Frequently Asked Questions About The Earth Liberation Front

North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office

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>
> — North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office

What is the Earth Liberation Front (ELF)?

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) is an international underground organization that uses direct action in the form of economic sabotage to stop the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment.

How and when did the group begin?

It has been speculated that the group was founded in the early 1990s as an offshoot of Earth First! in England. The ideology of the ELF spread to North America in the mid 1990s. In November 1997, the ELF officially claimed responsibility for the group's first action in North America. The claim of responsibility was sent to aboveground supporters, who released the information to the media. In the communiqué, the ELF claimed credit for releasing wild horses and burning down a Bureau of Land Management Horse Corral near Burns, Oregon on November 29, 1997. The communiqué appeared as follows:

> The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) claims they are removing non-native species from public lands (aren't white Europeans also non-native?) but then they turn around and subsidize the cattle industry and place thousands of non-native domestic cattle on these same lands...to help halt the BLM's illegal and immoral business of rounding up wild horses from public lands and funneling them to slaughter...
>
> This hypocrisy and genocide against the horse nation will not go unchallenged! The practice of rounding up and auctioning wild horses must be stopped. The practice of grazing cattle on public lands must be stopped. The time to take action is now. From an investigation like the Associated Press' to writing the BLM to an action like ours, you can help stop the slaughter and save our Mother Earth...

This action caused an estimated $450,000 in damages to the facility and the release of 448 wild horses and 51 burros. Since November of 1997, there have been over two dozen major actions performed by the ELF in North America alone, resulting in nearly $40 million in damages.

Where is the ELF based geographically?

The ELF has no centralized location. Actions have been taken by the ELF all across the United States, in Canada, throughout Europe, and in South America. The number of locations targeted by the ELF continues to increase.

How is the organization structured?

The ELF is organized into autonomous cells that operate independently and anonymously from one another and the general public. The group does not contain a hierarchy or any sort of leadership. Instead the group operates under an ideology. If an individual believes in the ideology and follows a certain set of guidelines, she or he can perform actions and become a part of the ELF.

This cell structure has been extremely effective in ensuring the continuation of the organization with minimal arrests. Law enforcement, particularly in North America, is trained to recognize and deal with organizations that have a leader, a hierarchy and a central headquarters. The ELF does not contain any of these.

Due to the autonomous and underground aspects of the ELF cells, an infiltration into a cell by no way means the entire movement will be stopped. If one individual or even one entire cell is captured by authorities, other individuals and cells will be free to continue their work, as they operate independently and anonymously from one another. The cell structure is a type of guerilla tactic that has been successfully employed by various movements around the world for ages. It can be a successful tactic when used properly against a greater military power.

How many members are in the ELF?

It is next to impossible to estimate the number of ELF members internationally or even country by country. Since 1997, in the United States, the ELF actions have steadily increased and have appeared in a growing number of differing geographical areas. Therefore, it is safe to assume the group continues to grow in size.

More and more people around the world are realizing the horrifying state of the environment and the extreme, continuous exploitation of people and life in general caused by the greedy individual wanting more numbers to appear in the bank account. Simultaneously, people are becoming increasingly frustrated with the exhausted state-sanctioned, legal means of social change because on their own they do not work.

If people are serious about stopping the destruction and exploitation of all life on the planet then they must also be serious about recognizing the need for a real direct action campaign and their own personal involvement.

One ELF cell can consist of just a few people who have the ability to cause extreme amounts of economic damage with just one action. It doesn't take a trained expert to become involved in the ELF, just individuals who really care about life on the planet to the degree that they want to take actions to protect it. Environmental protection is a matter of self defense, and ELF actions are a natural response to the very real threats to life on Earth.

Is the ELF primarily an environmental organization?

The organization is an environmental group but also one that realizes the true cause of murder and destruction of life. Therefore, it is not enough to work solely on individual environmental issues; the capitalist state and its symbols of propaganda must also be targeted. It may be more realistic to refer to the organization as one that works to protect all life on the planet.

What is the ideology of the ELF?

The ideology is what lies at the heart of the ELF. As previously mentioned, the group does not have any sort of hierarchy or physical leadership but instead revolves around an ideology. This ideology is the key to the group's existence, purpose, and longevity. So what is it?

The ELF realizes that the destruction of life is not a mere random occurrence but a deliberate act of violence performed by those entities concerned with nothing more than pursuing extreme economic gain at any cost. With this realization in mind, the ELF maintains that it is only logical to work to remove the profit motive from killing the Earth and all life on it.

Anyone seeking to create actual positive social and political change must reflect on past attempts throughout history to learn what worked, what didn't, and what can be taken to aid in the current pursuit. A refusal to make this reflection is also a refusal to make an honest life commitment to the cause of justice and protection of life on this planet.

The ELF recognizes that the popular environmental movement has failed miserably in its attempts to bring about the protection needed to stop the killing of life on this planet. State-sanctioned means of social change rarely on their own have (or will have) any real effect in obtaining the desired results. This is due to the obvious fact that the legal means of protest in solving grievances do little more than reinforce the same system, which is a root of the problem.

The state system is not going to allow any real change within it unless the state structure (government), big business, and finally the mainstream consumer society feels that change is really necessary. Yet it is this same state structure, big business, and consumer society that is directly responsible for the destruction of life on the planet for the sake of profit. When these entities have repeatedly demonstrated their prioritizing of monetary gain ahead of life, it is absolute foolishness to continue to ask them nicely for reform or revolution. Matters must be taken into the hands of the people who need to more and more step outside of this societal law to enforce natural law.

One definition of natural law refers to our dependence on the substances in the natural environment which enable all life to exist, primarily clean air, clean water, and clean soil. Clean air is needed for life to breathe, clean water is needed for life to drink, and clean soil is needed to grow food for life to eat.

Particularly with the advent of the industrial revolution, the westernized way of life has been in complete violation of natural law. There is a major difference between taking actions for the immediate sustenance of you, your family and your close-knit community and actions taken to stockpile wealth and to demonstrate power and domination over, and often times at, the expense of others.

Yes, everyone should have access to basic necessities of living, a suitable shelter (not only for you but for the natural environment), access to healthy food (not only for you but for the natural environment consisting of organically and locally grown items using sustainable permaculture practices free of genetic engineering), access to proper healthcare, etc. But there is no excuse for, out of pure greed and selfishness,

desiring more than you need to live a free and happy life. The majority of stockpiling, greed, and monetary wealth comes at the expense of others whether humans, non-human animals or the natural environment.

The ELF ideology considers the various social and political problems facing the world today to be mere symptoms caused by a larger overall problem. Thus, in a sense, to work individually on separate justice issues is to attempt to toss water out of a sinking ship with a teaspoon. (If you are serious about stopping the ship from sinking it would only be wise to find the hole and plug it!) The only way to stop the symptoms of the problem is to identify the main root cause and directly work to abolish it.

The ELF ideology maintains that it is the very social and political ideology in operation throughout the Westernized countries that is creating the various injustices on this planet and ultimately the destruction of life. That ideology is capitalism and the mindset that allows it to exist. Capitalism and (what we have referred to in the states for years) the American Dream have long symbolized a form of economic opportunity and freedom. The idea that no matter who you are, if you worked hard all your life, you too could have the perfect husband or wife, the 2.3 kids, new BMW, the beach house on Maui and penthouse in New York City and loads of cash to play with.

What wasn't and still isn't told to the millions seeking the American Dream is that dream comes at a price; it always has and always will. That price consists of everything from taking advantage of slave labor, to dumping toxic waste into our waterways, to murdering those who take a stand for justice, to destroying cultures, to destroying environments and exploiting and oppressing anyone or anything that poses to be a threat, nuisance, or a bump along the path to riches.

What also isn't revealed to the seekers of power and wealth is that those material possessions represented in the American Dream cannot buy happiness. The quest for monetary gain has left millions of people suffering from depression and other illnesses and has been responsible for countless suicides and murders and for the demise of the community and family structure, leading to (or at least being partially responsible for) such atrocities as the numerous school shootings.

True wealth and real happiness come from good health and a strong community. They come from knowing the history of your people and your place in the world, and from living a life of realism with a sense of what it means to be alive. Finally, they come from living a life that is not irreversibly harmful to other life forms or the natural environment.

The real symbolic statement of reference to the Westernized world (especially the U.S.) is apple pie, baseball, and screw anyone or anything you can to make a profit. Sound absurd? Ask the vast amounts of rainforests and old growth, natural areas who destroyed them. Ask the sun why its path to the Earth is far less obstructed due to the depletion of the ozone layer. Why did this depletion take place? Ask the citizens of Burbank, California how they enjoy the chromium in their drinking water. Why and how did it get there?

Ask the families of the murdered individuals why, when they took a stand against corporations like Shell and Chevron, they were killed. Ask the many Native American tribes who it was that murdered their families and virtually destroyed their cultures. Ask the relatives of black slaves why slavery was legal years ago.

Ask an Iraqi civilian why the U.S. government continues to bomb the country, killing innocent people. Ask the executives of the General Motors Corporation, Ford, and the others why the Gulf War was fought. Ask the executives of General Electric who it is that has profited massively from virtually every war that has been fought around the world. This is real violence. This is real injustice. This needs to be stopped by any means necessary.

The ELF realizes the profit motive, caused and reinforced by the capitalist society, is destroying all life on this planet. The only way, at this point in time, to stop that continued destruction of life is to by any means necessary take the profit motive out of killing.

Using real direct action in the form of economic sabotage, the ELF is targeting what the greedy entities care about: their pocketbooks. By inflicting as much economic damage as possible, the ELF can allow a given entity to decide it is in its best economic interests to stop destroying life for the sake of profit.

Capitalism as a target is not easily identifiable due to its being an ideology rather than a physical object. But forms and symbols of capitalism can be targeted successfully to greatly influence the impact the capitalist state has on life. These symbols and forms can take the shape of individuals, businesses, governmental and non-governmental organizations and items which aid in directly destroying life and/or the spread of the destructive propaganda of the American Dream. The list is endless but could include such symbols in the U.S. as Mt. Rushmore, the Statue of Liberty, Disney, Wall Street, etc.

Whatever the target may be, the ELF ideology promotes efficiency and effectiveness. It promotes the idea of choosing the most effective target possible and using strategies and tactics to cause the most amount of economic damage as possible. In addition, the idea of momentum is pushed to create an actual movement that continues to grow to successfully stop the destruction of life. More and more actions need to be taken by the ELF in order for this success to become a reality.

What are the various issues that the ELF has targeted?

The specific target areas of the ELF are constantly increasing and will continue to grow to include any threat to life on this planet caused by greedy quests for monetary gain. The ELF targets have included such issues as deforestation (for human development of roadways, for luxurious living and/or recreation areas, for profit by selling or using trees, etc.), urban sprawl, genetic engineering, natural habitat and ecosystem destruction, the use of slave labor by corporations and more.

What are some of the actions in North America performed by the ELF?

The most notorious action performed by the ELF in North America to date is the October 18, 1998 fires set at Vail Resorts, Inc. Vail, known as one of the premiere

ski resorts in the world, had proposed an 885-acre expansion into one of the last remaining habitats for the Canadian lynx in the United States. Despite clear opposition from a vast majority of the local community and a ten-year legal battle by local environmentalists, Vail was still moving forward with the expansion plans. Members of the ELF felt it was time to increase the opposition. The action caused an estimated $12-$26 million in damages to Vail and brought the issue of expansion into wilderness once again into the international spotlight. The communiqué sent by the ELF taking credit for this action appeared as follows:

> On behalf of the lynx, five buildings and four ski lifts at Vail were reduced to ashes on the night of Sunday, October 18th. Vail, Inc. is already the largest ski operation in North America and now wants to expand even further. The 12 miles of roads and 885 acres of clearcuts will ruin the last, best lynx habitat in the state. Putting profits ahead of Colorado's wildlife will not be tolerated. This action is just a warning. We will be back if this greedy corporation continues to trespass into wild and unroaded areas. For your safety and convenience, we strongly advise skiers to choose other destinations until Vail cancels its inexcusable plans for expansion.
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> — Earth Liberation Front

On December 27, 1998, the ELF burned down the corporate headquarters of U.S. Forest Industries in Medford, Oregon. This particular target served as the corporate headquarters for four mills: a White City veneer mill and a Grants Pass plywood mill in Oregon, a sawmill in Florida and a studmill in Colorado. The action caused an estimated $500,000-$800,000 in damages to U.S. Forest Industries. The communiqué sent by the ELF taking credit for this action stated:

> To celebrate the holidays we decided on a bonfire. Unfortunately for U.S. Forest Industries it was at their corporate headquarters office...
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> On the foggy night after Christmas, when everyone was digesting their turkey and pie, Santa's ELFs dropped two five-gallon buckets of diesel/unleaded mix and a gallon jug with cigarette delays; which proved to be more than enough to get this party started.
>
> This was in retribution for all the wild forests and animals lost to feed the wallets of greedy fucks like Jerry Bramwell, U.S.F.I. president... and it is a warning to all others responsible, we do not sleep and we won't quit.

Just under a year later, on December 25, 1999, the ELF targeted the Northwest regional headquarters of Boise Cascade in Monmouth, Oregon. A $1 million fire set by the ELF burned the 8,000-square-foot building to the ground. A few days after the fire the ELF sent the following communiqué:

> Boise Cascade has been very naughty. After ravaging the forests of the Pacific Northwest, Boise Cascade now looks towards the virgin forests of Chile. Early Christmas morning, elves left coal in Boise Cascade's stocking. Four buckets of diesel and gas with kitchen timer delay destroyed their regional headquarters in Monmouth, Oregon. Let this be a lesson to all greedy multinational corporations who don't respect their ecosystems. The elves are watching. -Earth Liberation Front

Boise Cascade had recently teamed up with Maderas Condor, a Chilean company, to continue expanding its practices of deforestation in the Puerto Montt area of Chile, one of the few remaining areas in the world which had remained free from massive cutting.

Just six days later, on New Years Eve, 1999, the ELF for the first time turned to the subject of genetic engineering. At Michigan State University, Catherine Ives worked as a researcher, according to her to help feed the starving people of the world through biotechnology. One of her programs funded in part by Monsanto and the U.S. Agency for International Development involved attempts to coerce farmers in less Westernized countries to give up sustainable agricultural practices for reliance on the biotech industry– in particular Monsanto, who among numerous other creations brought the terminator seed to life. These seeds, which do not reproduce, require farmers to purchase new seeds annually from Monsanto.

The idea that there just is not enough food in the world to feed the current population is an absolute myth being used by the biotech industry as one of their reasons to continue into the area of gene manipulation. The public relations departments at Monsanto and in other firms within the biotech industry are being far from truthful in presenting this appearance of altruism as though they are helping people in (as they refer to them) the "developing nations" to improve their lives.

It is nothing but another form of largely U.S.-based imperialism attempting to control and destroy non-Westernized cultures for the sake of monetary gain. Is it just a mere coincidence that Monsanto, the U.S. Agency for International Development and Catherine Ives, are not teaching and promoting organic permaculture in less-Westernized countries? And is it just another coincidence that instead they are manufacturing the desire for genetically-altered seeds, which Monsanto conveniently sells? In response to this program and Catherine Ives' work, the ELF set fire to her offices at Michigan State University causing an estimated $400,000-$900,000 in damages. Ives herself admitted the fire destroyed years of her work. A communiqué sent by the ELF stated:

> The E.L.F. takes credit for a strike on the offices of Catherine Ives, Rm. 324 Agricultural Hall at Michigan State University on Dec. 31, 1999. The offices were doused with gasoline and set afire. This was done in response to the work being done to force developing nations in Asia, Latin America

> and Africa to switch from natural crop plants to genetically altered sweet potatoes, corn, bananas, and pineapples. Monsanto and USAID are major funders of the research and promotional work being done through Michigan State University. According to local newspapers, the fire cost $400,000 in damage. Cremate Monsanto, Long live the E.L.F. On to the next G.E. target!

Just under a month later, on January 23, 2000, the ELF set fire to a new luxury home under construction in the Bloomington, Indiana area. This home, which was to be valued at between $750,000-$1.5 million upon completion, threatened the Lake Monroe watershed, which supplies clean, fresh drinking water to the Bloomington area. Damage from the fire was assessed at over $200,000 and it marked the first time the ELF had targeted what the group chose to call urban sprawl. The communiqué sent by the ELF claiming responsibility for this action stated:

> Greetings from Bloomington, IN:
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> The Earth Liberation Front would like to take credit for a late night visit to the Sterling Woods development on the evening of January 23rd. During our visit, we torched one house that was under construction. It was completely destroyed. The walls had caved in by the time the fire department arrived. Damage has been assessed at $200,000. When finished the house was to be worth $700,000. 'No Sprawl, ELF' was painted on the developers sign. The house was targeted because the sprawling development it is located in is in the Lake Monroe Watershed. This is the drinking water supply for the town of Bloomington, IN and the surrounding area. It is already being jeopardized by existing development and roads. Once again the rich of the world are destroying what little we have left in terms of natural areas and collective holdings (the water). Hopefully they will get the message that we will not take it anymore.

In addition to the actions listed above, the ELF has taken responsibility for spiking trees in Eugene, Oregon and in Bloomington, IN. They have burned and caused severe economic damage to a series of homes on Long Island, New York and torched Superior Lumber Company in Glendale, Oregon. In addition, the ELF has continued on with its work against genetic engineering, targeting the Delta & Pine Land Company Research Cotton Gin in Visalia, California (a Monsanto subsidiary) and the University of Minnesota at St. Paul. More recently the ELF continued to broaden its targets with actions taken against a Nike Outlet store in Albertville, Minnesota, against an Old Navy Outlet Center on Long Island, and more. The ideology of the ELF reveals that any entity (whether it be an individual, corporation, governmental or non-governmental agency) that continues to destroy the natural environment for the sake of profit and greed may be considered the next target of the group.

How does one become a member of the ELF?

The ELF does not have any sort of physical membership list or meetings you can attend to become involved. Remember, the ELF revolves around not a physical base or classically-designed structure, but instead an ideology. If you believe in the ELF ideology and you follow a certain set of widely-published guidelines, you can conduct actions and become part of the ELF.

The ELF guidelines are as follows:

1. To cause as much economic damage as possible to a given entity that is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment and life for selfish greed and profit.

2. To educate the public on the atrocities committed against the environment and life.

3. To take all necessary precautions against harming life.

As you can see the guidelines are every similar to the goals of the ELF with one major exception. The third of three guidelines states that one must take all necessary precautions against harming life.

The ELF considers itself a nonviolent organization as no physical harm has come to a human as a result of the group's actions. This is by no means a sheer coincidence but in fact a commitment to the guidelines. Individuals interested in becoming active in the ELF need to follow the above guidelines and create their own close knit anonymous cell made up of trustworthy and sincere people. Remember the ELF and each cell within it is anonymous not only to one another but also to the general public. So there is not a realistic chance of becoming active in an already existing cell. Take initiative, form your own cell and do what needs to be done!

Are ELF actions successful?

Perhaps the most important and logical question which needs to be asked is, are the actions of the ELF successful? If the group does not stop a given entity fully with one action that does not mean the action was unsuccessful. The ELF actions have at least three major goals in mind:

1. To cause as much economic damage as possible to a given entity that is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment and life for selfish greed and profit,

2. To educate the public on the atrocities committed against the environment and life,

3. To make it known that any entity profiting off the destruction of life for profit may be considered the next target.

With these three goals in mind every action taken by the ELF has successfully met at least one or more of these goals.

Aren't the ELF targets covered by insurance?

A common argument against the actions of the ELF has been that each target has been covered by insurance so the given entity fails to suffer little if any economic loss. While it is largely true that most if not all of the ELF targets have been insured it is completely ludicrous to believe that insurance companies can suffer losses of hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars without greatly raising the rates of insurance. If the given entity or even industry was targeted repeatedly by the ELF, insurance companies would either cease to cover these entities or raise the cost too high for a profitable business.

The only problem with ELF actions at this point is there are not enough of them occurring.

Is the ELF a terrorist and violent organization?

Federal authorities and mainstream media particularly in the United States have done an outstanding job at feeding the public false rhetoric largely associated with the term "ecoterrorism." Any action taken by the ELF has been labeled as ecoterrorist by the press and law enforcement for a particular, very conscious purpose.

What would happen if a major ELF action were taken and instead of instantly labeling it as ecoterrorism, the press and authorities took an unbiased perspective and honestly revealed the entire story, including the motives for taking that action? Perhaps the public might be a little too eager to support the action and a lot less likely to quickly condemn the group.

What happens, though, in today's fast-paced, media-savvy society is that news and mainstream media are used to control the minds and actions of the mainstream public. Large news agencies and the federal government learned their lesson during the Vietnam War era, when pictures a little to true to reality were brought home into the living rooms of the public. As a response to the atrocities committed by the United States in Vietnam, the public within the States became angry and fought back. This was largely due to the fact they had more access to real information, less censored and controlled by societal forces.

A major difference could be seen in comparing the images shown to the public in the United States during the Vietnam War and those shown during the Gulf War in the early 1990s. The American public did not see the murder of countless civilians, nor did they see the constant bombings of urban areas filled with civilians. Instead, what NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN and the others showed the public were heavily censored and filtered computerized images that appeared like a video game. This was an obvious attempt to build the patriotism level or at least maintain it within the States.

When a news event takes place it should be the responsibility of the news agency to provide a balanced, objective view of the events to the public, free from labels and other forms of mind coercion. If this did occur, the mind of the individual would be allowed to remain open to receive and process information, thus allowing the individual to come to his/her own conclusions. This is in direct contrast to the reality of today's news world where the public is made to feel like they are making free conscious decisions

when in fact they are succumbing to mind control and preformed opinions created by the state and societal forces based around commerce.

By labeling an action or a news event, the media forces the public to adopt the media-created stigma, either positive or negative, in response to that label. Think of what goes through your mind when you hear the term "terrorist." Usually it relates somehow to racist beliefs and stereotypes about Arabs, about airline hijackings, violence, and about how terrorists need to be caught and/or killed to be kept away from society. So when the federal government and the mainstream press immediately label actions of the ELF as ecoterrorism, it could only create a negative stereotype in the minds of the public.

Unfortunately as the pressures of mind control through labeling increase, it becomes more difficult to allow the mind to remain open to independently process information and form less-biased opinions. This is precisely what the federal government and law enforcement want: to make sure that the mainstream public immediately equates the ELF with ecoterrorism.

Can you imagine just what might occur if the ELF were not labeled negatively? What if people were honestly told why the group exists and who its targets are? Obviously, more and more people would support and take part in ELF actions. The ELF is not an ecoterrorist organization or any sort of terrorist organization, but rather one that is working to protect all life on planet Earth.

It is amazingly hypocritical for mainstream media and the federal government to label the ELF as a terrorist group, yet at the same time ignore the U.S. government and U.S.-based corporations, which every day exploit, torture, and murder people around the world.

Why don't members of the ELF use more traditional tactics to achieve environmental protection?

The mainstream public has been fed an extreme amount of false and misleading propaganda in regards to "traditional tactics," those which are strictly legal and sanctioned by the state. In reality, a more honest definition of traditional tactics would include illegal direct action such as economic sabotage, due to its crucial role in numerous successful social and political movements throughout history.

The ELF does not engage in more traditional tactics simply because they have been proven not to work, especially on their own. The popular, modern mainstream environmental movement, which began arguably in the early 1960s, has failed in its attempts to bring about the needed protection to stop the destruction of life on this planet. This fact cannot be rightly disputed. The quality of our air, water, and soil continues to decrease as more and more life forms on the planet suffer and die as a result. How much longer are we supposed to wait to actually stop the destruction of life?

A belief in state-sanctioned legal means of social change is also a sign of faith in the legal system of that same state. The ELF clearly do not have any faith in the legal system of the state when it co comes to protecting life. The state has repeatedly shown

itself to care far more for the protection of commerce and profits than that of its people and the natural environment. To place faith in that same state as though it will do what is in the best interests of justice and life is utter foolishness and a grave mistake. The state is a major portion of the problem. There is also a certain intelligence and logic to the idea that with one night's work, a few individuals can accomplish what years of legal battles and millions of dollars most likely did not.

Are ELF tactics, such as economic sabotage, new to social movements?

No, in fact very few (if any) major successful social movements globally have been able to progress using strictly state-sanctioned tactics. In Westernized societies, it is quite normal for schools to push the mythical propaganda that state-sanctioned means are the only way social change has ever been achieved.

One of the most famous examples usually cited by state-sanctioned, nonviolence absolutists is the Independence Movement in India while under British rule. Classically, people– especially in privileged, Westernized societies– have been taught that Gandhi's nonviolence tactics were the only methodology used to gain India's independence from Britain. Yet, in addition to the work of Gandhi, there was a strong militant faction of the Independence Movement that played just as important a role as the work of Gandhi himself.

The British government understood Gandhi's tactics and knew what broadly to expect from him. The more militant sector of the movement posed a far greater threat to the government simply due to the reality of the British not knowing what to expect or what might result if the road to India's independence was not traveled down. In fact, Gandhi himself was released from prison on at least one occasion only on the direct order from the British that he would try to calm the more militant sector of the movement. Both the nonviolence tactics employed by Gandhi and his followers and the threat of more severe tactics from the militant sector brought about India's eventual independence.

Most schooling systems also do not teach and educate students about the Luddites. Perhaps one of the earliest (if not the first) groups to target the Industrial Revolution and its effects was the Luddites. From 1811 to 1816, the Luddites caused extreme economic damage to the weaver industry in England. Angry at the threat to life and culture that the new machines of the industrialized revolution posed, the Luddites fought back using tactics very similar to those performed by the ELF today. Some factories were forced to shut down and others agreed to stop running the industrialized machines due to the Luddite activity and threat.

In the abolitionist movement in the United States, there are numerous accounts of slaves sabotaging the property of their "masters" and engaging in various tactics to disrupt the flow of commerce in the slave system. Slave revolts were fairly rare, but even one would create a chilling threat that actually forced some slave owners to give up the practice.

The suffragette movement, particularly in England, used sabotage in addition to other tactics to successfully gain rights for women. One example occurred in Febru-

ary 1913, when Emmeline Pankhurst, the founder of England's suffragette movement, bombed the villa of the Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George in Surrey. Pankhurst accepted responsibility for the event and described it as "guerrilla warfare."

In the United States, most everyone has heard of the Boston Tea Party which consisted of bands of men boarding English ships in Boston Harbor (among others) and dumping British tea into the water. Seldom is this referred to as economic sabotage, but that is indeed an accurate description of it.

In the protests in the U.S. against the Vietnam War, economic sabotage was once again used, in addition to other tactics, to place a great amount of pressure on the U.S. Government. In the end– due in part to the protests but more to the reality that the U.S. lost the war– the U.S. troops began withdrawing from Vietnam.

The above examples represent just a mere fraction of the historical instances in which economic sabotage has been effectively employed. The tactic has a rich and plentiful history in movements around the globe and makes sense from a purely logical standpoint. If an item or piece of property is threatening life for the sake of profit, shouldn't it be destroyed?

Why don't ELF members come forward and publicly take responsibility for their actions?

Frequently, when this question is asked there is usually some reference made to the ELF members showing cowardice by not publicly taking responsibility for actions. This is complete nonsense. The ELF is made up of brave, utterly courageous individuals who are risking their freedom to protect all life on Earth. ELF members make a conscientious decision to go underground and remain underground to create the highest level of effectiveness. The idea is not for the members to be rotting away in prisons but rather to be free each and every day to continue their heroic actions.

One school of thought under the broad scope of nonviolence theory states that an individual must allow an entity in opposition to see the evil in his or her own ways and voluntarily change. This, according to the theory, will create lasting change. This belief places an extraordinary amount of faith in the human conscience, which at this time has more than proven to be misguided. If an individual had a working conscience in the first place, would s/he actually engage in activities that threaten and destroy various forms of life on this planet? This is not a demonstration of a working conscience, and therefore all the attempts in the world to appeal to the oppressor's conscience will not work. There needs to be something more.

The ELF recognizes this flaw in conventional nonviolence theory and also realizes that remaining safely inside state-sanctioned societal law while attempting to create social and political change will never work. Laws are set up as a mere reflection of the morals and norms of the majority of mainstream society. Unfortunately, as a result of massive conditioning and the manufacture of desire, the mainstream public (especially in the United States) is living a life of extreme over-consumption, ruthlessly attacking what we all need to survive: clean air, clean water, and clean soil.

At this point in time there exists the immediate need for individuals to step outside of societal law and work to directly stop the destruction of life, by any means necessary. The ELF recognizes that the destruction of the planet is caused by the quest for profit, and therefore the only appropriate response at this stage is to completely remove the profit motive from killing life. When an unjust entity is severely attacked financially, it will see that it is in its best interests to stop the unjust acts. Due to the nature of the court systems, particularly in the U.S., there is little (if any) chance of a just trial. If an ELF member is caught and prosecuted s/he stands the chance of spending a ridiculous amount of time in prison because of newer and newer laws backed by big business and government to protect commerce.

The decision to not take public responsibility for each action is purely a strategic one. Why would anyone want to be caught and unjustly locked up, when s/he could instead be free to continue destroying that which is killing life? For the individual to come forward and take responsibility for an ELF action, this would require a sound faith in the legal structure. The ELF understands that this legal structure is part of the same system of government and now Westernized world domination that is causing the death of all life. It can never be trusted an ultimately needs to be abolished.

Do ELF actions alienate other groups and individuals within the environmental movement?

The members of the ELF have never stated that the tactics of their group will on their own achieve full change. Of course, there needs to be public education. The ELF considers itself one part of a global movement that uses a variety of tactics to stop the destruction of life. The ELF actions on their own do not alienate the environmental movement.

The problem arises when aboveground organizations, who claim to be for the same cause, come out publicly against the actions. Regardless of their motives, these groups have (whether they meant to or not) created a rift in the movement. A split in a social and political movement classically signifies a weak point that has historically been, and can continue to be, exploited by the authorities and entities who are interested in the movement's demise.

Grassroots and mainstream organizations who have come out publicly against the actions of the ELF do so either for economic reasons (to continue receiving donations from the public, members, or grants from charities or governmental or non-governmental organizations) and/or they have a firm belief and an exceptional amount of faith in the system of government in operation in their particular area. Either way, this attitude demonstrates a clear misunderstanding and/or a great reluctance to accept the seriousness of the threats to life on this planet and to make a firm commitment to work to actually stop that destruction of life. All of us must remember that the movement to protect all life must not be a means of monetary gain for individuals and organizations but rather one that produces concrete results.

In addition, rarely is the distinction made– which is crucial for any movement seeking to actually produce change– between actions that make an individual simply

feel good and actions that are truly effective and challenge the oppressing party. Actions that make individuals feel better about themselves are most often safer and pose little actual threat to the entity that needs to be changed. Especially in the global movement to protect all life, this is in direct reference to the continued belief in and use of state-sanctioned tactics, which have not only been proven ineffective but may only aid in prolonging the real problem.

This movement to protect all life requires all of us to step out of our comfort zones and realize what actually needs to be done. The Westernized individual who may support more extreme forms of direct action abroad and outside of the Westernized countries, such as the armed self defense of the Zapatistas, while simultaneously denouncing direct action domestically to protect life, is practicing one of the sickest forms of hypocrisy, if not a form of racism and imperialism.

No one in his right mind can honestly state that the popular environmental movement using state-sanctioned tactics has been successful. It is very obvious something more is needed.

There is no tolerable excuse for an individual or organization that claims to be a part of the movement to protect all life on the planet to come out publicly against the actions of the ELF.

If the individual or particular organization disagrees with the tactics, it is just as easy to come out publicly when asked and respond with a statement such as, "Although neither I nor my organization take part in actions like those of the ELF, we can understand the motivations because the threat to life on this planet is very real and serious."

What this statement does is to, rather than publicly show a major rift in the movement, give at least the perception of a varied movement, strong and rich in diversity.

What if someone is injured by an ELF action? Has that ever happened?

The guidelines for the ELF specifically require members to take all necessary precautions to ensure no one is physically injured. In the history of the ELF internationally, no one has been injured from the group's actions and that is not a coincidence. Yes, the use of fire as a tool is dangerous. But when used properly, it can tremendously aid in the destruction of property associated with the killing of life.

If an action similar to one performed by the ELF occurred and resulted in an individual being harmed, this would not be considered an ELF action. It may have been done for social and political reasons and even may have had the same motives as the ELF, but since a life form was injured, it would not be considered an actual ELF action. Remember, the ELF exists to protect life on this planet. The choice to use economic sabotage is a very deliberate and purposeful strategy to target the real underlying threat to life: the quest for profit and power. The ELF does not engage in state-sanctioned tactics or those that physically harm people or life in general, due to the group's belief that economic sabotage is the best, most direct way to take the profit motive out of destroying the planet.

The real violence and danger come from businesses clear-cutting forests and destroying ecosystems; from pollutants carelessly pumped into our air by industrial and consumer society; from water being poisoned to the point of being undrinkable' from people eating commercially-grown, nonorganic food; and many, many more. Very often, by labeling the ELF as 'violent,' mainstream society, government, and big business can attempt to forget about the real violence that occurs everyday: the violence against life.

Is the ELF concerned with the workers at a given business who may be forced into unemployment by an action?

The ELF supports the right for all individuals to have proper access to adequate nourishment, health care, shelter, and the basic necessities of life. There is, however, no excuse for individuals to be working at a job that directly threatens the ability for all life on the planet to exist. If an individual– whether an executive, owner, or bottom-of-the-ladder employee– is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment, aiding in the stockpiling of wealth into the hands of a few, the least he deserves is to lose his job. Individuals cannot blindly enter into any form of employment, regardless of the pay, without first considering who and/ or what that work is going to hurt. The victim / benefactor ratio must be greatly considered and occupations that pose a threat to life must be abolished.

What approach has law enforcement taken to stop the work of the ELF?

From 1997 through 2000, not a single person was arrested and charged with an ELF-related crime in North America. Then, on January 25, 2001, the first ELF-related arrest in North America came. Since that time, there have only been a few others. The ELF, by all accounts, has been extremely successful in evading law enforcement due in much part to its anonymous cell structure.

Law enforcement, from the federal down to the local level, has been extremely frustrated. Out of this frustration, aboveground individuals around the country have been harassed, subpoenaed to grand juries, had their homes and offices raided and property seized, and more.

The U.S. Department of Justice has particularly focused its interest since 1997 on the North American ELF Press Office, foolishly believing that the office might have some direct connection to ELF members. It doesn't. After years of surveillance, harassment, two major raids and property seizures, and numerous grand jury subpoenas, the U.S. Department of Justice continues to place pressure on the press office to shut down. They don't seem to be having much luck.

Another step that the protectors of the state and commerce have taken is to have the Federal Bureau of Investigations classify the ELF as a domestic terrorism group. In fact, the FBI has referred to the ELF as the leading domestic terrorism threat in the United States. This classification has allowed heightened surveillance and investigative techniques to be legally used against the ELF. In addition, this move by the FBI allowed the formal creation of "joint terrorism task forces" in most larger, urban areas throughout the U.S. One such example follows.

On November 25, 2000 the NAELFPO received notice the Portland City Council had approved a terrorism task force. This new force involves both the FBI and the Portland Police Bureau. The original ordinance passed by City Council has a particularly interesting mission statement. Mission statement #3 (of 4) states, "The mission of the PJTTF is to identify and target for prosecution those individuals or groups who are responsible for Right Wing and/or Left Wing movements, as well as acts of the anti-abortion movement and the Animal Liberation Front/Earth Liberation Front."

Public outcry in opposition to the above mission resulted in a rewording, but the idea remains the same. The state is beginning to recognize that the ELF poses a major threat to commerce so they are reacting accordingly.

In addition, certain U.S. states, including Oregon and Washington, are adopting "ecoterrorism" laws. These laws greatly increase the sentencing limits for crimes largely associated with the interference of commerce. With every step that the state takes to try to stop the unstoppable, loving work of the ELF, it once again proves its priorities are to protect commerce at any cost, regardless of the people and life in general.

The FBI's classification of the ELF as the most serious domestic terrorism threat in the U.S., as well as the increasing number of "ecoterrorism" laws being passed, is a definite sign that the authorities are considering the ELF a viable threat to the Westernized way of life and to the idea of profits and commerce at any price. It is a clear sign that the ELF is successfully threatening the nation state that is destroying life on this planet.

What is the future of the ELF?

The future of the ELF depends largely on the growing number of people globally concerned about the destruction of life. Once the ideology of the ELF is understood, anyone who is honestly concerned about the destruction of life should feel compelled to either support and/or become a member of the organization.

As the amount of exploitation and destruction of life continues to increase, so will the response from concerned global citizens. It is this individual involvement from people all over the world that justice and the protection of life relies upon.

Using real direct action in the form of economic sabotage, the ELF is targeting what the greedy entities care about: their pocketbooks. By inflicting as much economic damage as possible, the ELF can allow a given entity to decide if it is in its best economic interests to stop destroying life for the sake of profit.

— North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office

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North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office
Frequently Asked Questions About The Earth Liberation Front
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