

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

Witness Testimony

Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health,
Oversight Hearing on "Public and Private Resource Management
And Protection Issues in the National Forest Systems"
Tuesday, May 18, 1999
Committee Room 1334, Longworth HOB
Testimony of Teresa Platt
Executive Director of Fur Commission USA
Chairwoman Chenoweth, Committee Members and Concerned Citizens:

Thank you for allowing me to address you today. Fur Commission USA is a non-profit trade association representing over 600 mink and fox farming families on over 400 farms in 31 states. Fur farmers, along with trappers, retailers and our support industries, have been subjected to persistent terrorist attacks by the same people claiming responsibility for 1998's destruction at Vail, Colorado, which resulted in \$12 million of damage on Forest Service land. As victims of terrorism, either in the name of animal rights or the environment, we join the ranks of the beef, poultry, dairy, timber, mining and recreation industries, wildlife managers, research scientists, zoos, aquariums and all others who have been victimized.

As everyone is aware, Earth Liberation Front (ELF), the sister group of Animal Liberation Front (ALF), took credit for the fires at Vail, claiming its intention was to "save" the Canada lynx, which is, of course, native to Canada and under the management of the Canadian government. Many people are not aware that ELF's next action, after the arson attack in Vail, was directed at the family farm of Tom and Carol Pipkorn of Powers, Michigan. On October 26, between 3 and 5 a.m., ELF terrorists claimed responsibility for releasing 5,000 domesticated mink. Over a hundred neighbors helped collect the animals, minimizing the damages. If not for the efforts of these good neighbors, sixty years' of sweat and toil in building this family business would have come to naught. [Letter from Tom and Carol Pipkorn at www.furcommission.com/news/newsD4.htm and *USA Today* article "Terror on the Beasts' Behalf" by Traci Watson at www.furcommission.com/news/newsC3.htm.]

In claiming responsibility for the release, ELF stated, "As corporate destroyers burn in the west, wildlife nations will be liberated in the north, Earth Liberation Front." [Animal Liberation

Frontline-News, www.animal-liberation.net]

Over the last decade, fur farmers have suffered dozens of attacks with ALF and ELF taking credit, either individually or jointly. Thursday, August 20, 1998, cages were opened on a domesticated fox farm in Guttenberg, Iowa. ALF took credit, stating, "This action was done in solidarity with the warriors of the Chatham 3" in reference to three people arrested in connection with a 1997 incident at a fur farm in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. ALF's "communique", as it calls its public announcements, ends with "Our brothers' and sisters' forced inactivity will not abate the ALF's resistance against the capitalist death machine."

On October 21, 1998, our fur farmers received a threat from the ultimate enforcement arm of ALF and ELF, the so-called "Justice Department," which stated "Any fur farmers or animal abusers who use violence against activists will suffer full retribution. The ALF have a clear policy of adherence to non-violence. We do not." [www.animal-liberation.net/news/98/981021c1.html]

The Justice Department has claimed responsibility for hundreds of actions in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. A London newspaper, *The Independent* characterized the Justice Department's bombing campaign as, and I quote, "...the most sustained and sophisticated bombing campaign in mainland Britain since the IRA was at its height", end quote and even speculated that, quote, "a more accurate role model of JD's relationship to ALF might be the extremely violent Irish National Liberation Army, which broke away from the IRA."

According to an Animal Liberation Frontline Justice Department Fact Sheet [www.animal-liberation.net/about/media/jd.html],

"By utilizing a combination of economic sabotage, and live liberations, the Animal Liberation Front achieved what other methods have not while adhering to nonviolence. A separate idea was established that decided animal abusers [responsible animal owners included - editor] had been warned long enough. Animals had suffered long enough-the time has come for abusers to have but a taste of the fear and anguish their victims suffer on a daily basis.

"The Justice Department first sent devices to bloodsport supporters [that's hunters and fishermen - editor] on Oct. 6, 1993, which was only the beginning. The Justice Department fully supports The A.L.F. in nonviolent direct action. However, they see another path open to directly change the fate of animals slated to die. That path involves removing any barriers between legal and illegal, violent and nonviolent. As convicted Justice Department activist, Gurj Aujla, explains, "I think we need to all ask ourselves what works, and then go from there, let's not start from a position that violence is wrong, or law-breaking is wrong. Let's just

honestly examine what works. These examples clearly prove that the Justice Department does work...

"The Justice Department in Canada, began a campaign against hunting guide outfitters across B.C. and Alberta starting January 1996. 65 envelopes with rat poison covered razor blades, taped inside the opening edge were sent to these hunting guides. The success of this campaign can be measured with the following sentence; David Fyfe, a Vancouver Island big-game guide outfitter, has stopped abusing animals after receiving the devices."

"Animal abusers" and "Earth abusers", to use the terminology of ALF, ELF and their terrorist ilk, are anyone who owns, uses or depends on animals or the Earth, directly or indirectly. That is ALL of society.

Background and fertile ground

I do not want to spend time giving you a laundry list of terrorist actions that are easily found on the Internet and through any FBI office. I do, however, want to point out that although we tend to think of animal rights terrorism and eco-terrorism as being recent English exports, actions in the U.S. go back over twenty years.

One of the most public actions, little investigated by the press, was the 1975 assassination attempt on President Ford by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, supporter of Charles Manson. Reason? Saving the Earth. Fromme had a hit list of corporate targets in her apartment when she was arrested. Her roommate, Sandra Good, served time for sending death threats to the heads of corporations she felt were responsible for destroying the Earth. [*American Assassins: The Darker Side of Politics* by James W. Clarke.]

In 1997, the State of California granted 501c3 non-profit status to a group called ATWA, Air, Trees, Water, Animals. Articles of Incorporation state ATWA is organized for "scientific and education purposes," to "proactively engage ecological and environmental issues in the public interest." In 1998, Sandra Collins, a.k.a. Sandra Good, joined the group as an officer.

ATWA's website includes a logo with a swastika incorporated into it. On the home page, Charles Manson laments, "Life is dying faster each day and there is zero, no one who will pick it up to try. The last people who picked it up to fix it was killed (swastika)."
[www.atwa.com/atwa.htm]

Although we all support the right to free speech in this country, I question why the citizens of the United States have given tax exempt benefits to this corporation. Is the I.R.S. not watching?

Straight Edgers, those who eschew drinking, alcohol, and the use of animal products, found

fertile ground for this philosophy in Salt Lake City, Utah. Straight Edge spawned Hate Edge, an offshoot gang, whose intolerant members attacked anyone who was not "pure" enough. Salt Lake City has found itself the center of a crime wave that includes the 1997 fire bombing of our farmers' feed co-op with over \$800,000 in damages plus attacks on leather shops, restaurants and minorities. Several young men are now spending time in jail for embracing a flawed philosophy that is gaining a following in urban areas across the land as people lose contact with the Earth.

After years of violent acts committed in the name of saving the Earth, we need to question what causes industrial societies to foster a movement that attacks the producers who provide us with food, clothing and shelter.

Putting it in perspective

Often when reviewing press reports on the actions of animal rights terrorists and environmental terrorists, I hear law enforcement and government representatives state, "We agree with their goals but disagree with their tactics."

So what are the goals of these terrorists, and how desirable are they in reality? Although much has changed in the last million years, some things have remained constant. Water, undrinkable salt water to boot, still covers 75% of the Earth's surface. About 10% of the landmass - or just 2.5% of the planet - can support agriculture to feed and clothe us. The other 97.5% of the planet can support grazers and predators and birds and fish, animals which consume what are to us inedible plants and animal life and convert them to food and clothing for our use - but we must take the lives of these animals to reap these benefits. The domestication of animals over the last ten thousand years has contributed greatly to the Earth's ability to provide for us all.

Animal rights terrorists are concerned with all animals while eco-terrorists are concerned with wildlife and habitat. These terrorists are working hard to ensure that humans abandon most of the Earth's surface but we are as dependent today as we were in the Stone Age on animals for food and clothing - all 6 billion of us and counting. Even vegetarians, who oppose the direct harvesting of animals, are unwittingly supporting the taking of animal life in the production of food and clothing. Agriculture is a leading cause of wildlife habitat loss worldwide, and hundreds of millions of animals die in fields each year to pesticides and at harvest time. So much for cruelty-free pasta and veggies.

To survive we need access to more than the 2.5% of the Earth's surface that can support monoculture crop production. Modern, urban, civilized, moral man must recognize himself for what he really is: the human animal. Man is the only animal that appreciates and values the rest of the world's animals. Man is the only animal able to manage and domesticate, the only animal

capable of applying a moral code in his treatment of other animals. We must reject the tactics and the goals of the extremists.

What government can do

There is overwhelming evidence that we are in the midst of an international green and fuzzy crime wave. In some instances, governmental bodies have given non-profit status to groups romanticizing violence. For these reasons, we have joined the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), a non-profit educational animal welfare organization of people involved in animal-based enterprises, in their "Call for Action" against animal rights terrorism and eco-terrorism. [www.naiaonline.org]. Over a thousand organizations have signed on including Alliance for America, several Farm Bureaus, American AgriWomen, United Kennel Club, Cat Fanciers' Association, national research organizations, associations representing livestock producers, rodeo, farmers, ranchers, groups representing hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of U.S. citizens who are concerned at the threat posed by terrorism to our society. The Call for Action continues to gather support here and abroad and states:

"WHEREAS the leadership of many animal rights organizations conspire to promote activity by their followers that violate national policy as it concerns public health (medical research), nutrition (abolition of milk and meat), wildlife management (disruption of hunting, fishing and trapping), commerce and trade (destruction of businesses engaged in interstate commerce), destruction of government property and the exportation of animal rights terrorism to foreign countries and WHEREAS many animal rights organizations, their leaders and followers routinely assemble and conspire to interfere with interstate commerce, business, public policy and government-approved programs via the use of force, extortion, coercion, threats, violence, arson and destruction of government property; (a violation of The Hobbs Act)., NOW THEREFORE, we respectfully request that the United States Senate Judiciary Committee:

1.) Direct the Department of Justice to establish a National joint task force, which includes the FBI, B.A.T.F. and I.R.S. to investigate, apprehend and prosecute individuals and animal rights organizations involved in the following:

- a.) Conspiracy to prohibit and disrupt interstate commerce;
- b.) Intentionally interfering with, and disrupting interstate commerce;
- c.) Arson;
- d.) Destruction of government property;
- e.) Violations under The Hobbs Act;

f.) Conspiracy to violate public policy;

g.) Violations of 501-C-3 tax code."

The Call to Action asks the government to study and report to Congress on the impact of "domestic and international terrorism on enterprises using animals for food or fiber production, agriculture, research or testing, exhibition, entertainment or sport, including animal breeders and animal shelters."

What can this committee do

This committee can start to address the impact of animal rights terrorism and eco-terrorism by directing the governmental agencies to do an accounting of the response costs of animal rights terrorism and eco-terrorism and report back to this committee within a reasonable time frame. We need to assess the scope of this problem and its impact on the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (B.L.M.), the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (B.A.T.F.) and on local law enforcement. It is impossible to attack this issue without a clear, across the country analysis of the scope of the problem.

This committee can support the efforts of NAIA to establish a fully funded multi-agency task force to work together and with local law enforcement on this problem.

In conclusion

Domestic terrorism has victimized small family farms, food producers, research scientists, loggers, miners and is now threatening the millions of Americans who recreate in the great outdoors and on Forest Service lands. Government must respond and investigate and prosecute animal rights terrorists and eco-terrorists. The policy makers of this country must make an effort to understand why industrialized society is experiencing this negative symptom. Society must address the cause and cure the disease. *Political will* is what it takes.

Peaceful protest and civil discourse are welcome. But we must find out how we, as a society, can stop an international crime spree driven by a poorly conceived and fundamentally flawed philosophy -- a confused amalgam of animal rights and environmentalism.

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