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THE ENVIRONMENT

A grinch who loathes Green groups

By Katherine Long
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

BELLEVUE, Wash. — Sitting in a quiet little office tucked in a wooded area outside downtown Bellevue, Ron Arnold props his black cowboy boots up on a cluttered desk and utters words that would send a chill down a spotted owl's spine.

"Our goal is to destroy, to eradicate the environmental movement ... We're mad as hell. We're not going to take it any more. We're dead serious — we're going to destroy them."

Arnold doesn't look like he's mad as hell. He doesn't slam his fist down on the desk or raise his voice. Instead, he is affable, engaging and even cracks a smile now and then.

But he is very serious.

Arnold, 56, is executive vice-president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, a national organization with 125,000 supporters and 8,000 core members. He's also one of the principal writers and organizers of a philosophy — and a movement — known as Wise Use.

He and centre president Alan Gottlieb are the backbone of a loose network of Wise Use activists that number in the millions, they believe.

The group's focus is grass-roots organizing in small western towns and lobbying in Washington, D.C., although the office is in the Seattle suburb of Bellevue because, as Gottlieb says with a chuckle, "we like the environment."

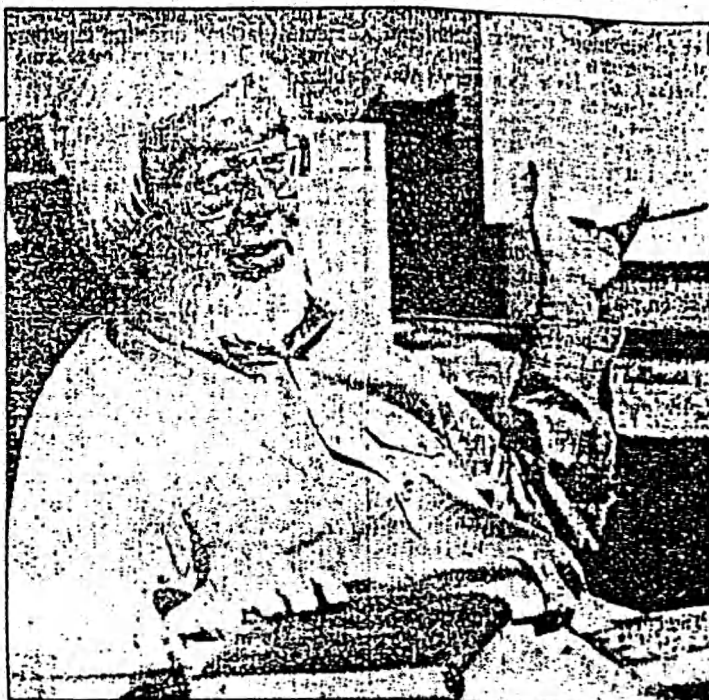
Gottlieb, who has also headed the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms and the Second Amendment Foundation, was one of the U.S.'s leading direct-mail fundraisers for far-right candidates and causes in the 1970s and early '80s.

In April, 1984, he pleaded guilty to filing false income-tax returns for 1977 and was sent to prison.

The centre has been in existence since 1976, but only in the past year did it begin making headlines in the national media. One story is begetting another.

An article in the Chicago Tribune led to stories in Newsweek, the

"Our goal is to destroy the environmental movement," says affable Ron Arnold, champion of Wise Use



KITH PHOTO

Christian Science Monitor, the Washington Post, U.S. News and World Report, and Outside magazine.

Even its opponents admit that the Wise Use movement appears to be growing and becoming more effective at lobbying Congress and environmental regulatory agencies.

The Wise Use movement believes that the planet's resources were meant to be exploited for human gain and profit. Arnold — a former Sierra Club member himself — talks of harvesting old-growth forests, eliminating or reducing the size of many national parks and recreation areas, opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling and repealing the Endangered Species Act.

And he believes the environmental

movement must be destroyed because it holds a dark vision of mankind as spreading like a cancer on Earth. He believes the environmental movement has an anti-human agenda that ultimately includes the destruction of civilization and the eradication of human beings.

Many in the environmental movement are only vaguely aware of Arnold and the Wise Use agenda.

Yet among environmental groups in the U.S. capital, "he's regarded as a kook who is a serious threat," says David Alberswerth, director of public lands for the National Wildlife Federation who has followed the Wise Use movement.

Kook, or philosopher with an appealing message — whichever he is, Arnold is in demand. In the next few months, he's scheduled to speak to the New Mexico Cattleman's Association, the Minnesota Wheat Growers Association, the International Council of Shopping Centers in San Francisco, the Maine Conservation League and a Society of Professional Journalists meeting in Kennebec, Wash.

He urges his followers to take this attitude: "One, don't believe a thing

the environmentalists say; two, go look to see if it's there (the problem the environmental movement claims); three, act on the truth, not the theory. Don't be snookered by these activists that are out to destroy civilization."

Among the myths he believes environmentalists have perpetuated:

□ The disappearance of the spotted owl. Arnold contends the birds are not on the verge of extinction; they actually prefer second-growth forests.

□ The ozone hole. Arnold suspects it has always been there. If chlorofluorocarbons really destroy ozone, why isn't there a hole over chlorofluorocarbon factories, he asks.

□ The greenhouse effect. "There isn't any such thing," Arnold says.

□ Acid rain. "The problem is 1 per cent of what it's been claimed to be," he says.

The movement's principal successes have been in fundraising, organization and dissemination of the Wise Use philosophy. But the movement also is "making real inroads" in national legislation, Alberswerth says. "We do take them quite seriously."

For example, Alberswerth says, the new highway and mass-transit bill passed by Congress recently provides for construction of off-road vehicle trails that would open up wilderness areas — something Wise Use members have long sought. Wise Use proponents also have been successful at battling rules that result in the loss of property rights.

Arnold says the group also successfully challenged the Natural Resources Defense Council on its claims of the effects of the apple-growing chemical alar.

Alberswerth believes many of the groups belonging to the Wise Use network are fronts for a variety of industries, including oil and the Japanese manufacturers of off-road vehicles.

Arnold says there's nothing wrong with encouraging private gain of resources. "We want you to be able to exploit the environment for private gain, absolutely," he says. "And we want people to understand that is a noble goal."

Arnold says his group is not liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat. If anything, he says, it's libertarian, conservation-oriented and a defender of the environment.

"We're not out to hurt the environment," Arnold says. "We love the environment more than they do."

SEATTLE TIMES

Huge algal bloom chokes Outback river

Outback Australia is facing an environmental disaster from drought and the spread of a 1,000-kilometre (620-mile) algal "bloom" that is killing fish and livestock and threatening to destroy the Darling River system. Fish rise to the surface gasping for air, cattle and sheep are dying for lack of drinkable water and thousands of farming families have been told not to drink, wash or cook with the Darling's water.

THE INDEPENDENT

An ecological declaration of independence

VANCOUVER — I have talked to business executives and politicians about the inescapable fact that, as biological beings, we require for our very survival clean air, pure water, unpoisoned soil and biological diversity around the globe.



David Suzuki

ements of a new politics of hope. The opportunity to live in an unsoiled environment, breathe clean air, drink pure water and eat from fields untainted with toxins, must now be accepted as an inalienable

any equations of economic development. And where our knowledge is limited, we must err always on the side of caution. This turning point in our percep-