven that resistance can be effective, so let's briefly examine how this is possible.

Most businesses, both large and small, operate to produce a relatively small margin of profit, frequently a single digit percentage of overall gross sales. This small margin of profit is vulnerable to outside tampering, such as a successful consumer boycott which reduces sales. A determined campaign of monkeywrenching affects the other end, by increasing operating costs to the point that they cut into profits. The random act of sabotage accomplishes lit-

tle, but when cautiously repeated, striking weak points again and again, monkeywrenching can force an exploitative corporation to expand their security efforts and incur related expenses. Repairs of damages, such as abrasives in lubricating oil, result in several costs, including downtime. Since many businesses run on tight budgets or borrowed money, loss of production, even on a temporary basis, becomes costly. Interest payments on borrowed funds increase, payrolls for idled workers must be met, and buyers of finished products become impatient with missed deadlines. Reputation, as much as other factors, influences credit; so imagine the chilling effect on banks, finance companies, equipment manufacturers (who often extend credit to buyers), and insurance companies (who finance anything these days) when they realize that a few operators, working in critical wildlands, are more susceptible to delays in repayment.

Production scheduling is so critical to financial planning that most businesses have various contingencies to minimize the impact of mechanical failure, inclement weather, and other factors. They may anticipate losing an average of two weeks to weather when logging in a certain season. Or they may have plans to rent extra equipment in the event of serious breakdowns. Repeated hits by ecoteurs exhaust the contingencies and cut into the eventual profit.

Some ecotage damage is repaired by funds from insurance companies. If the damage is recurrent, the insurer will increase the deductible, thereby forcing the operator into higher out-of-pocket expenses. Insurers will also often increase premiums, insist on higher security expenditures, and may even cancel coverage. Of course, the operator's standing with his insurance company is of critical importance to his lenders.

Increases in security costs include pay for guards, guard dog services, security fencing and lighting, and mundane security measures, like driving all heavy equipment to a single secure location (resulting in higher operating costs and lost work time). Heavy equipment is especially vulnerable to sabotage, with downtime often costing more than \$50 an hour. Security expenditures can be increased by including urban targets like warehouses, mills, and offices for ecotage.

In addition, if smaller supporting businesses fear the impact of monkeywrenching against a business to which they sub-contract, they may hesitate to do business, or increase their charges to compensate themselves for also becoming targets.

Ultimately, the entire industry and its financial backers must be made aware that operations in defacto wilderness areas face higher risks and higher costs. Press coverage of monkeywrenching can drive this point home and alert the public in a manner that hurts the corporate image. The charge that monkeywrenching alienates public opinion stems from an incomplete understanding of propaganda and history. Scientific studies of propaganda and the press show that the vast majority of the public remembers the news only in vaguest outline. Details rapidly fade from memory. Basic concepts like "opposition to

logging" are all that are retained. History informs us that direct action engenders as much support as opposition. The American Revolution saw as many colonists enter the Tory ranks as enlisted in the Continental Army. During World War II, as many Frenchmen joined Nazi forces as participated in the famous French Underground. The majority of the public floats noncommittally between the conflicting forces.

Finally, the actions of monkeywrenchers invariably enhance the status and bargaining position of more "reasonable" opponents. Industry considers mainline environmentalists to be radical until they get a taste of real radical activism. Suddenly the soft-sell of the Sierra Club and other white-shirt-and-tie eco-bureaucrats becomes much more attractive and worthy of serious negotiation. These moderate environmentalists must condemn monkeywrenching so as to preserve their own image, but they should take full advantage of the credence it lends to their approach.

As for other types of activism, picketing and sit-ins quickly lose their newsworthiness. Boycotts can't touch primary industries because these resource extraction industries do not sell directly in a consumer market. Even letter-writing campaigns and lobbyists are losing ground as the high cost of television advertising places election financing in the hands of well-heeled industrial and labor union PACs (Political Action Committees set up to undermine campaign "reform" laws).

In these desperate times, it is difficult to be both close to Earth and optimistic about her future. The hope that remains is found in the minds of those who care, and the hearts of those few who dare to act.