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Bitter Politics

Berrigan

With a gift for sports--he played first basemen for a semi-professional league in his youth-- he had arms that could windmill you into tomorrow. He used those arms to hammer the instrument panel of sparkling warships, throw blood onto the deck of aircraft carriers, burn draft card notices and dig a grave in Gerald Ford's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld's front lawn. After he was arrested for this particular incident, the headline in the morning paper read 'Berrigan Arrested at Rumsfeld's Grave'. To misquote Twain, the notice of Rumsfeld's death was greatly exaggerated. Rumsfeld of course lived to serve a second term as Secretary of Defense controlling the largest military machine on earth. Berrigan who died last Friday, December 6th, was one of the few people in this country who tried to stand in his way.

By T. L. Reavis

Reviews

Wright Zeros in on Hope

If we stick to the absolute bare bones of Darwinian theory, there is no reason for consciousness at all. According to modern behavioralist, consciousness lacks a true function. It is redundant, superflous. In short, consciousness is weird.

By Jacob Newman

Fictions

From the Chicago Bubble: The Edsel Farm

"I ought to make you take that whole stinking mess and put it in the shed. It's got no business in the house!" A standard Mom-type admonition. I took the

Looking for the Delicate Monster Blog?

Monster's choice in News



For Christmas: The E.L.F. Interview

By Thomas Jackson

PRINT EMAIL

First the facts: on Sept. 27 or 28, vandals used a glass-etching cream to damage fast food restaurant windows in Richmond, Virginia. Thirteen windows at each of two McDonald's and 25 windows at a Burger King, all in Richmond's affluent West End were scratched up. Around the same time, vandals used a similar substance to scratch the surfaces of 25 SUV's at a West Richmond dealership.

Then on Oct. 5 or 6, vandals took a hatchet to a pair of SUV's in a suburban subdivision and left notes on each saying it was the work of E.L.F. or the Earth Liberation Front. Similar notes had been found on July 11 when there was a 'string of slashed tires on SUVs. How many tires were slashed? No exact numbers were given.

Rather than investigate the incidents themselves, the Richmond Police called in the F.B.I. Lawrence Barry, chief counsel of the Richmond division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, confirmed that his agency was helping to investigate the incidents.

Why should the F.B.I be involved in the relatively trivial task of

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bra to my bedroom where I tried folding it and taping it to a card. The straps and plush cups did not make the fit an easy one. On the card I carefully wrote: "BRA from wrecked 1958 Edsel Pacer. Condition of thing: Dirty. Weather: Sunny and hot."

By Harry Kollatz

Muses

From the Bowels of Am. Lit. 101

Here at last American literature brings us kicking and screaming into the contemporary scene. Here is Enron, WorldCom, and the artful dodging of our very own (warm your heart) Bush. Surely a playful fool, not unlike Dr. Tamkin; obfuscating desire with reality, while cleverly playing the doltish innocent, and, in the end, taking off with all our cash.

By Joe Johnson

Local Links

FireHouse Theatre Project

NoPrizes.Net

1708 Gallery

Amle Oliver.com

Official ELF Statement from FBI

tracking down some folks who scratched up SUVs and damaged restaurant windows?

"Police are trying to determine if there are any links to other incidents around the country," said Wade Kizer, Commonwealth's Attorney for Henrico County.

And if there are links?

Kizer said that they may belong to a wider group that have defaced SUVs across the country. The members of this group, he explained, call themselves elves for the Earth Liberation Front. The F.B.I., he further explained, consider this group a 'terrorist' threat.

This is where you would laugh if it were not for the fact that Wade Kizer and Lawrence Berry and a certain Representative for Congress from Colorado, Scott McInnis, are deadly serious. In fact, the combined efforts of our House of Representatives, the F.B.I. and the local police authorities have napped two of these elves, one of whom, Jeffrey Leurs, has been sentenced to a prison term of 22 years, eight months. To put this in context, in Eugene, Oregon, where Jeff Leurs was convicted, the local newspaper, The Register Guard, reported that a man who killed a woman while driving drunk received a 10 year jail sentence. Six days later, the same newspaper reported that Jeffrey Leurs had been sentenced to 22 years and 8 months for causing arson damage to three SUVs. Even though the judge admitted that Leurs had taken precautions against harming people, Jeffrey, who is now 22, will spend as much time in jail as he has already spent on earth.

Probably the person most responsible for the disparity in this sentencing is Rep. Scott McInnis, a man whose constituency includes the timber and recreational industries in Colorado. Rep. McInnis has used the September 11th attacks on the US to ratchet up domestic fears of so called 'eco-terrorists' and has even called for well known environmental organizations to publicly 'denounce' groups like E.L.F. For those familiar with the McCarthy era, this should be an endearing reminder of times past.

Duped the new 'eco-terrorist czar', McInnis' request for denunciation, dated Oct. 30, 2002, went to the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Earthjustice, League of Conservation Voters, World Wildlife Fund, National Wildlife Federation and the National Resources Defense Council. It reads in part: "As our Nation begins the recovery and healing process following the tragedy of Sept. 11, we believe it is critical for Americans of every background and political stripe to disavow terrorism in all its forms and manifestations: Americans simply cannot tolerate, either overtly or through silence, the use of violence and terror as an instrument of promoting social and political change."

The congressmen added that while eco-saboteurs' acts have not risen to the level of the World Trade Center attack, they are "no less deplorable."

Here, in the interest of rational journalism, it may be instructive to note that no one--let me repeat that--no one has ever died or even been injured as a result of one of these incidents. At their website, the ELF note that they make every effort to avoid injury to any form of life. It should also be noted that McInnis' district is home to the Vail ski resort, which sustained \$12 million in damage when a posh, mountaintop lodge was torched to protest an expansion into an endangered lynx habitat. Other congressmen who

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whether true or not? help! quote news coverage help! Sub

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signed the letter also live in districts where acts of property destruction have occurred. No doubt these facts may be relevant in explaining the necessity of suddenly aligning glass scratchers and 'monkey wrenchers' with terms like 'terrorists'.

Since so much ink has already been spilt about 'eco-terrorism', but very little on the actual reasons behind such organizations, we at the Delicate Monster felt it only fair to give the 'eco-terrorists' a chance to state their side of the matter. Through anonymous email, Delicate Monster has asked the ELF to respond to a series of questions regarding their motives and actions.

The content of the e-interview follows:

1) On your website you state that a goal of your organization is to inflict economic damage on those profiting from the destruction and exploitation of the natural environment. I presume one of the reasons you would carry out such actions is to reduce the profitability of exploiting the environment. Do you have any methodology that lets you track such a reduction? In other words, have you any way of measuring your organizations effectiveness in preventing environmental exploitation?

One goal of the organization is to inflict economic damage, the other two being to educate the public and to make known that earth-abusing entities can all be considered targets. Whether each action is successful on all counts can only be considered on a case by case basis. We do not keep statistics on how much each ELF action sets back corporations and government entities that are targeted. To date, the ELF has carried out actions that have cost over \$45 million which is quite a financial hit taken by a few corporations, universities and government agencies. We fail to see how this does not affect the operations and the considerations that these agencies must take into account. There is no question that each of these agencies have their profits cut into when they have to spend more on security, insurance, staff training, and damage control. A target hit again and again becomes unprofitable over time and it's the long-range view that matters in the struggle to save the planet.

2) If it was determined that activities which inflict economic damage on exploiters actually is not an effective deterrent to environmental exploitation would you try an alternate means?

There are other reasons that actions get carried out. There is no question that these actions raise issues before the public like few others could. The reality is, these actions bring enormous amounts of attention to issues that would not otherwise get any media play or public discussion at all.

In some cases, such as biotechnology research, there is the added imperative of putting a stop to destructive practices before they are released on an unsuspecting public and planet. There is no question that ELF actions have set back this type of destructive research by decades - which far surpasses any finite and

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measurable economic damage.

3) A common belief by some who have studied your organization is that you really aren't interested in political change per se. Is this accurate? If so, is this because you believe the current political climate is too saturated with consumerist sentiment to effectively change its [own] habits? Or is the process of political change too slow going at this late stage?

We aren't sure what you mean by "political change" - if you mean change of government then no, ELF members are unlikely to focus on whether Gore or Bush wins the next election. If you mean revolutionary change in which society is transformed into a place where people, animals and the earth are respected, and the systems of hierarchical rule are turned upside down - then yes - ELF members are likely very interested in that type of change. However, the question is whether there is time left on this planet to make the type of evolutionary leap politically that would be required for such transformation. ELF members obviously believe in taking action in the here and now - directly having an impact on conditions that affect them and their world - rather than waiting for a future that may never come.

5) I understand that ELF traces its roots to EarthFirst! And that they are more or less a splinter group after EarthFirst! turned away from acts of sabotage in favor of more legally acceptable courses of action. EarthFirst! of course was no doubt inspired by Edward Abbey and his novel, The Monkey Wrench Gang. Do you also draw your inspiration for activism from Abbey? Or are their other sources? If so, could you please discuss them?

We are simply the press office, it is difficult to say where people carrying out actions are inspired from. The Monkey Wrench Gang is an obvious source for ideas in action. Derek Jensen's book - A Language Older Than Words also provides some fine inspiration for would-be monkey-wrenchers. But really, no one needs a book to see that the world we are living in is in deep, deep trouble - and we suspect that people are moved by the suffering and struggle that they witness around them rather than the ideas of a few writers.

6) How do ELF members handle being in an organization that the FBI has characterized as a 'terrorists' group? Specifically, how are the day to day logistics handled. Also, this has to be incredibly difficult on a personal/emotional level how is that sense of marginalization handled?

ELF members live anonymously which is why we, the press office, have no contact with them or any knowledge of who carries out ELF actions. ELF members could be your next door neighbour, or that friend you went to college with. They could be living so-called "normal" lives, or living out of the back of their car in a wilderness area. How each individual or cell handles their day to day existence depends on the situation and it is difficult for us to guess

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what different scenarios exist for ELF members. There is no question that this is stressful work, since ELF members are risking arrest and incarceration with every action they carry out - and the actions themselves can pose physical risk to those involved. There is no question that even taking on the ELF Press Office in this day and age (post-september 11th) is a stressful task given the level of repression that has come down on activists across North America and the world. The decision to keep the press officers anonymous (since Leslie James Pickering stepped down) is an obvious outcome of that. Just an association with the ELF could cause one to lose their job, or come under investigation - and so even speaking out in support has become marginalizing in itself.

7) I'd like for our readers to get a sense of who you are demographically. Obviously any answer will be a generalized aggregate, but it would be interesting to know. Are you more male or female, more young, 20s or older 30-40s? As a group are you more white? Afro-American? Asian? Hispanic? Do you hail from lower class backgrounds, middle class backgrounds? Upper class? What would you say is the general educational level for your group?

We have no idea. We are the press office and do not know those who carry out actions on behalf of the ELF.

10) There seems to be a strong streak of anti-technology sentiment among ELF members. Is there any place for high-tech solutions to environmental problems in the ELF world view? I am thinking specifically of fuel-cell cars, or so called clean alternative energy sources: solar power, wind power, etc.

We don't hold a position on this particularly. We suspect that there are many different viewpoints within the ELF on questions like this and some individuals may hold specifically anti-technology views while others may not.

11) How do you feel about the Green Party, The Sierra Club, the NRDC? Do you think they are legitimate political alternatives for individuals who want to protect the environment through legal political means?

These organizations are as legitimate as any other reform-minded organizations existing in North America today, however - the mainstream environmental movement alone can not bring about the type of changes needed to transform the world we are living in and certainly doesn't threaten the political status quo any more than the Democratic Party does (green consumerism being an example of this).

By the same token, 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 which uses a variety of tactics to stop the destruction of life.

12) The Sierra club and other environment groups claim that your actions actually hurt the environmental movement. How do you respond to this criticism?

Grassroots and mainstream organizations who have come out publicly against the actions of the ELF do so either due to economic reasons (they rely on donations from the public, members, or grants from charities or governmental or non-governmental organizations) and/or they have a firm belief 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.

13) Do you have any thoughts on such figures as Ron Arnold, the so called father of Wise Use? In particular, his rather rabid denunciation of civil protests against environmental exploitation as 'terrorism'?

The Wise Use "movement" is not wise nor is it a movement at all. Simply put, wise use is just another voice of industry destructive to the earth and the animal inhabitants on it. It is comprised of fur farmers, logging companies and large-scale ranchers (to name just a few of the interests which comprise so-called wise use organizations). Of course, since these individuals and companies are legitimate targets of the ELF because of their destructive practices, and are often the targets of more mainstream protest as well - they have an interest in encouraging more government crackdown on activism under the guise of fighting terrorism.

14) One point often made when comparing ELF members actions to those of say Henry David Thoreau or Martin Luther King is that ELF members do not take responsibility for their actions. They actively try to avoid detection (while both Thoreau and King accepted jail time in protests). How do you respond to such criticism?

ELF members are far more useful on the outside carrying out further actions that stuck inside a prison cell.

15) Last, although we do not have a large readership, it is reasonably well educated and favors well thought out arguments (as opposed to knee jerk solutions). What would you say to our readership so that they might sympathize with ELF and/or encourage them to create their own cells?

IS ELF
an organization
or an
ideology?