

wear the uniform of the Forest Service, will realize that timber sales in wild areas are going to be prohibitively expensive." This seems to be an article of faith for some Earth First!ers. But a look at the actual history of Earth First! tree spiking will show that it hasn't really worked out that way.

The most intensive spiking campaigns have occurred in Oregon and Washington, although there have also been tree spikings in California, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Arizona, British Columbia, Southern Illinois, Kentucky, Maine and New Jersey, to name a few.

I'm not going to say that none of them saved any trees, because in a few cases they did, especially early on, or in areas without a timber-based economy. But the successes have been few and far between. Even the unabashed Earth First! apologist Chris Manes, in his well-researched book "Green Rage," could only come up with two timber sales that were cancelled because they were spiked.

-- one in the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, and one in the Wenatchee Forest's Icicle River drainage in Washington. I don't know about the trees in Virginia, but the Icicle River sale has since been cut. Earth First! activists from Shawnee in Southern Illinois also report that when the hard-fought Fairview sale was finally clearcut, the only trees that were left were a few oaks that had been spiked.

But there have been scores and scores of tree spikings. In the vast majority of cases, the Forest Service or timber company just sent people in with metal detectors and, often with great fanfare, removed the spikes and cut the trees. Sometimes spikes were missed and hit the blades in sawmills, but the timber industry has made it clear that this is a price they are willing to pay.

The first known tree spiking in Earth First! history occurred in the Siskiyou Mountains of Oregon in 1983, on the Woodrat timber sale on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. Notice was given of the spiking, and some of the trees were marked with yellow ribbons to make them easy to find and verify. The BLM reacted by having the loggers cut the trees and leave them on the ground for firewood cutters to saw at their own risk.

In 1985 in Southern Oregon, Earth First! was engaged in a high-profile direct action campaign to save Cathedral Forest in the Middle Santiam Wilderness. Demonstrators blockaded roads, staged the first tree-sit ever, and even occupied an area scheduled for blasting with dynamite, some of them actually sitting on the charges.

In the midst of these actions, a few Earth First!ers took it on themselves to spike some of the trees at Pyramid Creek. To read about it in Chris Manes' book, I can see where people get the false impression that tree spiking is a drastic but effective last resort: "Despite continued opposition in the form of civil disobedience," Manes writes, "the road crept inexorably toward the sale. As a last-ditch effort, (Mike) Roselle sneaked into the stand one night and spiked it."

What Charles Manes doesn't tell us is that the spiking didn't work. It caused a spate of bad publicity, and it caused Mary Beth Nearing, one of Earth First!'s most inspirational organizers, to publicly distance herself and the Cathedral Forest Action Group from the spiking and Earth First! But it didn't save the trees. In fact, Mike Roselle himself, speaking in Rick Scarce's book "Eco Warriors," admits that the spiking "barely slowed them down." The Forest Service sent rangers in to pull the nails, and the trees were cut.

Other areas in Oregon that were spiked and cut include the Hobson and the Deer Creek sales in the North Kalmiopsis, the Too and Skook sales in Hell's Canyon National Forest, the Bull Run on the Mt. Hood, and a Boise-Cascade sale in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. At this last site loggers missed some of the spikes, which made it into the mill, breaking teeth off of six sawblades. The sawteeth shot across the mill like bullets, injuring no one but terrifying and angering the mill workers.

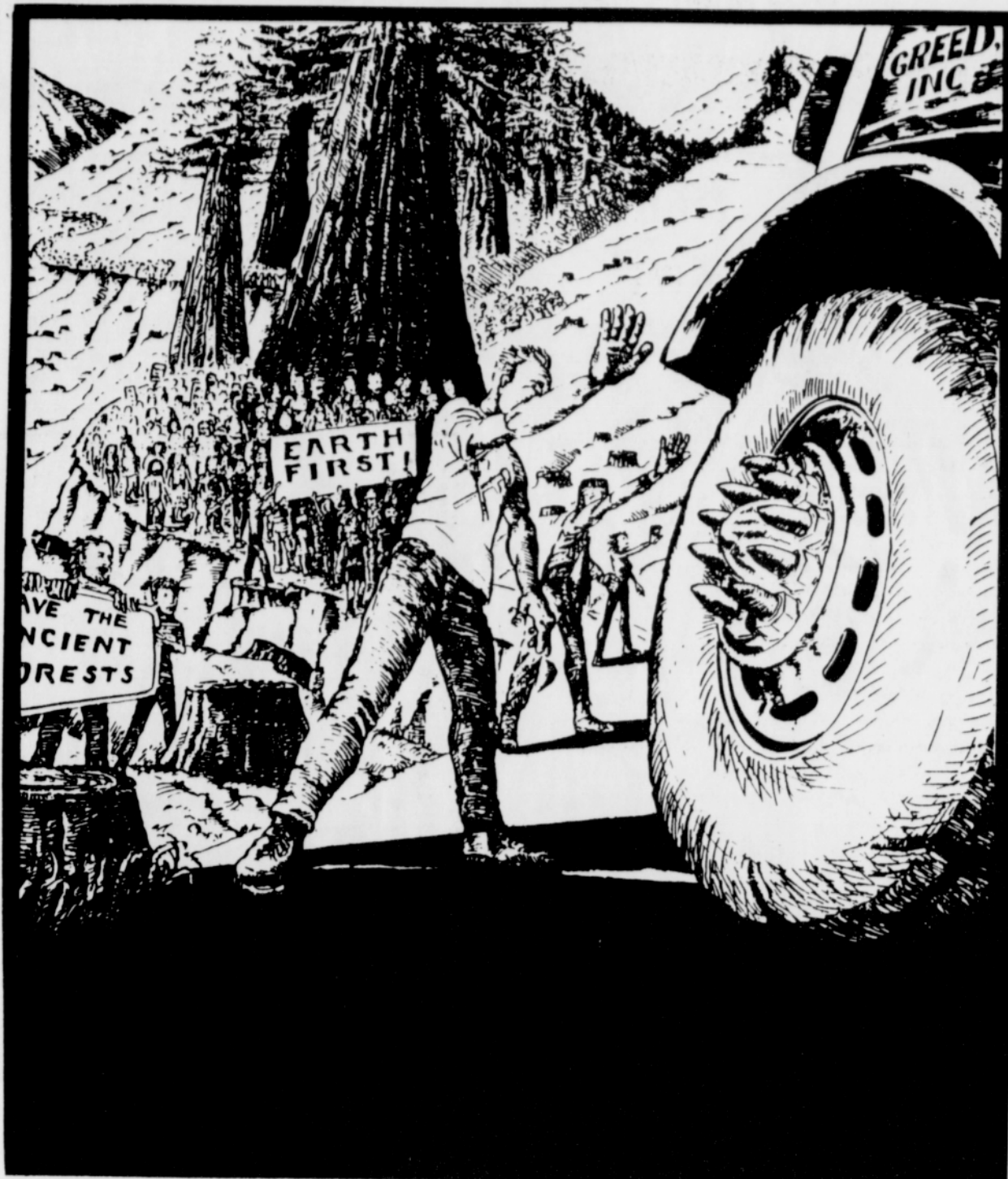
In fact, the main effect that tree spiking seemed to be having in Oregon was to piss people off. In June 1987, Earth First! was protesting the Lazy Bluff timber sale in the North Kalmiopsis roadless area. Tree sitter Randy Price was perched eighty feet up in an old growth fir when a logger cutting in an adjacent area hit an 11-inch spike and damaged his chainsaw. The logger stormed over to Randy's tree, revved up a saw and, screaming something about tree spiking, began cutting down the tree with Randy in it. He cut one-third of the way through the tree before he was talked into stopping. Shaken, Randy denounced tree spiking and publicly distanced himself from Earth First! And the Lazy Bluff timber sale was cut.

Spiking in Washington State was just as extensive as Oregon, and its results no better. Starting with the temporarily successful Icicle River spiking in 1986, sale after sale was spiked and cut in Wenatchee National Forest, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, and Coville National Forest. The only spiked sales that I could verify as still standing are the Spoon sale and Olston Quirkendale in Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, and they were set aside in the spotted owl ruling, not due to spiking. In 1989 the Sugar Bear sale was spiked in the Cedar River area near Seattle. Although the cut was eventually halved due to a public campaign by Earth First! and others, the spiked area was cut.

Spiking was not saving many trees in Washington, but it was certainly raising the ire of the timber industry. Bandsaw blades were broken by tree spikes in four different sawmills between 1987 and 1989, resulting in predictable cries of "terrorism." Finally, in September 1989, the timber industry and corporate press mounted an all-out assault on Washington Earth First! A four-part series was printed in the Bellingham Herald listing acts of sabotage in the area, quotations from "Eco-Defense," and the names, addresses, places of employment, and photos of key Earth First!ers. No proof was given to show that these public Earth First!ers were actually responsible for any of the sabotage listed, but the atmosphere was so hostile that no proof was needed. The Earth First!ers had to leave town for their safety.

The classic example of tree spiking regularly cited by Earth First!ers as proof that the tactic works, occurred on Mear's Island in British Columbia in 1985, where the Society to Protect Intact Kinetic Ecosystems (SPIKE) drove 26,000 helix nails into old growth cedar trees. What the tree spike advocates don't tell you is that there was a whole campaign going on over Mear's Island, and the spiking was only part of it. The issue on Mear's Island is native land rights: the Claque people who live there have never ceded the land or signed any

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treaties. When the Canadian government attempted to sell timber rights on the island to MacMillan Bloedel, a coalition of natives and whites fought back with a lawsuit and a five-month occupation. When MacMillan Bloedel tried to come in and cut before the court could grant a restraining order, hundreds of people massed on the beach to prevent their helicopters from landing. The court finally halted the logging until the final ruling. That ruling is expected soon, and the Canadian government has stated that if they win in court, they will cut the timber, spikes or no spikes.

As tree spiking continued across the United States, the government increasingly tried to crack down on it. Although no spiker has ever been caught, laws were passed to make spiking a felony in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. In 1989 the federal government passed its own laws, and that brought the FBI into the picture. When Postoffice timber sale in Clearwater Forest, Idaho, was spiked, the FBI responded by rounding up University of Montana professor Ron Erickson and several of his Earth First! students. Two indictments were issued in April.

With this history, you have to wonder why some Earth First!ers cling so tenaciously to the myth that tree spiking works. One of the explanations commonly given is that, regardless of whether it saves individual trees, spiking is an economic restraint on the industry. "The idea could come straight from the Chicago Business School," says Chris Manes in "Green Rage." "If the costs of removing spikes is high enough, the cut will not be made, or at least the decreased profit margin will discourage logging in (controversial) areas."

With this logic, Chris Manes would have flunked Econ. 101. There are several flaws in his theory. The strategy of tree spiking was designed for federal lands, where most of the remaining old growth timber in the U.S. is located. In these cases it is the Forest Service, not the timber company, that bears the cost, both of removing the spikes and of charging less for the timber to make up for broken saws. As a government agency, the Forest Service is not required to make a profit: in fact, between 1982 and 1987, the Forest Service received \$800-million per year from timber sales but spent \$1.2-billion per year making the timber ready for sale. That's a loss of \$400-million per year. There aren't enough spikes in the world to make a dent in this agency.

And even in the case of tree spiking on private lands, this economic theory assumes that the price of lumber is fixed, so that any increase in production costs will result in a decrease in profits. But old growth timber is so valuable, and there is so little of it left, that the timber industry could charge anything they wanted and still sell every stick. In fact, the price of lumber has doubled in the past year. Any costs due to tree spiking would simply be passed on to the consumers.

Nor are the timber companies put off by the threat of injury to their employees, as we have already seen in real life. Dave Foreman tells us in "Eco-Defense" that tree spiking is "unlikely to cause anyone physical injury even should a blade shatter upon the spike, which is an unlikely event." But Foreman also admitted to the Christian Science Monitor in 1987 that he had never seen the inside of a sawmill. And it is clear that he doesn't understand the depths of depravity of the timber companies. Logging is the most dangerous occupation in the U.S., with injury and death rates higher than in underground coal mining. The routine maiming and killing of timber workers is coldly calculated into the cost of the lumber, and a few more injuries aren't going to stop them.

The forests that Earth First! has been instrumental in saving have all been saved through blockades and public organizing campaigns, often combined with lawsuits. It's time we faced the truth about tree spiking: it is dangerous to workers; it needlessly endangers Earth First! activists on the frontlines; and it doesn't save trees.

Earlier this year in Maine a letter was sent to the local press stating that the trees at Mt. Blue had been spiked by Earth First!. I don't know if the letter was real or fake, but a group of Earth First!ers blockading Mt. Blue were subsequently arrested, dragged through hot coals from their campfire, and roughed up in jail.

I wonder if a new generation of activists is going to repeat the mistakes of the last ten years. Those of us who are putting our bodies in front of bulldozers and chainsaws can't afford to be isolated and discredited by something as ineffective and incendiary as tree spiking. If we are serious about putting the Earth first, we need to choose tactics because they work, not because they are macho or romantic. That's what no compromise really means.

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