



The following are articles on Population by Kelpie Wilson and some cartoons by Nina Paley on the same subject. We urge our readers to consider this very emotional issue with their minds as well as their hearts. We also urge our readers to contact their local chapters of Planned Parenthood or Zero Population Growth for more information on this important subject. This insert was made possible by a grant from the Fund for Wild Nature.



It requires a very unusual mind to make an analysis of the obvious.
Alfred North Whitehead

OP. ED.

On Civil Dissent and Responsibility

KELPIE WILSON

Abortion Clinics and Old Growth: Parallel Protests?

Even though I am a pro-choice environmentalist, I have a few things in common with Shelley Shannon, who was recently convicted of shooting abortion doctor George Tiller in Kansas last August. Only a few things—but still more than I would expect to share with someone whose values are 180 degrees apart from mine.

Shannon and I are the same age and we have homes about 35 miles apart in southern Oregon. We both have brown hair and wear glasses. She has been sued for Operation Rescue protests, while I have been sued for Earth First! protests. The abortion clinic suing Shannon filed an *amicus* brief on behalf of the logging company suing me, because they wanted to apply the precedent set in my case.

My case was decided last summer when the Oregon Supreme Court determined that to allow a logging company to sue me and five others for hanging a banner on their equipment would not violate the First Amendment. Both my lawyer and Shannon's have argued that allowing punitive damage awards in cases of civil disobedience would let a jury determine the degree of punishment based on the content of a protester's beliefs—an affront to First Amendment rights.

The result for me and my co-defendants is that we must now pay \$30,000 to Huffman and Wright Logging, Inc. for stopping their old-growth logging operation in the Siskiyou National Forest for one day back in 1987. The way I see it, we are being punished for alerting the public to a problem that is now being seriously addressed. In 1991, federal judge William Dwyer stopped all new logging of Northwest ancient forest with an injunction that was only recently lifted. The present administration is at least attempting to solve the problem of

disappearing forests.

Our civil disobedience was a tactic of last resort to save ancient forests. We acted because we didn't want to leave a denuded, drought-ridden, salmon-barren land to the next generation. But if human population and consumption keep expanding exponentially as they are now, all we will have done is to shift the destruction to other forests that are less well protected.

Here is where my views are completely opposed to Shannon's: To me, abortion means a gift to the future and

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a personal tragedy averted—the last thing our overburdened earth and dysfunctional society need is another unwanted child. To Shannon, abortion seems to mean simply the deletion of a soul belonging to God. She sees no difference between the soul of a 3-week-old embryo and that of a middle-aged man. Shannon wanted to force women into bearing unwanted children so much that she tried to kill a doctor. This crime landed her an 11 year-prison term. The question is: Should an abortion clinic have the right to sue her to keep her from blockading its entrance?

Clinic blockades do prevent women from having abortions. Women who travel long distances to find a clinic temporarily closed by a blockade are

denied their reproductive rights. The atmosphere of intimidation created by Operation Rescue has closed clinics permanently: 83 percent of counties in the United States now have no abortion services.

With few legal tools to stop the harassment, pro-choice supporters turned to RICO (the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act). The Supreme Court decided that RICO could be broadly interpreted to cover Operation Rescue's criminal activity, even if monetary gain was not the motivation. But the American Civil Liberties Union is concerned that RICO may now be blanketly used against all political protesters, threatening First Amendment rights.

Far better than broad defensive swipes such as lawsuits and RICO would be to establish within the law that impeding a woman's legal right to an abortion is a serious criminal offense. The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act now in a House/Senate conference committee does just that. The ACLU is satisfied that the bill would not limit freedom of speech.

Civil disobedience is always a questionable tactic. But ever since the Boston Tea Party, American society has valued the deep probing of values and recommitment to freedom that can lead to it. When we tested society's values as Earth First!, we found that people did want to save the ancient forests for their children.

When Operation Rescue tested society's values, they found that *Roe v. Wade* was not so easy to strangle. Hopefully, they will soon find a new federal law that prevents them from interfering with a woman's right to choose.

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It is easy to see that large corporations are to blame for our disappearing forests in the Pacific Northwest, but some of the fault lies with consumers who buy all the products they turn out. Our felled forests are re-erected as houses, businesses, and the shopping strips where we go to consume all kinds of stuff that we don't really need. Possessing more stuff, we find we need bigger houses in which to store it all. And with our population increasing, we must build more houses every year.

All these factors taken together constitute demand. Population biologist Paul Ehrlich has an equation that relates environmental impact to demand and technology: $I (\text{impact}) = P (\text{population}) \times A (\text{affluence}) \times T (\text{technology})$. The P and A terms taken together make up demand. The United States has a long way to go to reduce the affluence term, but we have work to do on the population term as well. Also, population numbers have the potential to increase exponentially, whereas affluence (given the scarcity and eventual depletion of resources) does not.

The United States is the fastest growing industrialized nation. Our population is projected to double from the current 260 million to 530 million by the year 2050. Many think that only continued immigration is keeping us from zero population growth, but that is not true. About half of our growth is from the birth rate which has increased in the last decade from 1.8 children per woman to 2.1 children.

There are several speculations about why the birth rate has gone up. Some blame it on the decrease in federal funding for family planning and the anti-abortion climate of the Reagan/Bush years. Some point to the increasing disparity of wealth in this country and the fact that poverty often leads to high birth rates. Others say that immigrants are bringing high birth rates with them. All in all, we find ourselves in the midst of a "baby boomlet" as big as the original one, producing about four million new Americans every year.

How can we reduce logging levels and give forest ecosystems the rest they need when the demand keeps rising? As our friends who work in the timber industry have put it so succinctly: "What are you gonna wipe your ass with, a spotted owl?"

In 1990, during Redwood Summer, I experienced a rare moment of common ground out on the Earth First! picket line in front of Louisiana/Pacific's Redwood Valley mill. A mill worker's wife told me that the reason Louisiana/Pacific was cutting timber so fast was due to increased demand from population growth. She agreed with me that excess consumption was also a part of that demand. She knew that Louisiana/Pacific's liquidation forestry would put her husband out of a job soon, but she wanted him to work as long as possible. They were trying to put children through college as there was no future for them in the timber business.

Boom and bust has always characterized the timber industry's relation to resources. We are in real trouble if boom and bust also applies to basic necessities like food. Worldwide, population grows by almost 100 million people a year, while we lose 24 million tons of topsoil through erosion and salinization, and per capita food production decreases.

Some 200 years ago, Thomas Malthus pointed out that in agriculture increasing inputs of labor and fertilizer reach a point of diminishing returns where future increases in production stop. His "solution" was to allow the poor who had no bread to starve, even though the rich possessed the resources to feed them. This is no solution. It's been tried in different places for 200 years and hasn't worked. Besides it is simply immoral. To save forests and farmland, we must reduce demand in a way that respects human life and dignity as well as the limits of the land.

The solution is straightforward and is being outlined in preparatory discussions for the upcoming UN Population Conference in Cairo this September: redistribute wealth to end poverty; fully fund birth control; and raise the status of women. While the prescription is easy, remaking our societies to end patriarchy and class disparity is nothing less than a revolutionary undertaking. If we care about forests, it must be done. WFR

That government is best which governs the least, because its people discipline themselves.
Thomas Jefferson



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