

**W**hen I hear the group's name — Earth Liberation Front — I think of the line about cowardice written by author and satirist Ambrose Bierce. It reads: "One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs."

The Earth Liberation Front, or ELF as the group is known, is the underground organization that proudly claims responsibility for setting fire to the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture in May, as well as other acts of destruction.

ELF's members claim to be ecologists, but they're really just arsonists and vandals who wear the finest running shoes available. They conduct their terrorist acts and run like hell.

Some say they must have loose screws upstairs to undertake such violence, but I don't buy that crap. They know what they're doing. But frighteningly, they've talked themselves into believing their acts aren't evil.

What's worse is the ELF's members are incredibly wrong about their beliefs. The group's members set the University of Washington fire to destroy the office of Toby Bradshaw, an associate professor and geneticist, who the ELF says is "unleashing mutant genes into the environment that cause irreversible harm to forest ecosystems."

Bradshaw, who conducts classes at the University of Washington on the ethics of science, isn't doing that. He's as eco as they come, says Val Easton, library manager for the burned-down Center of Urban Horticulture and Bradshaw's co-worker. Bradshaw is researching ways to make poplars grow bigger and faster to replenish forests lost to logging.

"You'd think that's a good thing, and that people interested in preserving the environment would welcome it," Easton says. "But ELF's motto is: 'Let it be wild.'"

ELF's members refuse to recognize that Bradshaw and others are studying science, including genetic engineering and biotechnology, for the good of the environment and the world. ELF's members dismiss such science as "unnatural."

This is where we add the term "phony" along with "cowardly" to describe ELF. Its members don't realize that millions of items

## Time to Confront Evil, Menacing ELF

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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could be deemed "unnatural," from life-saving medicines to Diet Coke. The group's members also fail to understand that the gasoline they used to torch Bradshaw's office is manufactured from oil, which is extracted from the ground. How "natural" is that?

I'm sick and tired of these misdirected protest groups who take up causes and have no idea what they're fighting for. But I'm scared that these groups resort to violence to make their points.

What if the ELF had killed somebody in the University of Washington fire? Does the group conveniently submit one of its communiqués to declare "collateral damage" to feel better about itself?

It's time the green industry starts to take these menacing groups more seriously. The industry's members — from golf to landscape to arbor — need to join together to make a stand against groups like the ELF before somebody is killed in a senseless act of terrorism.

I'm not sure what it will take. For starters, much discussion is required. Perhaps it can begin with industry segments forming a committee to investigate the matter.

The goal here should *not* be to try and change the ELF's mind. First and foremost, the industry's goal must be to stop the group from committing its destruction. (Maybe the ELF only wants attention from the industry and will stop the violence upon receiving its notice.) Somehow, the industry needs to get its point across to ELF that nothing positive can come from violence. If the industry succeeds in doing that, then it's on to step two — whatever that may be.

One thing is for certain: There's no time to wait because lives could be at stake.

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