

Fanning the Flames of Resistance

Theresa Kintz

21 December 1998

"...we can go back to the earliest recorded texts in our canon... and find that those who have served power have always been rewarded with respectability... That pattern just perpetuates through history, and for perfectly good reasons. If you serve power, authority and privilege, you'll end up, by and large, with respectability. And if you undermine them, whether it's by political analysis, moral critique or anything else, they're not going to applaud you for it."

— Noam Chomsky

Precisely because it was such a sensational public denial of the legitimacy of authority and the privilege of power, the Vail bonfire was not a respectable thing to do, granted. But let's face it folks, Earth First! is an ecological resistance movement that has come to engender beautiful radical and revolutionary philosophies—not respectable ones.



The planned Vail expansion is just one more example of humans overstepping their bounds unnecessarily and at all of our peril. As big corporations like Vail Associates are allowed to flourish, the rich get richer, the poor poorer and Mother Earth suffers the most. There have always been eco-anarchists among us who truly believe that the materialist/capitalist worldview in general, and the concept of the sanctity of private property in particular, must be deconstructed in order to incapacitate the nature-destroying juggernaut of industrial civilization. We dedicate our lives to fighting the power that turns people into "consumers," wilderness into "natural resources " and intentionally indoctrinates the world with an ethic of exploitation.

After every legal (*state-sanctioned*) means of trying to protect that incredible ecosystem had been exhausted, setting fire to a playground of the prosperous was a brave and eco-logical last resort (no pun intended). All such development projects must be opposed as vigorously as possible at this critical time in history. It is intellectually dishonest and morally unethical not to do so.

We should not be afraid to openly applaud the elves' blatant demonstration of disrespect for the accouterments of the aristocracy. We are members of a tribe of scofflaws who want to see the natural balance between humans and the ecosystems we inhabit restored. Certainly an important aspect of this is engaging in the public discourse about what our society's peculiar kind of political, technological, economic adaptation may mean to the future (a la the *EF! Journal*). But just as important is actively contradicting the policies and intentionally conflicting with the interests of those political and economic forces promoting development (a la the ELF).

The Earth Liberation Front's eco-sabotage of Vail constituted a political act of conscience perfectly in keeping with the sincere expression of the biocentric paradigm many Earth Firsters espouse. Ours is a movement of advocates on behalf of that which has no representation in government, no corporate sponsor, no voice in the world of men. We seek to address our concerns to a hostile civilization that maintains itself only by assaulting the natural world. For those who care more about the cause than the mainstream perception of the movement, respectability is neither an attainable or a desirable goal.

Earth Firsters aspire to become effective social critics of rampant technological change, corporate domination, hierarchical class systems and unsustainable development with hopes of changing the hearts and minds of humanity. To accomplish this we must defy a rich and powerful elite who protect their vested interest in maintaining the status quo by attacking the integrity of our vision. Violent acts towards Mother Earth and those who defend her are routinely committed by the extractive industries we oppose, condoned by the state and ignored by a media that labels *us* terrorists. Finding a so-called "nonviolent" way to respond to or influence a society too far removed from the wild, too wedded to material possessions, too enamored with technology and too intent on profiting from exploiting the natural world to really appreciate our perspective is perhaps our greatest challenge.

It may also be a fool's errand. The reality is the dominant value system in our culture denies the transcendental truth and beauty inherent in nature. Inflammatory actions like Vail succeed in letting Babylon know there are frontline revolutionaries willing to lead the fight to preserve the last wild places on Earth and who laud the last wild places in the human heart. The elves have asserted that an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude is unacceptable. They are not willing to surrender, compromise their ideals or water down the mandatory radical critique in subservience to power. Good for them.

The destruction of the private property of the upper classes at Vail, in defense of the forest and the lynx, should not be portrayed as an irrational, violent, aggressive act. Rather, it was a rational, overtly political and defensive act undertaken by Mother Earth's freedom fighters, not terrorists, in the face of overwhelming odds and at great risk of personal liberty. Those courageous and idealistic enough to believe it is possible to beat 'em must be encouraged to use all the tools in the toolbox, especially their best judgment, in the battle on behalf of the wild. I say carry on elves, with love and rage! No compromise in the defense of Mother Earth!

— Theresa Kintz

The Ted K Archive

Theresa Kintz
Fanning the Flames of Resistance
21 December 1998

Earth First! Journal 19, no. 2

www.thetedkarchive.com