



Peace met with violence in God's Valley

By the PDX Prop Busta, for Portland Indymedia

(Tillamook State Forest)--Sixteen people were arrested in God's Valley on Saturday, October 6, when they crossed the line into the "safety zone" around current logging operations in Area II of the Acey timber sale. They were protesting the "tree thinning" that the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is allowing there and making a statement against the recent attacks on other activists in the past three days. These 16 join three others in jail who were arrested on Thursday, October 4.

This action represents the first of its kind in an Oregon state forest. It was called by the Cascadia Forest Alliance (CFA) and the Hard Rain Allilance. Of the 60 people who showed up, about half were local residents, making this a cooperative effort between urban and rural forest activists.

The arrests

The seven women and nine men who were areested planned a fairly typical civil disobedience

action wherein they would cross the line together and peacably give themselves up. Hundreds of such actions have taken place over the years, and both activists and law enforcement have the drill down at this point.

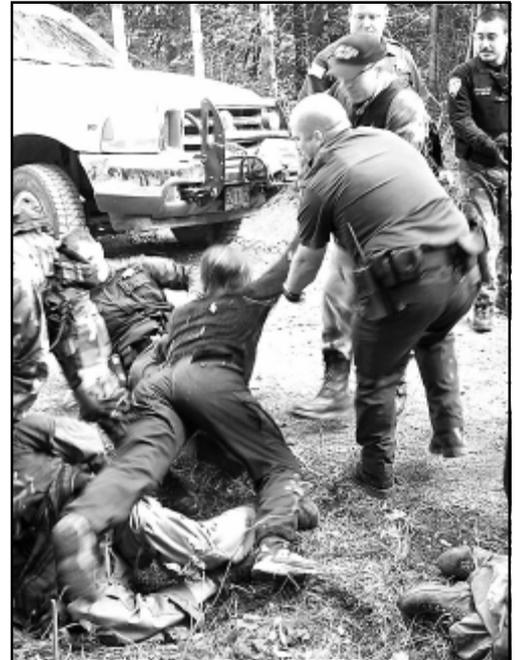
The law enforcement officers present, however, were apparently untrained for such situations, or were given orders contrary to this tradition, and immediatly began pushing the activists back. What ensued was a chaotic situation in which the officers turned unnecessarily to violence; people were shoved, thrown to the ground, subjected to pain compliance (such as ear-pulling), sat on, and -- in at least two instances -- pulled over the line from the legal side to be arrested.

One of the two people who was forced across the line was a Portlkand Indymedia reporter. An officer grabbed her by the shirt and pulled her over the line and a second officer pushed her to the ground on top of her video camera. She said, "I'm press! I'm press!" and when they turned her

over they saw her press pass. Immediately, they helped her up and apologize. "We were just doing our job," one of them said. An official complaint to the Sherriff's Department will be forthcoming.

A second woman who was pulled across the line was pulled back by two other people and escaped entrapment.

Arrestees had their wrists bound behind their backs with plastic ties, and were sat together in a group about forty feet behind the line. For some time they were left there, guarded by three to four officers, while the rest of the officers stood at the line facing the remaining activists.



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Corporate media absence

The only media in attendance at the line-crossing were the Portland Independent Media Center, KBOO community radio (90.7 FM), Cable Access, and KMUN radio. If any local television stations or newspapers present stories on the day's events, they will not be based on eye-witness reports, but only on official statements from the Clatsop County Sherriff's Department, which were delivered in an entirely different part of the forest, a ten minute drive and half an hour's walk away. For those members of the media who *did* go to the action, there was no way of getting the "official" word; none of the 25 officers at the line-crossing were allowed to talk to the press.

Multi-agency law enforcement

The mosaic of different uniforms among the officers reflected the multi-agency effort that had been arranged. There were officers from the Oregon State Patrol, the Beaverton Police Department, and the Sherriff Departments of Tilamook, Clatsop

continued on next page

All photos by PDX Dragon

and Columbia counties. Some were in camouflage, some in black, and two were on horses and were wearing black cowboy hats. Others were not easily identifiable. On a rise behind the line, a half dozen people with video and still cameras documented the event.

According to David Wells of the ODF, among this group were ODF employees whose normal duties include guaranteeing the safety of people in the forest while logging is taking place; they use radios to make sure areas are secure.

The free activists chanted and shouted words of encouragement to the arrestees. One beautiful moment came when three or four people sat and sang "om" at the same time. Everyone else stopped talking, and the resonance of the syllable rose up toward the sky. It vibrated there, powerfully, interrupted but not overcome by the squawks of the officers' radios and the buzz of chainsaws.

The moment passed as quickly as it came, and some of the activists taunted the officers. While some of the taunts dwelt on the importance of saving the environment, others were more personal, insulting and even profane. The officers showed no sign of being sawyed by any of these words.

Simple taunts, though, pale in comparison to physical violence or

intimidation and the activists had gathered here today in part to protest the egregious examples of such that had apparently been occurring over the previous three days. The treatment of the activist known as "Ridge", for example, is tantamount to attempted murder, as the story has been told to Indymedia.

The story of Ridge

Ridge climbed a tree near one of the treesits in Area II on Thursday. At this time, he was in radio contact with another activist, elsewhere in the forest. "Hostile climbers" came up the tree to bring him down, but he scrambled up further. Next, they fired up a chainsaw and sliced into the tree's trunk. The activist on the other side of the radio heard the buzz behind his frightened voice.

At this point, he jumped to another tree for safety. This is also the same day when three other activists, who were videotaping, were arrested. During the night, bright lights were shined up at him, and loud music played; forest activists say this is standard practice for trying to drive people down or out of treesits.

On Friday, Ridge was told that "we're coming up to get you". Whether this was loggers, the ODF, or other law enforcement is



Seven women and nine men were arrested in this first-of-its-kind civil disobedience action in an Oregon state forest.

not clear, but members of each profession were in attendance. A logger was sent up the tree to cut all the branches below Ridge. Ridge claims that the logger was told to cut the branch he was on, but that the logger refused. All the branches below this point were removed, however, cutting off any possible descent.

Ridge then radioed that there was a sharpshooter on the ground and that they were "threatening to shoot him" if he didn't come down. How he was supposed to do this when all the lower branches had been cut was not apparently revealed to him. Meanwhile, loggers were felling trees "left and right, all around him", at a distance far less than is legally mandated by law for human safety. That this occurred inside the "safety zone" is a too common irony.

Sometime after nightfall, Ridge fell from the tree. Whether it was from exhaustion or some other cause is not clear, but the consequence was tragic. He is currently in intensive care at Immanuel Hospital in Portland, dipping in and out of consciousness, with a hemorrhaging brain, collapsed lung, injured arm, and two breaks in his pelvis. At about the same time that he fell, a local resident heard three gunshots from that direction.

Literally adding insult to in-

jury, loggers and ODF personnel apparently made fun of Ridge after his fall, calling him an "amateur" and twisting his injured arm.

For the record, law enforcement has officially denied nearly all these allegations, though Wells confirmed that the lower branches of the tree were indeed cut.

See video of the action

As mentioned, no corporate media were present at the civil disobedience action in God's Valley on Saturday, October 6. This was an important event, and forest and media activists alike are eager to get the word out. Here are ways you can see video of the action:

Streaming Real Video on Indymedia website:

Go to <http://portland.indymedia.org> for online video

Jim Lockhart's cable access show, "A Growing Concern":

Friday, October 12, 7:00 p.m., Channel 11

Sunday, October 14, 10:00 p.m., Channel 23

Thursday, October 18, 10:00 p.m., Channel 22

(All channel numbers are for the Portland metro area)

Portland Indymedia's monthly video showing:

Monday, October 29, 7:00 p.m., at It's a Beautiful Pizza, Belmont SE between 33rd & 34th. Also featured will be the global Indymedia network's "Indyreal", a 1/2 hour of independently produced news from around the country, and video shorts from other recent local events.

What is Indymedia?

The Portland, Oregon Independent Media Center (IMC) is a grassroots organization committed to using media distribution as a tool for public education. We provide an open-publishing forum for the people to report on, illuminate and analyze local and global issues and to make commentary. We work toward the further education of the public because we believe that an informed populace will build a strong society that is resistant to tyranny, oppression and inequality.

Anyone can post text, photos, audio and video to the IMC Newswire with an easy-to-use online form; content is published (nearly) instantly without going through an editorial process. "News by the people, for the people."

The Portland IMC is part of the global Indymedia network, which boasts over 60 regional IMCs around the world.