

EDITORIAL



Rape, pillage, plunder: President Bush and the lumber companies

On June 23 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will decide whether to classify the Northwest's spotted owl as a threatened or an endangered species. Its decision could have a major impact on the remaining virgin forests of the Northwest. One recommendation of federal scientists to protect the owl would stop logging on up to 3 million acres of old forest. Because lumber companies cut down the tall trees on privately owned land long ago, most of the remaining old trees are on federal land. Some of these trees are more than 1,000 years old, making them among the oldest living things on Earth. Under present federal land management policy they are being cut down at the rate of 170 acres a day. In a decade they could all be gone.

To Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan Jr.—aka James Watt II—the environmentalists' attempt to save the owl, and therefore the trees, is an example of "insincerity." According to Lujan's spokesman, Steven Goldstein, they are simply using the Endangered Species Act "to stop economic progress or development." And President George Bush, though he has distanced himself from Lujan's suggestion that the Endangered Species Act be rewritten to take corporate interests into account when making environmental decisions, doesn't really differ with him. "I reject those who would ignore, totally ignore, the economic consequences of the spotted owl decision," Bush said to the thunderous applause of Republican businessmen at a \$1,000-a-plate breakfast in Oregon two weeks ago. "It's a human equation. The jobs of many thousands of Oregonians and whole communities are at stake."

Environmentalists, who are concerned about the forest as well as the owl, take a different view. As Greenpeace's Peter Dykstra said in response to Lujan's proposal, "The fact that the act is unambiguous is the very reason for its success." Indeed, if the act had allowed a balancing of corporate and environmental interests, 10 years of Reagan and Bush administration policies would have led to the extinction of many species on the endangered list.

Even with an unambiguous Endangered Species Act, old Northwest forests are disappearing at an accelerating rate. This is partly a result of administration policy but also a consequence of corporate raiders taking over Northwest lumber companies. The recent U.S.-Japanese agreement to encourage exports of American lumber—something the timber industry had long fought for—is expected to triple some lumber companies' sales, and company publicists say

this increased cutting will also create thousands of new jobs.

Meanwhile, takeovers by out-of-state corporations in Washington, Oregon and California have been on the rise, causing further speed-ups of cutting. Notable examples include Britain's Sir James Goldsmith's purchase of Crown Zellerbach and the leveraged buyout of California's Pacific Lumber Company by Maxxam Corp. of Houston, which was financed by Drexel Burnham Lambert junk bonds. These new owners do not take a long-term view of their resources. Burdened with junk-bond debt, they see any standing tree simply as an unclaimed financial asset. And once the trees are gone, these corporations will simply move on to other profit-maximizing opportunities.

Lumber companies once practiced sustained-yield cutting. But now, says Leo McElroy of Forests Forever, "it's more like locusts. ... They come in, take everything they want and leave bare countryside."

The president, the lumber companies and the corporate media are trying to sell this rape of our national forests as something that will create jobs. But it is more likely that the increased cutting will entail mechanization that will reduce the number of jobs. Though the Pacific Northwest produced a record 10.8 billion board feet of lumber in 1988, employment in the lumber industry in Washington state alone dropped by 10,000 workers that year. Profits went up; jobs disappeared.

New policy needed: The fact is that the national forests belong to us and future generations. When the old trees disappear we lose something forever, while the corporations that cut the trees make their profit and run. Our national interest lies in protecting our natural resources, which in this case means strictly regulating tree cutting on public lands and protecting the old growth on private land. As for jobs in the Northwest, many more would be created by investing in the manufacture of finished wood products rather than relying on accelerated exports of raw lumber. But our national leaders are so beholden to their corporate sponsors that they continue to take the short view. It's time to elect some who don't.

In These Times wins Utne Reader awards

Last month the editors of the *Utne Reader* announced their second annual Alternative Press Awards, and *In These Times* swept the field. Well, almost. We were pleased to receive both the award for best publication from 15,000-50,000 circulation and the award for cultural coverage. *In These Times* was the only publication to receive two awards and was a finalist in more categories than any other. We are grateful to the editors of the *Utne Reader* for this honor.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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In These Times believes that to guarantee our life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, Americans must take greater control over our nation's basic economic and foreign policy decisions. We believe in a socialism that fulfills rather than subverts the promise of American democracy, where social needs and rationality, not corporate profit and greed, are the operative principles. Our pages are open to a wide range of views, socialist and nonsocialist, liberal and conservative. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

(ISSN 0180-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100

Member: Alternative Press Syndicate

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LETTERS

Murder most foul

THE TORTURE-MURDER OF ALEX RACKLEY WAS one of the most heinous crimes committed by the New Left. In a ludicrous article (ITT, May 9), Paul Bass seeks to pin blame for this atrocity on the FBI for allegedly instigating it instead of on the Panthers who clearly committed it. Bass builds his tenuous case on the basis of FBI memos written *after* the murder that warn FBI agents not to try to divide the Panther ranks by planting false accusations because the Rackley incident shows what a bloodthirsty bunch these Panthers were. Any reasonable person would conclude that these memos show the FBI to have been more conscientious than most of us on the left then gave them credit for being.

Bass, on the basis of no other evidence, concludes just the opposite. But even suppose that Bass were right. Suppose the FBI falsely implied that Rackley was a police informant. The Panther leaders, Ericka Huggins among them, still sat in a room and watched while boiling water was poured over Rackley's chest and still acquiesced (at the very least) in the death sentence that a party official ordered and had carried out. And the New Left at the time closed down Yale University (an event whose anniversary is being "celebrated" by progressives today) to demand the unconditional release of Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale, who were on trial for the torture-murder that was actually committed.

Leftists claim to be concerned about the injustices committed against people of color. What about the people of color who were murdered by the Panthers, Alex Rackley among them? Why in these 20 years—amid all the books and articles written by tenured radicals about the relatively innocuous tactics used by the FBI in its COINTEL-PRO campaigns against the Panthers—has there not been a single article or book investigating the many murders and serious crimes, including rape, robbery, extortion and arson, committed by these heroes of the movement?

David Horowitz
Los Angeles

Paul Bass replies: I made no attempt to justify the Panthers' murder-torture of Alex Rackley. I quoted Warren Kimbro, one of the gunmen who served a jail term in connection with the murder, as saying even he recognizes that no amount of FBI dirty tricks justified his actions. That said, the FBI's use of crimes to disrupt dissidents' First Amendment rights does matter. It matters to the people whose rights are violated. It matters to a society that supposedly seeks to protect the right to dissent. And it matters because it increases the cycle of violence. Rather than showing the FBI to be "conscientious," the memos discussed in the article demonstrate the FBI's eagerness to forge letters, harass dissidents and provoke fights among the Panthers. While not excusing subsequent violence, this demonstrates government complicity in the Panthers' crimes. The FBI chose not to plant false information on San Francisco and Las Vegas Panthers about one of their members being a police informant specifically because of the New Haven experience. But the assessment of Panther violence didn't deter the agency from pursuing other equally dishonest and illegal disrup-

live tactics. Given the well-documented effects of similar federal and local COINTEL-PRO-related activities in cities such as Chicago, where Fred Hampton was murdered by the police, one would expect promoters of a free, democratic society to take the FBI's transgressions more seriously than Horowitz does.

Amazingly safe

I GREATLY RESENT YOUR BIAS AGAINST NUCLEAR power as expressed in the diatribe against the ads of Committee for Energy Awareness (ITT, April 18). The ads referred to are absolutely true—not lies, as you labeled them. Nuclear power plants do reduce carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide emissions by eliminating an equivalent number of fossil fuel burning power plants!

The reduction in carbon dioxide is not important despite the present propaganda designed to create fear of the so-called "greenhouse effect." Now really, is one-half degree—if any—theoretical rise in temperature per century really something to get all upset about? Now? Get data!

The reduction in sulfur dioxide is important, since sulfur dioxide causes acid rain. And it is acid rain that has created so much havoc in Eastern Europe, India, Greece, etc. But if you recognize the danger from acid rain then you've got to do something about it, and that gets expensive. You are willing to pay double for your electricity from fossil fuel plants? Like the Sierra Club that only now discovered acid rain and is still opposing our totally harmless nuclear power plants? Great—but are you willing to lose your manufacturing plants to the Japanese because they will have cheap electricity from their nuclear plants? Sure you are! So you will settle for the new generation of safer nuclear plants, heh? Do you realize that you will have to wait at least 50 to 75 years to find out if these plants are as safe as, let alone safer than, our present amazingly safe nuclear plants and their comparatively tiny amount of waste.

You have been acting like five-year-olds, swayed by every TV sound bite that comes down the tube.

Arthur Dutky
Omaha

God's choice

WHY IS ISRAEL SO POWERFUL IN WASHINGTON? It is not the money game, as so many anti-Zionists believe. Arab oil has more international capital.

Would you believe there is a spirit up there in Washington? The closer you get to men with high political, economic and military power, the more you see them aware

of a God over them who controls them for its wishes more than theirs.

Most of us—the poor proletariat—do not know living spirits, much less the God of creation and history. But is it too much for reasonable minds, who have studied Plato and looked at the Bible, to surmise that there are dead up there somewhere, ancestral spirits who are part of some consciousness above ours, and that this consciousness would reasonably focus on world leaders?

Maybe God moves political leaders more than lobbyists and voters.

Jack Greenfield
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Not a bad model

IN CONTRAST TO JOHN JUDIS' PESSIMISTIC VIEWS (ITT, May 9), I would argue that Sweden's policies do provide workable models that are timely, highly relevant and certainly worthy of emulation. My understanding of Sweden is far from complete, but I suspect that your editors would admit the same.

Tax rates in Sweden are higher than in the U.S., but they also provide much more value to average citizens. The wide range of social-welfare benefits available in Sweden are not means-tested but are provided to all—which helps explain the broad base of public support for the policies. Sweden is not unlike the U.S. in many respects, with its heavy reliance on markets and private ownership of industry and its balance of service and manufacturing. Sweden is also dealing now with problems the U.S. will soon face. Levels of computerization in the workplace are higher, as is the number of industrial robots per capita. Over 17 percent of Sweden's population was over 65 in 1987, compared to 12 percent in the U.S.

Public health care is the cornerstone of social-welfare policy in Sweden. It covers more people and procedures while costing less than U.S. health care. Sweden's health-care system produces impressive results. Population health indicators such as infant mortality and life expectancy are measurably better than those in the U.S. (or Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom). Sweden has a mixed public and private health-care sector, but it is one that incorporates systems of regionalized government planning coupled with centralized payment mechanisms that make use of market competition among service providers.

Family policies in Sweden are additional evidence of the value that tax-supported services provide to individual taxpayers and the national economy. Over 65 percent of Sweden's women work, representing the highest rate of labor force participation in the world. Sweden compensates either partner who stays away from work to care for children

until the child is 270 days old and during periods of child illness up to age 12. An extensive public program supports preschool day care for all children. Schooling, including college education, is publicly supported. All families receive a basic child allowance from birth to age 16 to help cover the general costs of raising a child. Compensation is also paid to the parent who cares for gravely handicapped children and to those assisting disabled adults or elderly. The everyday lives of U.S. citizens and the productivity of the national labor force could both benefit from the comprehensive, nationally planned system of family support, child care, education and dependent care already in place in Sweden.

Levels of unemployment in Sweden and budget outlays devoted to cash welfare payments are both much lower in Sweden than in the U.S. as a result of labor market policies that devote resources to better vocational and job placement counseling, training with pay and relocation assistance and incentives for employers to hire and retrain employees.

Alec Nove and Robert Heilbroner's suggestions that Sweden has lessons for U.S. policymakers should not be written off until we've had a chance to develop a greater understanding of Sweden's relevance to the U.S. In my view, Swedish industrial planning, schools and job training, health care and other policies and programs deserve much closer examination in *In These Times*' pages.

Larry Chapman
Madison, Wis.

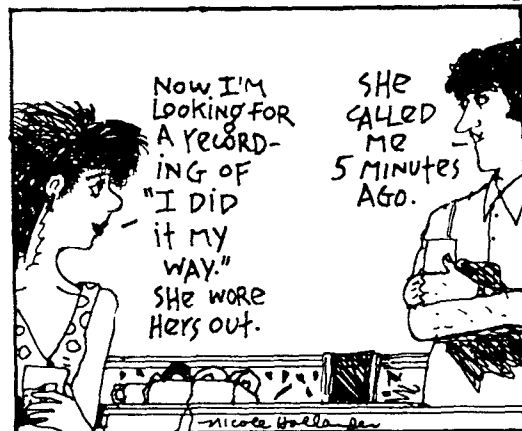
Correction

A "ETC" COLUMN ITEM "ROBINHOOD TO ISRAEL" (ITT, May 9) wrongly attributed criticism of U.S. aid to Israel to the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1989*. Wishful thinking, no doubt.

The criticism, including a call for the suspension of aid to Israel (based on U.S. law, which prohibits economic or military aid to countries that engage in consistent human-rights abuses) was made by Act On Conscience for Israel Palestine, a newly formed "National Campaign for Responsible Foreign Aid." Act On Conscience's advisory council includes William Sloan Coffin, Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, Adrienne Rich, S. Brian Wilson, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton. The group, whose nationwide protests on April 15-16 of U.S. aid to Israel received hardly any media attention, can be reached at P.O. Box 21104, Washington, DC 20009.

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Justice and Equality in Palestine Israel

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

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