

Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships and Responses

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Contents

Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships by David Orton 3
 Historical Context 8
 Ecological Realism not Romanticism 10

Toward Stronger Alliances by Mira Goldberg 12

Respect Native Struggles by Brian Tokar 20

Suggestions for Earth First!ers by Ted Kaczynski 22
 Appendix 26

Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships by David Orton

We recognize that the fight is a long one and that we cannot hope to win it alone. To win, to secure the future, we must join hands with like-minded people and create a strength through unity.

Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, 1979

To make an honest assessment, you must be able to put yourself in the place of the oppressed.

Daniel Paul, *We Were Not The Savages: A Micmac Perspective on the Collision of European and Aboriginal Civilization*, 1993

The fact is that by the end of the decade, aboriginal people are going to own or control a third of the Canadian land mass and be the recipient of \$5 billion or \$6 billion.

Ron Jamieson, Bank of Montreal aboriginal banking unit, in *The Financial Post Magazine*, March 1993

An absolute priority for the environmental and green movement, and Canadian society itself, must be to try and sort out the appropriate relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada. This is a vision quest that all of us who have any environmental and social justice sentiment need to embark on. It is a matter of urgency and the reason for writing this article.

While animal and plant nations or communities pre-date the arrival of humans, in Canada, aboriginal peoples can be considered the first or founding human nations. Aboriginal peoples have visions of the future, as well as views on their historical past in Canada and they are seeking alliances with others from such positions. In order for non-native environmentalists and greens to enter into alliances with aboriginal peoples, non-native environmentalists themselves should have a realistic perspective or analysis of aboriginal issues and their appropriate resolution.

Major changes in land and water use in Canada are being implemented or discussed due to aboriginal land claims. There are “specific” and “comprehensive” land claims

directed at a growing number of existing national and provincial parks across Canada. Land claims will and are affecting the establishment of new protected areas and parks—and also the Endangered Spaces Campaign, initiated by World Wildlife Fund Canada, which has been endorsed by many environmental groups.

The quotation from Ron Jamieson, of the Bank of Montreal “aboriginal banking unit” shows that the corporate class in Canada well understands the ongoing changes in land and water use in favour of aboriginal peoples in Canada and is positioning to profit from it and to steer the changes so as to extend, not undermine, the existing industrial capitalist system.

The relationship with aboriginal peoples is an extremely sensitive topic within the environmental movement (more sensitive even than discussions of ecofeminism/gender relations or the relations between workers/the working class and environmentalists). “Discussion” of Amerindian issues among environmentalists often seems restricted to repeating general statements such as “Natives were/ are model environmentalists and it is necessary to unite to defend Mother Earth,” or the expression of a general support for the right of First Nations to self-determination and the satisfactory resolution of land claims. Realistic public discussion is usually avoided by environmentalists and greens. Avoidance of contentious native issues is considered good manners.



However, there is something quite wrong in existing environmental/First Nations relationship. Conflicting perspectives towards the natural world are smothered over, for example, in some forestry groups which are working with indigenous nations and activists. Just as there is government and corporate “greenspeak” or “greenwash,” there is “native speak”—using seemingly progressive or spiritual rhetoric as a cover to advance a narrow selfinterest which is anti-Earth. Corporations and governments can wear native masks. There is a remarkable absence of any sympathetic yet critical analysis from the environmental or green side.

A couple of issues which need to be discussed openly are: what are some of the existing models in the environmental and green movements of environmental/indigenous relations and why are they not satisfactory; and how can non-natives work environmentally and politically with indigenous people?

Environmentalists and organizations who have come forward as promoting alliances with aboriginal peoples, such as Taiga Rescue Network or Canada’s Future Forest Alliance, seem to present an “alliance” as merely a blanket endorsement of stated aboriginal positions. Thus, the TRN, at their August 1994 Edmonton conference, according to a posting ‘ on the electronic network, took the position that:

Indigenous peoples’ rights in the temperate and snow forests must be respected even if they appear to conflict with environmentalists’ concerns, concluded activists at a week-long conference that wound up in this Canadian city...

I totally disagree with this position, which has been evolving within the mainstream TRN since its formation in 1992 at Jokkmokk, in northern Sweden.

One cannot ignore obvious environmental (or social) contradictions within native communities, just as one cannot ignore contradictions held by non-native environmentalists. Deeper environmental positions are a minority and radical trend in the non-native environmental movement. Some of the native trends being criticized in this article have a strong counterpart in the mainstream environmental movement.

Traditional natives and radical environmentalists are working shoulder-to-shoulder on a number of environmental issues. Yet generally ignored in non-native mainstream (and most of the radical) environmental circles are such contradictions as:

- support by some natives for “sustainable development” and for working with the forest industry, as in so-called Model Forest Projects, or the pulpwood logging in La Verendrye Park in Quebec;
- native-sanctioned logging of temperate old-growth rainforest in Clayoquot Sound in British Columbia, which undercut the growing national and international protest movement to save the Sound’s rainforest
- support for the fur industry and commercial trapping, even though this industry was imposed on First Nations by European colonial powers, and rests

- support for the wolf kill in the Yukon to “save a caribou herd;
- a recent proposal by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, in Saskatchewan, supported by the Atomic Energy Commission of Canada, to have a nuclear waste site on their territory for waste from Canada
- here in Nova Scotia, support by the Pictou Landing Micmac Band Council for Scott Maritimes to build a pipeline to discharge toxic, chlorine-laced pulp mill effluent one kilometer out into the Northumberland Strait, but away from the Landing.

Probably, in all of the negative examples given above, as in the Micmac Pictou Landing and in two other situations which are known to me, there are oppositional environmental voices, which are marginalized by the native mainstream. The non-native environmental movement must not forget these deeper native voices and they must be sought out. Such native biocentrists are a relatively stronger minority within the First Nations than non-native radical environmentalists in the mainstream movement are. Native biocentrists have more credibility within their context, as well as a base of authentic tradition. Any union activist “knows that one often fights the union “leadership” as well as the company. There is perhaps an analogous situation within native communities, with the “leadership” often willing to cut a deal with corporations and governments for some immediate, short-term economic benefit.

In many of the above situations, the abysmal economic situation of most native peoples in Canada undermines environmental/First Nations solidarity on environmental issues (over half of Canada’s Indians are on welfare). The economic situation is easily manipulated by provincial and federal governments and their corporate partners, who can free up public monies for aboriginal groups or provide jobs and very junior “partnerships” in Earth-destroying activities—all to facilitate more industrial growth. Provincial and federal governments, whatever their political complexion and “greenwash” rhetoric, share a human-centered resource orientation to Nature, and are prepared to trade away the environment for corporate growth and short-term industrial jobs. Also, just as is the case with the non-native Canadian Environmental Network, government funding of native organizations reduces reliance on the grassroots and increases dependency on, and subservience to, the existing bourgeois legal system—and leads to “solutions” within the capitalist industrial economy. If an organization becomes too militant, there will be problems with the continuity of funding.

There is an evolution in the-general social consciousness in Canada, which is belatedly favouring native Canadians. This evolution in social consciousness has its reflection in the green and environmental movements. Unfortunately for the natural world, this change in consciousness, while progressive, remains human-centered and seemingly unaware of either twentieth-century ecological constraints or the development in ethical thinking expressed in the philosophy of deep ecology. If Canadian society has a “resourcist” view towards nature, then this viewpoint will also define any resolution

of aboriginal disputes. Thus any resolution, even if respectful of the rights of native peoples, would still be disrespectful of the rights of nature.

Historical Context

Most conservation biologists agree that compatible human uses of the landscape must be considered and encouraged in large-scale conservation planning. Otherwise, the strategy will have little public support. However, the native ecosystem and the collective needs of human species must take precedence “over the needs and desires of humans, for the simple reason that our species is both more adaptable and more destructive than any other.

Reed Noss, *The Wildlands Project: Plotting A North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy*, 1992

The perspective and analysis on native issues has to be situated in the geological/ecological and human history of this country. Most importantly, it has to be informed also by a historical sense of worldwide environmental destruction and of the migration of the peoples of the Earth. The continent we now call Africa is believed to be the original centre of human life. Early human fossils have never been found in the Americas. Thus, most of the peoples of the world we now know, including the indigenous peoples of the Americas, are historically Bering Strait, at that time a land bridge, and eventually populated all of North, Central, and South America.

This worldwide understanding, a necessary part of a perspective and analysis of aboriginal issues in Canada, is shown for example in Clive Ponting’s very helpful but somewhat conservative, *A Green History Of The World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations*. This is an important book for both native and non-native greens and environmentalists.



Ponting documents the numerous historical examples of the degradation or collapse of the— /environment which pre-date and are not linked to ‘ the voyage of Columbus; that is, they are not linked to Western or Euro-centered value systems. (This article is not challenging the primary responsibility of these anthropocentric or human-centered Western value systems for thgcontemporary ongoing destruction of the Earth.Xone well-known example, which has nothing to do with Columbus or the trail of death and environmental destruction left in his wake, would be the self-inflicted environmental (and subsequent social and culturaD^jestructionofEaster. Island by Polynesians. Easter Island was first visited by Europeans in 1722, after this destruction and degradation had largely taken place.

Ecocentrism stands for a dramatic reduction and restructuring of the demands humanity is placing upon its environment.

Sandy Irvine, Editor of Real World: The Voice of Ecopolitics

It is not helpful to present a romanticized view of the past as the contemporary indigenous reality. Original native cultures did place dramatically lower demands on the environment. Because some survived within a circumscribed area for long periods of time, they have real justification for sustainable. But past relationships to wildlife by indigenous peoples in the Americas and elsewhere were not always benign and based on mutual respect. As Ponting and some other historians have argued, the evidence leads to . the conclusion that aboriginal groups in Australia \$ // arid the Americas hunted many large mammals to extinction. In the Americas, it appears aboriginals hunted mammoths, mastadons, giant bison, and American wild camels and horses to extinction.

Ecological Realism not Romanticism

A romanticized view of natives in Canada assumes that “teaching” is only one-way, from native to /A non-native. Some native spokespersons, often prominent on the environmental conference circuit, articulate the same one-way position; that is, ●non-native environmentalists are free to endorse ●but not to question aboriginal positions. Disagreement by hon-natives is put down as a lack of ‘ understanding, e.g., “There are environmental groups who have been very supportive to First Nations issues, however, there are some who do not understand our waysJ^Or, there may be more heavy-handed coniments, and environmentalists mayjje explicitly told “to tread softly,” i.e. to shut upSThgre isa fear among non-native environmentalists, which has some basis in reality? of being denounced as “paternalistic” or even “racist,” if dissenting views are racist.

I think that non-native environmentalists who go along with a non-critical and essentially deferential attitude towards the native peoples of Canada do this out of a

genuine sense of wanting to atone in some way for past atrocities and the dispossession of native lands. This is good sentiment, but liberal guilt is not the foundation for a realistic environmental alliance. This alliance has to be built to confront and defeat the Earth Destroyers, who are everywhere at work on this planet. We cannot go back, even to a non-romanticized past, although we must certainly learn from such a past. This continent has a lot more people today than when the Europeans first arrived, and its carrying capacity has been severely undermined, as the destruction of the fisheries, forests and wildlife show. We can only come to terms with this and go forward, hopefully on a different path.

Certainly our industrial culture must be dismantled for any long-term ecological and social sustainability. At the same time, all cultures must be assessed on their environmental compatibility. Whatever is environmentally incompatible in a culture must be thrown out.

There must be a commitment to social justice for aboriginals within contemporary Canadian society. Progressive people should support and help initiate whatever social changes are necessary for this to be achieved, as long as such changes are just to non-native Canadians and do not negatively impact upon what remains of the natural world. However, it is important that there be an atmosphere in the environmental movement which fosters critical thinking and public exchanges between non-native environmentalists and native peoples about aboriginal issues and the assumptions on which they rest. This is not the situation today.

In building alliances with native peoples in Canada on a basis of equality, everything is up for critical discussion, including basic assumptions. The ecological shortcomings of contemporary indigenous world views need to be discussed frankly and fairly, even while recognizing that our main preoccupation must remain with the sicknesses of contemporary industrial society.

The following persons gave valuable input to this article: Helga Hoffmann, Ian Whyte, Philip Fleischer, and Tom Holzinger.

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Toward Stronger Alliances by Mira Goldberg

A Response to “Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships

My first response to David Orton’s article (Yule, 1994, EF!J) was one of dismay—”here comes another white guy destroying any hope of building trust with indigenous activists.” My second response was that we do need to bring this discussion out in the open so that we know what needs to be done to move forward.

This article is an attempt to present another way of “rethinking” relationships between non-indigenous environmentalists and indigenous liberation activists. My analysis is rooted in my experiences working as a non-indigenous activist, in solidarity with sovereign native nations in the region known by the colonial name of “British Columbia.” Any discussion on this issue requires indigenous perspectives as well as non-indigenous perspectives, so read on with a recognition that this discussion is, at this point, seriously lacking.

Before I respond to the specifics of Orton’s article, I want to establish a context for the discussion. I see elements of Orton’s article as reflecting a tendency among some radical environmentalists to make a ‘ distinction between “human-centered” issues and “earth-centered” issues, and dismiss “human-centered” issues as anthropocentric and therefore not worth discussing. My difficulty with the “anthropocentric vs. ecocentriS-SpUtlsthis: In order toKaOhe destruction of the earth, we must understand what is destroying the earth. This involves looking at power relations between humans.

In North America, corporate destruction of the land is intertwined with genocide of native peoples and colonial occupation of native lands. To destroy capitalism, we must support indigenous liberation, even if that appears “human-centered.”

I have heard many non-indigenous environmental- ‘ ists try to sidestep supporting native” sovereignty and jurisdiction by saying “no one owns the land.” Until humans reach cultural consehsuroffTfiiSTcfea, the reality is that human control over land use plays a huge part in shaping the futures of the land and those who live on it. This issue of jurisdiction tends to alarm non-indigenous activists who are used to agitating for the return of “our land,” for “our government” to be accountable to its citizens.

But what we consider “our countries” are, in reality, neo-colonial nations that are currently occupying native nations. Much of this land has never been ceded by war or treaty and legally remains under the jurisdiction of the sovereign native nations that inhabit these lands.

Orton believes that certain environmental activists ally themselves with indigenous nations “out of a genuine sense of wanting to atone in some way for past atrocities and the dispossession of native lands.” There are indeed past atrocities; there are also current atrocities. Dispossession of indigenous people is still happening (e.g. relocation of Cheslatta people as part of the construction of the Alcan/”Kemano II” dam on the Nechako River). Because the genocide is current and continuing, we can take action now, not to atone for “past sins” but to rectify the current situation.

Part of colonialism is that the colonizing group defines history to keep itself firmly on top and conceal possibilities for resistance. Furthermore, it portrays the colonialism as “over and done with” and focuses on the colonized group as corrupt or otherwise collaborating in their own oppression.



If we took Orton's article as representing five of indigenous responses to destruction of the earth, we would have to come to the conclusion that there is no indigenous resistance. Obviously Orton's picture is incomplete. What about the 18-month blockade by Protectors of Mother Earth? Milton Born With A Tooth and other Peigan peoples' resistance to the Oldman Dam? The Lubicon Nation's fight against Unocal's Sour Gas Processing Project? Qwa-Ba-Diwa resistance to Fletcher Challenge and MacMillan Bloedel's destruction of the areas known as the Carmanah/Walbran? These are only a few examples of militant native resistance in defense of the land and environment. I am not trying to idealize native resistance, I am pointing out that indigenous resistance is current and widespread. This means that possibilities for alliance are there, if non-indigenous people are willing to make the effort.

Orton focuses only on native collaborators and mentions indigenous responses to collaboration only as an aside. Of course there are native collaborators—there are collaborators in every resistance movement. But indigenous people are capable of addressing this indigenous and non-indigenous activists. Issues of collaboration. Terri John of the Lil'Wat Peoples Movement writes, "we sovereigntists beyond the treaty frontier are no longer prepared to have our sovereign liberties bargained away by collaborating natives..." It is up to non-indigenous people to search out this indigenous analysis, to think about it and discuss it, but not to try to take leadership in criticizing the collaborators or otherwise determining the progress of native liberation. I think our time would be better spent looking at our own failures to build alliances with indigenous people rather than indigenous failures to live up to our own "environmentally pure" standards.

Another difficulty in Orton's article is his simplification of agreements between native nations and industry. For example, Orton cites "native-sanctioned logging of temperate old-growth rainforest in Clayoquot Sound which undercut the growing national and international protest movement to save the sound's rainforest."

If we are to look seriously at what happened in Clayoquot and learn from it, we must look at the weaknesses in the "protest movement's" alliance building that allowed the forest industry to be perceived as a stronger ally than the radical environmental movement.

Those weaknesses included disagreements within the indigenous/ non-indigenous Clayoquot communities on strategy and direction, past relationships between non-indigenous activists and indigenous communities in the area, politics within the native nations, and many other important factors that played a part. The Interim Measures agreement that Orton refers to was not signed in a vacuum. Without the context we can't learn anything from it.

The problem is not that non-indigenous environmental activists are uncritically embracing solidarity with native peoples/My observation of what happened in Clayoquot is that the natives signed the agreement precisely because the local non-indigenous environmental activists did *not* fully embrace an alliance with the local indigenous people, in the distant and more recent past?)

There are real barriers to alliance-building between class and culture cannot be ignored. When we look at why alliances have failed, we must look at these issues.

Orton states that “the abysmal economic situation of most native peoples in Canada undermines environmental/First Nations solidarity on environmental issues,” but he never looks at why some native people support development/destruction. He ignores the devastating effects colonialism has had on native nations’ economies, cultures, social structures, etc. We need to look at these things because we must grapple with the peoples’ immediate needs if we are to offer an alternative . Such needs drive people to take steps for survival. And this in turn affects the land we are trying to protect.

Orton warns us that” [native] land claims will and are affecting the establishment of new protected areas and parks—and also the Endangered Spaces Campaign, initiated by World Wildlife Fund Canada, which has been endorsed by many environmental groups.” He then states that “the corporate class in Canada well understands the ongoing changes in land and water use in favor of aboriginal peoples in Canada.”



First, I believe this presents a distorted view of the current situation in “Canada.” Where are the changes in land and water use favoring aboriginal peoples? Who, beyond a small class of collaborators, is profiting from industrial destruction of native lands?

Second, the use of the term “land claim” presumes that indigenous nations surrendered their jurisdiction and are now “claiming” it back. Sovereign nations have not requested that their sovereignty be returned—they have asserted their sovereignty and jurisdiction where the neo-colonial government is attempting to assert jurisdiction. This is a fundamental difference between the land claims movements and the sovereignty movements, which Orton never made clear/

Third, and perhaps most importantly, I have to question whether our goal is to create more parks or to completely alter who controls the land. If we support parks, we are supporting the neo-colonial government’s jurisdiction. We cannot support native sovereignty and support neo-colonial “protection” of that land. This is one of the areas in which non-indigenous environmentalists /must strive to resolve apparent conflicts between our short-term and longterm goals.

Non-indigenous people cannot control the development of the indigenous liberation struggle. What we can do is take responsibility for our own mistakes and attempt to correct them. Effective alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous activists require some initiative on the part of non-indigenous activists.

And if we do not take this initiative, a very possible scenario is that non-indigenous activists will agitate for park status and the neo-colonial government will grant it “without prejudice to land claims” (this wording is already being used by local neo-colonialist governments). Industry will court the native nation with a pending claim in the area and forge deals with native collaborators and the neocolonial government will reverse its decision. Native collaborators will sign deals that surrender native sovereignty in exchange for meager economic rewards, and the land will be destroyed. The colonial governments can then say “it’s not us, it’s those native people.” Many non-indigenous activists will blame native nations and pull support for sovereignty, and budding alliances will collapse. Meanwhile most native people will be exactly where they are now, in abject poverty, but with no legal basis for sovereignty over their territories.

We are already seeing versions of this scenario unfold in places like Clayoquot Sound. In order to halt this trend, we, as non-indigenous environmental activists, must start seriously rethinking our relationship to native struggles.

Orton’s article did much to shed light on how far the environmental movement has to go to throw off the limitations of neo-colonial thinking, and little to provide insight on how non-indigenous people can work towards stronger alliances with indigenous people. What we need are ideas on how to move forward. And let’s not forget that unless indigenous people are participating in this discussion, we will never move beyond theory.

For more information about BC native sovereignty, contact: Independent State of Qwa-Ba-Diwa Information Office (Canada): PO Box 35015, Victoria, BC, Canada V8T 5G2; or Lil'wat Peoples Movement: PO Box 79, Mount Currie, BC, Canada VON 2K0

Respect Native Struggles by Brian Tokar

David Orton has done a valuable service by raising the question of relationships between environmentalists and native peoples. However, his account unfortunately perpetuates some of the same myths and mystifications about indigenous communities that he says he is trying to deflate.

Everyone who has tried to work with indigenous communities on environmental (or any other) issues knows that the social fabric of these communities is as complex and at least as delicate as that of any other communities facing the political and economic onslaughts of these times. Native communities rarely speak with “one voice” these days, any more than Euro-American communities speak with one voice. Further, native communities are plagued by all of the problems facing other poor and marginalized groups. When the promise of land and material wealth is held in front of such communities, it exaggerates existing insecurities and tensions in ways that governments and corporations have become quite adept at manipulating for their own purposes.

From the Big Mountain struggles, which aroused widespread support from non-native people in the mid-1980s, to mining, logging, nuclear waste and land-claims issues today, activists rushing to support native struggles have had to take a step back and become educated about the politics and internal dynamics of indigenous communities. As Orton pointed out, this often reveals some elements that are all too willing to cut a deal for some immediate apparent benefit. This seems especially true in Canada, where governmental support for first nations appears far more generous than in the U.S. , .

For example, activists from Vermont and Quebec who were seeking to support the Innu traditionalists opposing Hydro Quebec’s latest dam project (Sainte Marguerite 3 in eastern Quebec) found a very different political climate than among the Cree of James Bay. While the Cree have been unified against Hydro Quebec (though only after they experienced the consequences of giving in to unstoppable government pressure to agree to the damming of the LeGrande River basin in the 1970s), the Innu community around Sept) Iles, Quebec is dangerously divided. Darn opponents, ‘while they do have tradition on their side, have been subjected to such intense intimidation by dam supporters on the Band Council that some have even had to renounce all government payments to their families in order to sustain their struggle against Hydro Quebec.

This is a source of tremendous hardship for people who have become increasingly dependent on such payments.

However, for Euro-American activists to expect native peoples to simply renounce government payments, income from trapping, or any of their other tenuous connections to the cash economy, is/ even more unrealistic than expecting urban North Americans to instantly stop using-petroleum and, "electricity immediately, tomorrow, without delay/ Given these communities' tenuous positions, with many families hovering at the edge of survival, it is extremely condescending to expect them to suddenly undo 400years of being forced into the market economy.

Does this justify the sometime complicity of native communities in the destruction of the environment? Of course not. But it means that activists need to listen to what native people are saying about their own situation and act from a place of respect and consideration, not objectification or passing judgment. Native people are neither "model environmentalists," nor are they blind participants in environmental destruction. They deserve due consideration for bearing the weight of 500years of colonialism, but cannot and do not want to be judged as historical symbols. Native people need to be approached with respect, just as we would approach anyone we seek possible common ground with. Native people fighting to protect the land, such as the Cree, the Innu, the Chippewa opponents of mining in Wisconsin, the Cahuilla people blockading toxic sludge shipments in southern California and countless others need to be supported. Those who make compromises with the system, often under conditions of extreme coercion, need to be approached cautiously and with understanding of their own often precarious situation.

Native nations are on the leading edge of environmental battles in many places in North America. Indigenous "sovereignty" is being cynically invoked by corporations and governments to maneuver around regulations that would prohibit environmentally destructive forms of development elsewhere. Some members of native communities are willingly going along, sometimes even believing that they are acting in the tradition of defiance that has kept their people alive for centuries. If we want to help native environmentalists win these battles, the first step is to approach these situations with a genuine sense of understanding and, yes, respect.

Suggestions for Earth First!ers by Ted Kaczynski

Earth First! wants to eliminate the industrial form of society. This is clearly a revolutionary goal. Yet it seems that many or most Earth First!ers still think and act like reformers, not like revolutionaries.

This is illustrated by Darryl Cherney's response to the bombing in which we assassinated the president of the California Forestry Association. According to newspaper reports Cherney was upset by the bombing because he was afraid that there would be retaliatory attacks on Earth First!ers. Now we respect (with certain qualifications) the nonviolent principles of Earth First! (even though we don't think it would be practical for everyone to abide by them) and if any Earth First!ers get beaten up in retaliation for our bombings we certainly sympathize with them. But Cherney's reaction shows that his mentality is that of a reformer, not a revolutionary.

To a revolutionary, what is important is not the short-term goal of saving this or that bit of wilderness or securing some grudging tolerance from the timber industry sympathizers. What is important is the long-term goal of weakening and destabilizing industrial society so that a revolution against it may become possible. From this point of view it is **desirable** that timber industry sympathizers should make physical attacks on Earth First!ers, because such behavior tends to increase the social stresses in industrial society and helps to turn people against the system.

It is important to distinguish between what the industrial system "wants" and what certain people who claim to represent the system may want or may do. By what the system "wants" we mean that which helps to assure the survival and growth of the industrial system. This corresponds approximately with what is desired by the most rational, self-restrained and "responsible" members of the systems [sic.] controlling elite. But people who believe themselves to be supporters of the system often behave in ways that are harmful to the system and thus serve as unwitting allies of those who want to overthrow the system.

Take police brutality as an example. The most rational and "responsible" members of the system's elite are against police brutality. They want the police to use just enough force (and no more than just enough) to insure [sic.] public order and obedience to the system's rules, because they know that police brutality increases social stresses and tends to break down respect for the system. Bad cops (or timber industry goons) who beat people up regard themselves as pro-system and hate those who are against the

system, but the behavior of such cops actually helps to undermine the system. Thus police brutality is not really a part of the system, but is a kind of disease of the system.

Similarly, the irresponsible politicians who are currently repealing environmental laws may be acting as unwitting allies of revolutionaries. If their actions lead to a few more cases like Love Canal and the Exxon Valdez oil spill, they will be helping to destroy respect for the system. Moreover the actions of these politicians help to weaken the standards of decent, “responsible” political behavior on which the stability of the system depends.

Footnote [In their own way, Rush Limbaugh, reckless right wing politicians and their like are rebels against the industrial system even though they do not regard themselves as such. They want the technology and “prosperity” that the system provides but they reject the restraint and social discipline that are required for the long-term health and stability of the system. These people **think** they are for social discipline, but their concept of social discipline is primitive: pile more homework on the kids and make everybody click their heels and salute the flag. The kind of social discipline the system needs would include temperance in the expression of political opinions, and realization that what is good for the long-term health of the system is not always what brings the biggest profits right now, and that psychological techniques are more sophisticated than just “getting tough” are needed to make children behave in conformity with the needs of the system. Through their irrational antics and lack of self-restraint Rush Limbaugh & Co. are helping to weaken the system. Our most dangerous enemies are not reckless right-wingers but those leaders who take a rational and balanced approach to promoting the growth and power of the system. That is why we of FC always make it our policy to vote for those politicians who are most corrupt, incompetent or irrational. They are the ones who will help us break down the system. Pete Wilson said we deserve to die for blowing up the president of the California Forestry Association. He shouldn’t be so ungrateful. We voted for him.]

What the rational, self-controlled, “responsible” members of the system’s elite want is not reckless repeal of environmental legislation; they want enough environmental legislation to preserve the system’s image of benevolence but not enough to interfere very seriously with economic growth and the increase of the system’s power. They want exploitation of natural resources that is rationally planned for long-term economic growth and stability, and that takes into consideration social needs (e.g. health, esthetics) as well as economic ones. Like police brutality, environmental recklessness is not really a part of the system, but is a disease of the system.

Needless to say, police brutality and environmental recklessness make us sick at the stomach, and we know that Earth First!ers react the same way. And of course we have to stand against these things. But at the same time it has to be recognized that ending police brutality and environmental recklessness are goals of reformers. The goal of revolutionaries is to undermine the system as a whole, and to this end police brutality and the grosser forms of environmental recklessness are actually helpful.

The trouble with Earth First!ers is that, like reformers, they devote their attention almost exclusively to fighting evils that are peripheral outgrowths of the system rather than fighting those institutions, structures and attitudes that are central to the system and on which the system most depends. We've only read about 6 or 8 issues of Earth First!, but if these can be taken as a fair sample then EF! articles are devoted almost exclusively to wilderness and environmental questions. These are extremely important matters, but if you devote your attention exclusively to them you will never overthrow the industrial system, and as long as the system survives the most you can hope to do is slow, not stop, the taming or destruction of wilderness. Therefore we argue that the Earth First! journal should devote at least half of its content to questions that have central relevance to the development of the industrial-technological system. How about some articles on genetic engineering and its probably consequences for life on earth? How about some articles concerning the tremendous powers that computer technology is putting in the hands of the system? What will be the consequences if the computer scientists ever succeed in developing machines that are more intelligent than human beings? How about some articles on propaganda and other psychological tools that help to induce behavior that conforms to the needs of the system?

Most importantly, you need to develop a coherent ideology that opposes technology and industrialism and is based on analysis and understanding of the industrial system, and you need to develop plans and methods for weakening, undermining and destabilizing industrial society.

As for action, with only one exception all the actions we've seen reported in Earth First! have been focussed on environmental and wilderness issues. But as long as you fight **only** on environmental and wilderness issues you are fighting defensively. The best defense is a good offense, and to fight offensively you've got to get out of the woods and attack the structures that make the system run. For example, instead of demonstrating (or monkeywrenching) at a logging site, you might demonstrate (or monkeywrench) at a chemical plant. And the issue that you demonstrate about should not be a particular case of environmental destructiveness but the very existence of the chemical industry itself. You have to use your ingenuity to devise some forms of action that will weaken the system as a whole, not just slow its destruction of the environment.

* * *

Another indication of Earth First!'s essentially reformist mentality is your attitude about the paper industry. You want to stop the cutting of trees for paper by finding alternative sources of fiber, such as hemp. This is a reformist attitude. The revolutionary attitude would be: Stop cutting trees for paper, and if that means that the system comes grinding to a halt for lack of paper, so much the better. To hell with the system.

You will answer that if your program implied an end to the mass production of paper, then you would have no chance of putting that program into effect, because

few people would support a program incompatible with the continued existence of industrial society.

But of course! That is the difference between the reformer and the revolutionary. The reformer seeks to bring about some improvement in conditions NCW, by means that are compatible with the survival of an existing system of society. The revolutionary advocates measures that are **incompatible** with the existing system, knowing that those measures cannot be put into effect **now** . But by advocating such measures he plants in people's minds the idea that doing away with the existing system is a conceivable alternative. In this manner he helps to prepare the way for a future revolution that may occur when the time is ripe.

* * *

Some Earth First!ers think they can change the system just by providing, through their own actions, examples of noble, nonviolent, passive, environmentally nondestructive behavior. But it won't work. Look at history! It's been tried before, repeatedly. The earliest Christians, the Quakers, certain Hindus and Buddhists relied on passive, nonviolent loving-kindness, but they had little or no lasting effect on the behavior of the human race in general. people of the saintly type may have an important role to play in a revolutionary movement, but their kind of action **by itself** cannot bring down the industrial system. For that, revolutionaries of a tough, practical type are needed.

* * *

It is a big mistake to complain about "capitalism." To do so gives the impression that industrial society would be OK if it were run according to some other ideology, such as socialism. Actually socialism in Eastern Europe did more damage to the environment than any capitalism did in the West. Our enemy is not capitalism, socialism, or any other ideology that may pretend to guide the system. Our enemy is the industrial-technological system itself.

* * *

The Earth First! journal should have a section in which successful monkeywrenching operations are reported. Reading about successful operations will encourage and stimulate other monkeywrenchers. Those who have carried out successful operations should report their action to the journal in an anonymous letter. Such letters will constitute evidence in "criminal" cases, so the journal will have to turn them over to the police to avoid prosecution for obstruction of justice. Therefore senders of the letters should make sure they bear no evidence such as fingerprints or handwriting.

Also, after every major successful monkeywrenching operation, the saboteurs should send anonymous letters to the mainstream media explaining both the reasons for that

particular monkeywrenching attack and the long-term goals of the radical environmental movement.

The effectiveness of monkeywrenching operations will be greatly increased if they are systematic and coordinated rather than random and sporadic. Each monkeywrenching group should plan not just **one** operation but a **campaign** of operations lasting several months. Such a campaign is best designed not to attack a lot of unrelated targets, but to concentrate pressure on some particular class of targets. For example, the monkeywrenching group might select a particular logging or mining company, or a chemical or electronics firm, and attack a series of targets belonging to that particular organization. It would be difficult to coordinate the efforts of different monkeywrenching groups without compromising security. But some degree of coordination might be achieved by passing the word through the grapevine that a certain week is to be a week of intense sabotage. A lot of sabotage concentrated into one week would be more effective than the same amount of sabotage spread out over an extended period.

FC

Appendix

... for a leftist, Goldberg is fond of certain catch-words. ... In her brief article she uses “capitalism” once, “genocide” twice and ... “(neo-)colonialist” or “(neo-)colonialism” thirteen ... claims that “genocide (against Indians) is current and ... This is absurd. The word “genocide” was originally ... describe the extermination of the Jews by the nazis. The ... reasonably be applied to some nineteenth century events in ... tribes were relocated through forced marches in which the ... was extremely high. But to apply the word “genocide” to ... treatment of Indians by whites is to compare it to the treatment of Jews by the nazis, and that is ridiculous in the eyes of ...

SUGGESTIONS FOR EARTH FIRSTIERS

from FC

Earth First! wants to eliminate the industrial form of society. This is clearly a revolutionary goal. Yet it seems that many or most Earth Firstiers still think and act like reformers, not like revolutionaries.

This is illustrated by Barry Cherney's response to the bombing in which we assassinated the president of the California Forestry Association. According to newspaper reports Cherney was upset by the bombing because he was afraid that there would be retaliatory attacks on Earth Firstiers. Now we respect (with certain qualifications) the nonviolent principles of Earth First! (even though we don't think it would be practical for everyone to abide by them) and if any Earth Firstiers get beaten up in retaliation for our bombing we certainly sympathize with them. But Cherney's reaction shows that his mentality is that of a reformer, not a revolutionary.

To a revolutionary, what is important is not the short-term goal of saving this or that bit of wilderness or securing some grudging tolerance from timber industry sympathizers. What is important is the long-term goal of weakening and destabilizing industrial society so that a revolution against it may become possible. From this point of view it is DESIRABLE that timber industry sympathizers should make physical attacks on Earth Firstiers, because such behavior tends to increase the social stresses in industrial society and helps to turn people against the system.

It is important to distinguish between what the industrial system "wants" and what certain people who claim to represent the system may want or may do. By what the system "wants" we mean that which helps to assure the survival and growth of the industrial system. This corresponds approximately with what is desired by the most rational, self-restrained and "responsible" members of the systems controlling elite. But people who believe themselves to be supporters of the system often behave in ways that are harmful to the system and thus serve as unwitting allies of those who want to overthrow the system.

Take police brutality as an example. The most rational and "responsible" members of the system's elite are against police brutality. They want the police to use just enough force (and no more than just enough) to insure public order and obedience to the system's rules, because they know that police brutality increases social stresses and tends to break down respect for the system. Bad cops (or timber industry cops) who beat people up regard themselves as pro-system and hate those who are against the system, but the behavior of such cops actually helps to undermine the system. Thus police brutality is not really part of the system, but is a kind of disease of the system.

Similarly, the irresponsible politicians who are currently repealing environmental laws may be acting as unwitting allies of revolutionaries. If their actions lead to a few more cases like Love Canal and the Exxon Valdez oil spill, they will be helping to destroy respect for the system. Moreover the actions of these politicians help to

APPENDIX

by Mira Goldberg that appeared in the Earth First! Journal, February 2, 1995) will help us to illustrate the leftist

le, December 21, 1994 issue of Earth First!, David Orton's article, "Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relations in which he criticized SOME "First Nations" (i.e. Indian) collaborating in destructive economic exploitation of the lands made by any Indians. In her article, "Toward Innocent: A Response to 'Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships,'" Goldberg answers Orton, and in doing so she gives typical examples of leftist thinking.

She shows the leftist trait of intense identification with victims that we (FC) mention in paragraph 13, 249, 252 of our article and coupled with this the trait of hyperresponsibility that we mention in paragraphs 11, 12. Orton's article was reasonable and made it clear that he was criticizing only SOME Indians collaborating with environmentally destructive policies, and he stated the opinion that there were more "good" Indians than bad environmentalists: "Such native 'biocentrists' (he wrote) are a very stronger minority within the First Nations than the radical environmentalists in the mainstream movement are." She responds to Orton's article as if it were a nasty attack on all Indians. She even implies that Orton's thinking is "racist" (last paragraph of her article). She seems to think that white people ever to criticize any Indians (in her article).

Goldberg grudgingly admits that not all Indians are perfect - there are "collaborators" - but then (in the eleventh to thirteenth paragraphs of her article) she tries to find excuses for them and bad actions on the insufficiently subservient attitudes of environmentalists. Compare paragraphs 15, 255 of our (FC's) article.

For a leftist, Goldberg is fond of certain catch-words. In paragraph 229 of FC's article.) In her brief article she uses the word "genocide" twice and "ethnocide" once. "Genocide" is a word that is used to describe the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis. It is a word that is reasonably applied to some nineteenth century events in which the Indians were relocated through forced marches in which the death rate was extremely high. But to apply the word "genocide" to the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis, and that is ridiculous in the eyes of

Lot 14

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A critique of his ideas & actions.



David Orton, Mira Goldberg, Brian Tokar & Ted Kaczynski
Rethinking Environmental-First Nations Relationships and Responses
1994-95

EF!J V15 #2 (21 Dec. 1994), EF!J V15 #3 (2 Feb. 1995) & U.S. Marshals to
Auction Unabomber's Personal Effects.

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