

TESTIMONY OF RICHARD B. BERMAN

**Before the U. S. House of Representatives,
Committee on Resources,
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health**

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ECOTERRORISM, ITS CONNECTIONS TO ANIMAL-RIGHTS TERRORISM, AND THEIR COMMON ABOVE-GROUND SUPPORT SYSTEM

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Richard Berman. I am the Executive Director of the Center for Consumer Freedom, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC. The Center does not accept and has never received government funds.

On behalf of American restaurant operators and food producers, I would like to thank you for holding this hearing today. Eco-terrorism is indeed alive and well in the United States of America, and it shares a common heritage with violent animal-rights extremism. These radical movements have been responsible for well over 1,000 documented criminal acts in the U.S., most of which would be prosecuted as felonies if the perpetrators could be brought to justice.

I am not talking about peaceful protest, pickets, sign waving, slogan chanting, or forms of civil disobedience that are protected by the First Amendment. Rather, America's present environmental and animal-rights terrorists have committed arsons, assaults, vandalism on a massive scale, and a host of other property crimes that cripple food producers and resource providers, and occasionally lay waste to entire restaurants.

On September 11th of last year, on the very day America mourned the loss of thousands of lives to foreign terrorists, our own home-grown version (the Earth Liberation Front *and* the Animal Liberation Front, known as "ELF" and "ALF") took joint credit for firebombing a McDonald's restaurant in Tucson, Arizona.

There is no doubt now, and the FBI concurs, that the Earth Liberation Front is associated with the Animal Liberation Front. Special Agent David Szady (now the U.S. counterintelligence executive) has told CNN that "by any sense or any definition, this is a true domestic terrorism group, that uses criminal activity to further their political agenda."

During the past three years alone, ELF and ALF have claimed responsibility for smashing bank windows, torching a chicken feed truck, burning a horse corral at a Bureau of Land Management facility, firebombing dealer lots full of sport utility vehicles, destroying valuable scientific laboratory equipment and many years worth of irreplaceable research documents, "spiking" trees in the Pacific Northwest, and even setting bombs under meat delivery trucks.

There should be no sympathy for intentionally committed felonies of this magnitude. Eco-terror and animal-rights crimes have become everyday events in America, yet they are among our most under-reported and least-punished offenses.

Members of the Subcommittee, on rare occasions the criminals responsible for these violent and unlawful

acts are captured. Just two weeks ago a pair of animal-rights terrorists were sentenced to prison terms for attempting to blow up a dairy truck near San Jose, California. They were caught red-handed, with home-made bombs just as deadly as those being exploded by other terrorists in the Middle East. But the vast majority of crimes like these go unpunished. The underground ELF and ALF even have the gall to brag publicly about their felonies. ALF actually released a report in January, claiming responsibility for 137 crimes in 2001, and causing an estimated \$17.3 million in damage.

ALF and ELF won't stop with damage to people and businesses with whom they disagree. Rather, they are aggressively recruiting new criminals to their vicious gang. Incredibly, the group's leaders have begun to distribute "how-to" manuals on the Internet, describing how to build bombs and incendiary devices, how to destroy fields of genetically-engineered food crops, and how to commit "arson," "thievery," and other felonies without leaving clues at the crime scene. There is even a volume on the easiest way to sink a ship.

Any 10-year-old with a computer can download much of this reading material. For a few dollars and the cost of postage, ALF "spokesperson" David Barbarash will mail the rest of the materials to anyone who asks. Mr. Chairman, I have submitted a copy of Mr. Barbarash's disturbing catalog for the record.

Equally troubling is the extent to which some eco-terrorists and animal-rights criminals have managed to garner support, both philosophical and financial, from above-ground activist organizations, including those that enjoy the same tax benefits as our nation's churches and universities.

Between 1994 and 1995, for instance, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals gave over \$70,000 to an Animal Liberation Front criminal named Rodney Coronado, who was convicted of arson, a felony, in connection with the \$1.7 million firebombing of a Michigan State University research facility. This amount, by the way, is more than ten times the total that the same organization (PETA) devoted to animal shelters during those two years. In addition, both PETA and its president, Ingrid Newkirk, are acknowledged financial supporters of an organization called *No Compromise*, which operates on behalf of, and for the "underground" supporters of the Animal Liberation Front.

PETA raised over \$15 million last year from the general public, all of it tax-exempt. When will PETA be held accountable?

Another eco-criminal, Dave Foreman, pled guilty in 1991 to felony conspiracy in a plot to blow up the power lines of three nuclear power generating stations. Mr. Foreman was a co-founder of the radical "Earth First!" organization, the group from which the Earth Liberation Front split during a 1992 meeting in the United Kingdom. Among its other claims to fame, Earth First! actually published the newsletter articles (in the *Earth First! Journal*) from which "Unabomber" Ted Kaczinsky chose his last two victims.

An organization called the Ruckus Society was started by another Earth First! co-founder named Mike Roselle. This group was largely responsible for the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle, which ended in mass rioting and the destruction of Starbucks and McDonald's restaurants. The Ruckus Society trains young activists in the techniques of "monkeywrenching" which, when applied, result in property crimes of enormous financial cost.

The Ruckus Society and the Rainforest Action Network (another outfit founded by Mr. Roselle) are tax-exempt organization that have enjoyed contributions from such mainstream sources as Ted Turner and Ben & Jerry's. When will this breeding ground for environmental criminals be held accountable?

Ruckus, by the way, also gets funding from a San Francisco outfit called the Tides Foundation, which distributes other foundations' money while shielding the identity of the actual donors. Our tax law permits this sort of money-laundering. If the public is prevented from learning where a tax-exempt organization like the Ruckus Society gets their money, then the legal loopholes that permit foundations like Tides to operate as it does should be closed.

Mr. Chairman, these are all serious charges that I am making, and I urge this Committee to fully investigate the damage that ALF, ELF, and other like-minded terrorist groups have caused to American businesses, American livelihoods, and the American psyche. I would also urge the appropriate Congressional committee to explore the tax-exempt status of groups that have helped to fund - directly or indirectly - these domestic terrorists.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

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