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Activists seek solidarity with timber industry

Shared goal to end tree-spiking, conflict

By Hon Walker
Emerald Associate Editor

Earth First! activists in Eugene and northern California renounced the tactic of tree-spiking Wednesday and called for community solidarity between environmentalists and timber industry workers.

During a press conference in the EMU Ben Linder Room, representatives from both sides of the timber issue agreed that stopping tree spiking was a first step toward ending the antagonism between them.

"Earth First!'s decision is more than about tree spiking," said Dennis Gilbert, co-chair of the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network.

"It is about the environmental movement removing a division between itself and millworkers and working people and the labor movement," he said.

Gilbert was a panel member who spoke at last month's Public Interest Law Conference. From the conference, he said, grew the idea of involving the labor movement in the conflict between environmentalists and industry owners. ESSN seeks to create a labor-environmental coalition in the state, he said.

The issue before the region, Gilbert said, is preserving the state's natural, social and cultural heritage by preserving "people as well as trees."

The issue is not saving the northern spotted owl, he said.

"Such a narrow-minded view of the issue is a product of the polarization that puts environmentalists on one side and the wood products industry owners on the other, while working people and the labor movement are relegated to back one side or the other," he said.

Creating a labor-environmental coalition will take time, Gilbert said, but it will be done "despite the polarized feelings and the narrow-mindedness that happens to be on both sides."

Gene Lawhorn, an employee of Roseburg Forest Prod-



Photo by Mark Ylen

From left, Roseburg Forest Products employee Gene Lawhorn, Earth First! spokeswoman Karen Wood and Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network co-chair Dennis Gilbert speak out against tree spiking at Wednesday's press conference between environmentalists and timber industry workers.

ucts who also spoke at the law conference, said he recommended that Earth First! publicly renounce tree spiking if they truly wanted to bridge the gap between workers and environmentalists.

"Both battles stem from the same problem — the greed mentality which places profits above the environment, and the health, safety and prosperity of the working class," he said.

Karen Wood, spokeswoman for Southern Willamette Earth First!, said opinions of tree spiking vary widely among the loosely organized group, but local sentiment is overwhelmingly in favor of renouncing tree-spiking.

"We can accomplish more by standing together as

a community than we could by spiking trees," she said.

The remaining issues are how much will be protected and how to implement alternative economic bases for communities previously dependent on "boom and bust" timber companies, she said.

Wood said no known injuries have occurred from tree-spiking. However, Lawhorn said spikes in trees can endanger workers' lives because of the exploding shrapnel effect when saws hit spikes.

"Ironically, the tactic of tree-spiking was borrowed from the timber industry itself; competing mills used it to damage each other's machinery," Wood said. "They can have it back now."

Forum looks at easing tensions

By Daralyn Trappe
Emerald Contributor

In an effort to alleviate tension between University students, the Eugene Police Department and the community, the ASUO held a public forum Wednesday where students and community members were encouraged to offer possible solutions.

ASUO President Andy Clark said he hoped that people were "committed to finding equitable solutions to the problem we're faced with now, which is community relations."

Students asked Deputy Chief of Police John Rutledge several questions about the incidents that took place on March 31, when police used tear gas to disperse the crowds at off-campus parties.

Courtney Duke, a University student who attended one of the parties, said she felt that adequate warning was not given before the tear gas was used.

"One critique from our standpoint about what happened, when it happened and what we could do differently is the issue of warning," Rutledge said. "There is no ques-



Photo by Stephanie Holland

Richard Lovell, Eugene Police captain (left), and John Rutledge, deputy chief of police were part of Wednesday's public forum held to try smoothing relations with the University, the community and the police department.

tion in my mind that there were people who didn't hear.

"From our standpoint, one of the things we want to do differently is to try to increase warnings early on in the loudest, broadest type of broadcast," he added.

Rutledge noted that last weekend was free of such in-

idents partly because the police approached parties differently.

"[Last] weekend we had more officers (out) earlier in the evening, working with students. We need to react early so we can have discus-

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Earth First! to protest ancient forest logging

By Pat Malach
Emerald Reporter

Members of the environmental group Earth First! are making plans to occupy local Forest Service lands until Congress passes a law forbidding the logging of ancient forests.

The group plans a sustained non-violent protest in the Eugene area until the cutting is stopped. The protest will begin April 21.

"We are looking for an area that is currently an active logging site," said Earth First! member Karen Wood. "However, we may go to one that is about to be logged to occupy and protect it."

The length of the occupation will depend on many different factors, Wood said.

"We are going to prepare to stay for a long, long time," she said. "It's going to be a vigil type occupation. People need to bring camping gear, food and the whole bit."

"The most important thing I can stress is that this isn't going to be a one-day action or a one-site action," said Earth First! member Matt Snider. "This is going to go on until the cutting of ancient forests stops. This is the people's re-occupation of federal forests. That land belongs to us, so we have every right to go out there and defend it."

Forest Service representative Gloria Brown said the Forest Service recognizes the environmental group's right to protest as long as it is a peaceful protest and does not interrupt the legitimate and legal activities of the logging contractors.

"If it is a peaceful demonstration we recognize it as such," Brown said. "They have the right of every citizen to peacefully demonstrate. However, if there is any harm to government employees or equipment, we have a law enforcement division that will work in conjunction with the local law enforcement agencies to



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