

Eco-Anarchism Rising: The Earth Liberation Front and the formation of revolutionary environmentalism

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Abstract: Critics and supporters often categorize the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as an extension of Earth First! and the deep ecology movement. However, the group is not as cohesive and monolithic as is often assumed. The diversity of their ideology is evident in their communiqués and statements by spokespersons, Craig Rosenbaugh and Ashley Pickering. In the paper, I examine their communiqués, covering the period 1996-2003, and show that theirs is a complex ideology, which has shifted away from the radical ecology of Earth First! towards what Dave Garland, Steven Best, and Mark Somma call “revolutionary environmentalism.” In the ELF’s “revolutionary environmentalism” deep ecology, social ecology and green anarchist theories are combined with an adherence to propaganda by the deed to form a new syncretic ideology. In forging this new ideology the ELF also rejects the tenets of new social movements and instead embraces anarchist-organizing principles.

“We are the burning rage of this dying planet.” – Beltane communiqué 1997¹

Many in the environmental movement view their struggle as a war - a war that holds all life on this earth in the balance. Daily, news stories and scientific papers come out, giving credence to this perspective. To deal with the destruction of the natural world, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), proudly proclaims that they “work to speed up the collapse of industry, to scare the rich, and to undermine the foundations of the State.”² Though many environmental activists have engaged in ecotage— from the Fox in Chicago³ to Dave Foreman and early Earth First!er (EF’ers) - the ELF is arguably the first to forge a coherent eco-revolutionary program.⁴ In this revolutionary program the ELF rejects not only state-Marxism, but also liberal identity and single-issue politics.

Social scientists and activists, both in opposition and support of the ELF, often misperceive them as an extension of Earth First! (EF). Authors, such as criminologist Don Liddick,⁵ political theorist Steve Vanderheiden⁶ and anti-environmentalist Ron Arnold,⁷ all conflate the ELF with EF and deep ecology. In the case of Liddick and Arnold they condemn radical environmentalism as a whole for the perceived sins of the ELF. While Vanderheiden, and in some instance Bron

¹ Leslie James Pickering, *The Earth Liberation Front: 1997-2002* (Portland, Or: Arissa Publication, 2006), 19.

² Ibid, p. 20.

³ The Fox was an ecoteur in Chicago during the early 1970s that plugged up industrial drainage pipes and ran an individual campaign against industrial polluters.

⁴ It could also be stated that the ALF also has created a revolutionary program, which Mark Somma contends.

⁵ See Ron Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmentalism and Animal Liberation Movements* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006).

⁶ See Steve Vanderheiden, “Eco-terrorism or Justified Resistance? Radical Environmentalism and the ‘War on Terror’” *Politics & Society* 33, no. 2 (2005): 425-447

⁷ See Ron Arnold, *Ecoterror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature: The World of the Unabomber* (Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press, 1997).

Taylor⁸ as well, conflate the ELF and radical environmentalism, leading to a distorted view of radical environmentalism as more militant than it is. My research will show that to categorize the ELF as an extension of EF is fallacious.

I contend that the ELF represents a shift away from “new social movements,” which better describes EF. ELF on the other hand, represents the formation of what I call “new anarchist movements.” In addition, by looking at their history and communiqués, covering the period 1996-2002, what is seen is a complex ideology,⁹ which has shifted away from the “radical ecology” of EF towards a “revolutionary environmentalism.” In the ELF’s “revolutionary environmentalism” components of deep ecology, social ecology, and green anarchism are combined with an adherence to propaganda by the deed to form a new syncretic ideology. This new ideology is fluid and allows them to act as an umbrella group for a wide range of environmental militants and address a panoply of issues.

This paper will start with an account of the dominant theories within radical environmentalism followed by a brief history of ecotage and the rise of the ELF. These sections are meant to provide a historical and theoretical grounding, which will be used to examine the differences between radical ecology, as expressed through EF, and the nascent revolutionary environmentalism of the ELF. Included in this discussion will be an analysis of new social movement theory. In addition, I will explain what I mean by "new anarchist movements" and how this encompasses the ELF.

I. The Radical Ecological Tradition

Before discussing the uniqueness of ELF, both their ideology and tactics, an understanding of deep ecology, social ecology, and green anarchism is essential. Similar to other movements, factionalism over ideology has historically divided the environmental movement. Understanding these ideologies is therefore essential to understanding the factions and the environmental movement in general.

a. Deep Ecology

Deep ecology is a philosophical movement based on the works of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Ness, as well as George Sessions, Bill Devall, and others. Deep ecology mixes new age, eastern, and shamanistic notions of spirituality to form what they call an ecosophy. From this, deep ecology formulated an 8-point program¹⁰ in which the most important point is that the

⁸ See Bron Taylor, “Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism: From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation Front,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 4 (winter 1998): 1-42.

⁹ In this case an ideology simply refers to a semi-coherent group of ideas that coalesce around a few core tenets.

¹⁰ According to Bill Devall and George Sessions in *Deep Ecology* the 8 key points of deep ecology are:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human

natural world has intrinsic value (Point 1) separate from its value to humans. To deep ecology the current horror of capitalism and western civilization is the byproduct of the human disconnect with the natural world, which is typified by anthropocentric thinking. As an expression of this, Chellis Glendinning argues that Western culture is suffering from “Original Trauma” caused by “the systemic removal of our lives from nature, from natural cycles, from the life force itself” and that “the ultimate goal of recovery is to refind our place in nature.”¹¹ For deep ecology it is only with the return to the natural that humankind and the natural world can be saved. Taking into account the interests of the natural world, through personal reflection, the dualism between “human” and “natural” can be bridged.

One component of bridging the gap is “living as though nature mattered.”¹² In other words, deep ecologists want individuals to give moral weight to the natural world in making political and social decisions. Therefore, a deep ecological society would have to take into consideration the effects of actions, not only on humans, but also on all aspects of the ecosystem. Thus, a community would be required to take the issues, concerns, and lives of non-human nature into account when making decisions. Thus a community might reject the development of a Wal-Mart on an environmental basis but support the building of a school, even if it causes some environmental damage, because it provides an essential service for the community.

b. Social Ecology

Social ecology, a philosophy most notably advanced by Murray Bookchin, attempts to combine Marxist, anarchist, and green political traditions into a coherent school of thought. The main tenet of social ecology is that environmental destruction is epiphenomena of *hierarchical* human societies. To Bookchin, prior to the formation of hierarchy's human communities existed as a part of the natural world, for better and for worse. Overtime, though hierarchy's formed, first by elders then by shamans and clerics and finally by warriors. With these changes the social relationships between man and woman and between humankind and the natural changed. It moved from an organic relationship, based on dependence and respect, to a relationship based on hostility and control.

Therefore activists should not only work to stop environmental destruction - logging, pollution, ect - but also work to heal the social rifts caused by capitalism, religion, and the state. This differs from deep ecology, which argues that the roots of environmental destruction lies in dualistic thinking and the human disconnect with the natural world. Bookchin believed that

population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

¹¹ Chellis Glendinning, “recovering from western civilization” in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. George Sessions, 37-39 (Boston, Mass: Shambhala, 1995).

¹² This is the sub-title and theme of Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*.

through resistance and struggle against hierarchy, including organized religion, the state, and capitalism, a hierarchy-free world is possible.

Included in Bookchin's work is a critique of the technological determinism and spiritualism found in other radical environmental philosophies. On the issue of technology, Bookchin argues that small is not always beautiful and small-scale technologies can be brutal and repressive, such as the Khmer Rouge's brutal dictatorship in Cambodia. Instead, Bookchin argues that the social relationships and power dynamics that shape the development of technologies also determine their relationship with the community and environment. Therefore, technological advances, such as agriculture, are not inherently oppressive. Agriculture only becomes oppressive through the development of power relationships, such as private ownership and specialization. Thus, in Bookchin's ecological society, technology is not a root problem like it is for green-anarchists and some deep ecologists. This does not mean that Bookchin supports industrialism or capitalist productive power. It simply means that certain technological advances can help society while at the same time not causing irreparable harm to the Earth.

In addition Bookchin, most notably in *The Ecology of Freedom*, addresses the issue of spirituality and animism in radical theories. He claims that spirituality and animism anthropomorphize the natural world, dull critical thinking through ritual, and idealize a revisionist history that never existed. Of these criticisms of earth-based spirituality, the dulling of critical thinking through ritual is most influential. This position is in direct response to many deep ecologists, most notably Gerry Mander and David Abrams, who believe that ritual is essential in fostering a biocentric worldview. Both of these authors look to gatherer-hunter and indigenous histories and mythologies as examples of egalitarian worldviews. They argue that the ecological consciousness, as well as the egalitarianism, of these communities was the result of their worldview, since indigenous worldviews are expressed, created, and institutionalized through rituals. As one example, David Abrams argues that aboriginal creation stories, and their reproduction through ritual storytelling, kept people connected with their land base and made them stewards of their land. Abrams argues that with the break-up of land holdings, and the declining importance of ritual, aboriginals are no longer as tied to their land base and no longer view stewardship as a moral obligation.¹³ Bookchin, on the other hand, argues that ritual played an essential role in the formation of hierarchies and castes, most notably through the creation of shamanist and clerical castes.

Bookchin, and social ecology, is viewed as the most humanists, most modernist and most classically leftists of the radical environmental theories. This is partly the result of social ecology placing human relationships as the root of environmental destruction. If human relationships are the cause, then only through radical changes to human societies can environmental damage be stopped. This is also why social ecology is the only major radical environmental ideology that actively addresses the issues of race, class, and gender.

This concern with human relationships is troubling for the more misanthropic deep ecological and green anarchist activists and has led to social ecology being marginalized within the greater radical environmental milieu. That being said, social ecology, as well as deep ecology, has been influential in the development of EF and the ELF. Most notably with Judi Bari and Northern California's campaign to heal the split between unions and environmental activists during

¹³ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

Redwood Summer. During this campaign the organization embraced many tenets of social ecology and opened the door for social activists to become involved within EF.

c. *Green Anarchism*

Green anarchism, also known as anti-civilizational anarchism, is a branch of anarchist thought that contends that civilization, along with domestication, is responsible for environmental destruction and human subjugation. Unlike social ecology, and deep ecology, green anarchism is generally anti-academic and the vast majority of green anarchist writings are written by activists and found in zines,¹⁴ such as: *Green Anarchy*, *Green Anarchist*, *Do or Die*, *Species Traitor*, *Arson*, *Fifth Estate* and *Anarchy: a Journal of Desire Armed*. Borrowing from the radical activist movement, authors commonly use pseudonyms, such Feral Faun or Felonious Skunk. The use of pseudonyms is common within the radical environmental movement, as a safeguard against government surveillance.¹⁵ Even though green anarchism does not appeal to academic authority, it has had increasing importance within anarchism and has influenced the radical environmental movement, the anti-globalization movement, and the youth dropout¹⁶ movement. According to Bron Taylor, green anarchism's influence on EF had led to a "decreasing importance of deep ecology" in the radical environmental movement and an increased importance for primitivism.¹⁷

The main tenet of green anarchism is that civilization is devouring the natural world and suppressing human desires. Emerging from the works of Lewis Mumford, Levi-Straus, Jacques Ellul, green anarchists claim that civilization has altered natural human interactions from organic gather-hunter societies.¹⁸ At the root of civilization's social structure is the process of domestication. Domestication is the process through which animals and plants are controlled for society's benefit. Domestication includes both animal husbandry and agriculture. In addition, Feral Faun, a green anarchist zine writer, claims that domestication for human animals,

takes many forms, some of which are difficult to recognize. Government, capital and religion are some of the more obvious faces of authority. But technology, work, language with its conceptual limits, the ingrained habits of etiquette and propriety – these too are domesticating authorities which transform us from wild, playful, unruly animals into tamed, bored, unhappy producers and consumers.¹⁹

¹⁴ Zines are independently produced and independently distributed magazines that are most commonly associated with the punk, anarchist, or sci-fi sub-communities.

¹⁵ This is generally expressed through the term "security culture" and includes such rules as not disclosing full names, history or anything else that could be used to identify you to authorities. The goal of security culture is to weaken the influence of infiltrators and "snitches" and allowing groups to engage in illegal acts with less of a concern for arrest.

¹⁶ Crimethinc is a publishing company that publishes anarchist books and zines that promote a situationalist critique. Crimethinc is known for its critiques of work, religion, family, monogamy and calls for people to "arm their desires." In addition, crimethinc is often associated with dumpstering food, riding freight trains, and finding alternative ways of living off the system.

¹⁷ Bron Taylor, "Experimenting with Truth" in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁸ I use gather-hunters over hunter-gather because anthropological research has shown that gathering was a more important component of their societies than was hunting.

¹⁹ "Feral Faun," *Feral Revolution* (Elephant Editions, Work in Progress), 28.

In other words, our social system – morality, work, and education – works to domesticate and placate humanity. To green anarchists, this domestication removes from life what is essential - spontaneity and passion. In addition, domestication is the root source of social strife and human conflict. John Zerzan, an influential green anarchist theorist and member of the Green Anarchy Collective in Eugene, OR, writes, “domestication involved the initiation of production, vastly increased divisions of labor, and the completed foundations of social stratification.”²⁰ To Zerzan domestication is the root cause of sexism, racism, war, capitalism, and work. Undermining and destroying civilization would return human interaction to their organic gather-hunter state. Since all aspects of the current system are used to dominate and oppress green anarchists reject all social, economic, and technological forces. Included in this, is a rejection of workerism and unions, formal education and academia, and scientific and technological research.

Their hostility towards civilization leads to the rejection of traditional liberal and leftist organizations and political reformism. In “The Ship of Fools,” Theodore Kaczynski develops the following claim: if a ship is heading towards an iceberg, worker concerns for better wages, and minorities' concerns for equal rights become unimportant in the face of collapse. Because of this, green anarchists tend to reject unionism, anti-racism, and traditional class-based political action as reformist and counter-revolutionary. In this vein Kevin Tucker, in *Species Traitor*, criticizes a picture in *Fifth Estate* depicting Judi Bari with the phrase “environmentalist and loggers unite” as the heading. Tucker writes, “I was hoping she would have something more memorable to say” and then lambaste unionism as a tactic. This disdain is also seen in “News from the Balcony,” a common feature in the zine *Green Anarchy*. In this section, the authors - using the pseudonym’s Waldorf and Stalter (the old cynics from the Muppet show) – heckle and joke about the ineffectiveness of other anarchist organizations and the labor union movement. This hostility to unionism and class-based movements has placed green anarchists at odds with anarcho-communists,²¹ social ecologists, and other members of the political left, limiting any collaboration between the groups.

As a means of resisting domestication, green anarchists look to the process of “Rewilding.” Rewilding is when an individual rejects civilization and attempts to reconnect with the natural world by embracing the lessons of gather-hunters. Through learning primitive skills people can be reconnected with the world and embrace the animal instincts within themselves. The practical goal of Rewilding “involves both accessing our present situation and looking back to what has been done before by people” in an attempt to survive in modern civilization and prepare for a post-civilizational world.²²

Green anarchists are arguing that there is a systemic problem – civilization – that needs to be uprooted. The difficulty that green anarchist theory has had is in expressing a coherent political program that helps bring down civilization, a tall task. Anarcho-communists argue that the difficulty rests on green anarchist adoption of individualist anarchist theories, such as Max Stirner and Benjamin Tucker's. Taking from Max Stirner, green anarchists often critique leftist politics for constraining and suffocating individual expression, and reject mass-based politics in favor of “Rewilding” and insurgency. The goal, for both these tactics, is not to liberate others

²⁰ John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* (Columbia, MO: Columbia Alternative Library, 1999), 77.

²¹ This generally refers to anarchists who follow the more communalist theories of Bakunin or Kropotkin. There are also, anarcho-syndicalists, who follow the syndicalism movement and George Sorel. These two movements are, strikingly different from one another but are often confused.

²² Green Anarchy and Wildroots Collective, “Rewilding: A Primer for a Balanced Existence within the Ruins of Civilization”, *Green Anarchy* 16 (Spring 2004), 31.

but to liberate individuals from domestication.

Table 1: Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Green Anarchism

| | Deep Ecology | Social Ecology | Green Anarchism |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Root Problem | Human/Nature dualism | Hierarchies | Civilization |
| Expression of the problem in contemporary society | Economic Development/Human Arrogance | Capitalism | Technology/ Workerism |
| Level of analysis | Individual | Systemic | Systemic and Individual |
| Tactics for change | Personal reflection/Direct Action | Direct Action/Mass Organizing | Direct Action/Personal Reflection (Rewilding) |

II. The History of Ecotage and the Rise of the ELF.

Sabotage is a common tactic used by resistance movements and has been especially popular among environmental activists, who refer to it as ecotage. Environmental activists trace the roots of ecotage to the Luddites;²³ a contemporary literary example of ecotage is *The Monkey Wrench Gang* by author and environmental radical Edward Abbey. Abbey romanticized ecotage in a narrative of four eco-warriors fighting against the expanse of technocratic society, which has influenced the modern environmental movement.

With the formation of EF in 1979, ecotage became one of many confrontational tactics used by radical environmentalists. In the early years of EF ecotage tactics ranged from tree-spiking,²⁴ to monkey-wrenching logging equipment, to defacing billboards. This early stage of EF was arguably their most militant. Ecotage was so widespread that the Willamette National Forest supervisor Michael Kerrick told Congress that he would place a closure on the entire national forest if the tactics in *Ecodefense* were realized.²⁵

However, even during this time, EF was not revolutionary. Dave Foreman in *Ecodefense* states that “Monkeywrenching is not revolutionary” and that “the monkeywrenchers do not wish to overthrow any social, political and or economic system” and instead are protecting the natural world from the expanse of civilization.²⁶ The majority of actions that EF engaged in were symbolic actions, such as the “cracking” of the Glen Canyon Dam in 1980 and nonviolent

²³ These groups tend to have an a-historic and mythical account of the Luddites, who engaged in the destruction of machines and buildings in order to attack the economic and social system that was threatening their livelihood, and generally place on the Luddites a radical understanding of environmental protection and a rejection of western civilization that was not found among the historical group. This is discussed in detail in Steven Jones, *Against Technology: From the Luddites to Neo-Luddism*.

²⁴ Tree-spiking consists in inserting large ceramic nails into the base of a tree in order to destroy saw-mill blades

²⁵ Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston, Mass: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 82-83.

²⁶ Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Chico, Ca: Abzug Press, 2002) 10.

protests.²⁷ During this period the media, and even EF, portrayed radical environmentalist activists as lone-wolf eco-warriors.²⁸ By the 1990s EF's association with ecotage led to increased FBI repression as state and federal laws were passed to stop them.²⁹

By the 1990s all western states and the federal government had passed laws increasing prison sentences for ecotage.³⁰ At the same time, a new generation of activists were getting involved with EF. These new activists came from the social justice and labor movement, not ecology and botany. These new activists, combined with the new ecotage laws and increased media pressure, made EF change its stance on ecotage. With the departure of Dave Foreman from EF, activists such as Judi Bari begin taking leadership roles, shifting the politics and tactics of the group. At this junction, EF changed its policy on ecotage and decided to neither condone nor support it.

While EF in the US debated the tactic of ecotage, activists at Hasting College in east Sussex England formed the first lasting European chapter of EF in 1991.³¹ One year after its formation the group engaged in its most popular campaign, the anti-roads campaign at Twyford Downs. In the Twyford Down campaign, EF (UK) occupied the road and halted development, allowing more mainstreams groups' time to lobby politicians and initiate litigation. By 1992, the camp had become a meeting ground for environmental activists, New Age hippies, and punks. This campaign lasted into 1994 and became a model for other anti-road campaigns throughout England, even though the Twyford Downs campaign itself failed. In the many-year campaign, activists utilized a wide array of tactics, ranging from non-violent civil disobedience to covert and unreported acts of ecotage.³²

Ecotage during the Twyford downs campaign was controversial. In 1992, at the EF (UK) national gathering, they decided to abandon the tactic of ecotage. Instead EF (UK) decided, to 'neither condemn nor condone'³³ ecotage but instead allow the formation of an "Earth Liberation Front, which would promote a radical political agenda and repertoires of sabotage."³⁴ The hope of the ELF founders was that "illegal action would aid the earth liberation movement in exactly the same way similar actions had helped the animal liberation movement."³⁵

²⁷ In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* the four eco-raiders planned to blow up the Glen Canyon Dam, a controversial dam project. One of the first EF actions was a symbolic "cracking" of the dam, where activists snuck onto the top of the dam and dropped a large "crack" banner that made it look, from a distance that the dam had cracked. Interestingly, this banner was dropped while Ed Abbey was speaking to the crowd in front.

²⁸ Even to this day there is a section in the EF journal entitled "wolves and poodles" that details the exploits lone-wolf ecoteurs and also the exploits of poodles – people who support or promote a corporate environmental line.

²⁹ Christopher Manes discusses the laws passed throughout the northwest in *Green Rage* chapter 2.

³⁰ Christopher Manes details the types of laws and the reasons for them fully in *Green Rage* in chapter 1.

³¹ This was the second attempt to start an Earth First movement in the UK. Chris Laughton a physics graduate student, first attempted in 1987 to form a UK chapter of EF. Even though he was active throughout the radical environmental and anarchist communities he was not able to find enough people to organize effectively with and in less than a year the group disbanded.

³² For a more detailed analysis of the anti-roads movement look at Derek Wall, *Earth First!: and the anti- Roads Movement: Radical Environmentalism & Comparative Social Movements*.

³³ "To Cast a Giant Shadow: Radical Ecology and Its practical Implementation through the ELF" in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 2006), 59.

³⁴ Alexandra Plows, et al, "Covert Repertoires: Ecotage in the UK" *Social Movement Studies* 3, No. 2 (Oct. 2004): 202.

³⁵ Noel Molland, "A Spark that Ignited a Flame: The evolution of the Earth Liberation Front" in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 2006), 50.

The organizational structure, as well as the name, was borrowed from the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). The ALF formed in the 1970s and is commonly associated with the liberation of animals from laboratories and factory farms. The ALF adheres to three guiding principals, which the ELF emulated. The ELF version claims,

- 1) To cause as much economic damage as possible to a given entity that is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment and life for selfish greed and profit.
- 2) To educate the public on the atrocities committed against the environment and life.
- 3) To take all precautions against harming life.³⁶

Even though the ELF borrowed heavily from the ALF, it is wrong to view the groups as similar. The theories and arguments, as well as the concerns, expressed in the radical animal liberation movement oftentimes differ with the beliefs of the earth liberation movement. Though many activists, most notably Rod Coronado, have bridged the gap between the two movements, in general there is less of an anti-state and anarchist concern within the animal rights milieu. Since the formation of the ELF the line dividing the two movements has blurred, as the ALF has embraced a more militant and anarchistic stance.³⁷

The ELF (UK) failed to gain the popularity and influence that the ALF had achieved in Europe, in part because they rarely engaged in large-scale acts. Instead, they committed small-scale acts of what they called “pixieing.” As an example, during one EF (UK) campaign, while others engaged in a sit-in, “the Elves would be busy gluing the locks of the building. In another action Elves went to upscale supermarkets and filled shopping carts with meat and dairy intending to spoil the food before being found.

Their one large –scale action, a “night of action” waged against Fison, an English company that was draining peat bogs through the English countryside, resulted in nearly \$100,000 worth of damage. In only this action, did the ELF (UK) post a communiqué, published in *Green Anarchist*. It stated:

All our peat bogs must be preserved in their entirety, for the sake of the plants, animal and our national heritage. Cynically donating small amounts will do no good. The water table will drop, and the bog will dry out and die, unless it’s preserved fully. FISON MUST LEAVE ALL OF IT ALONE – NOW.³⁸

Shortly following the Fison action, members of the ELF published the journal *Terra-ist*; which detailed ecotage happening throughout the world. Through *Terra-ist*, green anarchist zines *Green Anarchist* and *Do or Die*, and a road show throughout Europe, the ideology spread. By 1996, actions of ecotage had been reported in most western European countries. That year also marked the end of the ELF (UK), as a group, and since then there have been no actions claimed by the group, and ethnographic research has shown “no evidence of a continued ELF presence.”³⁹

³⁶ Leslie James Pickering, 4.

³⁷ I believe that the increased militancy of the ALF is a result of activists, like Rod Coronado or Peter Young, who are actively connecting animal liberation and earth liberation to anarchist politics. I also think that a convergence is occurring between the two movements, which is typified by joint ALF/ELF actions.

³⁸ Ibid, 52.

³⁹ Alexandra Plows, et al, 203.

Coincidentally, in 1996, small groups of environmental activists started re-engaging in ecotage throughout North America. The first known ELF actions in North America occurred in British Columbia, Canada in June of 1995 by “The Earth Liberation Army.” They acted against trophy-hunting stores, which culminated in the arson of a British Colombian Guide Outfitter. It is also widely speculated that it was a similarly-minded group of activists that committed arson on Oct. 8th 1995 against the lumber company Weyerhaeuser in Alberta, Canada.

The presence of the ELF in the United States occurred during the spring of 1996 with small acts of vandalism throughout Oregon. Quickly the Elves in the Pacific Northwest escalated their tactics, as they started “pixieing” logging equipment. Before the first ELF (US) communiqué was ever written, in March 1997, ELF actions were reported throughout Michigan, Oregon, Washington, Northern California, and Indiana. The group’s ideology had spread from the Douglas-Fir forests of the Pacific Northwest to the industrial cities of the Great Lakes, and beyond (Table 2).

Table 2: ELF Attacks by Target 1996-2001⁴⁰

| Target | ELF Actions |
|---|--------------------|
| Logging and Related | 18 |
| Government facilities | 5 |
| Corporations | 33 |
| Symbols of global economy | 3 |
| Urban Sprawl/ Development | 30 |
| Genetic Engineering/Biotech | 14 |
| Facilities that threaten Animals | 6 |
| Total | 109 |

III. Towards a Revolutionary environmentalism: The Difference between the ELF and EF

According to Italian sociologist Alberto Melluci, “a social movement is not a unified ‘subject’ but always a composite action system, in which widely differing means, ends and forms of solidarity and organization converge in a more or less stable manner.”⁴¹ In other words, it is essential to understand the complexity of ideologies and tactics. The complexity and inherent diversity found in social movements prohibits neat organization and categorization. While this is true for all social movements, it is especially true within the environmental milieu. Environmental groups often share membership and this overlap blurs whatever boundaries exist. Because of overlap in both members and assumptions about the world, most studies treat smaller groups, such as the ELF, as extensions of larger groups, such as EF. This tendency is fallacious as an individual can engage in an animal rights protest for PETA in the morning and arson for the ALF in the cover of darkness, without the two groups being conflated.

Even though complexity and diversity of social movement’s make categorization difficult, it is also an important aspect of social science research. The term new social movements emerged

⁴⁰ Steven Leader and Peter Probst, “The Earth Liberation Front and Environmental Terrorism” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 4 (2003).

⁴¹ Alberto Melluci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 25

from studies of the peace, women's, and early environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. These new movements are based on identity politics; they reject Marxism; and are indifferent to class. In addition, these movements reject hierarchical-organization models and embrace consensus-based affinity groups. Finally, these groups embraced creative forms of political protest, such as street theater, non-violent direct action, and lifestyle changes.⁴²

EF is often, rightly, classified as a “new social movement.” For example, EF embraces non-hierarchical organizing structures, rejects Marxism and class-based politics. They also engage in non-violent civil disobedience and promote individual lifestyle changes. Unlike, EF, the ELF fails to fit within this categorization. The ELF does embrace non-hierarchical organizing structures, but do not reject class and do not believe in non-violence as a political strategy. The ELF fits more with an anarchist-organizing model than it does with new social movements one (Table 3).

I believe that the ELF represents a shift from EF towards a new anarchist movement. This new anarchist movement has its roots in the anarchist movement of the 19th and early 20th century. It takes its influence from Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Max Stirner, and follows the examples of the IWW, Alexander Berkman, and the Paris 1968. These new anarchist movement marks a return to class considerations, although class is not always primary, and also marks a shift away from identity and lifestyle issues. In addition, the scope of a new anarchist movement is greater than that of typical new social movements, often requiring systemic change. Finally, new anarchist movements reject a dogmatic adherence to non-violent direct action and instead embrace propaganda by the deed, when necessary.

Table 3: new social movements v. new anarchist movements in regards to EF and ELF

| | New social movements | Earth First | Earth Lib. Front | New anarchist movement |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Concerned with Class | No | No | Yes, but is not their central concern | Yes |
| Marxist | No | No | No | No |
| Based on issues of Identity | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Lifestyle issues | Yes | Yes | No, but consumption habits are seen as part of the problem | No |
| NVDA | Yes | Yes | No- Propaganda By the Deed | No- Propaganda By the Deed and strikes |
| Decentralized | Yes- Consensus based | Yes- consensus based | Yes- Cell | Yes – Cell/Affinity |
| Anti-political | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

What categorizing the ELF as the militant wing of EF accomplishes is to overstate the voice, and

⁴² Enrique Larana, et al, “Identities, Grievances, and New Social Movements” in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Larana, et al, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 6-8.

gives undue influence to the social ecologist and green anarchists involved in EF; this makes EF seem less deep ecological and increasingly more militant than it really is. Addressing the differences between EF and the ELF also highlights the difference between radical ecology and revolutionary environmentalism.

1. Radical Ecology and its influence on Earth First!

Carolyn Merchant defines radical ecology as encompassing social ecology, deep ecology, and what she refers to as spiritual ecology. To her, radical ecology “pushes social and ecological systems towards new patterns of production, reproduction, and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment.”⁴³ The defining characteristic of radical ecology is a belief in the intrinsic value of nature. Radical ecology becomes a big-tent theory that includes all green political theories that are opposed to anthropocentrism. Thus, radical ecology, “lacks a coherence as a theory and as a movement” and because of this, according to Merchant, “radical ecology has not brought about a worldwide socialist order,” which was its objective.⁴⁴ At its best, Merchant argues that radical ecology has shifted popular opinions regarding nature. In her discussion of radical ecology, it is also revealed that radical ecological movements reject violence and embrace non-violent direct action, lifestyle changes, and consciousness raising as political tactics.

Two main features of radical ecology can be extracted from Merchant’s work.⁴⁵ First is what Murray Bookchin called “lifestyle politics.” This includes, but is not limited to; concerns with dietary habits (vegetarianism) and consumer habits, as opposed to concerns over systemic power relationships. Second is an adherence to legal, or quasi-legal, tactics and non-violent direct action. EF, with its adherence to lifestyle politics and non-violent direct action, is an empirical example of a radical ecological group, as well as a new social movement.

Arne Ness, in addressing the importance of personal reflection, wrote a short article entitled “Deep Ecology and Lifestyle Politics.” This article is a list of “tendencies and attitudes” that most deep ecologists share. Included in this list are: “3. Anti-consumerism and minimization of personal property”, “23. Try to act resolutely and without cowardice in conflicts, but to remain non-violent in words and actions” and “25. Vegetarianism, total or partial.”⁴⁶ Murray Bookchin, in *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* argues that lifestyle concerns are “basically liberal, grounded in the myth of the fully autonomous individual whose claims to self-sovereignty are validated by axiomatic ‘natural rights,’ ‘intrinsic worth,’ or, on a more sophisticated level, an intuited Kantian transcendental ego that is generative of all knowable reality.”⁴⁷ The reason for this liberal bias, according to Bookchin, is that lifestyle concerns place the impetus for social change in individual choices; reifying individuals as the essential component of society. This individualist tradition of anarchism “bears a disdain for theory, with mystical, and primitivistic filiations that are generally too vague, intuitional, and even antirational to analyze directly. They are more properly symptoms than causes of the

⁴³ Carolyn Merchant, 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 237

⁴⁵ This is an argument made by Authors such as Steven Best, Anthony Nocella and Bron Taylor as well as Mark Somma.

⁴⁶ Arne Ness, “Deep Ecology and Lifestyle” in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston, Mass: Shambhala, 1995), 259-261.

⁴⁷ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: Unbridgeable Chasm* (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1995).

general drift toward a sanctification of the self as a refuge from the existing social malaise.”⁴⁸ In essence, lifestyle politics presumes social change will occur through changes in individual choices and habits. It thus rests on an egoist understanding of social relationships, which is an essential component of alienation and competition.⁴⁹

Non-violent direct action has also been the tactic de jour for EF and other new social movements. A current example, of this is the forest defense campaigns- see Warner Creek (1994-2006)⁵⁰, Fall Creek (1997-2001), Straw Devil (2003-2005), or Biscuit (2005).⁵¹ These campaigns have consisted of tree-sits, road blockades, soft-blockades, and the destruction of roads. Forest defense campaigns have two goals: the first is to slow down the destruction of an area, and allow legal Monkey-Wrenching to work. The second is to create a spectacle in the hope that public pressure will force legislation.⁵² In the last big forest defense campaign, the Biscuit campaign in 2005, well over 100 individuals were arrested at soft blockades, including countless actions consisting of elderly and pregnant women and children. In addition, armies of lawyers and lobbyists worked to alter public opinion.

In appealing to the federal government the activists are assuming that the federal government: 1) can be persuaded with moral arguments; 2) values human and natural concerns over monetary gain; and 3) that the legal and political systems are legitimate and responsive to public concerns. With the track record of the federal government, and the Forest Service in particular, it is no surprise at all that the Biscuit campaign failed- every proposed acre, and countless illegal ones, were cut.

2. *Revolutionary environmentalism and the ELF*

If radical ecology promotes lifestyle politics, self-reflection, non-violent direct action, and moral outrage as a mean of political change then revolutionary environmentalism believes that use of political violence is a legitimate and essential component of political change. They reject the non-violent creed of radical ecology, and instead “revolutionary environmentalists seek to counter forces of oppression with equally potent forms of resistance, and uses militant tactics when they are justified, necessary, and effective.”⁵³ Revolutionary environmentalism also rejects the Marxist praxis and identity politics of radical ecology. This is, according to Judi Bari in her article “Revolutionary environmentalism: biocentrism and Deep Ecology”, because “communism, socialism, and all other left ideologies that I know of speak only about redistributing the spoils of raping the earth more evenly among classes of humans.”⁵⁴ In

⁴⁸ IBID

⁴⁹ Post-Left anarchist critiques, especially Bob Black in *Anarchy After Leftism*, reject Bookchin’s argument against lifestyle anarchism. The general argument is that there is no such branch of anarchism as “lifestyle anarchism.” They also rejected his dualistic claim that anarchism is either “communalist” or “individualist” and instead argue that anarchism, unlike communism and liberalism, best mixes the two into a coherent school of thought. Even though these arguments are valid against his critique of “lifestyle anarchism” it does not dilute his critique of “lifestyle” argument for social change.

⁵⁰ See Tim Ingalsbee, *Earth First! Consciousness In Action In The Unfolding Of A New-Social-Movement*.

⁵¹ See Chaone Mallory, “Ecofeminism and Forest Defense in Cascadia: Gender, Theory and Radical Activism.”

⁵² “Lessons from the Tree Sitters,” *Green Anarchy* 20 (Summer 2005).

⁵³ Steven Best and Anthony Nocella, “A Fire in the Belly of the Beast: the emergence of revolutionary environmentalism” in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 2006), 21

⁵⁴ Judi Bari, “Revolutionary environmentalism: Biocentrism and Deep Ecology” *Alarm, a journal of revolutionary environmentalism*, 1995.

addition, Steven Best and Anthony Nocella, argue that revolutionary environmentalism must embrace, not only a concern with the natural world, but abolish capitalism and reject social domination. They recognize that lifestyle issues, such as “human psychologies” and “interpersonal relationships,” are symptomatic of the economic and social system destroying the earth.⁵⁵ Instead of placing the responsibility for change on activists and individuals, revolutionary environmentalism views itself as a collective struggle against capitalism and industrialism. Revolutionary environmentalism also “renounces reformist approaches that aim only to manage the symptoms of the global ecological crisis and never dare think to probe its underlying dynamics and causes. Revolutionary environmentalism seeks to end the destruction of nature and people, not merely to slow its pace, temper its effects, or plug holes in a dam set to burst.”⁵⁶

Derrick Jensen, an author and activist in Northern California, explains the difference between radical (Earth First!) and revolutionary (ELF) as a difference between symbolic and non-symbolic forms of action (Table 4). To Jensen, “a symbolic action is one primarily intended to convey a message. A non-symbolic action is one primarily intended to create some tangible change on its own.”⁵⁷ Symbolic actions are meant as spectacles, while non-symbolic actions are meant to foster change through direct political action. As, for instance, in the tree-sit campaigns in the Cascadian bioregion *symbolic actions assume a responsive and just government, and a morally astute public*. Some examples of symbolic acts are: letter writing campaigns, pie throwing, and mass protests. As an example of non-symbolic organization, Food Not Bombs addresses the issue of hunger by dumpstering and gathering food, and serving it in public settings. The group does not appeal to the government and the public through symbolic acts.

Jensen's distinction highlights one important aspect of anarchist revolutionary violence: violence should directly target the cause of the problem, and should not be used indiscriminately. However, Jensen's distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic is rigid and does not adequately address the fact that all forms of action are in some level symbolic. Since the “symbolic” and “non-symbolic” aspect seems overly rigid, I believe that a distinction between non-violent direct action and propaganda by the deed is more useful.

Carlo Pisane coined the origin of the term “propaganda by the deed” and wrote, “ideas spring from action and not the other way around.”⁵⁸ The tactic is best known through the actions of 19th and early 20th century anarchist militants who engaged in regicide and acts of political violence. Mikhail Bakunin, an avid supporter of propaganda by the deed, wrote,

All of us must now embark on stormy revolutionary seas, and from this very moment we must spread our principles, not with words but with deeds, for this is the most popular, the most potent, and the most irresistible form of propaganda. Let us say less about principles, whenever circumstances and revolutionary policy demand it – i.e., during our momentary weakness in relation to the enemy – but let us at all times and under all circumstances be adamantly consistent in our action. For in this lies the salvation of the revolution.⁵⁹

In this statement Bakunin lays down the main tenet of “propaganda by the deed”; that actions speak louder than words. Propaganda by the deed not only attempts to address a real-world

⁵⁵ Steven Best and Anthony Nocella, 21.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 21

⁵⁷ Derrick Jensen, *Endgame, vol. 2: Resistance* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006), 771

⁵⁸ Carlo Pisano, “On Revolution.”

⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis” in *Bakunin on Anarchy* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1972).

concern, such as removing a despot from power, but also, serves as an example. This original term of "propaganda by the deed" refers, not only actions of political violence, but also other forms of direct action.⁶⁰ Non-violent forms of propaganda by the deed can include: Food not Bombs, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense's social programs and open carry-programs, ect.

Rejecting reformist tactics and promoting propaganda by the deed, is not enough to make a group revolutionary. According to Mark Somma "tactics such as direct action and ecotage may be 'radical,' they are not revolutionary because they cannot, by themselves, bring about a qualitatively new social system. Such transformation requires a *new social movement* and a *positive vision of a new society*."⁶¹ Thus revolutionary movements must not only reject reformism and promote a radical new vision of a "good society," they must have an adequate means for enacting that change. Thus revolutionary ideologies have three basic requirements:

- 1) A rejection of reformism as a political tactic for revolutionary tactics
- 2) A coherent radical political philosophy
- 3) A practical means of enacting political change

I contend that the ELF is a nascent revolutionary environmental movement.⁶² They reject reformism and symbolic actions and embrace propaganda by the deed, which has been discussed in detail already, and are forging a coherent ideology that mixes deep ecology, social ecology and green anarchism. This ideology not only makes a radical critique of existing society, but also formulates a compelling case for why ecotage can bring about lasting change. The last two segments will be discussed in the next section's analysis of ELF communiqués from 1997-2002.

Table 4: Differences between Radical and Revolutionary environmentalism

| | Radical Ecology | Revolutionary environmentalism |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Type of Actions promoted | Non-violent direct action | Propaganda by the deed |
| Legal status of actions | Legal | Extra-legal |
| Form of action | Mass based | Guerilla |
| Level of analysis | Individual | Systemic |
| Means of change | Personal reflection | Coercion |

IV. The ELF Syncretic Ideology

⁶⁰ Some propaganda by the deed theorists, such as Bakunin and George Sorel, argued that violence was not only legitimate, but also essential for remaking society. Bakunin and Sorel's statements are similar to that of Franz Fanon. Fanon believed that "violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the ends." In all these theories, political violence was necessary, not only to destroy the old order, but also in changing peoples psychologies.

⁶¹ Mark Somma, "Revolutionary Environmentalism: an Introduction" in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 2006), 38.

⁶² I use the term nascent revolutionary movement because I do not believe that the ELF is fully a revolutionary environmental movement. They are at the starting phases of it, as is the ALF, but what both groups are missing is a positive (creative) component to their theories. Both the ALF and the ELF have strong, and influential critiques of modern day society, they also have a praxis for creating change. What they are missing is an understanding of what the change will look like; they need to figure out a future good society.

Between 1997 and 2002 ELF cells distributed forty-six communiqués for actions ranging from petty vandalism to arson and animal liberation. Some of the communiqués are descriptive and admit responsibility, and the majority offer insight and reasoning for why they engaged in the action. Since the ELF is a leaderless resistance movement, without central authority, it requires a strong ideology in order to attract and retain supporters.

What is interesting is not that the ELF activists embrace aspects of deep ecology, social ecology and green anarchism at different times; it is that they often mix aspects of the ideologies in a syncretic way, forming a new ideology that differs and transcends the parts that comprise it. This development may be an example of what Steven Skowronek calls, “ideological shift.”⁶³ This term differentiates ideological appropriation from ideological syncretism.

To show how the ELF is forging a new ideology, I will look at five of the most influential and detailed communiqués.⁶⁴

a. *Beltane communiqué, July 1997*

Welcome to the struggle of all species to be free. We are the burning rage of this dying planet. The war of greed ravages the Earth and species die out every day. The ELF works to scare the rich, and to undermine the foundations of the state. We embrace social and deep ecology as a practical resistance movement. We have to show the enemy that we are serious and about defending what is sacred. Together we have teeth and claws to match our dreams. Our greatest weapons are imagination and the ability to strike when least expected...⁶⁵

The Beltane communiqué was the first in the United States. This communiqué was written in connection with actions throughout Oregon during 1997. The name Beltane comes from the ancient Gaelic holiday that marks the beginning of the summer, and was commonly associated with massive bonfires and elf and faerie imagery. The use of Beltane in the communiqué is similar to ELF (UK) appropriations of mythical and pagan images. For example, the original ELF (UK) sabotage manual was titled, *The Book of Bells*, which was a play on a Gaelic book *The Book of Kells*.

This communiqué introduces the ELF as a unique group that bridges the gap between social and deep ecology. The statement, “the ELF works to scare the rich, and to undermine the foundations of the state” resonates with the political philosophy of Murray Bookchin. Unlike traditional deep ecology statements, this appears to place a larger burden on the evils of the state. While the statement, “we have to show the enemy that we are serious about defending what is sacred” goes against social ecology's rejection of spiritualism and sacredness. Where as Bookchin believed that spiritualist's, “for all their celebrations of Mother Earth, mystical ecologies generally deal with ‘her’ as though ‘she’ had withered breasts and had lost ‘her’ powers of reproduction.”⁶⁶ What this communiqué does is mix social ecology's main concerns with the main concerns of

⁶³ Steven Skowronek, “The Reassociation of Ideas and Purpose: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition” *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (August 2006): 385-399

⁶⁴ It is important to note that because of the non-hierarchical and cell based structure of the ELF, understanding any collective ideology is difficult and can only be understood by examining communiqué's.

⁶⁵ Skowronek, 18.

⁶⁶ Murray Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* New York: Black Rose Press, 1991, li-lij

deep ecology; forming a popular front against “the war of greed.”

b. Rhode Island, December 19, 2000

...Our earth is being murdered by greed corporate and personal interests. The rape of the Earth puts everyone’s life at risk due to global warming, ozone depletion, toxic chemicals, ect. Unregulated population growth is also a direct result of urban sprawl. There are over 6 billion people on this planet of which almost a third are either starving or living in poverty. Building homes for the wealthy should not be a priority...The time has come to decide what is more important: The planet and the healthy of its population or the profits of those who destroy it...we are but the symptoms of a corrupt society on the brink of ecological collapse...⁶⁷

In the second of half of 2000, the ELF repeatedly struck against housing developments throughout Long Island. This communiqué is attached to a December 19th action, and is the most detailed communiqué associated with this string of incidents. Their argument has two facets to it. First, it states the dangers of over-population. This concern is historically aligned with deep ecology and green anarchism. Deep ecology, and early EF in particular, viewed overpopulation as one of the main ecological problems facing the world. Some early EF activists argued that overpopulation is depleting natural resources and is the primary cause of environmental destruction. Social ecologists and ecofeminists called over-population arguments racist and classist, because they often criticize the poor in the “developing world,” and sexist, since women’s reproductive cycles becomes the culprit.

The second facet of their argument is the claim that class and capitalism are driving urban sprawl. The ELF cell states that “building homes for the wealthy is not a priority...the time has come to decide what is more important: the planets and the health of its populations or the profits of those who destroy it.” Finally, they claim they are the “symptoms of a corrupt society on the brink of ecological collapse.” Since urban sprawl and over-population are destroying the world and making an ecological collapse eminent, the only acceptable response is ending urban sprawl. To them, this means abolishing capitalism and civilization.

c. Gifford Pinchot National Forest, WA, July 27, 2001

...We want to be clear that all oppression is linked, just as we are all linked, and we believe in a diversity of tactics to stop earth rape and end all domination. Together we can destroy this patriarchal nightmare, which is currently in the form of techno-industrial global capitalism. We desire an existence in harmony with the wild based on equality, love, and respect. We stand in solidarity with all resistance to this system, especially those who are in prison, disappeared, raped, tortured...we are all survivors and we will not stop!

The forest service was notified of this action BEFORE this years logging season so we could take all precautions to assure worker safety. We must ask why they never made this public. We were trying to let them cancel this sale quietly. However, as bosses

⁶⁷ Leslie James Pickering, 35-36.

jeopardize worker's lives every day we realized that we needed to make this public...⁶⁸

Timber sales have been a popular target for ELF cells. This communiqué concerned a tree-spiking action, on July of 2001, in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. First, the communiqué takes a common deep-ecology concern; that humans should live in “harmony with the wild based on equality, love, and respect.” This is counter to green anarchist beliefs of rewilding. In the green-anarchist pamphlet, “Beyond Veganism,” the author argues that eating, and killing, is natural and that veganism, in promoting non-violence, is oppressive and domesticates. The concept of living “in harmony with the wild based on equality, love, and respect” does not follow the green anarchist belief in survival. On the other hand, this cell combines this deep ecological concern with a green anarchist concern with stopping the “patriarchal nightmare” that is expressed, currently, through “techno-industrial global capitalism.” This expands the deep ecology concern to encompass the systemic problems of industry and technology and, by proxy, civilization.

The next paragraph in the communiqué expands the argument by claiming solidarity with workers. The quote “as bosses jeopardize worker's lives every day we realized that we needed to make this public” is closer to Judi Bari or Murray Bookchin than it is to John Zerzan or Arne Ness. This concern with workers rights, which is even better expressed in ELF actions in solidarity with 3rd world workers, gets combined, with a green anarchist critique of techno-industrial civilization and concern with being wild.

d. Minneapolis, MN, January 26, 2002

... We are fed up with capitalists like Cargill and major universities like the U of M who have long sought to develop and refine technologies, which seek to exploit and control nature to the fullest extent under the guise of progress. Biotechnology is only one new expression of this drive. For the end of capitalism and the mechanization of our lives...⁶⁹

Genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, have been a concern for environmental activists for decades. GMOs are seen as potentially destructive for the environment and potentially carcinogenic for humans. In addition, once GMOs are introduced into the environment, they are impossible to control. Because of this, activists have called for the immediate ban.⁷⁰ When that does not happen, often times the only option is the destruction of laboratories and test sites.⁷¹ This ELF communiqué, an arson at a University of Minnesota research lab, is typical of ELF communiqués issued in conjunction with GMOs.

In general, the anti-GMO actions of the ELF are the most openly green anarchist. The ELF argues that GMO's are an assault on nature and justifications of technological solutions. In

⁶⁸ Ibid, 50-51.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁷⁰ GMO banning, or labeling, has been a rallying cry in the environmental community for decades. The greatest successes have been the banning of GMO products throughout the European Union and many Latin American and African countries. In the United States, on the other hand, the anti-GMO has been relatively ineffective. This ineffectiveness does not mean that GMO activism is not important to American activists, on the contrary, GMO issues have become an important component of the Green Party US platform and has been central to EF activists for decades.

⁷¹ Alexandra Plows, et al, p. 205.

addition, the GMO industry is interwoven with issues of industry and capitalism. Because of this, the only way to liberate nature is to abolish capitalism and the mechanization of scientific and industrial “progress.” However, the communiqué does not mention civilization as being a culprit. Similar to the communiqué from December 19, 2000 (section IV, b), there is no open rejection of civilization. Instead the civilization arguments are obfuscated and only visible because they deal with issues green anarchists confront.

e. August 11, 2002

...Their blatant disregard for the sanctity of life and its perfect Natural balance, indifference to strong public opposition, and the irrevocable acts of extreme violence they perpetrate against the Earth daily are all inexcusable, and will not be tolerated. IF they persist in their crimes against life, they will be met with maximum retaliation.

In pursuance of justice, freedom, and equal consideration for all innocent life across the broad, segments of this global revolutionary movement are no longer limiting their revolutionary potential by adhering to a flawed, inconsistent “non-violent” ideology. While innocent life will never be harmed in any action we must undertake, where it is necessary, we will no longer hesitate to pick up the gun to implement justice, and provide the needed protection for our planet that decades of legal battles, pleading, protest, and economic sabotage have failed so drastically to achieve.

The diverse efforts of this revolutionary force cannot be contained, and will only continue to intensify as we are brought face to face with the oppressor in inevitable, violent confrontation. We will stand up and fight for our lives against this iniquitous civilization until its reign of TERROR is forced to an end – by any means necessary.⁷²

This communiqué is controversial and was immediately denounced by mainstream environmental groups. Some activists believed that the FBI forged the communiqué in order to undermine the radical environmental movement. This communiqué critiques non-violence, one of the guiding principles of radical ecology. In doing so, it denounces non-violent political tactics such as tree-sits and protests, and even ecotage as failures. They argue that with the failure of non-violence, the only political tactic left is political violence. This fatwa will not be against “non-innocent” within society and will only target those directly profiting from destroying people and the earth. This attempt to reclaim the moral high ground, even while justifying political violence, is reminiscent of 19th century anarchist propaganda by the deed claims. As an example, Emma Goldman’s long-time partner, Alexander Berkman, justified his shooting of industrialist Henry Clay Frick as being in defense of workers. It was an act of pre-emptive self-defense.

This communiqué is also the only one that openly confronts “civilization.” Unlike previous communiqués, which allude to anti-civilizational arguments, this communiqué openly calls civilization, rather than capitalism or the state, as the target. This civilizational argument, because of its scope, requires the movement to be global and therefore portrays the ELF as a

⁷² Leslie James Pickering, 54-55.

member of a broader revolutionary movement. The difficulty of traditional green-anarchist theory was finding a way to practically attack civilization while retaining an individualist approach. This communiqué does something that traditional green anarchist theories don't, and claims solidarity with all forces fighting injustice. It also expands traditional green anarchist politics from "insurrectionary" to guerilla.

f. Their Syncretic Ideology

These communiqués are examples of a political ideology that cannot be defined as deep ecological, social ecologist or green anarchist. This ideology combines tenets of all these theories and formulates a new, broader, ideology. The ELF ideology connects the extraction of resources, and destruction of the natural environment, with the state and civilization. Civilization uses domestication to tame living entities and, through force, extracts economic value from life. The practical way of destroying this system is through attacking industries, and their peripheral industries, that are essential to its maintenance. The ELF strikes against forestry and resource extraction. By cutting off the flow of resources and attacking destructive industries, the ELF is striking at what they see as the crux of civilization. Unlike Marxism, and unlike classical anarchism, the ELF does not portray any group as being the key actor in revolution and instead places the impetus for change on those willing to act.

In addition, the ELF communiqués argues that:

- 1) Capitalism must be abolished in order for nature to be liberated.
- 2) Workers are harmed by capitalism and are not the enemy of the natural world.
- 3) Environmentally destructive industries – logging, mining, construction, industrial agriculture, and biotechnology –are essential for the maintenance of the state and need to be abolished.
- 4) Humans are animals, and should relish their animal instincts and natural spontaneity.
- 5) All living entities should be wild, and free from coercion.
- 6) Earth liberation, animal liberation, and human liberation are all intertwined into one revolutionary struggle.

In forming their arguments, the ELF is embracing concern with worker rights and social justice struggles and combining it with a general hostility towards civilization. The ELF rejects the green-anarchist critiques of unionism and workerism, and also Bookchin's pronouncements against technological determinism and primitivism. In this, the ELF is forging a flexible and fluid ideology. This fluidity and flexibility allow proponents of social ecology to engage in actions to protect workers, while also working in concert with attempts to undermine civilization.

This flexibility might be a direct result of the ELF's organizational structure and rejection of hierarchical authority. It also differentiates them from many failed US revolutionary movements. For example, the Weather Underground, another revolutionary US group, adhered to a Maoist ideology and a very structured hierarchy. This inflexibility, in their ideology and their organizational structure, made the group unable to respond to the end of the Vietnam War. Although the group remained active until 1977, for their last few years the group was marginalized and almost completely forgotten. The flexibility of the ELF ideology should allow their ideology to shift according to the political climate and allow them to remain politically influential for longer.

V. Conclusion

Beyond just being an interesting group, the ELF is also the most well-known social movement embracing anarchist politics. Since the collapse of state socialism, and the rise of the post-industrial economy, in the western world, it is generally accepted that liberal identity politics dominate political discourse. The ELF, and other organizations such as the ALF, Bring the Ruckus, CopWatch, and Food Not Bombs, are moving away from liberal identity politics and instead embracing anarchist politics. This increased influence of anarchism on leftist politics and on social movements, in particular, may represent a shift away from state-Marxism and from liberal identity politics.

In addition, the ELF, and to some extent the ALF, reflect the unique history of the American environmental movement. From its roots American environmentalism is egoist and individualist. For example, in Thoreau's transcendentalism and Edward Abbey's novels, the individual takes precedence over a community, and individual self-reliance and adventure are ideals. Thus, the American environmental movement has historically been connected with individualist and egoist politics. Because of this, it has more in common with anarchism, especially the individualist anarchism of Max Stirner and George Woodcock, than it does with Marxism. In addition, the American environmental movement has historically been at odds with Marxism and the labor union movement more generally. Philosophically, environmentalists have opposed the Marxist concern with production and reject his belief in unlimited economic and technological progress, which according to Ed Abbey "is the ideology of the cancer cell."

Environmentalists have also been placed at odds with the labor movement, often through media's framing of the issues; and have endured bitter battles over jobs vs. the environment. Though some attempts have been made to connect environmental issues and labor concerns, most notably by Judi Bari during Redwood Summer, ultimately any collaboration has been short-term and tactical. This separation of environmentalism and Marxism is unique for social movements,⁷³ and because of it the rise, and importance, of eco-anarchism to the environmental movement should come as no surprise.

Finally, new social movements and new anarchist movements, as well as radical and revolutionary groups, have different beliefs and tactics and should be studied differently. To critique a group like the ELF for not having a positive impact on "public opinion polls,"⁷⁴ or to use Kantian and Gandhian theories to formulate an ethic for the ELF,⁷⁵ misses the meaning of the group. The ELF does not wish to alter public opinion, to lobby politicians; nor do they embrace Kantian or Gandhian understandings of violence. Critiquing the group using these theories reveals hostility to the opinions of group members and is an act of either resentment or ignorance.

If the ELF is not Kantian and not interested in public opinion polls what are they interested in?

⁷³ The vast majority of left leaning social movements, for example the Black, Latino, Asian, power movements, the women's movement, the peace movement, and even the queer rights movement have their roots in Marxism or state-socialism.

⁷⁴ Amy M. Happ, *Media Coverage of Radical Environmental Organizations: A Case Study of the Earth Liberation Front*, a masters thesis argued against ELF actions on the basis that they fail to accomplish their goal; to alter public opinion and influence the mass public.

⁷⁵ Steve Vanderheiden, "Eco-terrorism or Justified Resistance? Radical Environmentalism and the "War on Terror" applies a Kantian ethic to the ELF and attempts to explain when an action could be deemed "morally ethical."

The ELF targets environmentally exploitative industries, which they claim, are essential to the maintenance of capitalism and civilization. Their goal is the destruction of the state, the abolition of capitalism and the end of western civilization. Derrick Jensen, in his *Endgame* series, discusses the difficulty of destroying civilization. He writes,

Bringing down civilization is millions of different actions performed by millions of different people...it is everything from comforting battered women to confronting politicians and CEOs. It is everything from filing lawsuits to blowing up dams. It is everything from growing ones own food to liberating animals in factory farms to destroying genetically engineered crops and physically stopping those who perpetuate genetic engineering...it is destroying the capacity of those in power to exploit those around them. In some circumstances this involved education. In some situations this involves undercutting their physical power, for example by destroying physical infrastructure...in some circumstances it involves assassination.⁷⁶

Jensen here realizes the enormity of the task and that it requires a wide range of tactics and people. It is impossible for one group to accomplish that task. A coherent revolutionary environmental movement must realize that the task of bring about the collapse of civilization does not rest on a vanguard or small group but on a large, broad-based movement. If they do this, they can, at best, speed up the impending collapse and hopefully save some of the natural world in the process.

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⁷⁶ Derrick Jensen, *Endgame, Vol. 1: The Problem of Civilization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006), 252.

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