



the half-hearted defense of possible violence in the environmental movement was not serious, but sloppy, and obviously not well-thought-out. Let's just deal with strategy first and leave morality till later:

The adversary: industrial capitalist civilization, has infinite resources for violence on its side. It has long known the technique of talking law and order while sneakily irritating, provoking and ultimately drawing a frustrated violent reaction out of whatever small minority is needing it, and then using that bit of violent reaction as an excuse for massive retaliation. Thus, Wounded Knees I and II. If you'll recollect the Black Panthers, all they really did with guns was posture. They showed guns off but did not, to my memory, actually assassinate or execute anyone. But with the excuse that gun-toting gave them, the FBI was able to shamelessly have Fred Hampton gunned down in his bed. I'm sure Earth First! is already well-infiltrated and that a provocateur from within your ranks will soon be urging some bit of sabotage which will be precisely the excuse the government needs to begin to crack down.

Again, Knowledge helps us keep from repeating history: The freedom of the information act materials on infiltration of campus radical groups in the late 60's and 70's is still coming out; more published the other day in the UC Berkeley newspaper. The "movement" was riddled with provocateurs who successfully drove it into unproductive if not downright nasty path. And if anyone thinks that violence against machinery is somehow ok (as long as people don't get hurt) though there may be some argument in that direction, it would be utterly foolish to think that industry and government will take it as a joke. In fact, private property is more sanctified than human life in our culture, and the real reason that **The Monkeywrench Gang** was not bought up and made into a movie is that the destruction of machinery is far more shocking and subversive to the powers that be than any amount of murder and rape would be on film. Also, any quick survey of guerrilla hit-and-run attacks on materials and equipment shows that inevitably people get killed sooner or later and the ante is horribly upped. Earth First! has real work to do: We are not a bunch of bonzo street theater ex-hippies, as much fun as it might be. If violence ever were any only-possible-choice, it would have to be undertaken with true warriors' consciousness, that is to say, the deliberate and thoughtful attitude of one who has investigated and exhausted all other possible avenues, and then turns towards violence with full, sad, precise comprehension of the cause-and-effect chains such an act would generate. There have been cultures where men were trained in true warrior consciousness; this is not one of them. Any talk that condones violence without understanding the warrior's path is premature indeed.

And morally, I am as distressed by the act of blowing up a bulldozer almost as much as I'd be by the death of a human. You wonder why? All materials, all organisms, all machines, all parts and all wholes are worthy of respect. As the ecologist Sterling Bunnell says, bulldozers are funny latter-day elephants, which if used in right time and place would do for the plant communities what elephants used to do around the globe—namely step climax succession back a few phases to increase bio-

mass, by opening the canopy. It's trite to say it perhaps, but we must start turning industrial capitalist civilization around by first noting the traces of it that we carry within us, turning those around as well.

So, in a spirit of brotherhood and friendship, I wish you well, urge you to reconsider your statement on violence, and I'll be behind you all the way but for that one point. Have a great time in July, and you guys swing by here when you are in California and we'll talk by the firepit.

—Gary Snyder, Nevada City, CA

Violence

Those of us who revere life and are enraged by the destruction of our Earth, our American heritage and natural treasure, have been restrained by our scruples. We have correctly rejected violence in our struggle to prevent the destruction of Earthmother's capacity to sustain her children. But we have *not* prevented the death-machine from consuming eco-systems with increasing rapidity, and the present trends portend disaster. We have been, and are being, *defeated* in the struggle to preserve the land and its life. Are we who defend the Earth in any way responsible for these losses?

We have allowed the ravagers and exploiters to define violence, and we have accepted their limitations on the scope of our struggle. They destroy *our* land and lives with their machines and chemical-warfare agents, and they tell us that is "legal." If we resist their lifeless machines, and the evil poisons that corrupt even the bodies of those yet unborn, then we are told that is "violence." Why do we accept such absurdity?

Our bodies are consumed by the cancers of their greed; they ravage our land in the manner of a vengeful conqueror; it is not violence to resist such an assault. It is a well-established legal principle that no crime is committed when property is necessarily destroyed in the defense of (human) life. The narrow anthropocentricity of that legal doctrine must be broadened. Elevations of the people's consciousness are normally manifested in acts of conscience *before* the power structure accepts the validity of their expanded vision of justice.

The philosophy of justice recognizes at least three categories of "wrongful action:" Acts that are evil in their very nature; those which are wrong because the power-elite says they are wrong; and default of contracts or agreements. We are concerned only with the first category: We want to know if it is wrong in essence to preserve life by disorganizing the *material* (lifeless) systems that have been organized to ravage the Earth. Simply to state the question clearly is to recognize the absurdity of any legal sanction against those who protect life from the exploiter's machines and poisons. Of course we have the moral right to act against lifeless "property" to preserve the Earth. Such acts of conscience are *not* violence; they are our

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'ler.

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 a 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 "monkeywrench gang" stance is simply theatrics. Thus, in your editorial,