

while destroying the assets that the Northwest timber worker needs. They have replaced forest workers with machinery at a rate far beyond job losses from environmental limitations.

Our skill and experience could be exported. I know many oilworkers and fishermen, construction engineers and teachers who go abroad for a season. Alaska has massive stands of quality timber that need to be harvested and managed. Sustainably. The Soviet Union has as much timber on their eastern frontier as the United States had in the 1700s. A summer stint there could give everyone a pocket boost. There is plenty of forest work to do, and plenty of folks who need the jobs. This could help ease the crisis while our own timber can be managed back to health.

But who is to pay for all this? The big companies don't like selective cutting. The profits are smaller. It is cheaper for them to replace men with machines and sell the product to foreign mills rather than look out for the people who have given their years, their blood and far too many lives so that the privileged few could sit in the Mansion and do nothing.

Let us turn to these companies. Let them pay reparations. Let us have them return 10% to the workers who made them rich. Just 10% of their enormous profits could employ every displaced worker. Let them hire the men who can repair our woodlots. Let them share the profits they have taken. The logger and his family have suffered enough. The natural resources of this nation are supposed to be held in trust for all. Let some of what has been stolen be returned.

— #2 The ecology of the Northwest is vast, ancient and complex. It is one of the most productive ecosystems on the earth. It provides quality forest products, an abundance of clean water, and it influences weather patterns as far away as the Midwest. This system has been damaged. It is losing its productive ability. There are no others like it elsewhere.

The State of Georgia was once covered with timber. Most was cut down and replanted. While they waited for the harvest to ripen, many of the same companies came to our area and started the same thing. Clearcut all of it and replant only the most valuable specie. In Georgia it was southern longneedle pine and its varieties. Here it is Douglas fir. But they never got to harvest all that pine in Georgia. Because they ignored agricultural science all that wood is unusable. Seems a little bug, the pinebark borer, found a whole state full of lunch. There were no diversified forests to provide natural barriers to its advance. The lack of diversity wiped out the conditions that allowed natural predators of the pest to take their toll. The forests of the Southeast are dying faster than they can be harvested. The same process has begun in our own state. In eastern Oregon the monocropping of trees has resulted in rampant pathology among what should be harvestable timber in a few years. Such claims as four trees planted for every one cut are misleading. An egg is not a chicken; a seedling is not a tree. A forest is not just trees. Trees are but one botanical expression of the complex that we call forest.

Consider your automobile. It will still work fine if you take out, say, the radio. You don't need a radio to have an automobile. But let's keep taking away nonessential parts. The back seat. The rear window. The passenger door handle. It still drives. Remove the left rear fender, the hood, the doors. Not very comfortable now, but it still drives. The turn-signals next, the headlights, the roof, the wind-

shield. Still runs, but not at night or in foul weather. Now the mirrors, one sparkplug. Two lugnuts off each wheel, the battery. The car still runs, roughly, though you have to push-start it. Drain half the oil in the crankcase, get rid of all filters. It still runs, sort of, but not for much distance. Pull out another sparkplug, siphon out most of the gas in the tank, disconnect that little wire there (who knows what it does?) — Suddenly you don't have a car anymore. You have a jagged, ugly metal boulder turning into rust.

Independent studies from universities, federal agencies, state agencies, private timber concerns and conservation organizations have agreed on one thing — Ninety percent of the original forests are gone. The big lumber companies have overharvested and their efforts at reforestation are less effective than advertised. I have spoken to loggers who have been embarrassed at the underage timber they have had to cut, skinny little poles of trees, when harvestable timber is demanded.

Yet many independent timber cruisers maintain a good living for themselves and their families selectively harvesting private woodlots. When one of these independents is finished the ecosystem is intact, the future value of the woodlot increases and another harvest can happen in a much shorter time than if it was clearcut and replanted.

Our timberworkers could turn the approach from mining wood to farming forests. We have a fire season. The wildfires are an important part of the ecology, but with standing timber dwindling we must contain those fires. Why wait until there is a fire to prepare for it? Lumbermen could work harvesting timber in swatches, producing wide firebreaks around sensitive sites.

There are still immense acres of clearcut yet to be repaired. Timbermen are the best choice for working these stripped hillsides, grading for erosion control, replanting timber,

conserving topsoil and watershed. They could be the ones to implement the knowledge of sustainable harvest that science and industry have discovered.

— #3 Misinformation. Many of the authorities in charge of our interior resources are plainly ignorant. Most are political appointees with no relevant experience. Their solutions are motivated by political expediency rather than practical concern. The results have been disastrous. Equally, many of the employees in the private sector are ignorant of all but the liquidation of assets.

In the debate over our forests definitions are diverse. Terms like old growth, ancient forest, back country, second growth, biological diversity, harvest, clearcut, selective cut, virgin stands, and others are argued about more than the solutions. The parties involved are often so emotionally driven that they refuse to even look at each others' data, or looking, declare it a lie. Reports from the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are generally between the extreme claims of either logging interests of naturalists. Yet even those figures are only used when they support one side or the other of the argument. But in spite of all the argument, there are a few agreements; sustainability and multiple use. Both sides call for it. It must be the answer.

Sustainability calls for forests intact enough to produce sufficient products for the market, sufficient activity for the economy. It is following the first rule of good business: Do not liquidate capital assets. Don't shoot your best breed bull for hamburger. Don't graze sheep on new sprouted corn.

Multi use. More than one value can be had from our forests, from milled lumber to furnished goods, plywood, medicines, food products, dyes, chemicals, all come from an active forest. We have yet to scratch the surface. The forest itself has value. It produces oxygen, clean water, wildlife habitat, tourist draw, a quality of environment unmatched in our country, vast opportunities for knowledge that could be turned to even more productive capability. Beauty.

— #4 Disinformation. It is in the private interest of a small minority of persons and organizations that the sides in this issue do not learn about each other. These agencies promote divisiveness between potential allies. Loggers don't want to kill the forests, ecologists don't want to starve towns and families. The spotted owl is not the issue. Continued healthy productive forests are. That owl is like the canary in the coal mine. The miners knew that if the canary became ill they were in danger. That owl is the warning light on your dashboard telling you the engine is overheated.

There are no easy solutions. We can never go back to the "good old days." We can go forward to times that provide for forest products, safe air and water for our children, jobs for many, wilderness for all. To have that we must rekindle the can-do spirit that has been the strength of America from the beginning. There is plenty of work to do, there can be plenty of forests to work in and enjoy. But how? By taking our medicine and being brave enough to cooperate, and smart enough to learn about what frightens us.

Louis and Lisa Alvis live in Astoria and are frequent contributors to the NCTE.



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