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The Planet, 2000, Fall

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"Be the change you want to see in the world."—Gandhi

The images—black smoky nights, arms upraised in anger, six-foot tall turtles—were larger than my TV could handle. The pictures snaked out of the screen to wallop me—hard—as I sat mesmerized, awestruck by the excitement, the absolute power of so many people united for a common cause.

I lived the Seattle World Trade Organization protest vicariously through the often-distorted lens of mainstream media. But the heady possibilities stayed with me.

It occurred to me that this was not an isolated event, that this was part of a larger social movement; that something, some consciousness, some sleeping giant, was just possibly groaning awake.

And so we have devoted this issue to activism and the many ways it manifests itself in our world today, to chronicle and support this awakening. As this magazine began to take shape, the intangible nature of activism became clear to me. There are no clear-cut definitions, no boundaries, no rules. And therein lies its power.

Sometimes you can harness a force larger than one person, as at the WTO demonstrations. But perhaps there is even more power and potential for change in one person's daily actions. Change can, and must begin with one person.

We, as editors and writers, have tried to tell these stories of values, from the big to the small choices, from taking back the streets to the clothes on our backs. Our effort was not to define or even just represent activism today. We have simply tried to acknowledge and give a voice to that power that resides in us all, the power to change not just the world, but ourselves.

—Tiffany Campbell, editor

“One final paragraph of advice: Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am—a reluctant enthusiast... a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it.

While you can. While it's still here.

So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, encounter the griz, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that sweet and lucid air, sit quietly and contemplate the previous stillness, that lovely mysterious and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much:

I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound people with their hearts in a safe-deposit box, and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators, I promise you this: you will outlive the bastards.”

—Edward Abbey

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The Planet is the quarterly environmental magazine of Huxley College of Environmental Studies, written, designed and edited by students. We are dedicated to environmental advocacy and awareness through responsible journalism.

Back photo by David Axelrod, Seattle, 1999.
Stephen Cox and Matt Stembridge aren’t your traditional janitors. As part of a national movement to legitimize the Green Party, they’ve traveled around the country mopping floors and scrubbing walls to expose corporate campaign donations at Democratic and Republican headquarters.

“’We’ll hit the populated part of town and start handing out bars of soap,’ said Nader Corporate Cleaner Stephen Cox. “Don’t be surprised if the response we see today is extremely hostile.”

The Ryder van was parked off East Holly Street facing Bellingham Bay as Cox and fellow cleaner Matt Stembridge pulled their overalls on and got to work. It was a cold, sunny day; Cox tried to rub the cold out of his arms before grabbing his bucket of peppermint soap. As Stembridge hefted his mop on to his shoulder he looked like Dennis the Menace picking up his sling shot, or a Colonial soldier shouldering his musket.

Earlier, Cox spoke of the team’s action in Portland, Ore. “We went to a clean up at the Portland office of the Gore campaign,” Cox said. “They weren’t happy to see us at all. They locked us out. They sent some union activists to shoe us away.”

The two men had traveled all around the West Coast cleansing various party headquarters of corporate cash. Dressed in janitorial outfits, they had scrubbed the walls of countless Democrat and Republican headquarters to invite conversation and draw attention to corporate donations to both campaigns.

Cox and Stembridge were part of a national movement to bring legitimacy to the Green Party, and to garner votes for Ralph Nader. Across the United States, thousands of volunteers worked for a presidential candidate that few truly believed would win the presidency. They donated countless hours and more than $5 million to do nothing less than shake the foundation of America’s two-party system.

“It has been a weird ride,” Cox said. “A lot of people have very mixed emotions about Nader’s campaign and about what we’re doing. Ultimately we feel that the work we’re doing will help establish a third party.”

At Western, hundreds of students came together to actively participate in a political system many have come to distrust. Western Green Party President Spencer West said he was politically disillusioned until the day he saw Nader speak at the Key Arena in Seattle.

“It was a real person speaking,” West said. “I got the feeling you get going to a really good concert.”

After that, West began working to bring the Green Party’s message to Western, and to bring students out of political hiding. Nader ran on a ticket that would, supporters believed, bring out the liberal student vote. Nader’s platform promised the elimination of soft money in campaigns, an increase of the minimum wage to $7.30, the signing of a 1997 United Nations treaty outlawing landmines and outlining an environmental agenda that

[Image]
puts people and the environment they live in ahead of corporate interests.

Western’s Green Party met weekly, organized protests, stationed informational tables in Red Square, and even held a concert and rally in the Viking Union.

“I felt that the rally was a successful event,” West said. “People had a good time. It showed that the community exists, that the community is growing.”

Few Greens’ believed they would ever see Nader take the presidency. They gave birth to a third option for American voters, something for the lost children of the American political system. West and the corporate cleaners represent the Green Party’s will to make politics open, even fun, to people.

When Cox and Stembridge protested a Republican rally in Portland, Ore., with other Green Party activists they held political puppet theater, waved signs, passed out “Vote Nader” soap and had a pretty good time. Cox said the same was not true for other advocates.

“There were a few people out for Gore ... there was one guy with a Gore/Lieberman sign that looked like he was clinically depressed,” Cox said. “He sat there with a sign, staring at the ground.”

According to Cox, some political critics in the Gore camp argue that the Nader effort may have stolen the presidency from Al Gore, and that citizens who vote for Nader are betraying the cause by adding to the number of people not voting against George W. Bush. The cleaners disagree.

“There is nothing anywhere in the constitution, or even in the history of American politics, that people who happen to be afraid of one candidate and the stances they take that they are required to vote for another person just to beat that bad person,” Stembridge said. “Voting on fear is a horrible way to run a democracy. You’re not going to end up with the kind of country, the kind of politics or the kind of leaders that you want. If you always vote that way you are going to always end up with the lesser of two evils.”

Cox said he knew that he had to work for Nader while watching the second presidential debate.

“I realized that I wasn’t being represented and in some way that I must get involved,” Cox said.

Cox said it is the moral responsibility of any American to vote their conscience, and that strategic voting is counterproductive.

“If there is a candidate who represents your viewpoints better than any of the other two, even it that candidate doesn’t stand a snowball’s chance in hell of actually winning the office, it is undemocratic, and in many ways un-American, not to vote for that candidate,” Cox said.

Nader’s campaign was characterized by volunteer action, with people working to take control of their nation by removing big money from the equation, according to Stembridge.
As nearly 80 vocal but smiling marchers rounded the corner into Western's Red Square, finishing the last stretch of their brick-laden pathway, a cheer of encouragement erupted from the crowd of runners seated in the square. The runners had arrived several minutes earlier and were eating soup, salad and ice cream to replenish the energy expended on their run from Maritime Heritage Park, neighboring Georgia-Pacific Corp.'s (G-P) pulp mill. Some of the runners had their faces painted dark green and black as if they had actually been poisoned. One marcher wore a white chemical protectant suit; others wore black gas masks and carried large multi-color banners that read "G-P Stop Poisoning Us." Once the marchers joined the runners the energy in the crowd was contagious. A local guitarist was playing, people were eating and everyone in
“G-P should go TCF because as long as it uses chlorine in any form it’ll continue to spew chemicals such as dioxins, furans and other PBTs that are known to cause cancer and birth defects.”
—Doug Tolchin

Attendance was excited about the community’s first major step towards fighting G-P’s pollution.

Run For Your Life, a community event that took place Oct. 28, 2000, included a mock chlorine dioxide explosion at Maritime Heritage Park and a run/march away from the poisonous gas up to "safety" in Red Square. Although it was centered on the threat of a chlorine dioxide explosion at G-P, it also addressed the chronic problem of G-P emitting carcinogenic persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) into Bellingham’s air.

“It was an excellent event, well conceived, creative and informative,” Joe Chermesino, Run For Your Life participant, said.

“This is a great turnout. I’m really proud of everybody. This has been a really successful day,” said Melissa Helzer, a runner in the event who also shared some original poetry with the crowd right before the mock explosion. “The bad smell in Bellingham inspired me to write my poems,” she said with a smile. “But they are also for my son’s future.”

“My biggest concerns are the catastrophic threat of chlorine dioxide in that it can explode at any time and the buildup of PBTs and other toxins,” Chris Dillard, one of the volunteers responsible for Run For Your Life, said. “We’re asking for G-P to go TCF (Totally Chlorine Free) and for the toxic waste incinerators to be shut down.”

“G-P should go TCF because as long as it uses chlorine in any form it’ll continue to spew chemicals such as dioxins, furans and other PBTs that are known to cause cancer and birth defects,” Doug Tolchin said.

Tolchin is a founding member of Friends of Whatcom, a local group that focuses on educating Bellingham and surrounding areas about the environmental injustice surrounding them, which includes but is not limited to G-P. Tolchin is also the president of River Oak Properties Inc., a real estate business that owns 12 redeveloped downtown properties.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared in April 1998 that all pulp mills in the United States would have three years to end their use of the highly toxic and volatile elemental chlorine to bleach their paper. Some will use chlorine dioxide which, due to the added oxygen, is a bit less dangerous than elemental chlorine, and the others will not use any chlorine at all. G-P is allowed, because they produce fine paper products like photographic and computer paper, to use chlorine dioxide. In other words, the mill will go ECF (Elemental Chlorine Free).

“The mill will shut down Nov. 6 for five days during which the final conversions to chlorine dioxide will be made,” Mark Cockrell, G-P’s environmental administrator, said.
"While a chlorine dioxide explosion would be terrible, it would be a one time event. The scarier thing to me ... is the daily low-level doses of chloroform, dioxin and formaldehyde."
—Robin du Pré

As long as 25 percent of the mill's production is specialty paper, the EPA will allow G-P to stay ECF and will not push for them to go TCF. The community, however, will.

“We're going to circulate petitions to community members and endorsement forms to local businesses and organizations,” Dillard said. “When we get enough signatures we'll use them to lean on our local politicians to make a change.”

So why is everyone so concerned about whether G-P is going to explode? Chlorine was used as a poisonous war gas in WWI and chlorine dioxide acts chemically similar. Inhaling chlorine dioxide deprives a person's lungs of oxygen and will cause inflammation of their lung tissue and throat until they can't breathe. According to a study done by the Whatcom County Division of Local Emergency Planning Committee, an explosion with chlorine dioxide at G-P's Bellingham mill could disperse five miles from the point of explosion. That would easily cover all of downtown, Western's campus and much of Bellingham's surrounding areas.

“The sensitivity of G-P's location is why I'm concerned,” Tolchin said. “It's right downtown.”

“While a chlorine dioxide explosion would be terrible, it would be a one time event. The scarier thing to me ... is the daily low level doses of chloroform, dioxin and formaldehyde,” said Robin du Pré who works for the local industry watchdog REsources and monitors G-P's compliance to discharge permits.

According to G-P's Air Toxic Emissions Inventory for 1999 the mill released 341,147 pounds of chemicals into the air last year. That breaks down to 935
pounds of toxic chemicals per day and 179 pounds of those chemicals were chlorinated. Activists say the root of G-P's air pollution is the hogfuel boilers.

"In the hogfuel boilers we burn hogfuel and clarifier solids with natural gas," Cockrell said. "Hogfuel includes bark and sawdust that we can't use and clarifier solids are the pieces of bleached pulp that are too big to make into paper."

"The burning of wood waste (bark and sawdust) laden with sodium chloride and pulp that has been bleached with chlorine dioxide is what is producing PBTs," Dillard said.

According to the EPA, PBT pollutants are chemicals that are toxic, persist in the environment and bioaccumulate in food chains and, thus, pose risks to human health and ecosystems.

PBTs prevalent in the air will get not only into a person's lungs but also into the crops and the livestock of local farmers. The PBTs stay in these meats and veggies until they are digested. Once digestion takes place the PBTs will remain in a person's system indefinitely.

"One of the main reasons we're doing Run For Your Life is that we want a strong PBT (restriction) plan from the Department of Ecology," Dillard said.

G-P employs 800 people in Bellingham. The fact that 35 other European pulp mills like G-P are TCF gives hope to local activists and community members that this issue doesn't have to be about jobs versus the environment. In fact, all the activists interviewed don't want G-P to leave.

"We should live with the plants that make our rosy pink toilet paper rather than shipping the plant and its pollution to Mexico ... my vision is for a mill here, but why not a state of the art, chlorine free mill?" asked du Pré.

Tolchin also wants G-P to stay but to go TCF and get rid of its hogfuel boilers. He knows it is possible, but acknowledges the power to make decisions is not here in Bellingham.

"This community is going to have to scream pretty darn loud and kick pretty darn hard for the people in Atlanta (home of G-P's head office) to hear it," Tolchin said.

Run for Your Life was the community's latest "kick."

"It's been the largest get together yet concerning G-P and with more than 300 people it was a great first step," Dave Sansone, another volunteer organizer of the event, said.

Whether the "kick" will be a hard enough for Atlanta to feel remains to be seen. What is apparent, is that the community is united to fight for the same cause. Bellingham citizens want clean air, clean water and uncontaminated food. Most importantly though, they want Bellingham to be a safe place to live now and in the future.
“I ♥ Sweatshops.” How would you feel if this were branded on your sweatshirt instead of “Western Washington University?”

How would you feel announcing to the world that you support sweatshops — factories where workers are exploited as cheap labor, where they are abused and harassed, subject to unsafe working conditions, where women are raped and victimized — all because you wanted to wear your school’s name with pride?

Perhaps this is what you risk when buying Western apparel.

In June 1999, Western joined the Fair Labor Association (FLA) to ensure that Western’s apparel is not manufactured at the cost of human injustices. Western, along with 142 other universities in the country, depends on the FLA to monitor the factories where apparel is made by imposing a restrictive workplace code of conduct on the manufacturers. This code of conduct outlines both operating and human rights standards that each factory must comply with. The FLA is then responsible for enforcing these standards through monitoring and inspections.

“Western joined the FLA at the time it was the only organization available,” said Linda Beckman, director of budget and administration at Western. “We (the university) wanted to make a statement about being against sweatshop issues.”
The FLA, which was formed in 1998, has still not begun its monitoring process. It will begin before the end of fall 2000.

The FLA's Workplace Code of Conduct states that enforcing issues such as forced labor, child labor, nondiscrimination, health and safety will eliminate sweatshops. It states: “Consumers can have confidence that products that are manufactured in compliance with these standards are not produced under exploitative or inhumane conditions.”

Sweatshop activists feel that there are a lot of discrepancies with the FLA, starting with workers' wages, corporate involvement in the FLA, and its monitoring methods. Due to these discrepancies, students across the country actively protest the FLA's ability to enforce manufacturer's compliance with the Workplace Code of Conduct.

In Feb. 2000, 40 anti-sweatshop activists from the University of Michigan sat in on the dean's office for two days. This protest helped force the administration to join the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), a new organization that also enforces labor laws. In winter quarter of 1999, Western student activists started a campaign to encourage Western to consider switching its membership from the FLA to the WRC.

"The FLA has some pretty serious flaws," WRC interim director Maria Roeper said. Child labor, for example, will not be prevented if parents are not making enough money because the children will have to work to help support the family.

The FLA supports a minimum wage while the WRC supports a livable wage. In the Workplace Code of Conduct, the FLA states “employers shall pay ... at least a minimum wage required by local law or the prevailing industry wage, whichever is higher.”

The WRC's code of conduct enforces a livable wage, which provides for “the basic needs such as housing, energy, nutrition, clothing, health care, education, potable water, childcare, transportation and savings.” In some countries, minimum wage is far below what is needed to live with these basic needs.

According to the National Labor Committee, the approximate hourly wage in El Salvador for apparel workers is 59 cents, where the living wage is $1.18. In Nicaragua, the hourly wage is 23 cents and the living wage is 80 cents per hour. In Honduras, the hourly wage is 43 cents and the living wage is 79 cents per hour.
A group of students from Columbia University traveled to El Salvador in spring of 1999 to study working conditions and living wages. According to this study, 80 percent of the apparel workers were women; 50 percent single mothers. The workers earn the legal monthly minimum wage, but that wage is barely sufficient to meet the basic food requirements as defined by the Salvadoran government itself. This means that 100 percent of a worker's wage is spent on food.

"A factory may still be clean, well organized and monitored, but if the workers are not paid a sustainable living wage, it is still a sweatshop," said Reverend David Schilling of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility.

The FLA and the WRC also differ in that the FLA allows corporate representatives to serve on their boards of directors. These people represent manufacturers that the FLA wants to comply with their Workplace Code of Conduct. FLA board members include representatives from Nike and Reebok. The FLA corporate advisory council includes Nike, Adidas, Kathie Lee Gifford and Gear for Sports. In the 1999-2000 school year, the Associated Students Bookstore sold $150,012 worth of Gear for Sports merchandise.

The FLA staff determines which of the manufacturer's factories will be monitored, said Jason Wares, executive officer of the FLA. The FLA chooses which 30 percent of the factories will be monitored during the first two years of the companies' membership with the FLA. After the second year, the FLA will reduce its monitoring to only 5 to 15 percent of the companies' factories.

"(The FLA) will look at a fraction of the factories and turn around and say 100 percent are 'sweat-free,'" Rooper said.

The FLA allows companies to have their own monitors inspect their own factories, Wares said. This would essentially be Nike hiring a Nike monitor to inspect Nike factories.

The FLA also has external monitors, people who have no affiliation with the corporation, to inspect factories. According to the United Students Against Sweatshops critique of the FLA, external monitors inspecting factories creates a conflict of interest. Since monitors contract with the corporations, they are more accountable to the interests of the corporation than they are to the universities, the FLA, or the public.

Factory management may be notified before an FLA inspection, and certain workers are picked to talk to the inspectors and told what to say, Rooper said. She added that monitors might not get an accurate idea of what is going on in the factories.

The WRC, formed in 1999, will have a governing board that will consist of 12 members: six representatives from the WRC Advisory Council, three representatives from United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) and three representatives from the administrations of the WRC schools.

"One of WRC's core principles is to work with workers to empower them and help improve conditions on their own behalf," Rooper said. To do this, she said the WRC will work with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that already have strong relationships with workers.

"What I like about the WRC is that it is not Western-privileged imperialists coming in (to foreign countries) saying 'we're going to organize you, this is how we envision a living wage, we're going to set it all,'" said Matt Remle, Western graduate and coordinator of the anti-sweatshop campaign. "The WRC is essentially a mechanism, a tool for the workers. They (the workers) determine what the living wage is, they determine what child labor is and they determine what conditions are acceptable."
The WRC wants to be able to develop close relationships with the factory workers through its mutual relationships with the NGOs.

The WRC's plan, instead, is to continuously work with sweatshops to ensure the agreement between the manufacturer and the university is legitimate.

Another core principle of the WRC, Roeper said, is that the information it collects needs to be public.

In spring 2000, after student protest and concern, the University of Oregon pulled its membership from the FLA and joined the WRC. Philip Knight, CEO of Nike and University of Oregon alumni, pulled a $30 million pledge for a new stadium and refused to donate any more of his private money to the university.

"I feel it was his way of saying 'I oppress people; I employ slave labor, but you shouldn't have a problem with that because I'm giving you money,'" said Lindsey McLean, a junior and Student Senate member at the University of Oregon.

University of Oregon students aren't the only ones who have protested their university's involvement with the FLA. Western students also have begun organizing and researching sweatshop issues and Western's membership with the FLA.

Last spring, Western anti-sweatshop activists collected signatures in a petition to give to the administration, showing that Western students do not want their clothing made in sweatshops, therefore they want Western to switch its membership to the WRC.

"Our petition said 'please join the WRC, endorse its code of conduct,'" Remle said. "If they do not adhere to this code of conduct, which basically means they are supporting the use of sweatshop labor, then we (students) refuse to buy from you the university."

The administration responded to students' concern by recommending a task force that would look at the differences between the two organizations to determine whether to stay with the FLA or to switch to the WRC.

"I wrote a recommendation to (Vice President of Student Affairs) Coughlin to recommend creating a task force that would involve faculty, students, and administrators so we could all look at the topic together," Linda Beckman, director of budget and administration, said.

The recommendation stated that the task force will "gather current information, review the goals and policies and potential effectiveness of both organizations, and make a recommendation to (Coughlin) as to appropriate codes of conduct, membership in national organizations and any internal policies that would be effective."

Cassandra Howe, coordinator of Students Against Sweatshops at Western, agreed to take over the work that was done last year.

"Our goal is to raise campus awareness to make students more conscious of sweatshop issues," Howe said. "To do this the group has discussed having forums to review the differences between the FLA and the WRC and to invite guest speakers to campus.

"Both organizations are in their infant stages," Beckman said. "(They are) trying to wrestle with the issues of living wage, monitoring systems and corporate involvement."

If the FLA doesn't pay workers living wages, nor have fair monitoring practices, Western students have reason to believe that being a member of the FLA will not ensure that their apparel is not made in sweatshops. As long as Western remains a member of the FLA, students should question the values they wear on their clothing.

"To me it's more important that human rights are not being violated, that a sweatshop worker isn't being sexually harassed or raped at work just so Western can have a T-shirt that says 'Western Mom,'" Remle said.

The next time you go to the bookstore to proudly buy your Western sweatshirt, challenge yourself to consider the conditions in which that sweatshirt was made. It may be easier to deny the possibility that a worker who wasn't making enough money to feed her children made your clothing. If the ideas of human injustices, exploited labor and extreme poverty appeals to you, then buy the sweatshirt and stand up for sweatshops.
The clear morning sun filters through the branches of the forest and droplets of dew rest on the surrounding fauna. Birds chirp in unison — a wake-up call for the other wildlife in the forest. This area of Arlecho Creek, located near Mount Baker, is home to cedar, fir and hemlock trees that are centuries old and home to the endangered murrelet bird.

Arlecho Creek has seen tough times. Eight years ago, the Arlecho basin was overrun with loggers who clear-cut the hills surrounding Arlecho. It was also eight years ago that the Lummi Indian tribe blocked the access road to keep logging trucks from reaching the rest of the forest. The tribe handed loggers informational pamphlets about the biodiversity and cultural significance of the area to the Lummi tribe, and then let the loggers proceed. The information blockade caught the attention of regional and national news agencies, including CNN.

The old-growth forest in Arlecho Creek is special to the Lummi tribe. It is a place of spiritual worship and a place to interact with Mother Nature.

"We like to go to an area that is isolated, pure, where it's never been touched, where there is no development going on so we can commune with Mother Nature," said Xwomiksten, traditional healer and natural-resource biologist of the Lummi tribe, who also goes by Tom Edwards. "Mother Nature has a lot to offer us and a lot to teach us. She has many stories to tell from the leaves, the rocks, the trees, the plants, the wetlands, the water ..."

Arlecho Creek is also a place where the Lummi relieve stress and sorrow and learn songs and stories from their ancestors. Some families will stay in the forest for four to six days interacting with nature and teaching its young ones about Lummi heritage. The Lummi also use the old-growth area for vision quests, which is a way the tribe members talk to The Great Spirit and pray.

"We always pray for the elders first because they are the treasure holders of all the knowledge. They experienced what has happened in the past," Xwomiksten said. "I pray for the continued health of our elders so that they can continue to help us understand the old ways, so we can teach those teachings to the younger generation."

That is why the old-growth areas in Arlecho Creek need to remain, so the tribe can stay connected to its culture, Xwomiksten said. If the rest of Arlecho is logged, the Lummi tradition also disappears.

Arlecho Creek is home to the endangered murrelet sea bird or squok-quok. The murrelet, a symbol of fortune, means the "totem of the potlatch" or the gathering of people. The community comes together during the winter and summer seasons and brings homemade dishes to share. The tribe eats together, exchanges stories, and shares its knowledge and
wisdom with each other. In the old days, many Lummi didn't make it past the second grade, said Xwomiksten, so the potlatch was a place where people could come together, to learn from each other and learn about Mother Nature.

The murrelet has brought many people outside of the tribe together: The House of Tibet, the Paul Allen Foundation, Microsoft and its employees, Columbia University, The Nature Conservancy, Crown Pacific timber company and many other organizations. The groups recognize the importance of preserving the culture of the Lummi tribe as well as the endangered species in Arlecho including eagles, elk, salmon, bears and assorted plant life.

In an effort to save what is left of Arlecho, these and other organizations across the country donated more than $5.25 million; $7.1 million is needed by Dec. 2002 to purchase the 2,000-acre area from Crown Pacific lumber company.

"Anything we don't make a conscious effort to save over the next 40 years will be extinct," said Kurt Russo, director of the Arlecho Creek Forest Conservation Partnership.

"That includes biological species as well as languages and cultural ways of living. It's all going to disappear. This particular area (Arlecho Creek) is a place of cultural importance to aboriginal people of this region. It is enormously important for biodiversity as it is a micro-problem of a global issue."

The goal of the Lummi tribe and the Lummi Natural Resource Department is to preserve, protect and enhance the remaining resources in Arlecho for future generations.

"We look at everything as a whole: the land, the water, the earth, the game, the air," Xwomiksten said. "If you disrupt the system it causes a ripple effect making the whole system unbalanced."

The Lummi tribe is trying to stop all logging in the area in order to keep the system balanced. The Lummi tribe would like the department landowners and the Department of Natural Resources to respect its recommendations concerning Arlecho. The tribe wants adequate protection on treaty and inherent rights given to them by its ancestors.

According to Xwomiksten, the state looks at fish, water and roads, but is leaving out several important factors: culture, archeological, historical and wildlife.

"Anything we don't make a conscious effort to save over the next 40 years will be extinct. That includes biological species as well as languages and cultural ways of living. It's all going to disappear ..."
— Kurt Russo

Why should the community care about Arlecho Creek when only a small percentage of the population has ever heard of it?

"It isn't the kind of caring that puts food on your table; it isn't the kind of caring that puts shoes on your children's feet," explained Russo, who has worked with the Lummi tribe for 22 years. "To tribal members, the forest has put a song to their hearts to know that it is there."

After Arlecho Creek is purchased, the Lummi tribe, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University and other colleges in the state will use the area to give students hands-on experience learning how the ecosystem functions and how to restore what has been damaged during past logging. The tribe also plans to use the clear-cut areas to build tribal schools.

"We want to open people's eyes so they can see this project become a success, and maybe other people will jump on board and look at other areas," Xwomiksten said. "If we don't do anything now in protecting our culture and Mother Nature, we're going to lose all the resources."

Xwomiksten hopes that as soon as the land is purchased, people in the community will come and celebrate together at Arlecho Creek, and work together to preserve and restore this land so important to the Lummi tribe, the endangered species and the community.

By preserving and restoring Arlecho Creek, the Lummi tribe can continue the traditions of its culture embedded in its roots since the beginning of time. The conservation efforts in Arlecho are crucial to the survival of the murrelet bird, salmon, elk, deer and a variety of wildlife that make their home in this area. When local and national communities work together to save Arlecho Creek, it enriches the lives of the Lummi tribe and the communities.

Kelsey Martinez (top left), a dance competitor at a traditional Lummi Tribe Pow Wow entertains a crowd with her dress and dance. Indian Nation Singers (bottom middle) of the Lummi tribe entertained a full house with their music and traditional American Indian dress. Trevor Takota plays with the group's drumsticks while Indian Nation singers look on. Xwomiksten (Tom Edwards) (top right), is a traditional healer and natural-resource biologist of the Lummi tribe.

Arlecho Creek Conservation Partnership (360) 733-5648
Arlecho Web site: www.nwic.edu/arlecho
Do you know the smell of burning dumpsters? The sound of concussion grenades? Or the sight of someone brought to tears by the hand of a governmental body? We do.

Protest is the vibrant result of individuals moved by a heartfelt disruption of what they believe in.
The World Trade Organization converged on Seattle one year ago, bringing with it images of black-clad anarchists, the National Guard, tear gas and the focus of the world. The media spotlight shifted from the message protestors put forth to the destruction wrought by so few.

By the third night things were bad and getting worse. Vile, black smoke billowed from dumpsters burning in the street, adding to the fog that already hung over the city. The crack of a rubber-bullet gun and bark of police loudspeaker broke the sounds of a protesting mob, muffled by the acrid cloud. Organized marching and peaceful protest had given way to rioting; anarchists and activists made the night their personal property.

The protesters, though scattered throughout Seattle’s downtown area, were united in vision. Whether protesting a multi-national corporation, such as Nike, an industry, such as agri-business or the secret proceedings of the World Trade Organization itself, they all agreed on one thing — the conference must be shut down. To some, this goal would be accomplished at any cost.

It was.

Earlier that day, downtown commerce had ground to a halt. Seattle was shut down; the WTO conference was closed for business. The Mardi Gras-style costumes and union jackets that had characterized the first days of the protest were being replaced with gas masks and riot gear, and soon with National Guard uniforms.

Fairhaven senior David Axelrod said it was at this point that he felt compelled to leave the protest.

“When the moment came that the tear gas arose, I had to leave,” he said. “I wasn’t there to witness non-compassionate acts.”

Axelrod had left his Bellingham home to participate in what he thought would be a peaceful protest that Sunday. He had only recently learned about the WTO and how its regulations were harmfully affecting the environment. Axelrod was also concerned with the WTO's power over democracy in the United States and abroad.

But by Tuesday afternoon his hope and enthusiasm had dimmed. He left the next day.

“I left with a bad feeling in my stomach,” he said. “I was not prepared for the violence I saw human beings exert towards other human beings.”

Axelrod's feeling of dread first came when he witnessed student activists setting up roadblocks to deter the police.
“Obviously there are a lot of ways to change policy. In this world people speak with many different voices.”
—Doug Israel

“I had never seen such a thing,” he said. “They were putting their lives on the line as well as their money and safety to stand up for their beliefs.”

But it wasn’t the blockades that bothered Axelrod the most. It was the incessant exchange of anger between the police and the protesters.

“I saw a lot of people yelling and cursing at the cops in their faces,” he said.

Despite the violence, looking back on the protest, Axelrod said he doesn’t regret being there and he doesn’t think the violence canceled out the positive impact of the protest. In fact, he said, since that time he’s noticed resurgence in activism all over the country.

“I think the Seattle protest is responsible for that,” he added.

What became known as “the Battle of Seattle” was a showcase of popular response to supra-governmental groups’ like WTO, policies and practices regarding labor rights, environmental regulation and development around the world. These organizations are designed to foster a new global economy, one with fewer restrictions, and more money, for business around the world.

Both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were formed after the second world war to revitalize war-torn Europe’s ailing economies. The IMF helped save Europe’s currencies, slowed inflation and introduced a number of other fiscal renovations while the Word Bank acted primarily as a development-oriented, lending institution, as it continues to do today with tight links to the IMF and the WTO.

The newest institution, the WTO, was founded in January 1995 to monitor governmental trading policies, resolve trade disputes between countries and act as a forum for trade negotiations. The organization resulted from problems with past General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade treaties made by individual nations, which made international commerce slow and costly.

They allow corporations in rich countries efficient access to the developing world under the auspices of free trade, claiming, according to WTO Director General Mike Moore, that “maximizing efficiency means ... enabling people to fulfill their potential and helping countries to make the most of their resources.”

The activists on the streets of Seattle and Prague, where demonstrators clashed with Czech police earlier this year at an IMF meeting, disagreed; they saw the WTO's “globalism” as a fancy, new term for imperialism. Fair trade activists point to failures by the WTO to address environmental or labor problems around the world, for its policy of separating trade from human rights violations. The WTO was also attacked for its ties to the IMF and the World Bank, and for its blatantly non-democratic structure, in which all meetings are conducted in secrecy and officials are appointed, not elected.

That the WTO did not accept, in any direct way, input from the people was the driving force behind the massive display of discontent the world saw in Seattle last year. Activists took to the streets as their last recourse against problems they perceived in the new global economic order dictated by the WTO. Their only course of action was to
"That day that we were all together in Seattle, our voice was really loud. Having a protest like the one against the WTO is worth it and it definitely has an effect."
— David Axelrod

But there is still something to be said for feet on the street, Israel said.
"I think the WTO protest was very successful," Israel said. "The relatively small amount of property damage was justified."

He pointed to the response it got, to the attention given protestors by those with the power to address problems within the WTO and other pan-global organizations. Seattle became the mold for active response to far-reaching problems, and an example of how a group of protesters can fight those in power and win.

Recently, before a large IMF conference was held in Prague, the Czech Republic staged the largest build up of police and military might the country has seen since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Photographs from the protest that began with the conference looked identical to those taken in Seattle almost a year before.

On Saturday Dec. 4., the last day of the conference, delegates and demonstrators began to leave Seattle, while several hundred protesters remained in jail. Many peaceful protesters, such as Axelrod, had left earlier in the week, when the protests began to grow violent.

Despite the violence, Axelrod said he believes the protest was a success. For nearly a week, news of the WTO protests was broadcast around the world. Powerful figures such as
President Bill Clinton and Mike Moore, Director General of the WTO, were forced to react to the protesters’ concerns and demands. Though violence may have tainted the public’s view of the protests in Seattle, the fact remains that the publicity gave major attention to the issues at hand — as well as a voice to thousands of embattled protesters.

The majority of the protests were not violent. They were peaceful gatherings of activists, like Axelrod, who wished to stand up for their beliefs.

Though issues as expansive and complex as those presented by globalization may seem unconquerable; the voices of Axelrod, Israel and many others that wish for change will be heard.

“That day that we were all together in Seattle our voice was really loud,” he said. “Having a protest like the one against the WTO is worth it and it definitely has an effect.

“It raises peoples eyebrows and makes the general public think twice about things they might have not known about, like the WTO.”

The protest in Seattle showed that mass movement and direct action against even the most formidable foe will have a positive effect, that demonstration en masse continues to be viable option for those wishing to rest the reins of power from a corporate-dominated political system. WTO and globalization are now part of American popular culture, because of concerned efforts by thousands of Americans.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM TEAR GAS:

1. Come prepared.
2. A tight, moist cloth covering your mouth and lower face offers reasonable protection from tear gas.
3. Bring a liter or two of water.
4. If you plan to hurl tear gas canisters back, don’t, unless you have a baseball-quality arm and a thick, heat-resistant glove.
5. Covering the canisters with buckets might prove useful in containing the gas.
6. Wash any contaminated clothing well. (Regarding rubber bullets, you can expect welts and bruises. People with bare skin will likely endure sharp pain and open wounds).

*compiled from Voices From the WTO.*

An unidentified protester marches as she unveils a banner criticizing the WTO for being a money-hungry, world-dominating organization. Photo by Chris Goodenow
Few truly wild areas remain in our national forests.

I was in one of numerous vehicles in town with off-road capabilities, old beaters that smell like gas, and look as rough as the ground they roll over, with dents the size of potholes and scrapes like tire tracks. Bouncing across the old, broken pavement of Main Street, I came to stop at a traffic light that had turned red. The lights were on timers there; no cross traffic was visible.

I accelerated through the intersection towards Whitman College and realized most yards in Walla Walla, Wash., were adorned with Bush/Cheney and Slade Gorton political signs. “Save our dams,” the signs read. Beyond the paved roads of the town were countless acres of wheat fields, rolling away towards the Blue Mountains, the same political signs passing like mileposts.

I was told that beyond the fields, farther than I was able to see, 1.5 million acres of trees and meadows blanket the Blue Mountains — the Umatilla National Forest. It’s no wonder this particular forest is neither well known, nor the focal point of conservation issues. It lies in the heart of farm country.

What could be more normal than resource extraction, clear-cuts and logging roads? What could be more alien than a group of Walla Walla citizens organizing on behalf of the forest?
The Umatilla Forest Watch (UFW).

"The UFW provides people and organizations with the opportunity to join together and seek long-term protection of ecosystems," Bill Gaffney, one of two paid coordinators for the group, said.

When I first met Bill, he was cursing himself for scheduling the intern orientation on the same day as the opener of the deer-hunting season, a good excuse to be outdoors. Sitting in his office, I could see how scheduling conflicts were out of character for Bill; he had a printed schedule that looked as complicated as a schedule for a rocket launch might be.

'Scheduling' was one of the finer tools Bill took from his 20 years working for Boeing, the last five of which he spent as a strategic planner. He grew tired of the Seattle scene, so he and his wife packed up and moved to Walla Walla.

"I needed to leave Boeing," Bill said, "I wanted to have a job that meant something more to me than engineering and technology did."

Glancing around his office, I could tell Bill was more at home here. Stacks of papers, research materials, and reference books looked ready to tumble off the shelves. The table at which I was seated was an old, wobbly one with folding chairs. Maps and pictures of rock formations hung on the walls. I almost expected to find pine seedlings growing beneath my feet, but instead found a hardwood floor. Annie Douglass, the other paid coordinator for the UFW, sat across from me.

Annie, a recent Whitman College graduate, was Bill's perfect counterpart. Her blonde hair and intense blue eyes matched her ability to laugh heartily and elevate the energy in the room; Bill's soft brown eyes and relaxed nature were calming. She didn't smoke; he carried a pipe. She used classroom dialect; he used tavern talk. She ate vegetarian; he wanted to be hunting. Despite their differences, the ease with which these two worked was astounding; they even agreed on vegetarian enchiladas for lunch.

I asked Bill what drew him to Walla Walla. I knew why Annie came; Whitman is a good school.

"I'd visited the Umatilla National Forest in my youth," Bill said, "usually on my way to Idaho, to go fishin' with my dad."

The Umatilla National Forest is a popular place for the activities Bill and his dad enjoyed: camping, fishing, hiking and more modern recreation like biking and off-road driving. What many recreationists are well aware of may surprise others: few truly wild areas remain in our national forests.

According to the US Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a document that describes potential environmental impacts of land use proposals, only two percent of the entire landbase of the US is 'roadless', a title given to land that is, or can be, classified as wilderness.

The data used to make that calculation were complied 21 years ago, and only now is action being taken to preserve what wilderness remains.

Wilderness areas are unique because they have not been infiltrated by humans in a destructive manner. People value wild areas because they feel an inherent value exists in the way the earth functions without human influence.

Ecosystems, by nature's design, have hundreds of years to come to a delicate balance between all the natural cycles that filter and provide our water, air, minerals and trees. We extract these resources because they are required to sustain our current lifestyle, and this often disrupts the balance. Sometimes the disruption causes a shift in productivity and the ability of plants to grow or animals to survive, and sometimes results in the extinction of an entire species.

Bill believes the Forest Service's proposal to limit further road building in the inventoried 'roadless' areas isn't enough. He and the UFW are getting involved on the Umatilla National Forest's behalf.

"We want to see prohibition of logging and mining in all roadless areas," Bill said. "We're pushing for two new types of protection: traditional wilderness designation, which means no motorized traffic, bikes or permanent structures would be allowed; and the designation of certain areas for recreational use only."

The US Forest Service drafts a land and resource management plan for each national forest every 15 years. This plan designates how each parcel of land within the Umatilla National Forest may legally be used.

"Currently the forest plan doesn't allow for motorized recreation (like off-road vehicles and snowmobiles) unless timber harvesting is allowed," Bill said. "The area is compromised already by the presence of a road."

The UFW is preparing a new inventory of the roadless areas in the Umatilla National Forest. Student interns from Whitman College collect field data and construct maps that will show the areas that qualify as wilderness under the US Forest Service's roadless proposal.
In addition to facilitating and organizing the interns’ field work, Annie and Bill do a lot of work with the Forest Service.

“The Forest Service is really warming up to us,” Annie said. “I think they appreciate that we’re honest with them. We aren’t hiding the fact that we’re pushing for wilderness designation.”

Environmental groups and the US Forest Service often have conflicting interests.

“We want to see prohibition of logging and mining in all roadless areas,” – Bill Gaffney

“The Forest Service was created ... with a mandate to produce as much timber as possible for the long term. These principles have become well entrenched in the mindset, the attitudes and priorities that permeate the agency,” Eric Pfeifer, a student intern doing public outreach work for the UFW, said.

‘Management’ turns into a question of how to cultivate the forests in the most efficient manner, to meet our demands as consumers. This approach to management comes at the expense of our wild lands.

Many people believe that the minor economic loss due to decreased resource extraction revenue is largely offset by the recreational, aesthetic and biological advantages of preserving wild lands.

Environmental organizations have approached this conflict of interest in the past using lawsuits and form letters that tie up legislation and generate strong opposition from within the Forest Service. The UFW is taking a new angle.

Annie and Bill often call on the Walla Walla District Ranger of the Umatilla National Forest, Mary Gibson, to go on field trips with them.

Mary Gibson said the UFW is unique in this respect.

“The UFW takes time to become knowledgeable, they spend time in the field,” she said. “They make it their work to know what they’re talking about. It makes for meaningful discussion.”

Eric said the UFW’s most effective and personally gratifying work takes place during field trips with the agency.

“We exchange ideas and work towards solutions to problems based on shared knowledge and experience — not mistrust, differences and conflict,” he said.

Outside Bill’s office, sitting next to the curb, I noticed his Suburban, the side panels dented from sliding into a log on a narrow, poorly maintained forest road.

I imagine Bill seated at the wheel, pipe in hand, releasing the aroma of sweet tobacco smoke to linger with the musty smell of the soil on his boots. Annie would be seated next to him, glowing blue eyes marking her assertiveness, her ability to identify problems in the forest. Mary, in her For-
"The UFW takes time to become knowledgeable, they spend time in the field. They make it their work to know what they’re talking about. It makes for meaningful discussion.”
— Mary Gibson

est Service uniform and broken-in boots, would be ready to explain management concepts and to hear the concerns of the UFW.

I imagine them bouncing up an old dirt road, fit for logging trucks and the off-road vehicles I saw all over town, leaving behind the fields that seem to sprout political signs with anti-environmental sentiments, until they are completely enshrouded by the forest.

Bill told me once that everyone who spends time working in, or for, or with the forests, does so because that’s what they love.

“We all gravitated over time into forestry issues, because it’s so much a part of us, of our childhoods,” Bill said.

I imagine the Suburban will struggle over large ruts in the road, up steep terrain with looming drop offs and eroding clearcuts, deep into Bill’s childhood territory. Of course, they will have to leave the Suburban behind at some point, because where they are going, there are no roads, and hopefully, never will be.

To protect unspoiled forests: www.wildwashington.org/index.htm
Bill Gaffney, UFW coordinator: yogibear@bmi.net
“... the crew come from all parts of Puget Sound, Swinomish, some Nooksacks, Skagit River's. And I watch them from the boat in the (Bellingham) Bay to where Frank Wright's cannery was. It's about a mile long along the beach. And they'd make camps there during the summer and just catch enough fish for their own use. Sun dry them, some smoke them, one thing and another like that... this fishing would last up to the fifteenth of August and before the whole people break, to go home, they'd have a big celebration.”

4/13/73
Felix Solomon, Lummi Nation Elder,
Northwest Tribal Indian Oral History Collection

East of Bellingham, on Highway 542, just past the small town of Glacier on Forest Service Road 37, you just might catch a glimpse of another world along the quarter-mile long interpretive trail at Boyd Creek.

In the tail of a pool smaller than a bathtub a female coho salmon of about six pounds fins in the slack water at the edge of the current. A male of only a third her size swims along side. Periodically the female moves further into the pool, along the bank where the current runs quicker and turns so her dark sides face the sky. Her body spasms rhythmically for several seconds into the gravel before she moves back to her holding position at the tailout. From the rapids below a larger male moves into the pool. His red sides flash as he chases the other male, jaws open. The two thrash about in circles, biting one another, breaking the water's surface until the smaller fish is driven out of the pool. The victor takes its place along side the female.
Moss covered logs in the stream form eddies and pools where fish can rest. Along with brush and trees next to the bank they also provide shade and cover for the next generation of salmon.

Decades of overfishing, habitat loss via logging, and development and pollution have dwindled the number of returning salmon to sometimes alarmingly low numbers. The Nooksack River Spring Chinook have declined enough to receive listing on the Endangered Species List, but there is hope.

Scenes like the one at Boyd Creek are increasing in number due to the efforts of conservation groups, tribes, governmental agencies and corporations working together to bring back the once abundant runs of anadromous fish.

The Nooksack Recovery Team, (NRT) formed in 1994, often serves as a catalyst for many of the recovery efforts in Whatcom County and the Nooksack River watershed. While many traditional conservation groups rely entirely on the efforts of volunteers, the NRT brings together both volunteers and professionals to work actively and cooperatively for salmon recovery.

About 20 agencies are actively represented in the NRT. They include the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Lummi Nation, Nooksack tribe, Trillium Corporation (a logging company), Whatcom County Conservation District and the Washington State Department of Ecology, among others.

Wendy Scherrer is the executive director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. The NSEA is one of the founding member groups of the Nooksack Recovery Team. The NSEA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring salmon runs in Whatcom County through habitat enhancement and education.
"We all get together each month and try to prioritize our projects," Scherrer said. "(With the NRT) each groups' activities are magnified in a better way."

Whatcom Conservation District Coordinator George Boggs said his organization works very closely with the Nooksack Recovery Team and NSEA.

"We're partnered with NSEA," Boggs said. "We've worked together to obtain grants that put back displaced timber workers in the woods to work on salmon conservation."

The Nooksack Recovery Team members continue to work autonomously, but when a project calls for collaboration the members pitch in to help.

"Most members make an active contribution," said Jim Hansen, vice president of the Nooksack Recovery Team and Restoration Program Coordinator at Lummi Natural Resources on the Lummi Indian Reservation. "For instance, if I need a piece of heavy equipment on a project Trillium will lend it."

Scherrer said NSEA works with the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe to set up common ways to measure things such as vegetation growth in replanted areas along streams. This way all projects in Whatcom County can be measured on a similar scale and compared for success.

Groups in the NRT work together to receive grants that allow them to proceed with their conservation work.

"We work with and have obtained grants with several groups," Bob Kelly, Nooksack Tribe Natural Resources Director, said. "We try to be as collaborative as possible. The more people on the cause the better."

The Nooksack tribe had a part in the restoration efforts at Boyd Creek. Their main concern at the moment, Kelly said, is collecting DNA samples and documenting spawning areas to fill some of the data gaps in the Nooksack Basin.

At the mouth of Whatcom Creek in Bellingham, the NSEA, along with the help of area elementary school students, has replaced dense thickets of blackberry bushes with red alder, cedar, Douglas Fir and other native plants that will, in time, shade the creek and provide cover for fish.

Together and in individual groups the coalition that makes up the NRT has worked on more than 300 restoration and data collection projects that range from the headwaters of the Nooksack River's three forks to its mouth in Bellingham Bay. Work has also been performed on some of the smaller creeks in the county that flow directly into Puget Sound.

"You can never completely regulate the environment and people won't be coerced into saving the environment. When people get involved their attitude can change and they can become very involved working in a positive direction, that is the Nooksack Recovery Team."

—Jim Hansen, vice president of the NRT
"There has to be a multi-faceted approach to salmon preservation," Hansen said. "There is room for regulation, but there is also an important need for community collaboration on projects to get things done.

"You can never completely regulate the environment and people won't be coerced into saving the environment. When people get involved their attitude can change and they can become very involved working in a positive direction, that is the Nooksack Recovery Team.

"By involving farmers and the Whatcom Conservation District we try and build a membership representative of the community at large. It's all about being positive, finding things we can agree on and helping to restore the environment."

On Black Slough, a tributary of the south fork of the Nooksack River near the small town of Acme, a transformation is taking place.

The land along this portion of Black Slough was flat and trampled by grazing dairy cows. Reed canary grass covered the mostly treeless landscape.

"When I was younger I was a logger and when I retired I wanted to put something back," said Bob Barker, the owner of the 76-acre parcel.

Barker is working in cooperation with the Whatcom Conservation District to restore his land to its natural state.

"It's a good site for trees, but lousy for agriculture," Barker said.

In 1996 Barker purchased the land and a year later began planting trees — lots of trees. Barker estimates he has planted 6,500 trees, but now only about 900 trees remain due to predation by mice and voles.

Barker has solved that problem by placing plastic cylindrical blue tubes around the saplings. The reed canary grass will remain until the trees shade it out, but now the land is covered with hundreds of blue tubes with the tops of small native trees poking out of the skyward openings. Some of the trees Barker planted in 1997 are now five feet tall.

The slough provides habitat for juvenile coho salmon while they spend their first year and a half in freshwater. The shade and woody debris that the trees will provide will increase the quality of the habitat, a vast improvement over the now grass-choked channels.

Cooperative efforts like the NRT are necessary if salmon are ever going to recover.

"With cooperation anything is possible," Hansen said. Hopefully time will prove him correct. At Boyd Creek the coho will spawn and die. When their eggs hatch, the adults' decomposing bodies will provide nutrients for the growing salmon fry. The circle will be complete.
Scaling an outer wall of Seattle's Nike Town with relative ease, a man clad in black reaches the large letters looming over the crowd and begins to take part in destruction of the building. News crews covering World Trade Organization protests delight in vilifying the anarchist, focusing on his shoes. The man dons Nike footwear as he destroys the company's property.

Reporters inquire about the man's motives and an unintelligible mutter escapes from beneath his black mask. Peaceful activists stand nearby, displaying messages of concern for environmental and human welfare on large picket signs. An organized march proceeds through the violent chaos. Both are virtually unrecognized in the media.

In recent years, direct action, often called eco-terrorism by its targets, has gained momentum because of media coverage, albeit often negative coverage. Direct action includes any active, participatory effort to create change where an injustice is thought to exist without the mediation of a governing body. In order to create change, activists have several options, referred to as the 'repertoire of protest.'

"Activist must ask themselves, which tool is best suited to the situation?" Greta Gaard, associate professor at Fairhaven College, said. "Given the vast repertoire, why would people choose direct action and go into the streets? Obviously they see this is the most effective way to create change."

"The purpose of direct action is to interrupt dominance to get the message across," Gaard said. "If the channels of democracy were working, people wouldn't be in the streets. Politicians are not elected as our rulers, they are elected as our servants. But, they're not serving the people who elected them, they're serving the people who paid for them, the economically privileged."

Some proponents of the movement feel the media presents a skewed view of direct action, perpetuating the notion direct action is violent and erratic.

"People performing direct action are portrayed as comfortable, safe, middle class college students or aging hippie tree huggers — people who are not central to the system," Gaard said. "At the WTO for example, there was a good cross section of who is America, people in unions, churches, students, professors, lawyers and doctors. If this were presented, it would be hard to trivialize and dismiss."

J.J. Johnson, a self-designed environmental activism major at Western, said even simple efforts, such as forming study groups to educate citizens about environmental atrocities, are an effective form of direct action. Johnson cites the term eco-terrorism as a label to detract from negative attention forced on corporations by activist groups.

"The government has labeled any act focusing on the environment that isn't within the established realm of doing things as eco-terrorism," Johnson said. "It really scares people in power when activists overstep boundaries set to keep them silenced under their overarching power."

Shuksan Direct Action, a Bellingham-based organization, was formed out of a shared concern for the environment. A representative of Shuksan Direct Action, who wished to be known only as Osprey, said he feels the event was well organized and the media depicted activists as ignorant while mainly focusing on the anarchists.

Due to the corporate ownership and sponsorship of nearly all mainstream media, a definite slant is put in favor of international corporations lacking regard for the environment, Osprey said.

"Basically, the media has evolved into a lackey of corporate power," Osprey said. "My experience was people did know why they were at WTO. There are a lot of people who have an intuitive understanding why they were there but couldn't articulate it."

"Most members of Shuksan Direct Action belong to several other activist organizations and employ direct action after other outlets for discontent, such as voting, petitioning and lobbying are exhausted.

"When no change is taking place, people feel they have to take extra-legal means," Osprey said. "Interfering with business as usual is necessary to raise people's awareness ... when a law is unjust, it's a person's responsibility to break the law."

Many environmental groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Earth First!, and Greenpeace are repeatedly cited for illegal activities. These groups routinely break the law in the name of environmental, human and animal rights advocacy.

In late 1999, Western's Miller Hall was ransacked and vandalized when four rabbits and 37 white rats were taken from the animal-research laboratory. The ALF took
Unidentified Animal Liberation Front members took four research rabbits and 37 lab rats in late Oct. 1999. The damage totaled $3,700 caused by vandalism and theft. Reprinted with permission of The Western Front.

In 1996, Alaskan Fur Company in Minnesota sustained approximately $2.25 million in damages when the ALF set fire to a fur warehouse. The ALF and the Coalition to Abolish the Fur Trade (CAFT) took full responsibility for the largest monetary destruction in either organization's history.

The ELF claimed responsibility for the $12 million arson of Vail Mountain Ski Resort in 1998, gutting three buildings and damaging four ski lifts "on behalf of the lynx." The ELF claimed expansion of the largest ski resort in the nation would "ruin the last, best lynx habitat in the state." These explanations were announced to news organizations by Craig Rosebraugh, an ELF proponent from Portland who received a brief message he won't disclose from the ELF following the arson.

Groups such as the ALF and the ELF are particularly frustrating to law-enforcement officials, because their crimes are often committed at night with little evidence left for law officials. Terrorists leave names of organizations claiming responsibility for the crimes or circumstantial evidence at crime scenes, but often remain anonymous.

The ALF supports organized and strategically planned direct action. ALF leaders emphasize the ineffectiveness of irrational acts borne out of frustration, impatience or impulse. Actions are encouraged to be not only symbolic, but also valuable to the cause.

Authorities define these crimes as domestic terrorism — violence intended to alter public policy and individual behavior resulting in the eradication of environmental, human and animal abuse. The crimes are not classified as environmental due to their varying nature and the opposing definitions of eco-terrorism.

"The one thing we know is violence doesn't appeal to the public," Gaard said. "If you want support for your movement, don't use violence. There is no way you will win the battle through violence."

The public is presented with a view of activists and their causes, a view that all too often polarizes communities and creates animosity.

"Each individual interacts with other parts of the ecosystem and the community," Vermeers said. "They each have something which makes them say, 'We've had enough destruction and we don't want to see it happen anymore.'"

Blue- and white-collar workers, parents and children, doctors, lawyers, unionists and environmentalists are only a meager example of the variety of people converging to regain control of their lives and communities. Direct action provides a forum for people to voice concerns regarding animal, human and environmental welfare. Citizens around the world are uniting in a cooperative effort to end corporate disregard of the environment and the people.

www.directactionnetwork.org
www.animalliberationfront.com
WTOaction.org
Enviroweb.org