

Forest Service being kept mum



WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration is trying to "gag" U.S. Forest Service workers who want to sound off against logging national forests, an employee advocacy group and two congressmen charged Wednesday.

But a Forest Service spokesman said the critics have misinterpreted a recent agency memo that he said applies only to official on-duty comments from workers, not personal criticism after hours.

"They are reading more into it than is intended," spokesman Denver James said.

The Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics provided The Associated Press with a copy of an Oct. 8 memo barring service employees from talking to the national news media without prior approval from top-level administrators.

"Even where the contact is by telephone or incidental — such as to check facts or obtain further information — we must notify the department immediately," said J. Lamar Beasley, deputy chief of administration for the Agriculture Department, which oversees the Forest Service.

"This policy is vital to avoiding surprises in the media, and to enable coordination of inquiries and stories that may appear nationally," he wrote in the memo to regional foresters, and station and area directors.

Jeff DeBonis, a former Forest Service timber planner who founded the employee advocacy group in 1989, accused the agency of trying to intimidate workers critical of government mismanagement and environmental damage on forests.

Broadcasts by CBS News and CNN about the Northwest's old-growth forests this summer included interviews with current Forest Service employees voicing such concerns.

"Once again, agency officials are trying to harass individuals who are simply exercising their First Amendment rights," DeBonis said Wednesday from Eugene.

Two congressmen from the Pacific Northwest, Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield, and Jolene Unsoeld, D-Wash., both described the Forest Service's position on media interviews as "outrageous."

"We aren't talking about confidential, secret, classified information. We are talking about day-to-day information on the Forest Service," DeFazio said. "They are suppressing their employees — politically manipulating them with a few hacks up on top."

"What is it they are trying to hide from us? What is it they are trying to keep from being embarrassed about?" Unsoeld said.

Riot-related suits filed against LA

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As many as 2,500 people who say they were injured or had property damaged in the riots this spring have filed claims against the city ahead of a Thursday deadline.

Damage claims, routinely rejected by the city, ensure claimants will have the right to file lawsuits. They must be filed within six months of the loss.

One claimant was Reginald Denny, a truck driver whose beating became one of the indelible images of the riots that erupted April 29 after four white police officers were acquitted in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King.

Denny's claim, filed Tuesday, is a first step toward a multimillion-dollar lawsuit, said his lawyer, Eric Ferrer.

Some 2,300 to 2,500 riot-related claims were submitted — all but about 20 in the past three days, said Steve Peters, a spokesman for City Attorney James Hahn. "As we see them now, they

'As we see them now, they are going to be rejected.'

— Steve Peters, LA spokesman

are going to be rejected," he said.

Claims ranged from \$100 for laundry missing or destroyed from a dry cleaner to jewelry stolen in vandalized pawn shops and inventory losses amounting to thousands of dollars.

Hahn's office contends the city and its officials are immune from any liability resulting from the riots, basing that conclusion on a 1969 court ruling that barred claims from the Watts riots.

But Robin Toma of the American Civil Liberties Union said that ruling doesn't apply to claims arising out of racial discrimination.

Campaign nuggets

"These folks have got a right to raise their signs and protest, but let our friends hear us, OK?" — Pat Buchanan, who was heckled at a pro-Bush appearance.

"You know what's happening? These guys feel it slipping away from them. I feel sorry for them. Believe me, we are going to win." — President Bush.

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AUDITIONS

WILL BE HELD

On **SUNDAY, NOV. 8** (last name A-L) and **MONDAY, NOV. 9** (M-Z) in the Robinson Theatre, Villard Hall for three UO Productions.

ON THE VERGE by Eric Overmeyer

A surrealistic comedy about three Victorian women who journey through time and end up in the 1950's. By considering whether the women will move on or settle down, the play touches on such topics as finding a place where one fits in and exploring one's potential.

Directed by Amy Sarno.
Needed are 3 women and 1 man.

T BONE 'N WEASEL by Jon Klein

An extremely funny and poignant story of two ex-convicts, one of whom is black. They travel around the south in search of security, happiness and a sense of future, and are repeatedly confronted by prejudice.

Directed by Dr. Grant McKernie.
Needed are 3 men, genuine, with strong comic timing.

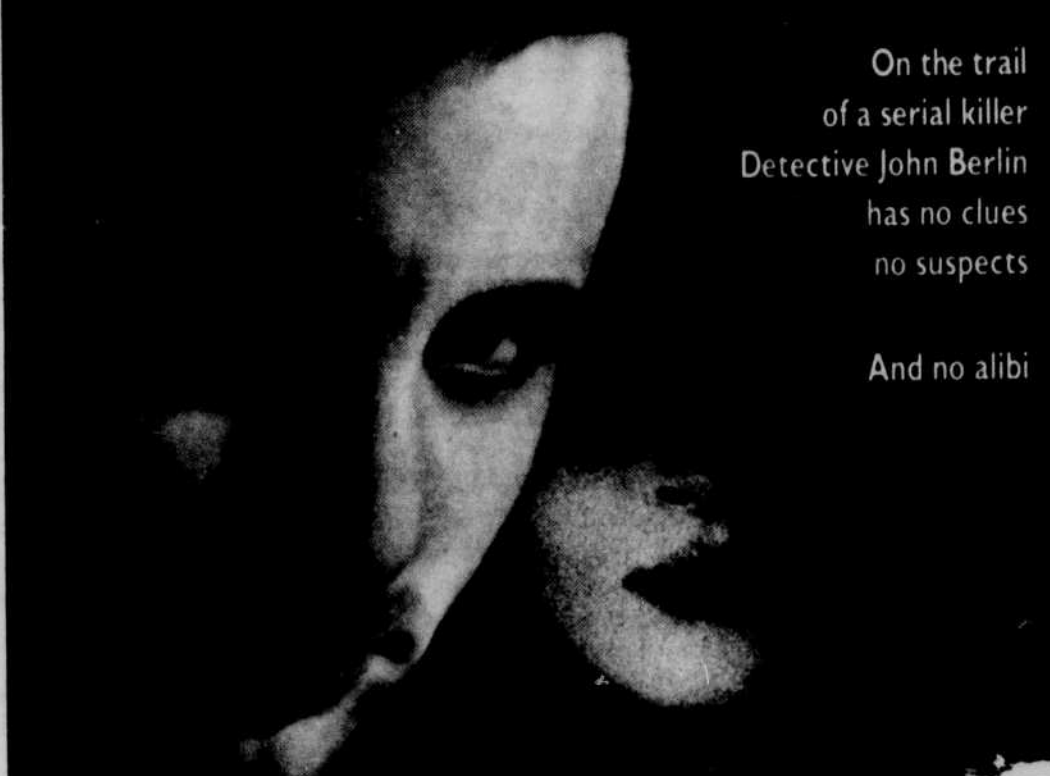
CHIMERE

A fusion theatre work inspired by the traditional theatre of Bali featuring music by Prof. Robert Kyr and The Pacific Rim Gamelan Orchestra. Lovers, demons, spirits, monkeys and other fantastic creatures participate in the ritual magic. Conceived and directed by Prof. Janet Descutner (Dance)

and Prof. Jerry Williams (Theatre Arts).
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For more information, call 346-4171

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