

Ancient forests cannot be ignored

By Howard Cohen

Someday, when conservation organizations are more than conservation groups, the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society will consummate economic takeovers of Weyerhaeuser and Boise-Cascade.

What did Nabisco cost R.J. Reynolds? Only \$5 billion down payment. Sony bought

Commentary

Columbia Pictures for \$3.4 billion. And what is the worth of cracker factories and film studios compared to the value of our ancient forests?

But when? When will responsible guardianship of our national heritage really become public policy?

When every citizen of the Pacific Northwest (and throughout the nation) who is concerned about the preservation of ancient forests donates \$20 (or whatever they can afford each month) to a conservation organization, and buys a gift subscription to a conservation magazine for a friend as well.

When the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management prohibit total cuts, "Clear-cutting" is a detestable euphemism for "slickin'" the mountain slopes, a devastating practice that should never be permitted on timberlands belonging to the national forest trust.

One imagines clear-running mountain streams and clear-cut choices or differences of opinion, not city-slick money men skinning Oregon and Washington alive, and destroying our priceless North American heritage forest lands in order to make a fast buck.

When? When all of the obsolete lumber-manufacturing mills which are geared to cut virgin timber saw logs are cut out of the lumber business altogether, and when retooled mills producing lumber from second-growth timber saw logs supplant them.

When new forests that ate in their infancy today are selectively thinned by the application of scientific principles like the D-6 Rule, and when sanitary logging operations respect the special need of certain species of birds for insect-inhabited dead and dying trees.

When? When, after many human generations, wisely-cultivated new forests have become old-growth forests in which the average spacing between trees is virtually identical to that found in the ancient forests, which our generation preserved as wilderness for our children's children's children.

We shall know that enough wilderness has been set aside only when, after 100 years, 99 percent of the plant and animal species presently dwelling in the wilderness have been able to maintain (or increase) the size of their breeding populations.

When? When the experienced small-time logging contractor, working carefully in the woods, cuts only the trees marked by a professional forester who, besides knowing how to maximize the sustained yield of a second-growth forest, wisely understands that humankind is only a more-or-less intelligent form of mold which requires a nutrient-rich, detoxifying natural landscape to surround it if it is to circumvent a fate of suffocating in its own chemical, radioactive, social

and political poisons.

When? When only stealthy Great Horned Owls gliding beneath 300-foot canopies search out Northern Spotted Owls, and when ignorant loggers who project the uncertainties of their own economic futures onto wildlife are themselves extinct, or have all moved away from here to find new economic niches in other habitats.

When? When yellow ribbons once again signify the anguished remembrance of soldiers who did not return from battle, rather than the working class's fear of its own uneducability.

When will our children's heritage be safe from economic depredation? When the number of forty-year-old timber fallers with bad knees turning up in two-year community college programs goes up. When the number of white-haired doctors and their mates chaining themselves to ancient trees goes up.

When the number of Oregon schoolchildren who realize the arguments of the owners of Asian drift-net fishing fleets, who are devastating the Pacific Ocean, are motivated by the same cruelly mercenary reasons as the American timber merchants employing their fathers, goes up.

When wishes are prayers.

Howard Cohen is a graduate student in the English department.

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Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.

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