Think you've got a handle on the left? Think again...

S
o, the Sierra Club is a bunch of wimps who've sold out to The Establishment. Factories don't burn down by themselves; they need your help. And President Clinton is environmentally "puerile."

Welcome to the world of Earth First! ... And pray they don't visit your golf course. The mere existence of Earth First! and its 100 chapters nationwide should make us all thank God for the other environmental groups — you, the ones that are at least partially cohesive and rational in their thinking.

I just read through Earth First! Journal and got an education — an education I'd like to pass along to you. Of special interest to the golf industry is this edition's installment of "Dear Ned Ludd," a regular feature for "creative means of effective defense against the forces of industrial totalitarianism." With a disclaimer that neither the EF! movement nor the EF! Journal "necessarily encourage anyone to do any of the things discussed," the column details how to destroy a golf course's irrigation system — trusty hammer and flathead screwdriver is hand.

"Forget all that you have heard about pouring gasoline or Roundup on the greens," the column advises. "Don't even bother carving up the tee's [sic] or stealing golf carts. Just cut off that IV from the aquifer."

Now, think of your club's protocol as you read this caution to the Dear Ned Ludd reader: "A quick note on security. There is virtually no security. I worked as a night waterman and security guard at a municipal golf course for four months. I was specifically told not to mess with anyone that [sic] trespassed. I was instructed to call 911 and let the herbies deal with any vandals."

The last graph serves as a call to arms: "So now you know. Go get busy. And if you get really serious about drying out a golf course, get hired on. You'll make some extra dough while conserving precious water."

In another attack leveled at golf, an EF! reporter called Cedar says Freport McMoRan's Barton Creek Properties in Austin, Texas, "is polluting Barton Creek and Barton Springs with sewage effluent used to fertilize two existing golf courses."

(First time I've ever heard of golf courses desiring effluent — and to fertilize to be sure. Boy, there's so much scientific knowledge in this group.)


couldn't help but titter a bit when I read J. Barry Mothes' story on the long-delayed demise of Liberty State Park's proposed golf development (page 5). While this story has dragged on for 18 years and a definative decision had to be reached at some point, it's ironic that Gov. Christie Todd Whitman — that pro-business, GOP wunderkind rumored to be the pol who leveled the final, fatal blow.

Whitman, of course, is New Jersey's newly elected Republican governor who stormed into office decrying the state government's anti-business stance on a range of public-policy matters. How interesting that she saw fit to bludgeon a proposal that would have preserved and enhanced a dilapidated park site while simultaneously generating funds to maintain the entire park.

Let's listen to a conservative politician staking out her environmental credentials, shall we?

"Liberty State Park provides green sanctuary in the state's most densely populated county," Whitman said, announcing her decision. "More important, the park belongs to all the people of New Jersey. Public sentiment overwhelmingly supported keeping it that way, without it being a golf course."

"It is time to close this issue once and for all and move ahead with the original intent of Liberty State Park," she continued. "The idea was for Liberty State Park to be a park in a classic sense — where people can go to enjoy quiet and solitude. A golf course isn't designed for that.

It's this last part that really steams me. It's not necessarily Whitman's transparent, righteous attempt to cast herself as "sensitive" on environmental issues — so she can play the "Liberty State Park card" during an upcoming vice presidential debate!

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Phillips comment
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urban areas often do) over and around this modest, middle-income municipality. During a late afternoon round, my foursome witnessed the following: A young couple and baby roaming the 6th and 7th fairways; four boys and their bikes cutting across the 12th on their way home from school; a shabbily dressed, middle-aged man (some might even have called him a vagrant) quietly reading John Steinbeck's Cannery Row on the 14th tee; and at least seven dogs happily leading their masters through their after-work walks.

No disruption. No adolescents riding their knobby tires across the putting surfaces. Just golf and community at dusk.

Sounds like a park to me.

In many ways, Gov. Whitman shouldn't be faulted for not realizing that fully two-thirds of the golf courses in America are open to anyone (of course, you have to pay—just as you have to pay to attend a sporting event, or many state parks for that matter). Similarly, the governor shouldn't really be expected to know why Hyde Park residents enjoy some of the best cross-country ski trails and sledding hills in Greater Boston.

Part of Whitman doesn't want to know because she's worried about her public image and how it might affect her political viability. Yet, it's even more likely that she understands none of this because the golf industry has done a damn poor job of passing along the facts.

Time to get started?