

## HUEY D. JOHNSON

# Earth First! is right

**A**MERICA'S young cutting-edge environmentalists are going to Northern California for the summer to join the American Indian Movement and Earth First! in protesting the cutting of the last stands of our nation's old growth forests.

Their effort, which I prefer to call Old Growth Summer instead of Redwood Summer, was marred two weeks ago by a pipe-bomb explosion in a car that nearly took the lives of Earth First! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney.

Everyone is abuzz about who put the bomb in the car. As serious as that incident was, my worry is that in focusing only on the bomb, the public will be distracted and miss the issue that is a thousand-times more important.

We have reached the end of America's vast forest bounty and we must respond. A frightened in-

**Earth First! members were taught to work within the system, but the system has failed them — and us.**

dustry needs help and the concerned young and Native Americans need to be heard. As is, even with the end in sight, the logging industry will fight like starving dogs over the last ten trees still standing.

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The industry's public relations arm is focusing on the monkey-wrenching rhetoric of Earth First! based on a book by the late Edward Abbey and a book by Dave Foreman, EFF's founder. The objective of the books was to chide the rest of us so we will worry and change our ways. The logging industry has understandably tried to manipulate public opinion to go against Earth First! by highlighting a few isolated incidents of sabotage by individuals, which it says were inspired by the books.

Earth First! was founded on the principles of non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and followed by Martin Luther King for social justice and civil rights. If the means to its end were really violence against private property, major power lines all across America would be down, and there wouldn't be an unguarded bulldozer in operation.

Instead, what Earth First!ers do are attention-getting, very public pranks: Draping banners on buildings and bridges denouncing the clear cutting of the old growth, tree sitting, and clearly marked spiking of trees, which, by the way, EFF has stopped doing, in part because someone was inadvertently hurt.

I welcome the protest this summer. These kids will not be bombing anyone and their voices, united with those of the Native Americans, must be heard and heeded. This group will move us and our political leaders to face, accept, and react to the reality of environmental limits. The hoped-for response is legislation plus political leadership to reforest the nation and world.



EXAMINER / HARRY ALING

With recruiting offices in the Midwest and East, Earth First! will have adequate numbers of protesters. Though the Earth First!ers hope that the demonstrations will be nonviolent, there was that same hope during the infamous Mississippi Summer of 1964 for civil rights.

**F**OR TWO centuries, profits from the abundance of our forests have been basic to building the nation. The once vast original forests were cut down to build cities from Roanoke to Chicago to Denver, and we continued to cut on through to the Pacific Coast without the future in mind.

Our forefathers didn't think of the next generation by replanting forests as they went. We've hit the other edge of the continent now, and the new generation is understandably angry and frustrated over our short-sightedness.

We sent these kids off to college to learn to respect history. They understand the connections to Ethiopia's vanishing forests and starving millions, the once-famed cedars of Lebanon that are now dusty hills, and the conflicts going on in the shrinking rain forests of Brazil, Venezuela, Malaysia, and other tropical countries.

We also sent them to school to learn how to succeed by working

(over)

within the system. But they see that the system has not worked for the previous generation or for them. The founders of Earth First! were working for wilderness legislation as young idealists but found that the Wilderness Bill was allowed to be used to favor exploitation.

Then came the last straw. Pacific Lumber, once one of the few large logging companies to ethically and sustainably manage their forest, was grabbed by Charles Hurwitz, a Texas junk bond king. His Maxxam Corporation reversed in a day what the previous owners had managed to sustain for decades.

Maxxam kept the name, and launched a public relations campaign to condone its clear cutting practices, including, an ancient stand of redwoods, while it skimmed the profits off the top. Maxxam isn't there to protect the rights of the loggers any more than the wildlife or the sustained crop of redwoods. The system appeared to favor Maxxam's butchery while it tried to stifle dissent, a tip to the old-growth advocates that working through the system offers little hope.

**T**HE PEOPLE in the logging industry understandably fear that no longer will their kids grow up to harvest the old forests. The American landscape is littered with ghost towns that once boomed with work in the forests and pulp mills, the bars and restaurants.

One hopeful outcome of the Old Growth Summer is to bring the loggers and logging companies around to accept a new direction: Using shovels to plant trees along with the chain saws they now use to cut them down.

Will political leaders get involved? The memory of President Lyndon Johnson standing by his mistake — our deep involvement with the Vietnam War — and thereby ending his career, will be fresh in the minds of our representatives. The campaign cry this summer should come in unison from environmentalists, loggers and politicians: Save the forests.