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Creation of Eco-Terrorism: A History of Actions by the Earth Frist!, Earth Liberation and Animal Liberation Front from the 1980s-2000s

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Abstract:

From the nineteen eighties to the early two thousands, the United States saw a raise in awareness and activity from ecological activist groups. The United States government labeled ecological activist groups as the one domestic terrorist group that was the largest threat to the safety and well-being of the American public. Given the current environmental crisis facing the world, there should be encouragement and rise of green activism not an active dismissal. How did these activists become the number one on the United States government list? The groups that are primarily responsible for this claim are Earth First!, Earth Liberation Front and Animal Front Liberation. The historical context of these groups is important in understanding how the United States formed the idea of Eco-Terrorism. Little historical research has been done on eco-terrorism, even though many laws have been created and the impact of them is far reaching. To research into these groups is difficult given their lack of formal membership and disorganization. Scholars must rely on newspapers, magazines, zines and police reports to create an understanding of the history of eco-terrorism. Creating an understanding of eco-terrorism provides a modern historical understanding how the United States has approached the green movement and more radical groups.

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History

Creation of Eco-Terrorism: A History of Actions by the Earth First!, Earth Liberation and Animal
Liberation Front from the 1980s-2000s

A Thesis in
History

By

Zachary Smith

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Dedications

To both of my parents, Margo and Brain for their endless support.

To Alexa for listening to ramble endlessly every night and always being there for me.

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“If the machine of government is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law.”

Henry David Thoreau

Chapter One

Foundation and History of Green Activism

Introduction of Environmental Activism¹

Environmental activism went from using conventional forms of protest, picketing and the court system, to more direct means, arson and bombings. This change occurred from 1980 to 2006, creating a litany of laws that would limit the action people could take to defend nature as a result of actions by the environmental groups Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, and Earth First! In 2006, Eric McDavid was arrested for conspiracy to bomb and damage several fisheries in southern California, and in 2008 was the first person to be charged under Earth Liberation Front (ELF)-related charges using the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA).² Eric McDavid is a vegan anarchist who was a part of the Earth Liberation Front, a green activist group.³ McDavid took part in illegal activities on behalf of green causes and “actions” throughout his youth. He subscribed to the beliefs of Earth Liberation Front, defending the earth by all means. The tactics the ELF adherents (or “elves”) would use were “wrenching” and “direct-action,” namely the destruction of property. The U.S. Government saw McDavid and the people he associated with as a threat due to their plans to blow up several fishing spots and businesses in Northern California. The FBI recruited a young college student named “Anna” to spy on McDavid and encourage his actions. “Anna,” was used as tool by the FBI to escalate McDavid. “Anna,” and the FBI would drip feed McDavid plans and ideas to provoke him, even giving him plans to a bomb.

The information used to bait McDavid and his co-conspirators that came from Anna and the FBI would lead them to a K-Mart in northern California on January 10, 2006, where a large

¹ Some sources are from zines and other magazines that did not have proper print information due to the nature of their construction.

² Rolling Stones, “The New Political Prisoners: Leakers, Hackers and Activists,” *Rolling Stone*, Politics Online Archive, March, 1, 2013.

³ Ibid.

number of FBI vehicles met and arrested them.⁴ McDavid had only attempted to make a bomb but did not actually carry out his mission of destroying buildings in the vicinity, including the Nimbus Dam and the Institute of Forrest Genetics. The United States used the AETA laws created in 2006 and ELF-related charges (laws that were created to punish those that engaged in activities connected to the Earth Liberation Front) in the case against McDavid, punishing him more harshly than he deserved for only destroying property. McDavid had gathered the materials to make a bomb, persuaded by “Anna,” but this criminal act is not what most would not consider a terrorist action.

In July 2014, Tyler Lang, and Kevin Johnson were similarly charged under the AETA laws for releasing nearly two thousand minks from a fur farm in Morris, Illinois.⁵ Lang and Johnson had travelled from Los Angeles, California to the mink farm in Morris, Illinois, looking to save the animals from being skinned for fur coats. Lang and Johnson, broke into the farm in Morris, removed the animals, destroyed the breeding cages and spray painted “Liberation is Love,” on damaged trucks.⁶ The bill for the damages caused by these young activists cost approximately \$200,000.⁷

Lang and Johnson were arrested for utilizing burglar tools while at the farm, leading both to be charged under AETA for harming a business that works with animals. Lang and Johnson attempted to avoid the AETA charges, arguing that the law violated their First Amendment rights. But the courts denied it and pushed for them to be charged as terrorists as AETA prescribed, since they deemed that they had committed “criminalized violence and intimidation used against

⁴ Aaronson, Trevor and Galloway, Katie, “Manufacturing Terror,” *The Intercept*,” November 19, 2015.

⁵ Meisner, Jason, “Lawyer Plans Constitutional Challenge in Mink Farm Sabotage Case,” *Chicago Tribune*, July, 29, 2014.

⁶ Flaum, Kanne, and Williams, Circuit Judges, “United States of America v Kevin Johnson and Tyler Lang, Defendants-Appellants,” United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, November, 08, 2017.

⁷ Ibid.

animal enterprises.”⁸ The violence that Johnson and Lang allegedly used merely caused property damage and did not involve bodily harm against anyone. The actions taken were illegal, but again as with McDavid, should not be considered terroristic. However, AETA branded Lang, and Johnson as “terrorists” for freeing animals from a factory fur farm.⁹ They were both convicted and sentenced to 30 months jail time, a substantial sentence but admittedly shorter than the nine-year sentence given to McDavid.

The incarceration McDavid, Lang and Johnson all faced showed the United States government’s desire to control and dispel environmental activist groups. The FBI categorizes environmental activists as “eco-terrorists,” and as the number one domestic terrorist group in the United States. For the FBI, domestic terrorism is characterized as “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.”¹⁰ The definition provided by the FBI is vague and unclear at best. The FBI failed to clarify what a “violent, criminal act,” is, leaving it up to law enforce and courts to decide.

The FBI’s definition of terrorism is used as a blanket term to allow the FBI to target groups that go against US business interests and the rule of law. “eco-terrorist,” disrupt the standard flow for the way in which the United States operates. Ecological groups such as Earth First!, Earth Liberation and Animal Liberation Front, came to be labeled as the largest domestic terrorist threat to the United States. The FBI can combat these groups by using resources, such as

⁸ Before Flaum, Kanne, and Williams, Circuit Judges, “United States of America v Kevin Johnson and Tyler Lang, Defendants-Appellants.”

⁹ Johnson, Kevin, “I released 2,000 minks from a fur farm. Now I’m a convicted terrorist,” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2017.

¹⁰ Lewis, John, “Animal Rights Extremism and Ecoterrorism,” FBI Online Archive, May 18, 2004.

surveillance, using people as plants and shutting down group meetings. All now because environmental activists now fall under the umbrella of “terrorism”.

The problem for the EF!, the ELF and the ALF is that their direct-actions often involve violence against property, if not people: “some animal liberationists [and all eco liberationists] support *economic sabotage*-destroying the exploiter’s property to make animal [and ecological] exploration less profitable.”¹¹ Examples of such economic sabotage include spiking a tree, damaging a bulldozer, or setting fire to an animal testing lab. Despite the property damage such direct-actions caused, none are focused on the idea of killing, using terrorism or warfare tactics to remove people who are against the ecological movement.¹² In the course of history the most damage done by any of the listed groups was the ELF’s October 1998 burning of the Vail ski lodge resulting in \$12 million dollars in damages, with no lives lost.

The methods the EF!, ELF and ALF use to propagate their cause is sensationalistic. Eco-groups want to make a scene, spray painting large declarative statements about liberation and the death of the earth in order to gain people’s sympathy. Eco-activist groups used bombings, arson, and destruction instead of protesting because of the failings of prior, more peaceful groups that focused on these methods such as the Sierra Club, Band of Mercy and the Sea Shepherds. This defiance of the law is similar to that of civil disobedience but goes beyond breaking the law to the idea of sending a message.

In sum, environmental activist groups like EF!, the ELF and the ALF use direct-action (the destruction of property and sabotage of corporate materials) to gain attention of the media, the population and the government. Often these actions are illegal and breaking the law but would not be considered a terrorist action. Direct-action by “eco-terrorists” do not compare to

¹¹ Lewis, John, “Animal Rights Extremism and Ecoterrorism,” 3 .

¹² Wicklund, Freeman, “Strategic Nonviolence for Animal Liberation,” *Animal Liberation League*, 2004, 3.

other terrorist organizations, for example, ISIS or al Qaeda, that regularly take human life to further their cause.

If there is any comparison to be made with other terroristic organizations, it would be with those who consciously avoid bloodshed, such as the Weather Underground, a Marxist militant group who bombed and destroyed banks and other buildings in protest to America's involvement in Vietnam and other countries. The Weather Underground decided to take this course after a bomb exploded in a Greenwich Village townhouse in New York City, killing three of its members in March 1970. The Weather Underground decided to avoid human targets in the aftermath of this event, differentiating themselves from other Marxist terroristic groups at the time, such as the Red Army faction, the Red Brigades and Carlos the Jackal.

In the 1970s and 1980s, environmentalism had come into its own, having groups such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Green Peace, and conservatories around the world pushing for stronger governmental regulation for environmental protection. Though these groups had attempted to promote reform through legal means, many were impatient. For example, David Forman, the former leader of the Wilderness Society, started Earth First! in 1980.¹³ He was frustrated by the lack of progress in protecting the environment by the Wilderness Club and Sierra Club and began looking at new methods that would amplify the need to protect the environment.¹⁴ On a similar note, Paul Watson left Green Peace in 1977, due to a belief that the group was not effectively protecting the environment. This led to his formation of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. The Sea Shepherds would focus on the protection of waterways, the ocean, illegal marine poaching, and the animals that live within the oceans.¹⁵ Others, such as

¹³ Eagan, Sean, "From Spikes to Bombs: The Rise of Eco-Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism Volume: 19 Issue: 1*, 1996, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵ Scarce, Rik, "Eco Warriors", The Noble Press, 1990, 2.

the Hunt Saboteurs in London, were already attempting to take action against fox and wolf hunters in the United Kingdom by “laying false scents, blowing hunting horns to send hound off in the wrong direction, chasing animals away to safety.”¹⁶ Though not content with these actions, Ronnie Lee and other members of the Hunt Saboteurs left in 1977 to form a more militant group known as the Band of Mercy (based on the British Animal Liberation group from the 1800s).¹⁷

Earth First!, the Sea Shepherd Conversation Society, and Band of Mercy are united by two major philosophical ideas: deep ecology and direct-action. Though often not directly referenced in the texts used by foundational environmentalist groups, the tenets of these ideals resonate throughout each organization.

The major defining philosophical thought for “eco-terrorist” is that of “deep ecology.” The idea of deep ecology is to live in simply and in harmony with nature.¹⁸ Adherents of this ideal must accept that all things in nature have value and must be treated equally. One must do “enough” to restore this egalitarian relationship and thereby reduce the human impact on the environment.¹⁹ Those that follow deep ecology must defend the environment by whatever means one can so that the limited “supplies” of earth can be sustained. The environment, under deep ecology, has basic rights that should be protected the way a human’s rights would be. This idea connects directly to David Foreman the founder of Earth First!, who used this idea to drive the group’s actions to defend the environment. Deep ecology is found throughout ecological activism and influences the way in which members approach the environment. It may not be written in books for members of ELF and ALF, but it guides every action that is taken by them.

¹⁶ Anonymous, “An Animal Liberation Primer,” *Militant Vegan*, 1, 1993, 12.

¹⁷ Scarce, “Eco Warriors,” 139.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Direct-action is the way in which “eco-terrorist’s” defend the environment and animals. Direct-action is a much more aggressive form of activism than merely protesting or using the courts. This is more aggressive than civil disobedience, due to the nature of direct action being on destroying targets than breaking the law to bring attention to an issue. Direct-action is defined as “solving problems yourself rather than petitioning the authorities or relying on external institutions. Any actions that sidestep regulations and representation to accomplish goals directly is direct-action.”²⁰ Essentially, direct-action is anything that avoids systems used by and approved by the government. For the ecological activist using direct-action, the government has failed to halt those actively harming the environment. Direct-action can look different, depending on the target or goal, such as “planting a public garden in an abandoned lot or defending it by paralyzing bulldozers,” or occupying empty homes or government offices. Direct-action is not limited to these actions, but the major goal is to limit the factors harming the environment by any non-violent means.

For Earth First!, the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, direct-action is not a terrorist action, but merely the most effective means to defend the environment. Terrorism uses fear and violence as a tool to push their ideologies forward..²¹But the goal for eco-groups is not to make people afraid or take any person’s life, but rather to protect the environment. The “violence,” used by eco-groups is only the destruction of property. Nonetheless, Eco-groups are still labeled as terrorist under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act

The Animal Enterprise Protection Act has labelled Earth First!, the ELF and the ALF as “terrorists.” The Animal Enterprise Protection Act, enacted in 1992, makes it a federal crime to commit over \$10,000 in damages to property in the name of environmental and animal rights.

²⁰ Anonymous, “How to Do It,” *Earth First! Direct-action Manual*, Third Edition, 33.

²¹ Scarce, “Eco Warriors,” 5 .

The add-on bill, “The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act,” came in response to “eco-terroristic” acts committed in 2005, and concern that ALF and ELF members could avoid certain sections of the original bill. Making it placed the use force, violence or threats by ALF and ELF fall under the same category of crime as those whole violate the original act.²² According to the AETA, the ALF and ELF had previously been allowed to “wage a campaign of threats, harassment, intimidation and fear mongering in an effort to have [targeted group] sever their relationships with targeted...enterprises.”²³ Moreover AETA also was able to prosecute ELF and ALF direct-actions, such as spray painting on businesses, physically assaulting someone, spraying fluid into eyes, smashing windows, making bombs threats and internet posting an employee’s phone number and location as “acts of terrorism” and not just vandalism, harassment and assault (as were previously defined under).²⁴

Eco-groups are labeled as “terrorist” by US law and the FBI as attempt to diminish the effectiveness of the groups. If the public sees these actions as terroristic, it will be easier to sway public opinion and criminalize any action against businesses that use the environment or animals for financial gain. With these legal changes, any action against businesses could be considered terroristic, including even protesting (which could be viewed as a threat to safety). Ecological terrorism is labeled as such because it is seen as a threat to business development, operations, and the economic growth of the United States, costing millions of dollars in lost assets and property. Thus, the prosecution of “eco-terrorists” ensures that systems of capitalism continue operating as scheduled in the United States. The destruction caused to businesses was more important than acknowledging the issues brought up by EF!, ELF and ALF. But to understand

²² “The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act,” Public Law 109-374, 109th Congress, November 27, 2006, 2.

²³ Ibid..

²⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

how EF!, the ELF and the ALF became categorized as “eco-terrorists” under AETA, one must analyze their history.

Literature

Currently there exists few works on eco-terrorism. The major works in this topic include Will Potter’s, *Green is the New Red* (2011), Andreas Malm’s, *How to Blow Up Pipeline* (2020), Kevin C. Armitage’s, *This Green and Growing Land: Environmental Activism in American History* (2017), and Dina Gilio-Whitaker’s, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*. (2019).²⁵ Will Potter’s, *Green is the New Red*, is a seminal piece in outlining eco-activism. Potter looks at how law-enforcement and counterterrorism network of the United States government has targeted green activist groups in the same fashion that communist were in the 1950s. Potter discusses how eco-activists are unfairly being labeled as terrorists in order to counter and delegitimize the green movement.²⁶ Potter goes to great lengths to outline key actions and works of all environmental activist groups, referencing publications from EF!, ELF, and ALF activists, such as “Earth First! Journal” and “No Compromise.” But he does not explore their historical context and writes about these groups in a journalistic way.²⁷ Outlining the role and actions of EF!, ELF, and ALF illustrates the history of these groups only indirectly, as Potter is largely focused on the court cases and modern turmoil in which activists find themselves now.²⁸

²⁵ Potter, Will, *Green is the New Red*, City Lights Publishers, 2011.

Malm, Andreas, *How to Blow up a Pipeline* London: Verso Books, 2020.

Armitage, Kevin, *This Green and Growing Land: Environmental Activism in American History*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018. Gilio-Whitaker, Dina, *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2019.

²⁶ Potter, Will, *Green is the New Red*, City Lights Publishers, 2011, 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

As the environmental crisis has lurked further into the minds of many, the discourse around environmental activism has become a more common topic. In the work, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, Andreas Malm voices frustration at the lack of focus among environmental activists some nine years after Potter wrote. Malm claims we are living in ‘Lanchester’s paradox,’ namely that environmental activism has died down exactly at the point when the climate and the environmental situation has worsened. One reason for the environmental activists’ current failures is the lack of seriousness of the movement within the United States. Malm dismisses the EF!, ELF, and ALF’s role and historical impact outright, viewing them as “mingling punk and hardcore with dumpster diving and veganism, spiritual voyages and holistic medicine with squatting and guerrilla gardening, fanzines with herbs.”²⁹

Instead, Malm pushes for a new movement focused on disrupting the production of coal, gas, and other nonrenewable resources rather than promoting green policies.³⁰ Admittedly, direct-action was only part of a broader strategy that also used protest and consciousness-raising, such as that employed by the Suffragette movement, Gandhi in India, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and the movement against Apartheid in South Africa. The peaceful protests in each of these cases outline different strategies that environmental movement could also use, according to Malm. According to him, while protest and other acts of civil disobedience are useful in fighting against a system, sabotage is also a necessary tool in the fight against climate change.³¹ Malm admits that destruction of property is violence, but qualifies it as a necessary evil in the fight against climate change.³² Nonetheless, Malm outright dismisses the importance of

²⁹ Potter, Will, *Green is the New Red*, City Lights Publishers, 2011,152.

³⁰ Malm, Andreas, *How to Blow up a Pipeline*, Verso Books, 2020, 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³² *Ibid.*, 102.

EF!, ELF and ALF as unserious and ineffective in using direct-action, a point that this thesis disputes.

The definitive outline of environmentalism in the United States is presented through Kevin Armitage's, *This Green and Growing Land: Environmental Activism in American History*. Armitage's work outlines the course and trajectory of American environmentalism from the foundation of the United States to the modern era. He covers the key thinkers like Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh and organizations such as the Wilderness Society and Sierra Club, as well as the key challenges in defending the environment in the modern era. Armitage focuses on the idea that the U.S. places its own need for resources above that of the environment.³³ He discusses American environmentalism from the Hetchy Hetchy Dam in 1906 to Love Canal in 1977- two defining events bookending the challenges of environmentalism in the United States in the twentieth century. Exploring the different approaches to environmentalism and the activism within, Armitage looks at the Earth Day protests, cleanup projects, and grassroots organizations, such as those involved in Love Canal. He examines the generally peaceful groups that focus on the use of public opinion and legal means to evoke environmental change.³⁴ Limited time is spent on environmental activist groups that went beyond protest and into direct-action.

Activism has been driven by the desire to protect the environment. Dina Gilio-Whitaker's, *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight For Environmental Justice, From Colonization to Standing Rock* looks at the role land and its resources play in indigenous communities from the first colonizers of America to the modern-day. He posits that indigenous

³³ Armitage, Kevin, *This Green and Growing Land: Environmental Activism in American History*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

peoples are connected spiritually to the land in an organic way no others can match.³⁵ Native people in the Americas have been forced out of their lands over the centuries leading to long-term health impacts, specifically causing “environmental deprivation.”³⁶ Out of a need for environmental justice, different indigenous environmental groups have formed, such as the Native American Land Conservancy, looking to restore the land to indigenous people.³⁷ With the formation of these groups, the fight for environmental protection came to a head in Standing Rock, where the Dakota Pipe Line was set to be built in 2016 directly in indigenous land.³⁸ The non-violent protests at Standing Rock were within the legal system, and therefore do not directly relate to the groups covered in this thesis.

Spurred on by the increased attention on terrorism from 9/11, other works have focused specifically on eco-terrorism: Michael Loadenthal’s, *Deconstructing “eco-terrorism”: rhetoric, farming and statecraft as seen through the Insight approach* (2013), Paul Joose’s, *Elves, environmentalism, and “eco-terror”: Leaderless resistance and media coverage of the Earth Liberation Front* (2012), and Sean Eagen’s, *From Spikes to Bombs: The Rise of Eco-Terrorism* (1995), all look more closely at the history and functionality of EF!, ELF and ALF and examine the extent to which these groups can be characterized as terroristic.

Michael Loadenthal’s article, *Deconstructing “eco-terrorism”: rhetoric, farming and statecraft as seen through the Insight approach*, looks at how laws were created to specifically limit people defending animals and the environment. After briefly outlining the history of the ELF and ALF, looking at their roots outside of the United States and their spread into the United

³⁵ Gilio-Whitaker, *Dina, As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, Beacon Press, 2019, 19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 153.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

States, Loadenthal explores how a post 9/11 world helped to justify more restrictive laws on the ELF and ALF. The reason for Loadenthal that eco-groups like the ELF and ALF were the focus of anti-terrorism laws, was not because of their record of violent action, but rather the economic damage that groups could inflict to industries that they targeted. Loadenthal also shows that groups labeled as “eco-terrorist” have never taken a human life, in contrast to other protest movements, such as anti-abortion groups have, which on rare occasions have.³⁹ Each law surrounding ELF and ALF was created with the idea that, if these groups were left unchecked it would cause farms, and other industries to collapse leading to state-wide economic failures, in turn making it paramount to stop ecological activist groups.⁴⁰

Paul Joosse’s, *Elves, Environmentalism, and “Eco-terror”*: *Leaderless Resistance and Media Coverage of the Earth Liberation Front* critiques the loose structure of the ELF, namely its lack of membership roles and its weak and ineffective leadership.⁴¹ Joosse cites two ELF spokespeople during the mid-1990s, Craig Rosebraugh and Leslie James Perkins, as responsible for mishandling the media during the mid-1990s. This led the *New York Times* and other news outlets to demonize Rosebraugh, Perkins and other ELF members as “tree huggers,” “punks,” and “hippies,” delegitimizing the movement’s activities.⁴²

Sean Eagan’s, *From Spikes to Bombs: The Rise of Eco-Terrorism*, looks at the development of eco-activism through the 1980s to the 1990s. Eagan cites the ideological belief in “Deep Ecology,” namely that humans are equal to all in the environment, as motivating

³⁹ Loadenthal, Michael, “Deconstructing “eco-terrorism”: rhetoric, farming and statecraft as seen through the *Insight approach*, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Arlington, VA, USA; Program on Justice and Peace, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA, January, 4, 2013, 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ Joosse, Paul, *Elves, Environmentalism and Eco-Terror: Leaderless Resistance and Media Coverage of the Earth Liberation Front*, University of Alberta, 2012, 78-79.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 82.

activists to found Earth First!, a group which used spikes and other devices to carry out acts of economic sabotage to prevent industrial deforestation.

The works of Potter, Malms, Aritago, Gilio-Witaker, Joose and Eagen, provide an introduction to understanding eco-terrorism and the core ideas around them. Each of these texts provides an insight into what ecological activism is and how it operates, in either their actions or organization. Beyond that, however, the texts do not deeply explore the historical context for eco-activist groups.

Therefore a history of EF!, the ELF and the ALF provides an understanding of how Potter arrives at his understanding of the “green scare,” why Malm finds that there should be more activists, and what Gilio-Witaker, Eagen and Joose assess as the tactics and organization of different eco-groups.

EF!, the ELF and the ALF were the most active from the 1980s till the 2000s. During this period, each of these groups participated in the radicalization of the eco-activist movement. Developing research on these groups will also shed light on how the congress, FBI and CIA handled protesters and advocates for environmental policy change in the US. Most often they advocated for punishment rather than addressing the questions and frustration of EF!, ELF and ALF. Lastly, it is imperative to determine if these groups deserve the title of being labeled as terrorist.

Earth First! formed in 1980 as a radical environmental group that advocated for the environment through nontraditional means, such as using direct-action to protect the environment. EF! organized through zines and meetings. And when committing action, Earth First! set out to damage deforesting equipment and organizing sit ins. Though EF! collapsed as an organization in 1990, they changed the way environmental movements functioned and the

ways in which laws were constructed. EF! then splintered into two more major environmental groups, the ELF and the ALF. The ELF was focused on protecting the land and Earth through the same means as EF!. ELF would burn down buildings and damage equipment to stop deforestation and destruction of land. On the other side, ALF focused on the protection of animals, again using the direct-action tactics of EF! ALF would break into farms, labs, or other facilities to free animals or burn them down. Both the ELF and the ALF's action led to the reformation of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, which places more restrictions on environmental activists.

Chapter Two

Direct-action and the Rise of Earth First!

Modern Environmental Activism

Active from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Earth First! followed a code of ethics and ideals that would go beyond the group itself. Earth First! would fall to the wayside by the mid-1990s. The influence of Earth First! would become integral for the Earth Liberation Front, which emerged in a loose form in the 1990s, building upon Earth First!'s tactics to continue the fight for the environment. Earth First! had set the stage for the green activist movement and the ELF would focus on the environment; where the Animal Liberation Front concentrated on animal rights.⁴³

In the 1970s and 1980s, environmentalism had come into its own, under the banner of such groups as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Green Peace, and conservatories around the world pushing for stronger governmental regulation for the environment be it land, water, or the animal world. Although these groups advocated for changes through public protests and other legal means, it had left people in environmental groups disillusioned. Feeling this disconnect from the Sierra Club and Wilderness (whose actions were focused on ecological preservation in the United States), David Foreman, former leader of the Wilderness Society, started Earth First! as a break-off group in 1980.⁴⁴ On a similar note, Paul Watson left Green Peace in 1977 to found the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. The Sea Shepherds focused on the protection of waterways, the oceans, and the animals that live within them.⁴⁵ Groups such as the Hunt Saboteurs in London were already attempting to take some mild action against wolf hunters in

⁴³ The ALF's goals were: "To liberate animals from places of abuse i.e fur farms, laboratories, factory farms, etc. And place them in good homes where they may live out their natural lives free from suffering. To inflict economic damage to those who profit from the misery and exploitation of animals; and to reveal the horror and atrocities committed against animals behind locked doors by performing non-violent direct-action and liberation." Anonymous, "An Animal Liberation Primer," 12.

⁴⁴ Eagan, "From spikes to bombs: The rise of eco-terrorism," 6.

⁴⁵ Scarce, "Eco Warriors", 2.

the United Kingdom by “laying false scents, blowing hunting horns to send hound off in the wrong direction, chasing animals away to safety.”⁴⁶ Ronnie Lee and other members of the Hunt Saboteurs would leave in 1977 to form a more militant group known as the Band of Mercy (based on the British Animal Liberation group from the 1800s).⁴⁷

Earth First!, Sea Shepherd Conversation Society, and the Band of Mercy had guiding principles which separated them from the groups from which they had sprung, namely direct-action and organizational ambiguity (as discussed in chapter one). Using these tactics, the above-mentioned groups aimed to inform and to create a discourse with the public about how the ecosystem was being negatively impacted by human hands. This discourse was known as the struggle against the eco-wall, the barrier of disconnect the public has with the environment.⁴⁸ The eco-activist uses any means necessary to attempt to break down the “eco-wall” to convince the public and inform them how the world was operating.⁴⁹

The ALF was also known for its embrace of veganism. Veganism is the lifestyle choice of avoiding consuming and using any animal by-products in any part of one's life in order to show compassion for all living beings. The lifestyle choice is directly tied to the functions of the ALF, seeing that all creatures have naturally given rights and that these rights need to be protected and preserved.⁵⁰ The ALF's goal is to avoid suffering, a core relatable idea that all living sentient beings understand.⁵¹ To be engaged in the liberation of animals, many members of the ALF pushed themselves into a vegan lifestyle that went beyond just direct-action. In turn, this lifestyle choice informs how direct-actions are done and the form that they can take. As before, direct-

⁴⁶ Anonymous, “An Animal Liberation Primer,” 12.

⁴⁷ Scarce, Rik, “Eco Warriors,” 139.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

action is focused on dismantling property through a variety of methods such as breaking into labs and destroying equipment, breaking animals out of cages and burning down buildings using animal products. But “unlike other radical movements, the vegan movement will avoid attracting the type of violence-loving thugs who are often drawn to political movements...”⁵² Compassion, rather than, violence drives for action in all parts of the animal liberation movement, its associated groups.

The basic definition of violence is to physically harm or kill someone or something. The idea of “something” in the definition is the core issue that the EF!, ELF, and ALF struggle to define and drive to different forms of direct-action from all the groups. As stated before, direct-action is a broad term that focuses on breaking down and disabling systems that harm animals and the environment, though these tactics range from protesting outside of fur shops to placing spikes in a tree to using explosive devices on equipment or businesses. None of these actions are focused on the idea of killing, or using terrorism or warfare tactics to remove people that are against the ecological movement.⁵³ Given this shared ideology, “some animal liberationists [and all eco-liberationists] support *economic sabotage*-destroying the exploiter’s property to make animal [and ecological] exploitation less profitable.”⁵⁴

⁵² Anonymous, “Building the Vegan Movement,” *Militant Vegan*, Issue Three, October, 1993, 10.

⁵³ Wicklund, Freeman, “Strategic Nonviolence for Animal Liberation,” *Animal Liberation League*, 2004, 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

The Foundation of Earth First!

On April 4, 1980, David Foreman, the former leader of the Wilderness Society, and four associates started Earth First!⁵⁵ The collective reason for joining together was a frustration with the lack of progress in protecting the environment by the Wilderness Club and Sierra Club, after the election of Ronald Reagan.⁵⁶ On November 1, 1980, Earth First! released their first newsletter which laid out their framework and guiding principles.⁵⁷ At that time, the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE), a controversial review of roadless areas, threatened to deforest significant sections of the countryside.⁵⁸ Earth First! wanted to “...preserve the ecological integrity...” of all wildernesses, especially those areas directly affected by RARE and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) projects.⁵⁹ Earth First! then started tree-spiking campaigns in two of the main targeted areas the Southern Appalachian Preserve and Coast Range Preserve.⁶⁰ Earth First!’s “no compromise” attitude with political forces reflected the organization’s desire “to have the courage of the civil rights workers who went to jail.”⁶¹

Bill Haywood’s directions on how activists should spike trees in the influential tract *Eco-Defense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, was widely disseminated to Earth First! followers who embraced the practice as early as 1984, when several trees that were set to be harvested were then spiked.⁶² The general goal of tree-spiking is to damage milling equipment for “saws are made of a very brittle, very high-tensile steel, and when they hit a piece of iron, they just

⁵⁵ Egan, “From Spikes to Bombs: The Rise of Eco-Terrorism,” 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ Foreman, David, “Earth First! Volume 1 Number 1,” *Earth First!*, November 1, 1980, 1.

⁵⁸ RARE and RARE II, “In: The Environmental and Public Participation Era, 1970-1993,” 1993.

⁵⁹ Foreman, “Earth First! Volume 1 Number 1,” 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁶¹ Foreman, “Earth First! Volume 1 Number,” 1.

⁶² Egan, “From spikes to bombs: The rise of eco-terrorism,” 6.

blow up.”⁶³ Thus, each act of tree-spiking damages the saw, and could easily injure the logger.

Though this process seems as if it would be a reaction action to the lumber mill’s taking hold of a forested area, Haywood notes that “if one spikes several years in advance of a sale, nature has time to disguise the work by growing completely over the spikes.”⁶⁴ Acting covertly helps create a sense of fear because timber companies would not know if an area is covered in rail impaled trees. Environmentalists can make such proactive efforts because Forest Services makes plans fifty years in advance in the commercially available timber areas.⁶⁵ To effectively place spikes into a tree one must study the information provided by the government and understand the area that is being surveyed. Tree-spiking is an expansive task that requires detailed thought, making it a difficult art in which only a few can truly take part. Haywood’s even mentions different forms of tree-spikes, even on those made of ceramic, rock or plastic.⁶⁶ Non-metallic spikes would be used to avoid metal detectors. In short, Haywood’s tree-spiking guide reads like the Anarchist Cookbook and other terrorist manuals.

In 1987 Earth First! began a battle against the Louisiana Pacific and the Maxxam logging corporations. Both companies were going to cut down 35,000 acres of forest in the northwestern United States.⁶⁷ Earth First! was frustrated that the California Forest Practice and the California Environmental Quality Acts, two pieces of legislation that in theory protected the redwoods from logging by Louisiana Pacific and Maxxam, ultimately did not prevent deforestation.

⁶³ Quoted in “Booby Trapped Tree Was Felled in Area Know for Bizarre Protests,” *Los Angeles Time*, May 16th 1987, 25.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶⁵ Haywood, Bill, “Tree Spiking,” *Earth First* Volume 1 Number 1, 1980, 35.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁷ King Greg, North Coast CA EFI, “Battle for the Last Redwoods,” in *Earth First!*, Volume 8, Number 5, May 1st, 1987, 7.

On May 14, 1987, a mill worker for the Louisiana Pacific lumber company was struck in the face with a metal tree spike after cutting into an impaled tree with a saw.⁶⁸ This made news in California under headlines such as, “Tree-Spiking Claims First Bloody Victim,” entirely blaming Earth First! for the accident.⁶⁹ The victim was George Alexander, who “was working near the saw blade when it struck one of two 11-inch spikes buried in the tree. A three-foot section of the blade flew off, cutting through Mr. Alexander's cheek and jawbone and knocking out several teeth...”⁷⁰

Earth First! denied responsibility for the action. Nonetheless, Earth First! initially hoped the incident would intimidate the companies and warned more people about the spikes located in the forests. Later EF! settled on non-violent protests to express what was taking place in the redwoods. One of these protesters sang “The Ol’ Tree-Spiker,” which bragged, “Well I’ve spiked me some redwood and I spiked me some pine. And they’ve tried to stop me with rewards and fines. The cops and the Freddie [federal] are hot on my tail. But I’m tree spiker and I’ll never get nailed.”⁷¹

The tree-spiking incident that injured George Alexander prompted the authorities to offer a \$20,000 reward for the capture of those responsible.⁷² The FBI then began surveilling David Foreman and Earth First!.⁷³ Tree-spiking was also outlawed in 1988 in United States Code 18, section 1864 in reaction to the May 1987 incident. This code notes that any person who damages

⁶⁸ Johnson, Nagasaki, “Tree Spiking,” *Earth First* Volume 8, Number 6, May 1, 1987, 34.

⁶⁹ Johnson, “Tree Spiking,” 34.

⁷⁰ Staff Report, “Louisiana-Pacific Worker Hurt When Saw Hits Spike,” in *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 1987, 1.

⁷¹ King, Greg, “Redwood Tree Climbers,” *Earth First* Volume 8, Number 8, September 23rd, 1987, 6.

⁷² “Louisiana-Pacific Worker Hurt When Saw Hits Spike,” 1.

⁷³ Jarboe, James, “Domestic Terrorism Section Chief, Counterterrorism Division Federal Bureau of Investigation,” in *Before the House Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health* Washington, February 12th, 2002.

or infringes upon the production of timber production will be tried under federal law.⁷⁴

According to this federal law, “no spikes or devices can be used on Federal land, on an Indian reservation, or an Indian allotment while the title to such allotment is held in trust by the United States.”⁷⁵ Tree-spiking was made illegal in nearly all forested areas; and if any people were injured or killed, the spikers would be charged with that offense.⁷⁶ The legislation also states that the use of “tree spiking devices including spikes, nails, or other objects hammered, driven, fastened, or otherwise placed into or on any timber” is illegal.⁷⁷

The final piece that ended the use of tree spiking, was on the eve of Earth Day 1990 when Earth First! officially renounced it.⁷⁸ Tree-spiking’s glory had come and gone within a flash of time but left Earth First! to become more focused with safe practices; leaving space and teachings for ELF and ALF. Earth First! renounced tree-spiking on April 22, 1990, when the group inaugurated the very first Earth Day.

Ecological movements using direct-action did not appear out of nowhere. Earth First!, ELF, Band of Mercy, the Sea Shepherds and the ALF were created out of a need to defend the planet and those living on it. Their embrace of this tactic led to their persecution by the United States government as “eco-terrorists.” Earth First! was the first major environmental group in the United States to put direct-action into practice, largely in reaction to the destruction of northwestern forest to build roadways. The most consequential form of direct-action Earth First! undertook was to spike trees. This battle naturally outlawed tree-spiking but it could not prevent

⁷⁴100th Congress, “Section 1864-Hazardous or injurious devices on Federal lands,” in 18 U.S. Code, 1988, section 1864.

⁷⁵ 100th Congress, “Section 1864-Hazardous or injurious devices on Federal lands,” Section 1864.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Hamer, John, “A Couple Of Cockeyed Earth Day Stories,” *Earth First* Volume 1 Issue 3, 1980, 1.

Earth First! from succeeding in preventing some forests from destruction, although the group's power diminished over time, in favor of the ELF and ALF.

Chapter Three:
The ELF's Multi-Front War

The ELF

Though Earth First! (EF!) had fallen from grace, they had laid the groundwork for the eco-activist groups should operate and how such groups would be viewed. The first ecological group to form ideals and practice akin to Earth First! was the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). ELF began as an offshoot of the English Earth First!, starting as an independent actor in 1990.⁷⁹ The American ELF was formed and undertook its first set of actions in 1996, focusing on the protection of the environment from pollution and industrial expansion. The group used both civil disobedience and sabotage to advance their cause, depending on the circumstance.⁸⁰

Overall, the American ELF was more of an “underground” movement than EF!. Unlike EF!, the ELF did not have newsletters that kept tabs on the organization’s actions as whole: “The ELF does [not have] ... any sort of physical membership list or meetings.”⁸¹

On a cold evening on November 29, 1997, the office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Burn, Oregon was set alight.⁸² The fire caused over \$450,000 in structural damage, and many employees lost gear and supplies for their work.⁸³ Officials were quick to blame the ELF, and soon posted a reward of up to \$30,000 for information on the activities of the group. The ELF had targeted the Burn’s office location, due to the BLM’s policies regarding the local horse population, ranches and slaughterhouses. The BLM allegedly sought to “protect the environment” by “maintain[ing the] wild horse population levels in balance with the carrying capacity of the land while meeting habitat requirements for wildlife and livestock.”⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Perkins, Leslie, *ELF 1997-2002*, Arissa Media Group/PM Press, 2007, 42.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸² Anonymous, “A History of the ELF,” *Resistance* #3, 1997, 3-4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁴ Bureau of Land Management, “Bureau of Land Management facts. Oregon and Washington B.L.M. facts,” U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1997, 34.

The ELF next acted in coordination with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) to set fire to a USDA Animal Damage Control Building, in Olympia, Washington in 1998, causing approximately \$50,000 in damage.⁸⁵ The branch of the USDA that was targeted by the ELF and ALF because these “facilities ...[made it] it a daily routine to kill and destroy wildlife” in the belief “that beaver, deer and other wildlife are responsible for the decimation of our public lands.”⁸⁶

The ELF had vandalized the Mexican Consulate in Boston, MA, in the summer of 1998, spray painting writing “VIVA EZLN,” displaying the ELF’s support of the revolutionary group of Chiapas in southern Mexico.⁸⁷ The ELF looked to show support for the indigenous people in Mexico, since they believed they were more in tune with nature than the conquistadors and their descendants.⁸⁸ Although small, this is was the first “direct-action” the group had perpetrated in the northeastern United States. Within two weeks after the spray painting in Boston, the ELF and ALF would try to free minks at a fur farm in Middleton, Wisconsin. 310 minks were “liberated” after opening their cages and cutting down their fence enclosures.⁸⁹ Within this facility the animals were being tested on for different vaccines, and, once they were no longer of use, they were turned in fur products.⁹⁰

On October 1998, the ELF took aim at a set of ski resorts, having in what the FBI called “largest act of eco-terrorism in US History.”⁹¹ ELF members claimed to have set fire to five buildings and six ski lifts, all owned by the Vail Corporation, a company that managed several ski

⁸⁵ Perkins, Leslie James, “A History of the ELF,” 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Wyrick, Randy, “eco-terrorist’s Set Fire to Vail Mountain 20 Yars Ago, and The Response Showed How Mutual Aid Could Benefit Mountain Communities,” *Denver Post*, Online archive, 2018.

lodges in the Denver area. The attack caused nearly 12 million dollars in damage, leading to an official FBI investigation of the incident.⁹² William C. Rodgers, a prominent member of the ELF, was cited as the planner and instigator of the crime, but he had committed suicide after being arrested on separate charges for another arson count in Oregon.⁹³ With little information, and key witnesses absent, no one else was ever held judicially accountable for the attack. Government agencies took note of the ELF as having carried out the Vail attack far more efficiently than before: “They’re also getting more professional. That troubles [us] a lot.”⁹⁴

During that same year the ELF freed 5,000 minks at the Peninsula Farm, also in Colorado, causing thousands of dollars in damages.⁹⁵ Justin Samuels, a Belgium ALF member who was working with the ELF, was the only suspect arrested at the time.⁹⁶ This arrest attested to the increasingly reckless nature of the ELF’s international collaboration with other groups.

On December 27, 1998, the ELF set fire to the US Forest Industries in Medford, Oregon, inflicting nearly \$500,000 dollars in damages.⁹⁷ The fire was “retribution for all the wild forest and animals lost to feed the wallets of greedy *fucks* like Jerry Bramwell, the United States Forest Industry (USFI) president.” The USFI took over 50 million feet of timber in the Oregon area in 1998 alone, and roughly the same amount from Washington state.⁹⁸ The timber collected came from either private or public land from all over the US. The ELF believed timber was not

⁹² Brooke, James, “Group Claims Responsibility For Blazes At Vail Resort,” in *The New York Times*, New York, N.Y.: New York Times Company, Late Edition (East Coast) edition, 1998.

⁹³ Kohler, Judith, “4 Indicted for 1998 Vail Ski Resort Fires,” AP Online, The Associated Press, Online Archive, May 19, 2006.

⁹⁴ Ron, Arnold, “A History of the ELF,” VP of the Center of Defense of Free Enterprise in Resistance #3, 1997, 7

⁹⁵ Perkins, Leslie James, “A History of the ELF,” 7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁷ Reuters, “Environmental Group Takes Credit for an Arson,” *New York Times*, Jan 1, 2000.

⁹⁸ Warren, Debra D, Production, Prices, Employment, and Trade in Northwest Forest Industries, All Quarters 1998,” Res. Bull. PNW-RB-231. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2000, 21.

sustainably harvested and that no plans were in place to revitalize the area or the wildlife whose homes were lost.

On December 25, 1999, the ELF targeted the Oregon regional headquarters of Boise Cascade, a paper manufacturing company causing roughly \$1 million in damages.⁹⁹ Boise Cascade was active in the lumber industry, beginning in the northwestern United States, and had recently been involved in harvesting paper from virgin forests in Chile. Boise Cascade had also expanded its operations to Australia, Belgium (under the name JPG), Canada (under the name Grand & Toy), France (under the names JPG and Boise Cascade Office Products France), Spain (under the name Sistemas Kalamazoo), and the United Kingdom (under the names Neat Ideas and Boise Cascade Office Products UK).¹⁰⁰ As the ELF announced “early Christmas morning elves [members of the ELF] left coal in Boise Cascade's stocking. Four buckets of diesel gas with kitchen timer delay destroyed their regional headquarters.”¹⁰¹ The FBI viewed the fire as “a potential violation covered by the F.B.I. under the domestic terrorism statutes...” Thus, the Boise Cascade fire was the first ELF act of sabotage to be defined as “ecoterrorism.”¹⁰²

The next ELF arson attack was at Sterling Woods, a 6500 sq.ft. housing development in Bloomington, Indiana on January 23, 2000. Sterling Woods, and other development projects like it, threatened the watershed and forest of the greater Bloomington area.¹⁰³ The development was continually dumping toxins in the local water supply. The fire caused nearly \$700,000 in damages.

⁹⁹ Perkins, Leslie James, “A History of the ELF,” 8.

¹⁰⁰ Donnelley Financial Solutions, “03/FA, Annual report Boise Cascade Office Products Corp10-K - Annual Report,” Section 13 and 15(d), not S-K Item 405, 3, 29.

¹⁰¹ Rosebraugh, Craig, “Earth Liberation Front Claims Credit For Fire Destroying Boise Cascade’s Regional Headquarters,” Liberation Collective Media Release, December 30, 1999.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Perkins, Leslie James, “A History of the ELF,” 9.

The group even left its “calling card,” namely graffiti on the development’s sign, proclaiming “No Sprawl. The ELF.”¹⁰⁴

In the wake of the Sterling Woods arson, there was a notable public debate between Vincent Scott, whose property was damaged in the fire, and Craig Rosebraugh, self-appointed spokesperson of the ELF. Scott was bitter about the overwhelming amount of damage that had been caused by the ELF, and thought that “eco-terroristic” acts, like the one he saw, would lead to job losses for the workers employed in the Sterling Woods development project and others like it. Scott stated that if Rosebraugh and the ELF wished to protect the environment, they should pursue judicial recourse and not take the law into their own hands.¹⁰⁵ Rosebraugh responded that their acts of sabotage must continue given the bankruptcy system: “As long as there are individuals and corporations within industries profiting off destruction of the natural environment there will be future actions...”¹⁰⁶

Rosebraugh ultimately could not live up his promise. The ELF soon met a much stronger government response after the Al-Qaeda attacks on New York City and Washington DC on September 11, 2001, when the George W. Bush administration was given wide latitude to fight groups like it in the “War on Terror.” The idea of the war on terror would put unrestricted pressure on the ELF, a deeply disorganized group young activists, could not handle. This led to the group functionally disbanding in the early 2000s, but the legacy and impact of the ELF spreads beyond their active years.

The ELF can basically be seen as a transformed version of EF!. Whereas EF! narrowly targeted lumber companies in the northwestern United States, the ELF focused on a variety of

¹⁰⁴ Perkins, Leslie James, “A History of the ELF,” 9.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Curry, Marshall, “If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front,” BBC Online Archive, June 22, 2011.

different industries throughout the country, preferring to burn and vandalize buildings rather than engaging in tree-spiking. All told, ELF direct-actions, often done in coordination with the ALF, led to nearly \$110 million dollars in damages to business in the United States. It was this monetary harm that motivated the government to act against the group after classifying them as “eco-terrorists.”

Chapter 4:

The ALF & the Fight for All Creatures' Freedom

The ALF

The Animal Liberation Front was an early adopter of radical ecological activism, first coming onto the scene in 1974 in England, when former members of the Band of Mercy broke into a laboratory to free rats and mice that were used in experiments there. Several breakouts were organized in the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s. American animal rights activists founded the US branch of the ALF soon afterwards to continue the cause.¹⁰⁷ The ALF would become the leading animal rights activist group from the 1990s until the early 2000s.

The ALF was also allied with the Animal Defense League (ADL), which both believed in: “working to inform the public about animal exploitation and abuse. Through community outreach, networking, legislation, public education, vocal demonstration and civil disobedience, [they both spoke] ... for those who [could not] speak for themselves.”¹⁰⁸ For the ALF and ADL, animals are seen as another group in the course of history whose rights have been stripped away and “othered,” allowing them to suffer injustice at the hands of farmers, meatpackers, fur producers, cosmetics, zoos, and all firms that murder and kill animals for human gain and profit. The ADL acted in a similar manner to that of the AFL, but functioned in smaller capacity and were often focused on spreading information. The AFL and ADL would act by occupying or burning buildings and staging demonstrations to prevent those industries and sports. Neither the AFL nor the ADL had a centralized membership, much like the ELF.¹⁰⁹

Animal rights activist groups had taken off as early as 1980, when the People for The Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), exposed the inhuman treatment of monkeys in laboratories Montgomery County, Silver Spring, Maryland leading to a massive court case.¹¹⁰ Self-published

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, John, “Animal Rights Extremism and Ecoterrorism,” May 18, 2004, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous, “An Animal Liberation Primer,” *Don’t Consider Yourself Free*, Volume One, 1997, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁰ Carlson, Peter, “The Great Silver Spring Monkey Debate,” *Washington Post*, February 24, 1991.

magazines (zines) and journals would pop up around the country [in the 1990s] prompting people to engage in and connect people with the animal rights activist community. Periodicals such as *The Underground*, *Militant Vegan*, *Don't Consider Yourself Free* and *Resistance* would act as mouthpieces for the ALF, even though they were not directly affiliated with that group.

ALF actions began on January 1, 1991, in Chicago, Illinois, when the group freed 14 rabbits and 11 guinea pigs from Hekton Laboratories.¹¹¹ In June 1991, the ALF launched Operation Bite Back, which targeted a mink farm and fur producing center at Oregon State University, causing a fire that resulted in \$62,000 of damage. No animals were liberated.¹¹² On October 24, 1992, the ALF freed 27 coyotes from a lab in Millville, Utah, this time causing \$100,000 dollars in damages.¹¹³ FBI agents were brought in to investigate the incidents in both East Lansing and Millville. However, the FBI failed to find much information, given the ALF's strategy of membership anonymity.¹¹⁴

The ALF had begun evolving from a small eco-activist group to a nationwide underground movement, inspiring people to take up actions both small and large in scale. The newer ALF members lived scattered throughout the United States, often concentrated in cities like San Francisco, Cleveland and Memphis. They embarked on a spree of vandalism in 1993, spray painting and paint bombing various buildings associated with animal abuse. Billboards would be covered in phrases ranging from "fur shame" on coat shops and fur farms, to writing "vegan power," on McDonald billboards, along with other businesses that profited from animal products.

¹¹¹ Anonymous, "Diary of Action," *Militant Vegan*, Volume 1, 1993, 3

¹¹² Lambert, Laura "Animal Rights Movement," in Martin, Gus (ed.). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (2nd ed.), SAGE Publications, 2011, 47.

¹¹³ Staff Report, Animal Activist Suspected In Fire At USU Facility," *Desert News*, Associated Press Online Archive, November 7, 1992.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The ALF's logos were left everywhere to draw attention and sympathy for their movement.¹¹⁵ The activists' goal was to inform the people of how the meat and dairy industries exploited animals, and that the proper response for people to the movement was to become vegan.¹¹⁶

The most telling of these acts of direct-actions was when a set of packages were left on the doorstep of laboratory workers in Montgomery County, Maryland. ALF members had placed mock bombs to intimidate opponents and the responding emergency service units.¹¹⁷ None of the devices that were left were ever intended to harm or injure any of the scientists involved. The fake blood and notes attached to the "bombs" merely created a climate of fear for laboratory employees and those testing the animals.¹¹⁸

The next location to be set ablaze for animal rights would be at a meat market and stockyard in Manchester, Tennessee. The ALF activists covered the market with tags on the morning of June 11, 1993, noting the harm the market was causing to animals in the area.¹¹⁹ Later that evening, the activists removed all livestock from the stockyard and then burned the whole building down, causing thousands of dollars in damages. The Tennessee State police then became involved, but they found little evidence implicating any ALF members beyond the spray-painting days earlier.¹²⁰ The ALF's primary target for this and other actions would be the fur industry, which was still booming during the 1990s but weakened thereafter whom fur products became less popular.¹²¹

On November 27 ALF members in Chicago placed several different incendiary devices in department stores across 5th Ave. and in surrounding shopping areas in the downtown area.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, "Diary of Action," 3.

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, "Vegan Vandals Tell About Diary Billboards," *Militant Vegan*, Volume 4, 1994, 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous, "Animal Researcher Feel Hunted" *Militant Vegan*, Volume 4, 1994, 9

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, "Diary of Action," 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²¹ Anonymous, "Diary of Action," *Militant Vegan*, Volume 3, 1994, 7.

¹²² Sanchez, Sandra, "Animal Activist Claim Store-Fire Responsibility," *Chicago Tribune*, November 30, 1993, 9A.

Warnings were sent previously to the store owners, who forwarded them to federal officials who successfully diffused eight incendiary devices.¹²³ Five bombs did explode, however, setting alight storefronts, leading to a significant undisclosed amount of damage to merchandise and the facilities. The bombings created an uproar across the country. PETA equivocated: “[We] don’t condone it, [nor do]... we condemn it. [PETA] understand why some activists are driven to more extreme tactics.”¹²⁴

By this point in late 1993, the FBI had compiled a list of twenty-one different large-scale offenses by the ALF and affiliated groups, in their efforts to contain the threat by radicalized animal rights activists.¹²⁵ These efforts only seem to draw more publicity to the eco-activists, which was the intention of those “direct-actions” anyways.

On January 8, 1994, an ALF member entered the International Mink Show in Madison, Wisconsin.¹²⁶ The ALF member discovered the manner in which minx in captivity are kept alive, even though this species are prone to infection, as witnessed by the fact that at least 10% are likely to die from this cause.¹²⁷ The ALF spy found that minx at the facility were forced to breed in captivity with only limited exposure to light(a display of the poor conditions)-an attempt to increase the amount of minx available for production.¹²⁸ The fact that the ALF did not immediately sabotage the show was interesting: a tactic much more reminiscent of PETA’s reliance on journalism to expose “industrial horrors” like the Muckraker Upton Sinclair. The ALF organized similar investigative missions in two other venues like Wildlife Pharmaceuticals and The National

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Anonymous, “Undercover Report on the Fur Farm Industry,” *Militant Vegan*, Volume 5, 1994, 6.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 6.

Fur Food Co., allowing aspiring ALF members to know which businesses should be targeted next.¹²⁹

The ALF and other animal rights groups were arguably achieving their goals through their activities, both in terms of sabotage and propaganda. A convention on the fur industry concluded in 1994 that production in the US totaled “18 million a year compared to 45 million in the late 1980s.”¹³⁰ Thus, there was a significant decline in fur sales. Some businesses, like one in Memphis, Tennessee, had shut down due to the market downturn.¹³¹ In sum, the investigative scouting missions are proof that the ALF successfully began to plan actions more strategically to prevent harm to animals.

The ALF ended 1994 with several small-scale “direct-actions.” For instance, the ALF targeted shops in Syracuse, New York and Woodbridge, New Jersey, dousing them in red paint to symbolize the slaughter of animals.¹³² In March, ALF members in Cleveland filmed a meat packing plant while in production and put the footage they found on local television.¹³³ The ALF also targeted the Pacific Café, a seafood restaurant, by etching the words “lobster liberation” on their windows. The vandalizers jokingly referred to themselves as the Crustacean Liberation Front, although no lobsters were rescued.¹³⁴ In Oshkosh, Wisconsin several young aspiring animal rights activists broke into a pet store, liberating a Persian cat because they “didn’t want the cat caged against its will.”¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Anonymous, “Undercover Report on the Fur Farm Industry,” 7.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Anonymous, “Diary of Action,” *Underground*, Volume 2, November, 1994, 7.

¹³³ Ibid., 7-8.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁵ Anonymous, “Diary of Action,” 8.

One of the most eye-catching direct-actions the ALF perpetrated was an attack on the office and laboratories of Professor Richard Aulerich of Michigan State University. Aulerich was conducting tests on minx to see what toxins affected the species as well as numerous other experiments involving lab animals. Rodney Coronado, an ALF member, was eventually held responsible for destroying the research and equipment at Aulerich's lab. Material losses ran up a tab of \$125,000.¹³⁶ Coronado, a Native American, was a longtime activist that had been fighting for animal rights first in the 1980s as a member of the Sea Shepherds, fighting against the whaling industry and fur industry.¹³⁷ Coronado revealed himself as the perpetrator years later, proclaiming that "abusers" like Aulerich never will "know when they [come] ... to work and [open] ... their office door whether there [has]... been an attack."¹³⁸

Coronado and the ALF were also allegedly involved in an arson case in the state of Washington on June 15, 1991, at the Northwest Farm Cooperative. The cooperative was targeted due to its mink population and feeding facilities. They provided feed for farms in the area that produced up to 150,000 mink furs annually, leading to nearly \$4 million in profits a year for the cooperative alone. The attack caused approximately \$800,000 in damage. Workers from the cooperative protested that they had done nothing wrong to the animals. They stated that: "the average life span of a farm-raised mink is 1.7 years, about the same as those in the wild. But animal-rights activists say the mink are deprived of their natural setting and treated cruelly."¹³⁹ Coronado and the ALF followed up with the second raid on a similar animal farm and fur-

¹³⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁷ Anonymous, "Rod Coronado Arrested," *Militant Vegan*, Volume 7, 1994, 7.

¹³⁸ Wolcott, RJ, "Ecoterrorist Admits Firebombing MSU 25 Years Ago," *Detroit Free Press*, Online Archive, February 23, 2017.

¹³⁹ Koch, Anne, "Set Blaze At Edmonds Mink-Food Plant Futile," *Seattle Times*, Online Archives, June 18, 1991.

processing facility run by Washington State University, freeing six minx and ten mice, and destroying \$150,000 worth of equipment.

Coronado was officially arrested in 1994 by the FBI for committing the ALF MSU fire of 1992. The arrest of Coronado marked one of the first major arrests of an ALF group member. In 1993 a grand jury had indicted Coronado for the MSU fire, and prosecutors still suspected him of being involved in the WSU case. The \$1.5 million damage caused in both incidents caught the attention of the federal authorities.¹⁴⁰ Shortly after the grand jury indictment, the FBI spokesman Robert Houston, stated that Coronado was “responsible for the destruction of animal research facilities at Washington State University (WSU) on Aug. 12-13, 1991.”¹⁴¹ Coronado had been living underground, volunteering with the Yoeman Tekia Foundation, a group that supported Native American youth. Bail was set at \$650,000 for Coronado, and he was charged with 56 years in jail and punishment for the two crimes he committed at MSU and WSU.¹⁴²

The ALF last major action in the 1990s for the ALF was on March 11 1997, when Clinton Ellerman set fire and bombed a fur farm food facility in Sandy, Utah. Ellerman had broken into the Fur Breeders Agricultural Cooperative, planting pipe bombs under five trucks and one inside the building, setting each one of them off early that morning.¹⁴³ The explosion resulted about one million dollars in damage, the highest the ALF had resulted in Utah.¹⁴⁴ Although costly, the blast did not injure anyone. Some animal rights chapters were not pleased with the action. Anne Davis, a local activist, found Ellerman did “not [aspire]... to create extended and enduring change on behalf of animals,” but instead pushed many potential sympathizers away from the movement.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Anonymous, “Animal Liberation Prisoner Support,” *Underground*, Volume 2, November, 1994, 20.

¹⁴¹ Kuipers, Dean, *The Tracks of the Coyote*,” *Rolling Stone*, Online Archives, June 1, 1995.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Moran, Hans, “6 Pipe Bombs Started Fire at Fur Firm,” *Desert News*, Online archives, March 12th, 1997.

¹⁴⁴ Anonymous, “Innocent on All Chargers,” *Underground*, Volume 3, 1996, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Moran, “6 Pipe Bombs Started Fire at Fur Firm”.

The split between those engaging in more drastic action and those pursuing more traditional means increased every year throughout the 1990s. Ellerman would eventually be arrested by federal agents later that year. He pled guilty to charges of using explosive devices and causing extreme damage to property. Still, Ellerman avoided a 175-year sentence by accepting a plea deal for 35 years in prison.¹⁴⁶ Although Ellerman had struck a blow against animal cruelty, he had also unwittingly fed into the federal government's narrative that the ALF and other radicalized animal rights activists were indeed terrorist groups.

The ALF, like EF! and the ELF, were driven by a desire to protect and aid those that were being targeted and abused by both corporations and the United States government. The trademark direct-actions the ALF engaged in were burning down labs, using explosives and freeing animals from cages in factories and labs. This group, in tandem with the ELF caused 110 million in damage, and thereafter drew the attention of the FBI. The full force of the US government was drawn upon to persecute and prosecute the ALF by 2004, when the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act became law in a post 9/11 world. The ALF stumbled and fell apart under this pressure, leaving "legal" groups, like PETA, to struggle in its wake.

Chapter Five:

¹⁴⁶Anonymous, "35 year Sentence for ALF Activist," *No Comprise*, Volume 8, 1999, 5.

AETA and the Fall of Eco-Terrorism

State of Eco-Activism

The Twin Tower attacks on September 11th, 2001, would fundamentally change the way in how the United States operated and viewed terrorism. The laws that were created in the aftermath of the attack were largely centered on foreign terrorist groups. Nonetheless, the laws and methods used to limit and control foreign terror, were being applied to eco-activist groups. ELF and ALF were weakened and exposed, with key arrests and the fracturing of activist groups. The US government acted on eco-terrorism because of the economic threat that the ELF and ALF had on business, labelling the ALF and ELF as terrorist groups in 2002. All told, the ELF and ALF had led to nearly \$43,000,000 in damage to businesses since 1996.

The main justification for pursuing the ELF and ALF as terroristic groups is their use of violence, even though it was largely limited to buildings and property and not people. If people were victims, it was because they either owned the property or stood to lose their jobs because of the sabotage. Thus, the FBI “defines eco-terrorism as the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally oriented, subnational group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature.”¹⁴⁷ The FBI placed twenty-six field units to investigate the ELF and ALF actions in 2002, in line with this justification.¹⁴⁸

The concern over the ELF and ALF led to a senate hearing in 2005 over eco-terrorism. At the hearing the ELF and ALF were ranked as a greater threat than that of white supremacists, militias, and anti-abortion groups.¹⁴⁹ The justification for the idea that an unchecked ELF and ALF would lead to loss of life was that the material damage they inflicted was at a higher rate than that

¹⁴⁷ Jarboe, James, “Domestic Terrorism Section Chief, Counterterrorism Division Federal Bureau of Investigation,” Before the House Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health Washington, February 12th, 2002.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Inhofe, James, “U.S. Senate Oklahoma in Eco-Terrorism Specifically Examining the Earth Liberation Front and The Animal Liberation Front,” Wednesday, May 18, 2005, 3.

of right-wing extremists.¹⁵⁰ The committee found that only 214 acts of crime from 1994 to 2004 had been committed by anti-abortion groups, significantly less than the over 600 recorded crimes by ELF and ALF cells.¹⁵¹ Thus, the killing of Dr. Gunn in 1994 was glossed over as less significant than the ecoterrorists even though the EF!, the ELF and ALF had never killed a person throughout their history.¹⁵² Though Senator James M. Jerrods (I, Vermont), would still compare the ELF and ALF to abortion bombers and white supremacists, he found that ecoterrorists were not the sole perpetrators of domestic terrorism.¹⁵³ Jerrods' attempt to defend and push for a more unilateral set of laws to handle domestic terrorism, and not just eco-terrorism, would fall on deaf ears. The FBI's argument that the eco-terrorism was the number one domestic terrorist threat in the country would lead to the revision of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2006.

The original Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 1992 had made it a federal crime to commit over \$10,000 in damages to a property in the name of environmental and animal rights. The new form of bill was proposed in 2005 in response to the eco-terrorism committee's conclusion in 2005 that tighter laws were needed to combat the ELF, ALF, and like-minded groups.¹⁵⁴ Loopholes in the 1992 legislation allowed the ALF and ELF groups to "wage a campaign of threats, harassment, intimidation and fear mongering in an effort to have [targeted group] sever their relationships with targeted...enterprises."¹⁵⁵ The new legislation also widened the scope for criminalizing the ALF and ELF campaigns, allowing it to cover spray painting businesses, physically assaulting someone, spraying fluid into eyes, smashing windows, making

¹⁵⁰ Carrol, Carson , "Deputy Assistant Director, Bureau of alcohol, Tobacco, firearms and explosives," 2004, 15.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁵² Stack, Liam, "A Brief History of Deadly Attack on Abortion Providers," New York Times, Online Archives, November, 29, 2015.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁴ United States Congress, *The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act*, Public Law 109-374, 109th Congress, November 27, 2006, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

bombs threats and the internet posting of an employee's phone number.¹⁵⁶ Protection of citizens is the key priority in the revised Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, with the goal to avoid physical disruption to anyone targeted by environmental activists.¹⁵⁷ Congress and the groups ensuring protection of the first amendment agreed, "that any tactic or strategy involving violence toward people or threats of violence is wholly unacceptable and inconsistent with a core ethic of promoting compassion and respect."¹⁵⁸ The key term here is the idea of "threats," a vague and undefined term that would cover a whole host of perceived transgressions.

The activities of the ELF and ALF did not stop after AETA was enacted, as witnessed by the nearly 50 different acts of bombing or attempted bombing were committed from 2006 to 2010.¹⁵⁹ As one can see across the web and social media, Earth First!, Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front still exist today. EF!, ELF and ALF are no longer the Direct-Action juggernauts that spiked trees, blew up housing developments and freed thousands of animals from the 1980s to the late 1990s, as they are crippled by a lack of organization and anti-terror laws. This is not to say that people are not still attempting more extreme measures, as such Eric McDavid, Tyler Lang, and Kevin Johnson, but the focus has fallen much more to the traditional methods of protesting. Organizations such as the Sierra Club and PETA still are on the forefront, campaigning as each has always in defense of the environment and animals, using the information booths, protesting, media and court rooms to push change instead of illegal methods. The animal farming industry and timber industry make billions of dollars a year, lab testing on animals is still a common practice by all laboratories in the world. Businesses are allowed to pump pollutants into

¹⁵⁶ United States Congress, *The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act*, 8-9.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Homeland Security, "START: An Overview of Bombing and Arson Attacks by Environmental and Animal Rights Extremists in the United States," Library of Congress, 1995-2010, 2011.

the earth's land, water, and air, and cut down trees for new hotels, and test on animals for products that no one will use. Even the declining fur industry makes over 50 million a year. The damages caused over the course of the nineties by eco-groups barely scratched the surface of the money within the economic sector that uses the earth and animals for gain. Even with the small losses, the government wanted to protect the bottom line of each company, rather than ever meet any demands of the ELF and ALF halfway.

As the environmental situation on the planet worsens with climate change, the growth of a new green movement should be critical in addressing this problem. Andreas Malm's work funnels this idea down to the 'Lanchester's paradox,' the idea that as the planet succumbs to these changes there should be more activists looking to defend the planet by any means. Malm's work, unlike most modern "eco-terrorist" work, is not driven by an underlining activist sensibility but rather understanding the current political landscape. The answer to the 'Lanchester's paradox,' exists within the history of EF!, ELF and ALF, and the reconstruction and application of AETA. Green movements have existed in the face of environmental changes but have been met with hostility to what they say rather than open arms or compromise.

EF!, the ELF and the ALF used "terrorism" as way to targeting those that would harm the planet. Their embrace of "direct-action" as the most effective way of promoting their causes all but ensured a brief but historic contribution to the ecological movement. Yet the government and conservative media's categorization of their acts of economic sabotage as "terrorist" is often overstated given that not a single human life was ever taken by any of these groups. The United States government, seeing an opportunity in the wake of 9/11 to stop further damage to corporate interests by painting these controversial groups under the rubric of terrorism, successfully

promulgated AETA in 2004. The result was to effectively defang the green movement in the United States at exactly the time it arguably is needed the most.

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