

- (4) The idea of a limited state and some degree of separation between the 'public' and the 'private' spheres of life.
- (5) The 'epistemological premise' that there is no superior knowledge or ultimate truth concerning the public good. It is up to citizens, and their elected representatives, to decide for themselves the meaning of the public good. The institutions of liberal democracy should be procedurally neutral and should be able to accommodate a diversity of opinion.

## 'Monkeywrenching' and the Processes of Democracy

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The practice by radical environmentalists of 'monkeywrenching' – deliberately interfering with industrial and commercial activities that are judged to be destructive of the natural environment – has been claimed by critics to be a form of ecological terrorism. Despite there being some features in common between monkeywrenching and terrorism it is misleading to see the one as a form of the other. Rather, monkeywrenching is far more accurately represented as a form of civil disobedience. That being so, it is important to consider whether, in the Western societies where it is practised, it is consistent even with the prevailing rather weak understanding of democracy. I argue that it is and, indeed, that its selective use may serve to strengthen the democratic process in polities where acts of civil disobedience are seen not as thuggery against the rule of law but as directing our attention to the need for reform of particular laws and related social practices.

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It is a commonplace that the scale and complexity of modern societies make for difficulties in the realisation of the classical understanding of democracy as participation on an equal footing with other citizens in collective decision-making. The invention of institutions of representation is best seen as a direct response to the problems posed by mass society for the classical form of democracy. Parliamentary and congressional forms of democracy are the most familiar institutional expressions for us of the idea of democracy, but they are in important ways much weaker forms of democracy than the classical conception. While these forms have enabled the solving of some of the problems inherent in involving citizens of complex societies in the decision-making process, they are incapable of facilitating equality in collective decision-making. There are several reasons why this is so.

First, the device of representation puts a gulf between those who are

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supposedly the ultimate holders of power (the community as a whole) and those who exercise it on the community's behalf. This gulf has widened further, as political representation has become a professional career (so that the very livelihood of representatives turns on their being re-elected), and as insistence on individual representatives being subject to party discipline has been elevated above independence of thought and action. Second, various interest groups within societies have concluded that to protect their sectional interests they must make use of the extra-parliamentary power they possess to ensure that parliamentary representatives do not take decisions that unduly threaten those interests. This is particularly the case for the media and large corporations, the trade union movement and professional bodies, but also, in some societies at least, for religious and other special interest groups. Lobbying by these groups gives them a much greater say in the decision-making process than is the case for individuals or less influential groups. Third, while we know that democratic structures, even in the weaker, representative mode, are more stable and work more effectively where there is relative economic independence, a history of peaceful evolution of social institutions, tolerance of differing views and a significant degree of consensus about values and social goals, it is also clear that the emergence in recent times of plural and diverse conceptions of life has made the achievement of consensus far harder.

This last point is of special concern in the present context. Though there has been a growing popular appreciation of the importance of protecting the natural environment, there certainly is no consensus about affording it the sort of protection that many environmental activists would wish. One consequence of this has been to pose the problem for such activists of whether it is best to work for their values through the parliamentary mechanisms, to work for them in extra-parliamentary ways, or to endeavour to promote their cause through some combination of these.

The history of seeking to achieve environmental protection exclusively through the first means is not encouraging. Single-issue representatives have commonly been marginalised by those whose constituency is more broadly based. Whenever other issues than the single one of the environment and its protection are perceived to be more pressing, as when economic concerns dominate in times of economic downturn or high inflation, representatives elected on behalf of a single-issue are easily rendered ineffective. Since the single issue representative is likely to believe if not in the paramount importance of the interest being represented, at least in its great significance, this is apt to be an especially galling outcome.

Even when environmentalists choose to exert whatever influence they can through extra-parliamentary rather than parliamentary means, there are going to be times when they will be unable to obtain a good hearing. Faced

with an unresponsive community or unresponsive institutions of representation, and given their conviction about the high stakes being played for, some activists have found it necessary to raise the stakes. The result has been that in recent years a number of environmentalists have resorted to radical forms of political action and have, in turn, been accused of engaging in ecological terrorism ('ecoterrorism'). The accusation stems from the ways in which they have responded to what they consider to be violence being done to the natural environment. Their responses have included actions aimed at stopping or seriously hindering timber cutting, oil and gas exploration, mining, various sorts of construction work, the use of off-road vehicles, trapping, whaling, off-shore fishing and so forth.

In this contribution I will first consider whether these actions are accurately to be characterised as 'terrorism', for in that case they would properly be thought of as involving a rejection of democratic processes. I will argue that, in fact, they are not acts of terrorism and should rather be thought of as acts of civil disobedience. I will go on to argue that not only can such acts, under appropriately specified circumstances, be morally justified, but that they are consistent with democratic principles. Indeed, I shall argue, they can be seen as strengthening the very processes of democracy.

### 'Monkeywrenching' as Civil Disobedience, not Terrorism

To make a proper classification and assessment of the kinds of action that have provoked the accusation of ecoterrorism, it will be necessary to have before us a more complete account of the offending actions and an analysis of the nature of terrorism.

Radical environmentalists have pulled up forest survey stakes, 'spiked' trees' due to be logged, destroyed machines such as bulldozers, rendered dirt roads in wilderness areas impassable to vehicles, destroyed trap lines, sabotaged power lines and burned property, all with a view to blocking environmentally destructive projects or making them so expensive as to be economically unattractive.<sup>2</sup> According to their radical environmentalist practitioners, these acts are best characterised as 'monkeywrenching'. They throw a large spanner into the works of those engaged in activities that are severely detrimental to the natural environment. They are thus a means of resisting the destruction of natural diversity and wilderness areas. Exponents of these means are adamant that their targets are only ever inanimate things and that great care is taken to ensure that no living things come to any harm (since to violate this requirement would be incompatible with the adoption of a biocentric perspective). They profess no revolutionary goals, only a concern to defend the environment. In response

to the charge that monkeywrenching, especially tree spiking, poses serious risks of injury to people (such as timber workers) and is accordingly properly to be spoken of as ecoterrorism, radical environmentalists claim that no act of monkeywrenching by them has been documented to have caused injury.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, we cannot just accept the say-so of these environmentalists that they are not (ecological) terrorists. To help us make our own assessment we will need before us an account of what makes something an instance of terrorism.

Notoriously, 'terrorism' is a term that suffers from indeterminacy because of its use for partisan purposes. Thus what the 'baddies' do is called terrorism while what the 'goodies' do is never so described. None the less, in my view it is possible to set aside this difficulty, for if we focus on what are indisputably terrorist actions a clear enough idea for our purposes will emerge as to what terrorism is.<sup>4</sup> First, and fairly obviously, terrorist actions are expressions of a particular political view and so can properly be described as political actions. Second, terrorist actions are violent political actions. Generally the violence is physical and is directed towards persons (or quasi-persons such as the state) or their property, but it may also be psychological. This links with a third point to be made, namely that it is commonly, if not always, the intention of those who carry out terrorist actions to generate or maintain a state of terror. Fourth, since terrorist actions are not the preserve of revolutionary groups alone but may be engaged in by states as well, the conclusion to be drawn is that terrorism is not something typically carried out by isolated individuals but is a form of organised political action. Fifth, though some contend that terrorism is violent political activity carried out by organised groups which is targeted only at the innocent or those with non-combatant status (or their property) [*Coady, 1985: 54f*], it is surely more reflective of the facts to see terrorism as not being restricted in this way. Violence aimed at army personnel or their barracks, or at police engaged in the guarding of political figures or state property can certainly constitute terrorism. It is quite implausible to regard such individuals as having non-combatant status in order to save the theoretical claim. Similarly, where a state systematically employs violence against members of groups who oppose it, it would be foolish to claim that the state's actions could not possibly be terroristic because its opponents are neither innocents nor combatants. Finally, while it is often said that terrorism involves the indiscriminate use of violence, this is, in fact, misleading. Often terrorist targets are non-specific as, for example, when a terrorist group is chiefly concerned to establish an atmosphere of terror. But to conclude from this, as those who make the charge do, that terrorist actions are characteristically acts of uncontrolled violence, would be to

make a serious mistake. Quite apart from the consideration that, in the sort of circumstances mentioned, warnings will typically have been given, terrorism for the most part is aimed at specific targets and so, in the relevant sense, can be said to be very discriminating.

These points are, I believe, sufficient to characterise the nature of terrorism. However, there are cases of terrorism (especially of the revolutionary variety) that have features of a contingent kind and these should be noted in passing. These features are also more often than not present in cases of monkeywrenching and so may influence the answers that people give to the question of whether acts of monkeywrenching are acts of (ecological) terrorism. What I have in mind are features such as the cloak of secrecy under which most acts of terrorism are carried out, and the lack of conventional political power of those (other than states) who carry out terrorist acts. Terrorist activities typically require co-operation with other conspirators and the keeping of confidences prior to the deed being done. The sharing of a particular ideology is generally sufficient for providing and maintaining the attendant cloak of secrecy – without the concealment this provides, operatives would find it much harder to avoid detection let alone to terrorise. Monkeywrenchers, too, act in secret though they are more likely to engage in their clandestine acts of sabotage as lone individuals. In each case it would seem that it is the relative political weakness, occasioned by being isolated from conventional political power, that drives the respective practitioners to don the cloak of secrecy.

Though these latter two features are, I have suggested, only contingently connected with terrorism it is not without plausibility to think that their presence in instances of monkeywrenching has influenced some people's opinion that monkeywrenching is nothing but terrorism. In both cases we have acts of political violence carried out through subterfuge by people who have been unable to achieve their political goals through conventional political means. In such circumstances opponents of those radical environmentalists who engage in monkeywrenching have found it easy to point an accusing finger at them and to claim that they are terrorists by any other name. The first question for us to answer is: are they right to point such an accusing finger?

My contention is that they are not. To begin with, acts of tree spiking, of destroying mechanical equipment, of plugging up factory outlets such as smokestacks and drains, and so forth, cannot with any plausibility be regarded as directed at the generation or maintenance of a state of terror (which I have claimed is commonly, if not always, a feature of terrorist actions). Consider the action of spiking trees in old-growth forests, the action which has led to most of the uproar over alleged ecoterrorism. Tree spiking is supposed to have nuisance value or to be an impediment to

ordinary commerce. It is accompanied by warnings and is done in the knowledge that milling companies nowadays routinely use metal detectors to locate spikes. Moreover, as long as milling companies properly maintain their band saws no injury to workers is likely to happen. So, despite the indeterminacy involved in the use of the term 'terrorism', it would be misleading in the extreme to think of tree spiking as terrorism, rather than as, at worst, vandalism or sabotage. We are a long way along the spectrum of violent political acts from, say, the violent attacks on people and, to a lesser extent, their property, of the IRA or the UDA in Northern Ireland and England. If this is so for tree spiking it is even more obviously so for the other forms of monkeywrenching which I have mentioned.

But it may be replied that this is too hasty. After all, have not many radical environmentalists been more than happy to adopt the language of warfare in their defences of monkeywrenching? Witness, for example, the way they tend to think of themselves as 'eco-warriors'. If there really is a 'war' going on concerning the environment, would it not be quite reasonable to think of some of the more extreme, guerrilla-style actions as terroristic? After all, do not the IRA and the UDA think of themselves as conducting a guerrilla war, too?

The fact that some eco-warriors see themselves as engaged in a last resort guerrilla-style defence of the natural environment does not, however, show them to be terrorists. Not all acts of political violence done as a matter of last resort are acts of terrorism. If they were, then the violent destruction of a sacred object by religious believers who prefer the destruction of such an object to its capture by infidels would (implausibly) be a terrorist act.

But there is a deeper point to be made. It was noted above that monkeywrenchers are committed by their beliefs to the preservation of life forms (and, even for the most misanthropic among them that presumably includes human life). It may seem, then, that, just like terrorists, monkeywrenchers are standing up for their political beliefs and prepared to use violence, albeit more selectively, in the process. So, notwithstanding the fact that they confine themselves to attacking inanimate things, are not the critics right to suggest that, for all relevant purposes, monkeywrenching is morally indistinguishable from terrorism? The answer still seems to me to be 'no'. The reason is as follows. Even if monkeywrenching, like at least some acts of terrorism, is understood as a means of defence (whether of the 'ecological self' or on behalf of an ecosphere that is ultimately a defenceless innocent), it does not follow that there is no distinction between the two kinds of political activity. Not every act of self-defence or, as some would say, 'counter-force' [Goodin, 1992: 133ff], is properly to be regarded as an act of terrorism. So even if we take the rhetoric of the eco-warriors at face value, their acts of guerrilla warfare do not automatically count as acts of terrorism.

That still leaves us, of course, with the question of how we should classify the behaviour of monkeywrenchers. I suggest that the sabotage carried out by monkeywrenchers is most accurately thought of as being continuous with civil disobedience. I do not doubt that there may be some radical environmentalists and even some animal liberationists who practise monkeywrenching who would put their hands up if asked whether they were terrorists.<sup>5</sup> Radicals of this ilk may think it impossible to protect the natural environment or captive animals without a revolutionary attack being directed against what they consider is a destructive social and political system. But they are by no means representative, or even typical, of the radical environmentalist movement. Not only do most of those who consider themselves to be part of the movement repudiate such revolutionary goals, but some practitioners of monkeywrenching have in recent times questioned the tactical value of those forms of monkeywrenching that create even quite remote hazards for others, particularly tree spiking [Manes, 1990: 177ff; Scarce, 1990: 266; Foreman, 1991: 158ff, 167ff]. (It should be said, though, that many mainstream environmentalists have claimed that their very moderation has come to be seen in a favourable light by those offended by the activities of more radical environmentalists, and so to have resulted in their obtaining a better hearing than they otherwise would. No doubt they would nevertheless prefer to see such activities cease even given the resultant loss in advantage to their own position.) It is true that part of the reason for the rethinking has been the concern of monkeywrenchers over the violence of the responses to the threat of tree spiking made by those working for forest service and commercial organisations [Foreman, 1991: 125ff]. But the main cause for the questioning of monkeywrenching would appear to be a wish not to engage in activities with the potential to harm others, for fear that that would move environmental protest along the spectrum of political activism in the direction of out-and-out terrorism. Were that to happen it would become extremely difficult to defend such activism as being demanded by the need to defend biocentric rights while also acknowledging the importance of other civil rights.

Suppose I am right that most radical environmentalists see themselves as in the business of trying to get the wider public to acknowledge the need for an expansion in the boundaries of the ethical (and legal) community. Does that help make sense of their more extreme activities, such as monkeywrenching? I think the answer is that it does. The best parallels to the kinds of civil disobedience in which present day environmental activists are engaged are acts like those committed in defiance of the Fugitive Slave Laws in the nineteenth century in the United States, those carried out by resistance movements during the Second World War and those that were

directed against the apartheid laws in South Africa during their heyday.

As with these earlier cases, monkeywrenching is clandestine in order that its practitioners can escape being detected and captured by the legal authorities. It is true that many of its practitioners have emphasised the *civility* of civil disobedience, so that those, for example, who engaged in civil disobedience during the civil rights protests of the suffragettes, and the protests against racism in the United States and Australia in the 1960s, commonly offered only passive resistance, preferring to be arrested and subsequently punished. It is also true that clandestine acts against morally objectionable practices are most easily justified when they are resorted to in a context of vicious (state) repression. None the less, as the examples I gave above make clear, it is not a necessary condition for an act's being one of civil disobedience that its perpetrator be willing to be punished [*Schochet, 1972*]. Nor is the use of violence precluded in acts of civil disobedience (despite the claim of those who insist on the need for civility in such acts).

Some of those who, in the recent past, have practised civil disobedience have so abhorred violence that they have been meticulous in insisting on civil disobedience being non-violent protest. Within the green movement the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King have often been pointed to as models of passive or non-violent resistance. Indeed the West German Green Party included in its policy platform a statement about its commitment to non-violent forms of resistance. However, many of the party's members took the principle of direct non-violent action to exclude all violence against sentient creatures, but not to rule out damage to property [*Langguth, 1986: 78ff*]. Such a view is not uncommon in green groups where opposition to violence (at least against property) has been for tactical rather than principled reasons so as to ensure that attention is not drawn away from the focus of protest.

In short, it is a mistake to think that civil disobedience is *essentially* a non-violent form of protest. Sometimes the use of violence serves to highlight an injustice in a way that no other form of protest can match. Sometimes the violence may be an inescapable means to the resistance of an injustice or a rights violation (especially where tyranny reigns). And sometimes, as has been pointed out by protesters who have resorted to violence, including some radical environmentalists, it is not until there is violent protest that any meaningful response to wrongs is likely to be made in many a society.<sup>6</sup>

It is considerations like these which lend support to the claim that acts of civil disobedience (including clandestine ones) can actually enhance democratic processes. Where protesters are at a disadvantage as regards participating on an equal footing with other citizens in collective decision-making (because they lack adequate and equal opportunities not merely to

express their views but to have them listened to, or because they would be subject to sanctions whose very application contributes to the stymieing of open debate), or where public discussion is hindered because the dominant sources of information are unreliable or inadequate, protest can be a stimulus to greater democracy. Indeed, in the quite recent past, protest in several countries against involvement in the war in Indo-China led to greater citizen participation in decision-making about that involvement and, ultimately, to changes in policy. Not all of the protests were carried out openly and not all were non-violent. Some protesters were willing to be punished because they saw that as a way of achieving publicity for their cause, others thought it tactically more effective to wage their campaign of sabotage from the underground.

So neither the secrecy that surrounds some acts of monkeywrenching, nor the fact that they involve violence, shows that it is incorrect to think of such protest as a form of civil disobedience. The presence of these features, and especially that of the violence, does, however, point up the importance of providing a moral justification for such political acts. The next section of this study will be devoted to examining whether such a justification can be found. I will proceed by way of a consideration of various objections which have been levelled at monkeywrenching. My conclusion will be that there can be no blanket rejection of the practice.

### Breaking the Law to Facilitate the Democratic Process

A recurring theme among critics of monkeywrenching is that breaking the law is wrong and, therefore, that acts of sabotage by radical environmentalists which involve breaking the law are wrong. Unfortunately, this claim is too sweeping to be plausible. There is a *prima-facie* obligation to obey the law within a reasonably democratically governed community. Indeed it is probably correct to go further and say that the onus is on those who break the law in such a community to justify their actions. But that onus can certainly be discharged should the law be broken to uphold a more important value. The breaking of laws against assisting fugitive slaves in the nineteenth century in the United States, the breaking of apartheid laws and the breaking of laws requiring contributions to immoral causes such as unjust wars are cases in point.

The critical issue, given this approach to justification, is whether the values upheld in protecting old growth forests from being logged, or in saving wilderness areas, or in protecting environmental diversity, outweigh the *prima-facie* obligation to obey laws protecting property such as machines, survey markers, roads and the like. That is a matter which is unlikely to be resolved in isolation from other objections, despite the

confidence of radical environmentalists about the order of precedence. So, for the time being, judgment must be reserved on the availability of such a justification.

There are, of course, other ways in which to try to justify the civil disobedience which I have argued provides the best way of understanding the political activism engaged in by monkeywrenchers. In particular, there is a longstanding tradition of seeing civil disobedience as about raising the consciousness of a democratic polity, or, put slightly differently, as a way of changing the political discourse accepted within a particular democracy. Here the focus is less on the particular actions taken by protesters (and so their justification), and more on how effective protest is in getting the community to think anew about the issue in question. If monkeywrenching is seen in this light it is probably best considered as a way of dramatising the issues surrounding protection of the ecosphere. Indeed, many ecological protesters would contend that because of the typecasting of the issues, and the stage managing in the media of much of the debate, anything short of such dramatisation would fail to get the attention of the public. Until people's attention is grabbed there can, of course, be no conversation with them. From the point of view of the ecological protester, then, the resort to civil disobedience may be seen as a necessary means to educating the public and so of helping make the democratic structures effective. There remains the question, however, of the place of violence in such a conception. Here a protester might respond that a strategic resort to violence against replaceable property is defensible when those with something important to say are unable to command attention in the democratic forums and so have to take measures born out of desperation. If powerful forces such as the public media have shut out alternative voices it may be necessary for protesters to try to get the attention of the public in the most dramatic way open to them.

Whatever the merits that some protesters will find in the justification for ecological civil disobedience that I have just rehearsed, there will be others who will consider it a sell-out. I have in mind those who claim that monkeywrenching is not an attempt to persuade but an expression of moral outrage at what they see as a concerted attack on the ecosphere. Those who take such a view are usually pessimistic about democracy (especially in its liberal, parliamentary forms) being a helpful means to the protection of the ecosphere. While it is likely that those who adopt this sort of stance would align themselves with a position that I outlined earlier – that there are more important values to uphold than respect for the law – they might well consider such talk to be too concerned with ranking values in terms of consequences in the external world. They would instead see the matter as having to do with the maintenance of their own integrity, just as Martin

Luther did when he declared that, from where he stood, he could 'do no other' [*Luther, 1958: 109–13*].

Now that we have before us these sketches of the ways in which civil disobedience (including monkeywrenching) might be defended, we can better consider other objections that have been urged against monkeywrenching.

According to some, the destruction of property is a wrong that could not be outweighed by the values monkeywrenchers aspire to defend. Even staunch environmentalists have condemned the tactic on this ground [*Manes, 1990: 181ff*].

Radical environmentalists are able to make an obvious response: surely it is a mistake of major significance to value more highly a bulldozer or some marker pegs (or whatever other piece of replaceable property is the target of the monkeywrenching), than an intact ecosystem which provides support for a community of plants, insects and animals? Of course, when property is damaged it is not just that damage that we need to consider. We also have to take into account the impact on the interests of the owners of the property (and related indirect effects on the interests of those whose employment may be affected). So a more accurate statement of the choice is that it is between the evil of ecological destruction or damage and the evil of violence against inanimate objects, the latter evil commonly issuing in either or both direct and indirect effects on human interests.

Some will see this as not a real choice because they consider it to be between incommensurable values. I am not persuaded that they are right to do so. It is true that many radical environmentalists think of wilderness areas and old growth forests for which they fight as like sacred objects, and hence that the destruction of such things is abhorrent. Their moral outrage at the suggestion of a trade-off makes them adamant that there can be no compromises because there can be no replication of nature's original once it is destroyed [*Elliot, 1982*]. We have already observed that for these environmentalists there can be no truck with those whom they see as having corrupt values.

Perhaps more typically, though, many radical environmentalists see the natural environment as merely an extension of the social community and so urge that it is as entitled to respect as the human component of that community. From this point of view, destruction and disturbance have to be justified by reference to how necessary they are to satisfy vital interests. The mere fact that humans have certain interests does not, of itself, make them *vital* interests so they have no automatic precedence.

This point of view is decidedly different from one which sees the environment as a sacred object. More importantly, it is possible for there to be a *rapprochement* between those with this more typical radical outlook

and those who oppose monkeywrenching because of its effects on human interests. What I have in mind is to emphasise the points of contact (rather than of disagreement) between these differing outlooks with a view to making use of democratic processes to resolve the disagreements. In particular, there is good reason to think that agreement can be reached in democratic polities that many present day forest projects do not serve vital human interests and so can be foregone. In those instances, at least, a suitable scheme of compensation for leaseholders and owners should be capable of being devised so as to permit our leaving wilderness areas and old growth forests intact.

Naturally the community as a whole has to accept responsibility for providing satisfactory compensation for the losses in economic opportunity suffered by property owners and leaseholders such as timber companies, by workers who lose employment and by rural communities which lose their very *raison d'être*. But that can obviously be a democratic choice. Moreover, monkeywrenchers could rightly claim some of the credit for getting their society to clarify its values through such choice and thereby aiding the democratic process. That would surely be a satisfactory response to the objection we have been considering. Though such an outcome would be democratically satisfactory it is important to recognise how high a value is being placed on the likes of old growth forests by those who demand their protection. For the community to be brought to agree with the demand is for it to accept that the forests and their inhabitants are worth more than the impact on people's lives, homes and work *and* that compensation has to be paid. Only thus can the costs of the demand to leave the forests alone be spread fairly.

There are those who insist, however, that monkeywrenching cannot claim any credit for making democracy work better, because it is ineffective. What exactly is it that such critics require of monkeywrenching? Do they require that every project ever sabotaged has to have been stopped for the practice to be effective? To insist on such a standard would be unrealistically harsh (consider, for instance, the implications for judgements about the effectiveness of widely accepted parliamentary tactics if success on every occasion of their use were demanded). If we suppose a less rigorous standard, then radical environmentalists certainly have claimed many successes in halting environmentally damaging projects in connection with mineral exploration, industrial pollution, in anti-whaling activities, in preventing cattle ranching in ecologically fragile regions, as well as in the more celebrated forestry cases [*Foreman, 1991: 133ff*]. But, more importantly, monkeywrenchers claim that the significance of their impact is best gauged through the discouragement their activities have given to those thinking of undertaking environmentally sensitive projects.

They frequently speak of their activities as a stalling tactic to give the environmental movement time to raise public awareness about the ecologically destructive nature of much present day industry.<sup>7</sup>

Suppose this to be right and that some time has been bought through their monkeywrenching by those who espouse biocentric values. Might it not still be the case, as opponents of monkeywrenching claim, that in a democracy such tactics are unacceptable because the breaking of (democratically enacted) laws constitutes an attempt to coerce others into agreement? At the beginning of the present section I responded to the claim that monkeywrenching must be rejected as a political tactic because it requires the breaking of (democratically enacted) laws, by pointing out that it is sometimes morally required of us that we break particular laws in order to uphold more important values. This present objection differs from the earlier one in that it is now being alleged that we should find fault with monkeywrenching because of the way it affects the democratic processes themselves. It is alleged to be morally faulty as a tactic because it is aimed at coercing other participants in those democratic processes and so is inconsistent with the achievement of democratic outcomes.

Those who put forward this objection have a tendency to think of the operation of the rule of law as the hallmark of a democracy. Accordingly they do not accept that civil disobedience is defensible because they consider that a society that operates under the rule of law has made provision for lawful means of registering protest. Protesters are apt to respond that civil disobedience is resorted to only where the lawful means have been tried without success – that is, where all efforts have failed to persuade. Opponents will retort in turn that this lack of success is the very thing that shows it is the protesters who are out of step with the majority view (as reflected in the law).

This last point brings us to the nub of the issue. Is democracy to be understood as the expression of majority wishes and values through the rule of law? Certainly societies which function along these lines are considered to be democracies. But this is an extremely weak sense of the ideal as compared with the classical understanding outlined at the beginning of this study. Moreover, deciding who will govern, by reference to majority opinion, is, at best, a democratic decision procedure not democracy itself. We saw earlier that at the heart of the idea of democracy is that everyone is to have an equal share in power so that each may participate on an equal footing with every other in collective decision-making.<sup>8</sup> Existing parliamentary-style democracies do provide for some sharing of power but they certainly do not ensure that there is equality of power. Given that the societies with which we are familiar (and within which radical environmentalists are endeavouring to have their say), simply do not display



the equal sharing in collective decision-making which is the true hallmark of democracy, the objector's case fails.<sup>9</sup>

If existing political structures fall short of what is required for fully-fledged democracy, the civil disobedient is in a strong position to reply to the objection we have been considering. The radical environmentalist who resorts to civil disobedience in order to have a more effective say in his or her society's collective decision-making about the fate of the environment, can once again argue, with some plausibility, that such actions further the democratic process. They do so by giving those with less power than, for instance, the media, large corporations and the trade union movement, an opportunity to have a say with a serious likelihood of being heard. They do so as well by alerting other citizens to issues of concern to the protesters and so contribute to a more enlightened electorate.

Against this, objectors are apt to say that civil disobedience, far from being an enhancer of democratic debate, interferes with the orderly continuation of the bargaining that underlies contemporary pluralist societies. Moreover, it is likely to be said that where the interference is in the form of violent protest, as with monkeywrenching, such protest is quite anti-democratic. It is anti-democratic because, to reiterate a part of the objection stated earlier, it is aimed at coercing opponents (in this case, the majority of the electorate).

These sentiments seem rather selective. To begin with, it is not obvious that any such interference with the processes for achieving collective agreement in pluralist societies is nearly as serious as that of powerful media proprietors who use their media outlets to campaign vigorously for particular interests, including some antithetical to the preservation of the natural environment. Second, it is certainly less disruptive to the democratic process than the actions of large corporations who make significant donations to political parties, threaten to withdraw from projects or to disinvest in a region in order to influence legislative outcomes. (Similar points could be made about the lobbying of the trade union movement.) Third, it is hard to see how such selective protesting as monkeywrenchers engage in, could be thought to match the capacity of the bureaucracy to thwart the public in its attempts to achieve democratically supported outcomes. So even if it were agreed that monkeywrenching had a coercive effect on the democratic process it would hardly be alone in that regard. But the truth seems rather to be that monkeywrenching is far less likely to be coercive than many other activities that are already thought of by objectors as being part of the democratic process. I conclude that a last resort use of strategic monkeywrenching does not amount to assaulting the democratic process. It is considerably less likely to damage that process than many other actions already being carried out by others who are opposed to a

strong defence of the natural environment, including those who have employed violence against environmentalists in an attempt to intimidate them.

Even if the responses we have considered have successfully rebutted the objections raised against the more extreme forms of political action undertaken by radical environmentalists, the question remains whether they are morally commendable forms of environmental activism. As with those who engaged in civil disobedience in the past in order to defend civil rights, monkeywrenchers, to judge by their writings, are morally serious people. They risk a good deal because of their actions – damage to reputation, fines or imprisonment, and violent retaliation from those who oppose their activities. Given this token of their good faith and given that they ensure that their sabotaging actions do not degenerate into sheer vandalism or threaten the lives of sentient beings (for their actions would then be morally inconsistent with their overall goals), they are to be respected for dramatising ecological issues and bringing them before the public. They follow in the tradition of those who opposed participation by outsiders in conflicts like the war in Indo-China. Just as hindsight has enabled us to see the moral justifiability of many of the protests against that war, a clearer vision may enable us to see many acts of monkeywrenching as equally justifiable. Finally, while it is true that criticism, dissent and protest of the kind seen in monkeywrenching are only tolerated in democracies, especially those which show significant respect for individuals and their conscientiously held beliefs, such activities should be seen as contributing to the health and vigour of democratic processes. Repressive violence is likely, in the absence of the rule of law, to be the response by those in authority to protest. But in societies that value tolerance, acts of civil disobedience can be seen against the backdrop of the rule of law as directing our attention to weaknesses in, and failures of, particular laws. From the perspective of those concerned to protect the natural environment against threats to its integrity, not only do democratic structures represent their best hope for ensuring such protection, but their very efforts can be seen as strengthening those structures on which they need must rely.

#### NOTES

1. Tree spiking is the practice of driving nails or spikes into trees to prevent or hinder milling and so logging. The spike does not harm the tree but can damage expensive saws if not removed (at great expense) prior to milling.
2. For accounts of such acts see, for example, Manes [1990, especially Part 2]; Scarce [1990]; Foreman [1991: Chs. 11–15].
3. Foreman [1991: 149ff] contends that the much publicised case of a timber worker who was injured in California in 1987 when the band saw he was helping operate shattered after



striking a tree spike embedded in a redwood log, has been shown to have resulted from the continued use of a saw that was overdue for replacement and, more to the point, that the chief suspect for having implanted the spike was a disgruntled neighbour of the milling company.

4. For more extensive discussions of the nature of terrorism see, for example, Young [1977] and Coady [1985].
5. See, for example, the views of the so-called 'Circle A' anarchists who broke away from the Earth First! movement in the United States, as reported in Scarce [1990: 88ff].
6. For perceptive discussion about the relation of violence to civil disobedience, see Cohen [1971: 22-30].
7. This idea is taken up by several contributors, including Foreman himself, in Foreman [1985] and in various articles in publications like *Earth First!: The Radical Environmental Journal*.
8. For a valuable discussion of the ideal of democracy see Dahl [1982].
9. See, for example, Norman [1987, especially Ch.8].

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## The Greening of Participatory Democracy: A Reconsideration of Theory

BRONWYN M. HAYWARD

Concern about the slow progress of liberal representative democracies on questions of sustainable development has encouraged research into alternative forms of democracy which might better inform environmental decision-making. Forms of deliberative, strong or 'participatory' democracy which emphasise greater public involvement in decision-making have particular appeal for many environmentalists. However, there has been surprisingly little critical evaluation of these theories in an environmental context. This contribution evaluates theories of participatory democracy in the context of environmental management in New Zealand where major restructuring has created new opportunities for experimentation. This opportunity to 'green' theories of democracy should force theorists to consider ecological rationality, community diversity, the needs of future generations, claims of intrinsic value, and the political sovereignty of indigenous peoples.

Environmental problems present a challenge for contemporary democracies. Democracies are forced to make difficult choices about how limited resources will be used. These choices are complicated by the often vastly differing attitudes people have about the environment, its problems and what actions (if any) should be taken to address these. Nevertheless, no matter how difficult, conscious choices eventually have to be made. Environmental degradation is unrelenting. Indicators suggest that, rather than go away, many environmental problems will only get worse. The scale and nature of environmental problems demands a collective response.<sup>1</sup>

But can our democracies respond adequately to environmental problems? Many environmental policy analysts are doubtful. Some have

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