

POINT COUNTERPOINT ON SISKIYOU'S McKay Rebuts Timber Lobby

by Tim McKay

About sixty thousand Indians and half-breeds...absolute savages...no communication whatever with the civilized world...still preserve their repulsive habits and customs...marriage, if you know what that is, my dear young lady; families...no conditioning...monstrous superstitions...Christianity and totemism and ancestor worship...extinct languages, such as Zuni and Spanish and Athapascan...pumas, porcupines and other ferocious animals.

These are the words of the Warden describing the "reservation" for the "savages" in Aldous Huxley's novel Brave New World. Five thousand kilometers of fencing with a charge of 60,000 volts keep the savages apart from civilization in the brave new world, where technology is the end product of human meaning.

Huxley wrote his book in 1932 and set his story of a totalitarian world 600 years in the future. But he noted in a preface that if he could have rewritten it, he would have set it much closer to his own time. His brave new world produces humans on an assembly line, substitutes drugs and sex for freedom and allows escape only to the reservation or by suicide.

What has all this to do with the Forest Service? I would argue that the battle to protect the Siskiyou Mountains is one where many issues posed by Huxley come to bear. The question of the link between natural systems and the human spirit. The question of the technological desire to improve everything to the point of pollution and destruction. The question of a dominant class exercising its power to obliterate an ancient culture's religious heritage.

Travel the Gasquet-Orleans (GO) Road as it approaches Chimney Rock. The Forest Service (FS) is preparing a Draft Environmental Statement (DES) for that stretch, the last section of the controversial highway and one which will cut through the heart of Native American holy lands.

"Mitigation" Lie

In it the FS will argue that the GO Road will provide access to timber for Del Norte County, "thereby mitigating the adverse impact on that area which has resulted from creation of the Redwood National Park."

Well, every time it is argued that the Siskiyou Mountains must be protected by wilderness designation, the "mitigation" lie follows in its wake. The root of the lie is a promise made by then USFS Chief Edward Cliff that the timber in the Gasquet timber district will go to the Del Norte Board of Supervisors. This promise was made at a time when the 14,000-acre Redwood Purchase Unit of Six Rivers National Forest was being considered for inclusion in the park.

In fact, that unit did not go to the park. Instead it was given to the Arcata Redwood Company, Miller-Rellum and the Simpson Timber Company in exchange for their lands acquired for the park.

It should be noted that for their 10,600 acres of old growth timber land included in the park, the companies have so far received more than \$175 million (to be exact \$175,063,518) which included 12,300 acres of old growth redwoods and timber land. Not a bad deal, but two companies are still planning to go to court to try for more money.

Even Congressman Don Clausen admits that there hasn't been an adverse economic impact to Del Norte County from creation of the park--but this lie is still used to justify logging the Siskiyou's.

As for the Chimney Rock section of the GO Road, the FS argues that this will open large timbered areas to competitive markets "which will tend to favor lumber mills with the most efficient procedures..." One such mill would be the new, automated Simonson mill at Smith River, which will turn out 20 million board feet a year and yet employ just 12 people.

In other words, the FS and the industry are talking out of both sides of their mouths. They attack conservationists as

being unconcerned about jobs and yet they order equipment to put people out of work, presumably because people require more consideration than machines do.



Charlie Tom, a traditional leader of the Karuk Tribe, has been criticized by other traditional practitioners of his tribe for going public in his effort to prevent destruction of sacred areas. (photo by Tim McKay)

Automation Cuts Jobs

In 1947 it took, on the average, somewhat more than 11 people to produce one million board feet of timber in Humboldt County. In 1975 that figure was down to seven people. At Simonson's mill it will take a mere 1.6 people. The same people who order the equipment will tell their laid-off workers that environmentalists have a callous disregard for people.

Now the industry has launched a campaign to keep the Siskiyou Mountains out of the Endangered American Wilderness Act sponsored by Senator Frank Church and Congressman Morris Udall.

In a letter to Senator Church on December 2, Richard Reid, Information For-ester for the Western Timber Association, enemies of the Siskiyous, argues that it would be a "mistake" to preserve and protect the Siskiyous.

First he says the Siskiyous are not part of the 100 per cent increase in wilderness area that the FS is envisioning as a national goal following passage of the Re-

source Planning Act. This is a meaningless statement, as the additional wilderness areas have not been selected; besides, only Congress can designate legal wilderness.

Second he says the FS is preparing a land use plan for the area and that the public process should not be "short circuited." This is only half-true because land use plans for the Blue Creek Planning Unit have already been prepared, and that area is now in direct danger of severe and irreparable environmental damage. Anyway, the proposal to protect the Siskiyous is over 14 years old and has had many public hearings, at which a majority of witnesses have urged protection of the area.

Next he says FS studies have found "unusual recreational, biological, geological and other resources in the area but that Wilderness Classification is not needed to protect them." Of course the FS rarely recommends wilderness classification because it is usually perceived as a threat to their bureaucratic authority. Furthermore, biologists from the State Fish and Game Department, California Native Plant Society and other groups disagree--they believe such classification is the only way to protect the resources of the Siskiyous.

The association does admit there are parts of the mountains where logging would amount to environmental disaster. But it goes on to argue, "The need for future developments to protect the area should not be precluded by hasty Wilderness Classification." It adds that there should be no need to log the area at any time in the future if the FS would do a more efficient job of managing good growing land elsewhere in the Siskiyous. This can only be regarded as doublespeak.

Still the association keeps going. "Contrary to preservationist propaganda, not everyone in northwestern California favor a Siskiyou Wilderness." Well you're not going to get everyone to favor any proposal, whether it's motherhood, the flag or apple pie. But the Siskiyou Wilderness proposal does have a broad-based constituency located throughout northwestern California and the rest of the country.

Next the timber lobby tells Senator Church, "Much of the new (GO) road is reconstruction of the old dirt jeep roads which were causing more resource dam-

age than the new road could." This is a major lie. The new GO Road has substantial cuts and fills and many parts are already in disrepair and eroding, causing sedimentation to water courses.

"Preservationist Propaganda"

As if this claptrap wasn't enough, the letter adds: "The preservationists would have people believe that the Forest Service is proceeding with plans to build roads and log with callous disregard for the use of the area by Native Americans. The record shows the opposite. The presently unroaded portions of the planning unit will stay that way until the land use plan is completed."

In fact the FS has plans to log the heart out of the Native American holy lands. When FS Chief John McGuire was in Arcata, he was asked by Native Americans if construction would stop until they had their day in court. He replied that progress couldn't be stopped for every problem like that. To this the Native Americans and their allies responded, "Roll back the GO Road."

Even the up and coming Chimney Rock Draft EIS will state that there will be serious adverse effects to "significant cultural values if the GO Road is constructed." Yet the FS proceeded to construct the Dillon-Flint Section of the GO Road and sold timber in the area of Flint Valley, which was another part of the Sacred High County.

On top of all these deceptions, the Western Timber Association asked Senator Church to resist the "preservationist pressure to put the Siskiyou Mountains in the Endangered American Wilderness Bill in an effort to short circuit the thorough Forest Service Planning program. . ."

At every turn they use the term "preservationist" as if to insist that there was something wrong with trying to protect the last of the Earth's wild places, as if there was something wrong with protecting the human connection to nature, as if there was something wrong with efforts to make clear the fact that the Creator lives.

I'll conclude with two quotes from different sources:

In my mind I can see that man (a Kiowa shaman) as if he were there now. I like to watch him as he makes his prayer. I know where he stands and where his voice goes on the rolling grasses and where the sun comes up on the land. There, at dawn, you can feel the silence. It is cold and clear and deep like water. It takes hold of you and will not let you go."

*N. Scott Momaday,
The Way to Rainy Mountain.*

The world is sick today because it has turned away from the Great Spirit. When men turn once more to the Ancient Being with love and world understanding, the earth will become beautiful again.

*Willoya & Brown
Warriors of the Rainbow.*