

Dilettante Activism

Onan the Barbarian

Summer/Fall 1993

Wait a minute please, there is something not right about the plea bargain worked out between the self named “Noble Road Action Team” (NRAT) and the prosecution. The seven-person affinity group blockaded the Noble road for about half a day during this past summer’s Cove/Mallard campaign. Because of the nature of the action, the group was charged with the crime of “conspiracy to commit grand theft of a road”—a felony. This is classic Freddie fantasy interpretation of the law, but the Idaho court venues have, for the most part, been an exceedingly difficult place for Cove/Mallard activists to get a fair shake. Also, a felony conviction is not a pleasant addition to anyone’s record—makes it much harder to have guns. But that is no excuse for the course of action six of the seven Nrats chose: copping a plea bargain that includes restitution to Highland Enterprises (primary road contractor in C/M and plaintiff in the SLAPP suit against various activists and groups) totaling \$3,300.00.

Get a fucking grip, people. When you do an action it is supposed to be to help defend the planet, save some trees, and to make a stand for one’s beliefs, not to line the pockets of the bad guys. And what about group solidarity? The one member of the affinity group with enough integrity not to sell out is now in a much more precarious legal situation. There is power in numbers, and when some people cut deals, the remaining defendants in these cases are usually treated more harshly. The group had already retained one public defender and spent \$500 of legal defense money before copping the plea—a goddamn waste of precious money.

Civil disobedience is not “going out and getting arrested,” it is a commitment to fight a battle on certain terms, to wear out an adversary without violence. What the six weenies did who copped a plea is the worst kind of “action,” it’s spineless, gutless, masturbatory self-important drivel: dilettante activism. No Jake, you are *not* more valuable outside of jail, it’s time you finished what you start and stop putting yourself in the position of INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT ACTIVIST and give us all a fucking break. If you can’t do the time, don’t do the action; go be important somewhere else.

There’s a widespread rumor that the Important People of the Cove/Mallard campaign have decided to model next year’s campaign after the Clayoquot actions. You know, arm-banded Peace Nazi’s telling everyone how to behave, 3-minute road blockades by people who voluntarily walk off with the cops and then pay exorbitant fines, and, oh, of course, a centralized power hierarchy running the show. *Wake the fuck UP!! We are quickly appropriating the types of campaigns and action philosophy that many of us came to Earth First! trying to escape.

The Ted K Archive

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