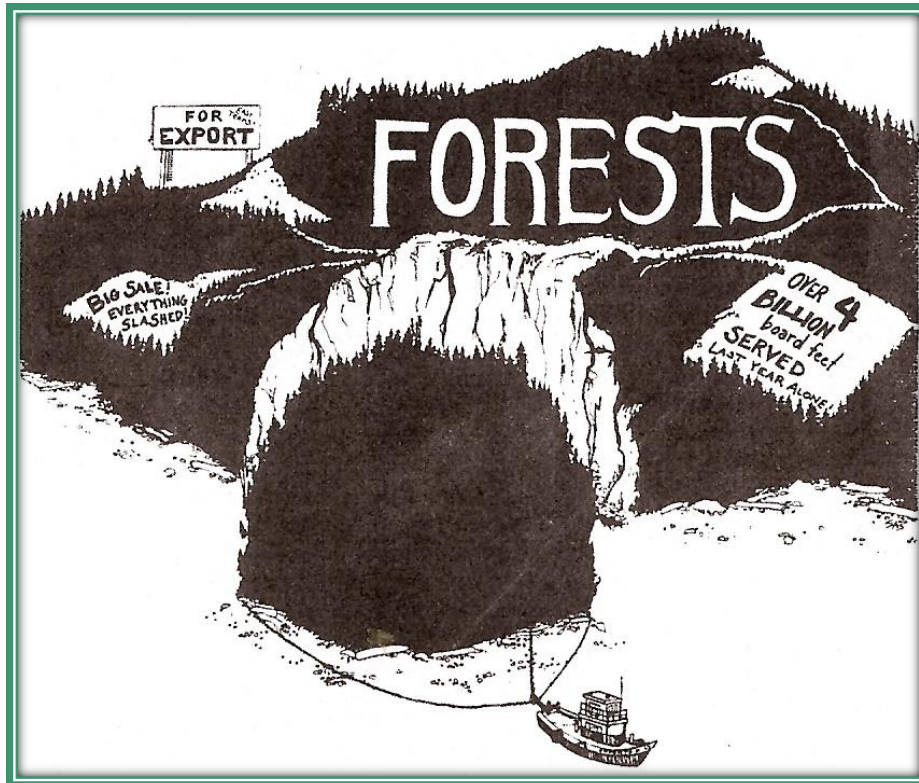


## Chapter 17 : Logging to Infinity



Observing the frequent loading of logs on ships, during daily drives past Fields Landing several years ago, aroused in me a strong curiosity about the ex-ported of logs. At the same time as I was so frequently driving past this docking facility, the expansion of Redwood National Park, and its potential impact on the local lumber mills, was a very big news item and the controversy was evident everywhere in the community. Why, I asked, are these logs being exported, in their raw resource form, from an area where steady employment is already a problem and, if the dire forecasts about the (Redwood) Park expansion are to be believed, there will be a much greater problem in the future? As I raised this question with a wide variety of people over the ensuing months and years, I concluded that the average citizens of Humboldt County has very little understanding of the log exporting matter.

—Edie Butler, *Hard Times*, February 1983

*Way up high in the redwood giants,  
Darryl Cherney sits alone,  
He is callin' 60 Minutes,  
From his treetop telephone.*

—lyrics excerpted from *Darryl Cherney's on a Journey*,  
by Mike Roselle and Claire Greensfelder

Earth First! and IWW made every effort to confront the real problems faced by the would-be “once-lers” on the North Coast. They began by organizing a “No Exports Flotilla” on Tuesday, May 23, 1989 at noon at the Fields Landing Dock two miles south of Eureka.<sup>1</sup> About four dozen demonstrators, some of them on boats and the rest on land assembled near the rally site, braving high winds and even some rain.<sup>2</sup> The boaters, including Darryl Cherney and Larry Evans, calling themselves the “Guerilla Flotilla”, struggled against a strong ebb tide while a coast guard patrol skiff hovered nearby ostensibly for the demonstrators’ safety. Meanwhile the demonstrators on land, including Judi Bari, marched until they met the flotilla where the latter finally landed. Demonstrators held a large orange banner which read, “Stop Exporting Our Future!” and another white banner which declared, “Log Exports = Closed Mills.”<sup>3</sup> Beach balls labeled “jobs”, “old growth”, and “the future” floated away illustrating the message.<sup>4</sup> The three network TV affiliates serving Humboldt County covered the event and their coverage was relatively favorable.

There, Darryl Cherney declared, “Earth First!’s ban on log exports campaign is one manner in which we can show common ground with the timber workers. Whole log exports clearly harm both the ecology and economy of this region.”<sup>5</sup> Judi Bari added:

“A lot of people blame environmentalists for the mill closures, (but) we’re here to point out that one quarter of the whole logs that are cut (from the Pacific Northwest) are being shipped overseas to Japan. This is where a lot of the jobs are going, and not only are they depleting the forests, but they’re also depleting the mill workers’ livelihoods.”<sup>6</sup>

Larry Evans emphasized that log exports cost the Pacific Northwest as many as 15,000 jobs annually. He further argued, “While that’s happening, the environmental movement is getting a lot of flak for ‘taking jobs away’ through protecting habitat and ecosystems which is in fact something that we all depend on. So basically we feel that exporting these jobs is a

profit, greedhead scam.”<sup>7</sup> John Boak accused the demonstrators of “showboating”, and “trying to take credit for the idea,” as if he had somehow thought of it himself. He and Candy could only sit and watch nearby fuming, because there was little in the message critical of log exports they could use to feed into the stereotype of “unwashed-out-of-town-jobless-hippies-on-drugs.”<sup>8</sup> Neither WECARE nor TEAM had anything to say about raw log exports either, nor could they. These organizations took their marching orders from Corporate Timber, who favored exports.

Although it was not a direct target of the protest, as the log export issue was more than just the work of one company, the demonstration ended up near Allen and Finn Exports which was then owned by none other than Woody Murphy. Although he had largely stayed out of the escalating timber wars, except to continue his legal battle against Maxxam, the former Pacific Lumber scion quickly revealed that he had a touch of the Once-ler in himself as well. Humboldt Sheriff’s deputies had already barred protesters from entering the property, but Woody—no doubt perplexed and insulted that Earth First! would target *him* of all people—came charging down to the beach, demanding that the protesters be arrested. When one of the protesters, a woman, not knowing who he was, accused him of exploiting the forests, Murphy lost his temper, called the woman “the dumbest b---- he’d met in his life,” and threatened to arrest the demonstrators himself if they didn’t leave his property. The sheriff’s deputies intervened and informed Murphy that they had kept the demonstrators on the public side of the property line and that he’d better calm down or they’d arrest him.<sup>9</sup>

Murphy was not the primary target of the demonstrators however (indeed, many Earth Firsters had indirectly supported Murphy’s efforts to fight Hurwitz’s takeover of Maxxam), but the Corporate Media reporters nevertheless sought out his opinions as if he were the key spokesman for the opposition. In front of the TV cameras, Woody was relatively charitable in response to the demonstrators, publically claiming to support their right to protest on public land, including the beach, but, of course, not his property.<sup>10</sup> He also claimed he was “having a good laugh about it now,” but he also questioned the

<sup>1</sup> “Earth First! to Protest Log Exports”, press release, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, May 24, 1989 and *The Mendocino Commentary*, May 25, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> “Rain-soaked Protesters Decry Log Exports”, by Marie Gravelle, *Eureka Times-Standard*, May 24, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Channel 6 KVIQ TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Gravelle, May 24, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Channel 6 KVIQ TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Channel 7-12 KAEF TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Channel 3 KIEM TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Gravelle, May 24, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> “Harris, David, *The Last Stand*, New York, NY, Times Books, Random House, 1995, page 347.

<sup>10</sup> Channel 7-12 KAEF TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

15,000 job figure, however, declaring that his business was a job creator, not a destroyer (eerily echoing the words of his enemy, Charles Hurwitz)<sup>11</sup>, and pointing out that less than two percent of the logs handled in Humboldt County in 1988 had been exported<sup>12</sup> (perhaps not realizing that Earth First! was, in fact, describing a situation that affected the *entire* Pacific Northwest).<sup>13</sup> He argued that most of the logs handled by his business were traded locally, but businesses had a right to trade their logs for the highest bidder and sometimes that was the non-US buyers.<sup>14</sup>

In Murphy's defense, he was, at worst, a small time Once-ler. This was not the case for Harry Merlo and his spokespeople, including Shep Tucker, who had no such excuses. On TV news, Tucker offered his carefully scripted opinion which was to argue that a ban on log exports could hurt small logging businesses and tree farmers, and to add, "They need a healthy economy and a market place to sell timber into, and I don't see Earth First! taking the time to make those investments. It's really easy to be against something, but it's real hard to come up with solutions and be for something."<sup>15</sup> Tucker was lying of course, because Bari and Cherney had already come up with a very bold solution to the Potter Valley and Red Bluff mill closures which the L-P spokesman had sneeringly dismissed.<sup>16</sup> Tucker also had nothing to say about automation, mill closures, union busting, insider trading, or capital intensive understory brush removal all of which were equally costly to local forest economies. The same news outlet that broadcast Tucker's condemnation of Earth First! reported, accurately, that Corporate Timber still sought to overturn the federal ban on exports from public lands, including National Forests. Woody Murphy, also missed the point, suggesting that perhaps Earth First! was merely looking for "another issue"<sup>17</sup>, when in fact the campaign against log exports was an attempt to link *all* of the relevant issues.<sup>18</sup> Given the circumstances, Earth First! was finding itself stretched pretty thin, fighting battles against the Once-lers on many

fronts, adding more issues to their already full plate was hardly first and foremost on their agenda.

Darryl Cherney was nothing if he was not drawn to the media spotlight, however, and having not yet engaged in a tree sit himself, he decided that the time was right for him to do it. Of course, the timing was determined as much by the fact that the annual Round River Rendezvous was at hand, and Cherney wanted to boast about his activities there.<sup>19</sup> Greg King, on the other hand, was already fighting burnout, and the thought of having to hastily organize *yet another* tree sit didn't enthrall him much.<sup>20</sup> It had been over a year since the last tree sit in defense of the old growth redwoods of Humboldt County. In King's mind, the tactic was losing its media staying power and Cherney was not accepting this. Also, Cherney made little secret of the fact that he felt it necessary to perform a tree sit as much for his own sense of standing within Earth First! as much as any strategic imperative against Maxxam. To make matters worse, based on past experience, Cherney wasn't particularly skilled at it or confident in his abilities. Furthermore, King was beginning to strongly sense that the FBI was increasingly monitoring Earth First!, perhaps even infiltrating them, and risky moves such as this left them open to potential dangers.<sup>21</sup>

Despite King's initial hesitance, however, he gathered the needed equipment, secured the necessary funds, and planned the treetop occupation to target a Maxxam THP near Yager Creek, which was visible from Redwood House Road, located northeast of Carlotta. Joining Cherney would be George Shook—a musician, wood carver, and former Forest Service timber cruiser—and Martha Stone—a surfer and jewelry designer attending Humboldt State University in Arcata. Rounding out the team, Judi Bari agreed to serve as the media coordinator for the action. On Saturday, June 3, 1989, the tree sitting crew followed their now established routine of entering the forest at midnight, conducting their final reconnaissance around sunrise, sleeping the rest of that day, and then establishing their platforms at sunset.<sup>22</sup>

The occupation was established without a hitch, but from there the situation grew increasingly complicated. From their platforms hung a banner reading "STOP REDWOOD SLAUGHTER –

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<sup>11</sup> Channel 6 KVIQ TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Channel 3 KIEM TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> "Earth First! to Protest Log Exports", press release, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, May 24, 1989 and *The Mendocino Commentary*, May 25, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> Channel 3 KIEM TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Channel 6 KVIQ TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>16</sup> "Northwest Wobs Call for Support to Keep L-P Mill Open", by Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, December 28, 1989 and *Industrial Worker*, March 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Channel 6 KVIQ TV News Report, May 23, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Earth First! press release, May 24, 1989, op. cit.

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<sup>19</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 260.

<sup>20</sup> "Warriors Climb Back Into the 'Trees'", by Greg King, *Earth First! Journal*, Litha / June 21, 1989.

<sup>21</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 260.

<sup>22</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

EARTH FIRST!.” Some loggers showed up and argued with the tree sitters about the viability of second growth forests as adequate replacements for old growth, but the banter was mostly friendly even if the two groups didn’t agree on every point. In spite of King’s skepticism, thanks to Cherney’s media savvy, the tree sit *did* garner local and national media attention, including from *National Geographic*, who sent photographer Jim Blair to graphically record the occupation.<sup>23</sup> Cherney, from his treetop, conducted interview after interview with the media, and issued the following statement:

We are sick and tired of watching ancient redwood forests being strip-logged into oblivion to make patio decks for yuppies. In fact, there is no justification for destroying 500, 1,000, 2,000-year-old beings, especially after we’ve annihilated 95 percent of them already. So three little people have to sit 100 feet up in giant redwoods for a week, risking life and liberty, in an attempt to save them...

“We sit in the trees and we lay down before the bulldozers because we are resisting the murder of our planet. We do not fear imprisonment or even death, because the current technological onslaught has become our prison and will lead to our death if it is allowed to continue its course. The system of planetary exploitation, a system of taking more than we give, has barreled through our front door and is strangling all our relations. Like any sane species on this planet, we will fight back to drive it from our home.”<sup>24</sup>

Pacific Lumber was displeased with the sitters’ presence, but decided to let them stay perched for the time being, because attempting to remove them would merely have drawn more attention. Speaking for P-L, David Galitz declared, “We’re not going to do anything to endanger them or ourselves. They are trespassing and we will ask the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Department to enforce the law.” He declared that the sheriffs would be waiting on Friday when the three planned to end their sit. He also indicated that the lawsuit against Cherney and Shook for trespassing the previous year might also be reactivated.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> “Statement from Earth First! Tree-Sitters”, by Darryl Cherney, *Mendocino Commentary*, June 8, 1989.

<sup>25</sup> “They’re Back in the Trees: Earth First! Begins Another PL Protest”, by Marie Gravelle, *Eureka Times-Standard*, June 7, 1989.

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P-L’s prohibition on retaliation evidently didn’t extend to its enablers and front groups, including Candy Boak and TEAM, however. One of the Boak’s cohorts, using a CB radio to illegally monitor Cherney’s radio telephone transmissions to the media, calling himself “the Enforcer”, transmitted threats to Cherney. Using the information from the intercepted transmissions, Candace Boak contacted the media, impersonated Judi Bari, and gave false information to the reporters in an attempt to sabotage the efforts.<sup>26</sup> The Earth First!ers were undaunted by Candy’s attempts to “monkeywrench their monkeywrenching”, and in any case, the media didn’t bite either.<sup>27</sup> Not yet fully aware of the implications and scope of Boak’s subterfuge, Judi Bari quipped, “Finally the wood workers are learning how to monkeywrench! Now all we have to do is organize them to stop Maxxam.”<sup>28</sup>

Boak wasn’t finished, however. There was no way she was going to let those “unwashed-out-of-town-jobless-hippies-on-drugs” beat her. She had more tricks up her sleeve. Inspired by watching her son set out traps in the woods to catch game using extremely pungent skunk oil, Boak decided to use some of it to drive Cherney out of his tree.<sup>29</sup> While Jim Blair was photographing Earth First!er Bill Devall, Candy and John Boak drove onto P-L property and parked near the action. While Candy continued to monitor Cherney’s transmissions from the vehicle, John trudged down the hill to the base of his tree, donned surgical gloves, and poured two vials of the substance near the trunk.<sup>30</sup> Candy Boak had guessed incorrectly about the effectiveness of the aroma, but Cherney instead assumed the vials contained a flammable liquid intended to ignite the tree, platform, and activist.<sup>31</sup> He frantically contacted the media and logistical supporters back in town from his radiophone.<sup>32</sup> His cries of “they’re going to light my tree on fire and burn me out!” rang out over the airwaves.

Quickly catching their wits, Greg King and fellow Earth First!er Andy Caffery sped up the hill after the John Boak. Meanwhile Candy sat, still listening in on CB to Cherney’s now fearful announce-

<sup>26</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> “No on Boak and Boakism”, letter to the editor by Darryl Cherney, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, December 19, 1990

<sup>28</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 260-62.

<sup>30</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 260-62.

<sup>32</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

ments, gleeful that she had frightened the living daylight out of him, and laughed maniacally at his imagined plight, loud enough to be heard by the others.<sup>33</sup> As the Boaks sped away in their truck (with Candy still laughing hysterically), Caffery and King chased after them in their own vehicle, recording their license number and visual images of the vehicle on videotape. In spite of the hubbub, no actual harm came to the tree sitters.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, TEAM and WECARE organized yet another “pro-worker” rally in downtown Eureka on Wednesday, June 7. At noon, about 200 assembled at the Humboldt County Courthouse to express their support for Corporate Timber, ostensibly billed as “the timber industry”, and denounce “unwashed-out-of-town-jobless-hippies-on-drugs.” Many of them carried signs which read, “Timber People Are Proud of Their Jobs”, as if anyone was suggesting that they shouldn’t be, and the speakers repeated the usual litany of corporate talking points. Anna Sparks, the keynote speaker, loudly proclaimed, “We have to show them who the hell is boss!”<sup>35</sup>

Taking note of the tree sit going on in the forest, about thirty of the group, most of them from Eel River Sawmills and Don Nolan Trucking decided to organize a delegation to counter demonstrate at the Earth First! tree sit. They showed up to find thirty Earth First!ers, including Judi Bari who recognized them immediately. While the police looked on, the counterdemonstrators started chanting “No Earth First!”; the Earth First!ers countered by chanting “No Exports!”, alternating with the “No Earth First!” chant, much like the IWW had outwitted the Salvation Army in many a free speech fight three quarters of a century earlier. Bari noticed that this time the counterdemonstrators were much less belligerent than they had been in Scotia, and as if to confirm that point, they finally gave up chanting and suggested that the Earth First!ers and IWW meet with them and have a dialog, which was mutually agreed upon set for the following week.<sup>36</sup>

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The assembled news media had been hoping for a hostile confrontation, but none took place. The next day, however, six loggers threatened to cut down the tree sitters, which Cherney reported live KMUD radio in Garberville by telephone. He then attempted to calm them down by singing *Where are We Gonna Work When the Trees are Gone?* Bari, meanwhile received a threat apparently from “The Equalizer” (the “Enforcer’s” brother), which prompted the sitters to contact the media one more time and announce that they would end their tree sit on Friday. However, the sitters actually descended from their perches on Thursday at dusk and evaded arrest as well as the loss of their gear. Maxxam, knowing of Cherney’s and Shook’s identities reactivated the lawsuit against them for trespassing and tree planting the previous year.<sup>37</sup>

The dialog with the representatives of Eel River Sawmills and Nolan Trucking proceeded as planned the following week in an Arcata café. It turned out that the counterdemonstrators were not rank and file workers, but supervisors and lower level managers. Bari and her fellow organizers continued with the summit nevertheless. She recalls that one of the very first questions they asked her was, “Are you a communist?”<sup>38</sup> It was entirely possible that Candy Boak had planted this suggestion in their minds, since she was certain that her nemesis was a disciple of Karl Marx.<sup>39</sup>

Bari had certainly much in common with Marxists. Bari believed that there was no way to reform capitalism and reconcile the extraction of value and the externalizing of its costs with deep ecology or a humane system. However, there had been many systems that had at least described themselves as “socialist” and/or “communist” that had established a technocratic class that had been equally exploitive of the Earth. She finally answered, “No, I’m not a communist. I’m much more radical. Communists just want to change the social structure so a different class can exploit the Earth. We want a society whose basis is to live in harmony with the Earth rather than to exploit it.” The two factions then drafted lists of the points that they believed in and found that they agreed more often than they disagreed on many ecological and economic issues.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 260-62.

<sup>34</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> “Workers Rally in Eureka Draws 200”, *Humboldt Beacon and Fortuna Advance*, June 8, 1989.

<sup>36</sup> “In the Middle of Run Away History: Judi Bari, Earth First! Organizer, Mississippi Summer in the California Redwoods”, interview by Beth Bosk, *New Settler Interview*, issue #49, May 1990.

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<sup>37</sup> King, June 21, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Bosk, May 1990, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> Harris, op. cit, page 259.

<sup>40</sup> Bosk, May 1990, op. cit.

If ever there were a single man who was a perfect argument for the elimination of capitalism, it was Louisiana-Pacific President Harry Merlo. In short order, the actual reasons for the closure of the L-P Mills in Potter Valley and Red Bluff began to come to light when the company announced that they were opening up a new chip mill facility in Calpella, which many feared was a prelude for the replacement of sawmilling operations with waferboard production.<sup>41</sup> Merlo had hinted that this development might be in the works as early as 1987, The product could be made from any size or type of wood, chipped up and glued together with (mostly toxic) chemicals. This allowed companies, such as L-P, to simply harvest small trees and utilize much quicker rotations in as few as twenty years. The trees needn't even be redwoods. Any species, including introduced species, such as Eucalyptus, would do.<sup>42</sup> Underbrush could also be utilized.<sup>43</sup>

While this might benefit L-P's bottom line, it spelled certain doom for the forests. The goal of waferboard was the ultimate maximization of timber production.<sup>44</sup> Already the L-P had been filling up the log deck in Calpella with "pecker poles" (baby trees less than six-inches in diameter).<sup>45</sup> Judi Bari quickly denounced waferboard as destroying the diversity of the naturally growing forests with monoculture plantations.

"Not only is L-P clearcutting, but now they're even taking the debris from the forest floor, leaving nothing to replenish the soil. The 19 year rotation tree farms L-P envisions will make Mendocino County a desert in three generations... If we had to sum up all our fears about the timber industry in one word, it would be waferboard. Its production erodes the soil, destroys habitat for wildlife, puts toxics into our environment and people's homes and eliminates logging and mill jobs."<sup>46</sup>

She warned that the likely outcome of deforestation was an accelerated greenhouse effect and global

warming. Bari stated that as a carpenter, waferboard was an inferior product. She also indicated that many of L-P's gyppo loggers were equally disgusted with the plan, quoting one who had stated, "When they start telling us to take the tops of trees, we know it's the end".<sup>47</sup> If clear cutting was bad enough for workers and the environment, this was going to be many times worse.

Waferboard production did not bode well for the workers' long term job security either. The whole process was highly automated, utilizing 95 percent fewer workers than traditional logging. The new chip mill in Calpella would employ no more than fifteen workers instead of the 250 combined at Potter Valley and Red Bluff.<sup>48</sup> Shep Tucker even admitted that there would be cutbacks at its Cloverdale mill within the next two to three weeks.<sup>49</sup>

Naturally, timber workers, environmental activists, and much of the rest of Mendocino County was horrified that the future of forestry was going to involve rapidly growing, rapidly harvested tree farms subsequently mulched up and glued together in a toxic chemical brew by a handful of underpaid workers driving harvesting machines and pushing buttons. Gyppo Logger Walter Smith expressed his (and no doubt many of his fellow timber operators') outrage at the concept of waferboard:

"A lot of people are taking offense at that. I mean, who wants the carcinogenic crap that comes along with gluing that junk together. And why should we compete with chip gluing mills in the Midwest with our redwood, when it's a special species with special qualities..."

"That doesn't make any sense in the long-term. But the long-term doesn't make any sense to, at least, L-P. They want to harvest on 20-year cycles and make the land profitable and paying all the time..."

"(H)ow long can you go on stripping the land of everything? You're basically making tree farms and you no longer have forests. And when you do that and you start getting this

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<sup>41</sup> "Timber Wars: Footloose Wobs Urgently Needed", by Judi Bari, *Industrial Worker*, October 1989.

<sup>42</sup> "No Waferboard!: Demonstration at L-P Calpella Chip Mill", press release, *Mendocino Commentary*, June 8, 1989.

<sup>43</sup> Bari, October 1989, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> "Wood Chip Mill in Calpella Triggers Furor", by Mike Geniella, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, June 13, 1989.

<sup>45</sup> press release June 8, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Geniella, June 13, 1989, op. cit.

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<sup>47</sup> "Waferboard: The Final Solution", speech by Judi Bari at L-P's chip mill near Ukiah, California, June 16, 1989 reprinted in *Timber Wars*, by Judi Bari, 1994. By contrast, Don Nelson had been one of the few union spokesmen to speak favorably towards its implementation, making the dubious argument that it could lead to the creation of additional jobs. For details, see, press release June 8, 1989, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Bari, October 1989, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Geniella, June 13, 1989, op. cit.

cheaper material, you start paying people less and you end up with (reduced) wages.”<sup>50</sup>

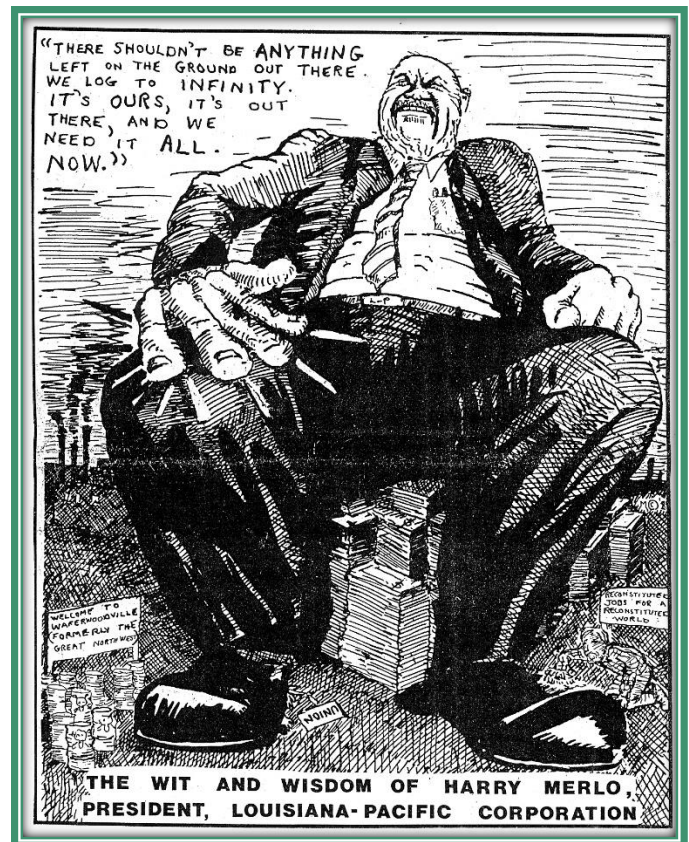
Louisiana Pacific dismissed the widespread opposition to its new facility in Calpella as being the overblown concerns of a few fringe environmentalists. L-P’s chief forester for Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties, Chris Rowney countered, “I know of no plans to construct a waferboard plant in California, let alone Mendocino County.”<sup>51</sup> Of course he had to say this, however, because the permit for such a facility was still pending approval by the county’s relevant agencies.<sup>52</sup> Rowney argued that the unwanted understory oaks and madrones, the tops of redwood and Douglas fir trees, and the decomposing bark and woody debris used to be left on the ground to rot or be burned. Now it would be used to make wood, and Rowney asserted that this was somehow supposedly more ecologically sustainable, but the lack rotting of woody debris was precisely what the environmentalists were challenging!

Louisiana Pacific was already the leading producer of waferboard, and they had indicated that every intention of increasing their production capacity of it. L-P claimed that it was stronger than conventional plywood and cost one-third less to make.<sup>53</sup> Harry Merlo declared, “We have designed Louisiana-Pacific so we don’t need big trees. The dwindling log supply creates opportunities for those of us who have the financing. When you look at the total picture, our future is so bright, even though some product lines are at their end.”<sup>54</sup> When questioned by *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* reporter Mike Geniella about the harvesting of the woody debris, Merlo responded (in an article published on December 11, 1988):

“You know, it always annoyed me to leave anything on the ground when I log our own lands. Now the good part of a log goes to lumber and the bad part can be waferized into the sort of products that you see here. There shouldn’t be anything left in the ground... We need everything that’s out there. We don’t log to a 10-inch

top, or an 8-inch top, or a 6-inch top. We log to infinity. Because we need it all; it’s ours. It’s out there, and we need it all; now.”<sup>55</sup>

Hollywood’s most hackneyed writers couldn’t have scripted a more villainous monologue, and it didn’t win the hated executive any popularity contests. Judi Bari countered, “We can’t coexist with that kind of philosophy.”<sup>56</sup> She also declared, “This maniac is actually in charge of most of the forestland in Mendocino County...(he is) the ultimate tree Nazi; He wants to cut every last tree and implement The Final Solution of waferboard in [Mendocino] county.”<sup>57</sup>



Even Merlo had to admit that his arrogance had stirred up a sleeping giant, and he tried to save face by claiming that his statement had been pro-environment, as opposed to anti-environment, arguing that using all of the woody debris (logging to infinity) was based on lessons he had learned from his mother who had emigrated from Italy, who had taught Merlo the value of frugality when he was a boy

<sup>50</sup> “A Logger Speaks Out: An Interview with Walter Smith”, by Bruce Anderson, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, July 4, 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Geniella, June 13, 1989, op. cit

<sup>52</sup> “Louisiana Pacific Demonstration”, by Bruce Anderson, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, June 21, 1989.

<sup>53</sup> “Punch Punctuates L-P Wood Chip Protest”, by Mike Geniella, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, June 16, 1989.

<sup>54</sup> “From Quality Sawlogs to Crappy Wood”, by Meca Wawona, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, August 22, 1990.

<sup>55</sup> Geniella, June 16, 1989, op. cit

<sup>56</sup> “Timber Industry vs. Environmentalists”, by Keith Michaud, *Ukiah Daily Journal*, March 19, 1989.

<sup>57</sup> “Waferboard: The Final Solution”, speech by Judi Bari at L-P’s chip mill near Ukiah, California, June 16, 1989 reprinted in *Timber Wars*, by Judi Bari, 1994.

and his family struggling financially.<sup>58</sup> However, his stories about begging the butcher for undesirable scraps of meat simply didn't square with the current reality of his roughly \$575,000 annual salary (only Hurwitz earned more among the North Coast timber barons).<sup>59</sup>

For the first time since the demonstrations against Garlon spraying four years previously, a coalition of Mendocino County Earth Firsters, IWW members, and Greens came together to oppose L-P. They scheduled a protest for June 16, 1989, to protest what Green spokesperson John Lewallen described as "strip-mining the forests".<sup>60</sup> Nearly 100 demonstrators—some of them holding signs reading "Real men don't destroy their forests", and "L-P is full of chips", others drumming and dancing—assembled outside of the mill at noon and listen to speaker after speaker denounce the plan.<sup>61</sup> Judi Bari, the rally's keynote speaker, denounced the chip mill, Harry Merlo, and waferboard on both ecological and economic grounds. She declared:

"We don't recognize Harry Merlo's claim to ownership of beings that are 2,000 years old. Beings in whose life Harry Merlo is just a blip in their history. We don't recognize his right to strip our forest and leave nothing, or to strip our children's future. The forest doesn't belong to Harry Merlo; the forest belongs to the ages. The logs on that log deck don't belong to Harry Merlo, they belong to the future. They belong to the forest creatures who need them for habitat. We are not going to let Harry Merlo chip our county to satiate this greed...Harry is practicing an economics of extinction. Well we have a surprise for him in Mendocino County. He's about to run into the politics of resistance... This is not the last demonstration Harry, this is the first. The next one will be at your office, and the next one will be at your house. Harry Merlo last! Earth First!"<sup>62</sup>

As was the case with the Day of the Living Dead Hurwitzes, the protest had attracted counterdemonstrators. Judi Bari challenged them to try and defend waferboard on the argument that Earth First! was anti-worker or anti-timber-jobs, but the latter didn't engage the demonstrators.<sup>63</sup> It seems that in an official letter sent to the L-P employees prior to the demonstration the company had admonished them, "Not to get in (the protesters) way", but to keep anyone from interfering with the work going on at the Calpella facility.<sup>64</sup> The company halted their truck flow during the demonstration for unknown reasons, though some speculated that the company feared that the workers might be too sympathetic to Earth First!.<sup>65</sup>

One of the counter demonstrators apparently didn't get the memo. During a march to the chip mill following the rally, a 38 year old man named Dick Abshire, who had been driving back and forth in front of the protesters, waving his middle finger in the air, and revving up a rather sizable chainsaw.<sup>66</sup> He had been doing this all day, threatening more than once to take his instrument and "hack the fucking hippie Earth fucking First! f---ts."<sup>67</sup> The activists had mostly ignored it, since they were used to such threats and regarded Abshire's behavior as yet another victim of WECARE inspired propaganda. Many of the demonstrators were convinced that he was hopped up on methamphetamine or some other substance,<sup>68</sup> and Judi Bari indicated to the press that she did not consider Abshire's behavior typical of most timber workers.<sup>69</sup>

Greg King arrived late to the demonstration however, and upon seeing the logger brandishing his weapon, moved to intervene. King commented that the chainsaw needn't be as large as it was, because there were few old growth trees left in Mendocino County, and were Abshire to cut one down, he'd soon be out of a job. The logger informed King that he'd never be jobless, to which the latter replied "you're crazy!" precipitating several minutes of heated back-and-forth arguing until Abshire threatened to punch the Earth Firstler. King stood his ground, and the logger turned to leave, but then suddenly doubled

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<sup>58</sup>Letter to the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* by Harry Merlo, February 7, 1989. (the letter was later reprinted in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* and given the title "Harry Learned it All from His Mom" by Bruce Anderson).

<sup>59</sup> "Gaye LeBaron's Notebook: The Company Hurwitz Keeps", by Gaye LeBaron, *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, April 24, 1990.

<sup>60</sup> "Demonstration Slated at L-P Mill in Calpella Today", press release, *North Coast News*, June 15, 1989.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, June 21, 1989, op. cit

<sup>62</sup> Bari, June 16, 1989, op. cit

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<sup>63</sup> Bari, June 16, 1989, op. cit

<sup>64</sup> Geniella, June 16, 1989, op. cit

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, June 21, 1989, op. cit

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, June 21, 1989, op. cit

<sup>67</sup> "Harris, op. cit., pages 272-73.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, June 21, 1989, op. cit

<sup>69</sup> Geniella, June 16, 1989, op. cit



back and sucker-punched his adversary unexpectedly, knocking him flat on his backside.<sup>70</sup>

Earth First! had been threatened by counter demonstrators and less enlightened timber workers in Humboldt and Mendocino Counties before, but never had they been physically attacked. King was not seriously injured, but the other demonstrators who had paid little attention to Abshire now approached him angrily.<sup>71</sup> King seeing that one of his comrades was carrying a six foot long redwood branch grabbed the log and swung at his adversary, hitting him in the chest. Abshire was stunned that one of the “fucking hippie Earth fucking First! f---ts” had the balls to hit him back. Nobody made a move for several minutes. The demonstrators demanded that the sheriff deputies arrest Abshire, but they refused. Finally Abshire walked across the street into a local bar, mouthing off about “fucking hippie Earth fucking First! f---ts” as he left.<sup>72</sup>

Corporate Timber and the police downplayed the attack. According to an unnamed L-P spokesman, Abshire had reacted to attempts by the demonstrators to take his (revving) chainsaw away from him. Lt. Larry Gander, commander of the Ukiah area sheriff’s deputies stated that assailant had been questioned after the altercation, but he claimed that none of his men had seen the altercation and that King had failed to sign a citizen’s arrest complaint.<sup>73</sup> Speaking for L-P, Shep Tucker attempted to distance itself from Abshire’s actions, pointing out that he was not an employee of the company (but not revealing whether or not he was employed by one of the gyppo firms that contacted with L-P). Other than that, Tucker did little more than call the incident “unfortunate.”<sup>74</sup>

Tucker’s colleagues at Pacific Lumber were not so quick to denounce Abshire. Indeed, they were privately waxing gleeful over the event. In an inner office memo, dated June 21, 1989, written by David Galitz to then P-L president, William Leone (and “cc-ed” to Hurwitz, Campbell, Malarkey and others), the public affairs manager wrote, “Enclosed is an article on King and Cherney’s latest stunt. As soon as we find the home of the fine fellow that decked Greg King, he has a dinner invitation waiting at the Galitz residence.”<sup>75</sup>

Considering the large number of police and L-P security present, it is a mystery how none of them apparently did not witness the exchange. King’s own testimony contradicts Gander’s account. King reportedly admonished the large contingent of police assembled nearby to take action, but they did nothing and informed King that they, “didn’t have jurisdiction”. King later filed a complaint with District Attorney Susan Massini, which was ignored.<sup>76</sup> One of the demonstrators said of the overbearing law enforcement presence at the demonstration, “You know, four hundred years ago these guys were footmen at the local castle.” Another observed the police nonchalantly joking with L-P’s security guards, who were also present. Still one more observer opined, “Last week their Chinese brothers shot (our Chinese brothers) down in Peking,” referring to the now historical Tiananmen Square massacre.<sup>77</sup>

A question that formed in many of the demonstrators’ minds was, “could something similar happen against American dissidents?” Given the unrelenting greed of the real-life Once-lers and their willingness to literally log to infinity, anything seemed possible. More sinister than that however, was an FBI sting operation against Earth First! that had just happened in the deserts of Arizona. Indeed, the attempts by the powers that be to subvert and undermine Earth First! was already under way.

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<sup>70</sup> “Harris, op. cit., page 273.

<sup>71</sup> Geniella, June 16,1989, op. cit

<sup>72</sup> “Harris, op. cit., page 273.

<sup>73</sup> Geniella, June 16,1989, op. cit

<sup>74</sup> Geniella, June 16,1989, op. cit

<sup>75</sup> “The Palco Papers”, by Judi Bari, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, March 27, 1991.

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<sup>76</sup> Anderson, June 21,1989, op. cit

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, June 21,1989, op. cit