Institute For The Study of Insurgent Warfare
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ways attackable even in the midst of a (projected) almost total war that still allows the aboveground organizations to engage in reclamation projects? Etc. Ultimately, the failures of DGR/*DGR* metastasize to every level of the organizational principles, the metaphysics, the tactics, the planning, etc. There is no way to cleanly separate any particular part of the organization to be held up as a useful tool because every single part of it is interconnected with the abhorrent personalities of Lierre Keith and Derrick Jensen and the authoritarianism and messianic nature of the entire project.

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ments.[66] While this strange mix of aboveground and underground action proliferates, and somehow ignores that corporations may stage something in response to secessionists outlawing corporations or that the federal government may intervene when a group that is openly supportive of "terrorist" actions that are crashing the national power grid starts buying up the Mississippi Delta, or that the federal government in the interests of corporations may activate state national guards or call a state of emergency and freeze individuals movement. Of course there is also blase apocalyptic imagery such as the idea that there "are tracts of old-growth forest now fertilized by the blood of your friends, but the trees still stand:'[67] Naturally, despite the attention paid to this section, it remains simply theoretical bluster; DGR has in the 3 years since the publication of DGR accomplished zero acts of direct action[68] and remains in Phase I as an aboveground group. While DGR theoretically strictly separates itself from criminal activity, there seems to be little interest by direct action radicals to act in solidarity with their organization. Part of this is because despite the bluster about security culture,[69] the fact that the de facto heads of the organization (Jensen and Keith) have frequently called the cops on other activists does not help. Ultimately, many of the internal contradictions of *DGR* come out in their narrative of what their resistance will look like. How can their aboveground organization prepare for the post-industrial world without accepting that industrialization is also part of the economy (which remains neutral in their eyes) or the government (which they seem to think can be influenced)? How is an organization so committed to primitivism so ignorant of critiques of primitivism that have been circulating since the late 80s? How is industrial culture somehow perfectly static and al-

[66] *DGR*, 514
[67] *DGR*, 515
[68] deepgreenresistance.org
[69] deepgreenresistance.org

tators (taking on tar sands extraction in her vision) and indigenous groups would begin flocking to join DGR's crusade (to throw in a tacky white savior narrative).

As the conflict between DGR and industrial civilization deepens, *DGR* as a manual begins to be translated and distributed worldwide sparking sympathy movements, at least in Lierre Keith's vision. This is imperative because "DGR requires a trail of solidarity, a trail that is build up into a protective barrier, an unbreachable line of determination against industrial assault. Our actionists draw that line around every rainforest and every last stand of old growth, and they build that barrier with transfers of funds and training and materiel"[65] Part of this is because DGR, despite by Keith's own estimation being widely hated, requires a significant and continually increasing number of dispersed activists, as their strategy involves hitting a huge variety of targets (power grids, dams, industrial logging, industrial fishing, industrial agriculture, etc.) all of which have very specific processes and geographically dispersed bases.

In a corollary process, Keith envisions young people abandoning cities to become self-sufficient farmers and begin repairing the environment through permaculture. Around page 512, Keith resumes her narrative of actionists taking up the DGR banner, now worldwide, and sympathy attacks that echo those in the United States actions of DGR spring up across the globe as DGR becomes committed to continually crashing the grid and halting industrial operations. Among the widening circle of attacks (which destabilizes the power grid for the United States), aboveground organizations are assumed to begin buying land and starting transition towns "based on direct democracy, human rights, feminism, steady state economies" while also winning local office and heading state secessionist move-

[65] *DGR*, 506

> "We tend to destroy our leaders with criticism, often personal and vicious."
>
> — Lierre Keith, Deep Green Resistence

Looting the Corpses That Come Before You

I'm not here to praise or condemn Caesar, but to make sure he stays buried. Often when a movement falls (and Deep Green Resistance is very much falling) there is a "nostalgic" tendency to attempt to exhume the corpse and at least loot it for a few precious baubles. Part of this necrophilia is the belief that to have persisted or to have attained some notability entails a certain degree of competence or at least some tactic, organizing principle or strategy that is worth taking one last look over the corpse for, even if the wake is purely unsympathetic looting paired with a squabble over what went wrong, finally degenerating into an amateur autopsy. Perhaps this metaphor a trifle too abstract; in concrete terms, while DGR is busily being torn down for their authoritarianism[1] and transphobia[2] there are quite a few people either within DGR or outside of it who still believe that DGR's promotion of itself as "an analysis, a strategy, and a movement" works as a cohesive whole, albeit one much better off without Lierre Keith and Derrick Jensen and their particular set of baggage. Rather than, like a vulture, picking apart the well-trod and well documented examples of DGR's weaknesses, it is my intention to address the strongest point of DGR (fusing their analysis, actions and movement into a coherent whole) so we can be done with this shibboleth once

[1] "www.anarchistnews.org" for a sort of clearing house of anarchist critiques

[2] "earthfirstjournal.org" explains Earth First! Newswire's decision to drop them and links to quite a few of the criticisms of Lierre Keith & Derrick Jensen's transphobia

and for all. The idea that DGR was strong given the unique way it interwove analysis, tactics and group identity is debatable. In theory, DGR provided its members with an actionable and concrete strategy based on attainable goals, individual and collective security and a gradual amplification of conflict that is, (again, in theory), a good method for dismantling capitalism and its attendant ecological devastation. With that in mind, let us get to the quite literal heart of the matter (DGR's titular production *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet*), pry it open, and glance into how theory met practice and spawned such a persistent organization.[3]

One of the problems with analysis of DGR as an organization is that those analyzing it often profile the actions of the organization by a standard other than the one proposed by DGR itself. DGR as a document is the bedrock that informs the understanding held by DGR the organization, and therefore quite directly determines their course of action. This is why often the actions taken by DGR are "illogical" from an outside viewpoint. In a sense, it is _impossible to loot anything of value from DGR because all of the things considered abhorrent about the organization (transphobia, authoritarianism, self-important bluster, etc.) are tied up in the literal material production of the organization.

While we will be focusing on the tactical blunders entailed in this ideology it is worth noting that the embarrassing viewpoints expressed by Derrick Jensen & Lierre Keith[4] are completely and utterly bound up in every element of DGR as it has existed.

[3] Insofar as DGR was published in 2011 and shortly spawned a fairly large movement, 3 or so years is quite a long time and even with all of the criticism the group draws it hasn't spectacularly collapsed into nothingness even if it is certainly far less prominent than it once was.

[4] Arie McBay left the organization over differences of opinion with both Keith and Jensen

> follow up on vulnerable targets to which they have access.
>
> The first DGR blackout could last days or even weeks.[63]

Because this theoretical attack is a jumping off point for the rapid growth of the (theoretical) DGR and their accelerated recruitment to dispersed attacks across the country, it is worth delving into some of its problematic assumptions. Firstly, success is measured in environmental impact being reduced. Although human impact is (theoretically) addressed, the idea that a grid failure would save the environment (or at least reduce the rate at which it is being destroyed) with no negative impact is hopelessly optimistic. Apparently, in this vision, there is no one relying on critical services (such as life support) who dies because of the grid winking out, or auto accidents, rioting, food shortages in inner cities, etc. These are completely brushed aside in the belief people will com ' together and enjoy the respite from industrial capitalism. There is some basis for this, such as some of the positive organizing that went on after Katrina in New Orleans, but there is also the reactionary blowback, which also occurred in New Orleans post-Katrina.[64] While the impact is certainly dependent on where the grid goes down (e.g. if the southwest lost the grid in the middle of summer or if the northeast lost the grid in the middle of winter) the possibility of such an impact is brushed aside by the necessity of immediate action against an industrial system that is immediately killing the planet. Keith also notes that large environmental groups and corporations (but somehow not the government) will, naturally, be upset (to slightly understate the case), and condemn the organization responsible. She then speculates that the impact of such an action would breed imi-

[63] *DGR*, 503

[64] A good rundown is available in Floodlines by Jordan Flaherty

A Religious Conception of Activism With an Apocalypse Cult Ideology

The conclusion to *DGR* devolves into Lierre Keith's eco-war science fiction, which is instructive for looking at the deeply messianic nature of the processes discussed in *DGR*. While there are several false premises underlying DGR's assumptions about potential trajectories of the dying days of industrial culture, their messianic and spiritual undertones are most prominent when the document discusses what the rise of DGR will look like. After outlining the phases of the strategy of Decisive Ecological Warfare, Keith provides a narrative structure as to how that might plar out (a narrative that is fundamentally optimistic, I might add) starting on page 495 and comprising much of the end of the book. Despite opening with a meditation on spreading resistance through environmental evangelism, Keith is insistent that "DGR is not secular millenarianism:"[62] Nonetheless, what follows is a poetic spread of allegedly non-symbolic direct action that is, however it is phrased, highly symbolic. As Keith states:

> In our story, the first direct hit to industrial infrastructure is likely to be something more pragmatic and less daring, like the electric grid.
>
> Our actionists have planned well. Remember the four criteria for target selection: the grid is accessible, vulnerable, and critical and while it is recuperable, the abundance of the first three criteria could potentially make that recuperability more theoretical than practical.
>
> The underground networks can hit a few nodes at once and the unconnected affinity groups, well versed in DEW and the DGR grand strategy, can

[62] *DGR*, 496

Two Truths and Two Lies

One of the reasons that DGR is so successful in drawing adherents, and why there is such a zealous crusade by their members to defend the good names of Derrick Jensen and Lierre Keith, is the way in which DGR (as an analysis) places an amazing onus on individuals to combat industrial civilization and frames this showdown in terms of a tiny conscientious (perhaps elect) minority against the entire world. This is quite simply drawn together from DGR's textual adherence to two truths and two lies. The first truth is simply that: "The dominant culture-civilization is killing the planet, and it is long past time for those of us who care about life on earth to begin taking the actions necessary to stop this culture from destroying every living being."[5] Here DGR does not really find itself in disagreement with most of the anarchist movement (or even, to be honest, most of the mild left and some conservatives), and it is undoubtedly true that industrial society has wreaked havoc on the environment. This central truth is echoed throughout the text, both in terms of raw numbers (whether of deforestation or animal depopulation) and poetic imagery (as many critics have pointed out, frequently dealing with the last salmon gasping its last breath); reiteration of this point is so much a part of DGR that listing all of the times it is brought up would be simply tedious (it is the sole content of the first two chapters and is utilized to underscore almost every point made by Keith, McBay and Jensen).

The second truth is that "We don't live in a democracy. And before you gasp at this blasphemy, ask yourself: Do governments better serve corporations or living beings?"[6] While this is also undoubtedly true and also a classic anarchist argument, from these points DGR diverges extensively from

[5] DGR, 11
[6] DGR, 11

an anarchist analysis. For DGR, one of the central problems faced by the environment is that "this culture will not undergo any sort of voluntary transformation to a sane and sustainable way of living."[7] Although the text meanders quite a bit before defining this, for DGR a "sane and sustainable way of living" is suicide for many individuals (including author Derrick Jensen). As outlined in DGR, industrial society as a whole is untenable. Any attempt to reduce environmental damage would simply end in responsible corporations being outcompeted by those with fewer environmental scruples, and many of the most destructive practices are underwritten by governments to keep them economically tenable.[8] However, the replacement DGR proposes is equally grim (by some measures) because it is such a rapid change. This is largely stated somewhat cryptically, such as Keith's statement that "human population must be reduced" with the corollary statement that "if we don't do it voluntarily, the world will reduce it for us. Even at Stone Age, solar-fueled levels of consumption, there are billions more people than the planet can support."[9] However, her target number involves a little over 7/8ths of the human population disappearing.[10] Derrick Jensen fields the question of mass death[11] with the blithe equivocation that we are all murderers anyway (because we are complicit in the industrial system that is killing the environment and by extension persons). Although he somewhat softens the impact of the statement by speaking both of the extensive death rate caused by industrial capitalism and the unavoidable catastrophe of resource depletion, along with some generalities about how

[7] DGR, 12

[8] Cf. DGR, 51

[9] DGR, 194

[10] "A truly sustainable number would be somewhere between 300 and 600 million." (DGR, 2 1 0; Keith estimates the world's population at roughly 8 billion).

[11] DGR, 422–424

> as McBay admits that some individuals will always, because of their particular skill sets or commitments, be engaged in Phase 1 broad based recruiting and movement building to replace militants lost to attrition.

It is worth noting that the desirability of this project is predicated on an apocalyptic reading of resistance in the United States. The scenarios that *DGR* use to build the case for this methodology ostensibly argue that there is no organizing going on against contemporary environmental horror (excluding groups that they patronizingly state simply lack the power to challenge things, such as indigenous land rights movements, or are hopelessly inept in their tactical action like ELF/ ALF). From there they project an existing movement that can minimize the brunt of ecological damage but is unable to completely halt industrial production and lacks a single minded devotion to wrecking industrial processes. *DGR* is then able to propose that Decisive Ecological Warfare is truly the best possible solution for repairing the ecological damage caused by industrial culture (by moving from focusing on the worst targets to the worst processes to stopping all industrial projects) while minimizing the impact on humans (by gradually working towards autonomy and selfsufficiency). While on paper these ideas seem workable, they are built on a number of fallacious assumptions; firstly, that the government and its attendant forces will not "harden" to defend vulnerable parts of industrial society when attacks on them begin having real effects, and secondly that such an unwieldy organization as *DGR*'s proposed confederation (spearheaded by DGR itself) can enact the security culture necessary to evade infiltration by informants and remain robust in the face of oppression. To illustrate this, I will turn to the conclusion of DGR where Lierre Keith expands upon a narrative of DGR rising to prominence and contrast it with both the reality of their organization and the material reality of conflict.

or exploitative banks:'[60] Phase 2 is theoretically the point at which direct action starts mobilizing from their projected organization(s) and where broad based organizing begins to pay off because (the theoretical) DGR is able to draw on so many supporters across a broad range of actions.

- Phase 3 is centered on underground groups beginning to engage in systems disruption; which is defined in terms of "identifying key points and bottlenecks in the adversary's systems (electrical, transport, financial, and so on) and engaging them to collapse those systems or reduce their functionality;' while accepting that this disruption is not reducible to a single action because "industrial systems are big … but they are sprawling rather than monolithic. Repairs are attempted. The resistance members understand that. Effective systems disruption requires planning for continued and coordinated actions over time:"[61]; The net gain of systems disruption is that the aboveground groups are able to begin filling the power void created by these attacks with increasingly localized and autonomous community building along with selective democratic involvement to curtail the powers of the government to unleash oppression.

- Phase 4 is essentially an amplified version of Phase 3, where instead of disrupting systems and attempting to reduce the human impact (that is collateral damage and casualties), the aim is to completely eradicate the functionality of certain systems without concern for human impact because of the looming threat of global warming. While all 4 phases are considered separately, technically the division between them is somewhat academic,

[60] *DGR*, 448
[61] *DGR*, 451

DGR will enable individuals to start using subsistence farming almost immediately (because in their analysis capitalism collapses in and we immediately start pulling up asphalt lots to make community gardens). This first lie, that there is no possibility of voluntary change, is partially rooted in truth. That is, there is little prognosis of generating a world-wide year zero in which almost everyone returns to a pre-industrial society pretty much immediately. The desirability of such a society (and whether this is the only possible solution to the overdraw on natural resources) is highly debatable, but by taking it as a core truth DGR is able to extrapolate that their organization is the only one capable of saving the planet from environmental devastation. Therefore, Lierre Keith states that: " [she is] not attempting to create panic or survivalism. Neither will help. [She is] attempting to create a resistance movement with a strategy that can address the scale of the problem."[12] This resistance movement is naturally DGR and can only be DGR, as Keith rhetorically states near the closing of *DGR*: "This is the question on which the world entire may depend: Are you willing to accept the only strategy left to us?"[13] This rhetorical gesture neatly ties these strands together. If one accepts the two truths to the argument of DGR and then take the leap that there is no way people will voluntarily adapt the society envisioned in the document, the only option is the sort of environmentalism embodied by DGR one which fuses this worldview into an authoritarian tactical organization which through its cohesive position is capable of destroying industrial society.

[12] DGR, 213
[13] DGR, 494

Environmentalism as a Panacea That Cures All Ills

This leads us into a somewhat thorny point, one that is not tactical in nature yet is vital for understanding the tactical failures inherent in DGR. *DGR*'s framing of resistance entails an acceptance of the proposition that all oppressions are co-extensive with industrial development or at a bare minimum are amplified and entrenched by the existence of industrial capitalism. That is, somewhat puzzlingly, *DGR* seemingly argues that misogyny and racism are products of industrial society and curtails much of its critique of the inequalities perpetuated by capitalism to being the products of a specifically industrial capitalist system. This leads them to the somewhat paradoxical position of being tacitly anticapitalist, yet advocating complete war against the industrial capitalist state while adopting small scale capitalism and actively purchasing land from the federal government (see below). Crudely put, the entirety of *DGR* is anti-industrial and only secondarily anti-capitalist or feminist. This is reflected in their (correct) statement that "industrialization is a process of taking entire communities of living beings and turning them into commodities and dead zones."[14] However, for them industrialization is distinct from capitalism (apparently the mass die off of the world's human population is not unthinkable, but calling oneself anti-capitalist is simply a bridge too far). This is perplexing because it makes their analysis of their own targets somewhat incoherent. As they state, " [our] goal is not to bring down the US government or any government;' even though centralized governments are one of the primary supporters of environmental devastation by their own analysis.[15] *DGR* puts the cart before the horse in terms of understanding their own conflict. They are opposed to multi-

[14] DGR, 23
[15] DGR, 497

and decisive action:"[58] This is both the stage which DGR views itself as occupying and a stage that is fairly uncontroversial (other than their analysis of ecological change, their divisiveness as an organization, and their authoritarian leadership) . Essentially, Phase 1 is about gathering the necessary forces to execute the later stages.

- Phase 2 is where differentiated roles for the aboveground and underground portions of the movement begin to take shape. As stated above the aboveground organization(s) are, in theory, able to push a narrative of support, or at least tacit approval, for direct actions taken by the underground. Perplexingly, this is a long-existing trend in radical environmentalism (specifically the distribution of communiques from direct action attacks supportively), and in the entire history of this tactic there has not been much evidence that doing so changes public opinion one iota. Additionally, the aboveground organization(s) can begin confederating with other radical organizations to build a wider network to draw on in future conflicts and to prepare non-activists for the shocks of reduced availability of electrical power and other luxuries as the ecological conflict steps up. They also "plan strategically themselves, engaging in persistent planned campaigns instead of reactive or crisis-to-crisis organizing:"[59] Underground organizations are somewhat limited in their (projected) utility at this point as for "the most part, the required underground networks and skills do not yet exist to take on multiple larger targets. Resisters may go after particularly egregious targets-coal-fired power plants

[58] *DGR*, 447
[59] *DGR*, 450

tactics and revolutionary zeal that makes for an effective organization, the assessment by the government's counter-terrorist experts of ELF's "the Family" cell (who were arrested in Operation Backfire) is fairly impressed with their ability to simplify most of their methods to maximize their effectiveness. According to them the "group's tactics can be characterized as 'low tech' (requiring very little technical expertise to execute), effective against the selected targets in most cases, using readily available and inexpensive materials, requiring very little logistical support (e.g. to construct devices), easily taught and learned, easily rehearsed, and producing a significant visual impact (scorched buildings and burning flames guaranteed news coverage):'[57] *DGR* could, perhaps rightly, object that the ELF attacks never stopped industrial civilization; however, it is undeniable that ELF/ ALF provide a model that is easy to emulate, nets fairly consistent results, and provides significant logistical challenges to government agencies to make an arrest.

For *DGR* centralized leadership is imperative because the showpiece of their argument (Decisive Ecological Warfare) requires an organization capable of gathering a fairly broad cross section of the environmentalist movement and to set it on a four step plan to eliminate industrial society. These four phases will be covered briefly below before delving more deeply into the fourth (decisive) phase.

- Phase 1 is where "resisters focus on organizing themselves into networks and building cultures of resistance to sustain those networks. Many sympathizers or potential recruits are unfamiliar with serious resistance strategy and action, so efforts are taken to spread that information. But key in this phase is actually forming the above- and underground organizations (or at least nuclei) that will carry out organizational recruitment

[57] START, 20

national corporations tearing resources from the earth (particularly coal and oil) or devastating the ozone layer by burning fossil fuels (especially in terms of the national power grid) and toxifying groundwater and contributing to the overtaxing of arable land or destroying old growth forests or the ocean floor (factory farming, clear cut logging and industrial fishing respectively). While all of these processes, to varying extents, are the actions of multinational corporations, the decision making process is based in a capitalist logic of market incentivization (specifically seeking high immediate yields regardless of long term impact) and backed by the power of governments (most of the processes that the federal government is dependent on are implicated in these industries). *DGR*'s analysis is ultimately missing the forest for the trees.

The problematic nature of separating industrialization from capitalism is also reflected in their analysis of the particularities of oppression. For example, while colonialism and its attendant racism is decried, what seems far more galling to the writers of *DGR* is the collective destruction of the environment that stemmed from this. In terms of the feminism that is a central tenet of DGR, Keith (who does most of the heavy lifting on the subject) seems to be a firm believer that pre-industrial societies are gender egalitarian if not matriarchal. As Marvin Harris notes in *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*, the problem with this argument is that no one "has ever been able to authenticate a single case that is representative of true matriarchy. The only evidence … aside from ancient myths about Amazons, is that about 10 to 15 percent of the world's societies trace kinship and descent exclusively through females:"[16] While the position of women, he notes, tends to be better in these societies they are still male dominated.

[16] Harris, Marvin. *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches: The Riddles of Culture*, 86

However, tactically DGR is able to draw quite a bit from their insistence that all social ills are derived from industrialization rather than the conditions that gave rise to industrialization.[17] Specifically, the theoretical system that DGR positions itself against is based around things like industrial agriculture, logging, fishing, and centralized power grids rather than governments and their symbiotic partner capitalism. This constructs a more tractable opposition for DGR because they are not in conflict with the whole of society (including its police and military) but rather only with certain earth destroying industries (which in their analysis can be viewed as distinct from the state as though, for example, coal mining weren't parasitically attached to the government both for the continuation of the power grid that their industry feeds but also through the hand-in-glove relationship between the coal industry and the local governments in coal mining regions).[18]

This simplification of conflict allows for the dualism propagated by *DGR* between Liberalism and Radicalism, with *DGR* positioning the Radical camp as the appropriate solution to the problem.[19] Accepting the earlier tenets of the *DGR* analysis, even the ones which are patently false, allows for the next important rhetorical move: the argument that DGR's actions/strategy are coherent with its analysis and their efficacy is drawn from being radical, in the Latin sense of addressing the source of the problem. In this sense, radical means viewing problems as being inherently collective and produced via power (in a sort of crude Foucaultian analysis) rather than being individual and thus incapable of being changed through

[17] Cf. Scott, James C. Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed

[18] Will Potter's work on federal gag laws against whistle blowers covering the meat industry would also be a pertinent point beyond the scope of this paper.

[19] Covering this schism in depth, especially its conceptual incoherence, is simply beyond the scope of this paper.

> Radical environmental groups like ALF and ELF have adopted a *leaderless resistance* model, in which autonomous subgroups of trusted confidants form cells for the purpose of carrying out illicit actions based on a set of guiding principles. New recruits are warned not to join existing cells, but rather to start their own cells with trusted associates. Regional and national press offices, which claim no official affiliation with the individual cells, post communiques from the cells. The lack of a structured hierarchy and clearly identifiable leaders makes it difficult for law enforcement officials to infiltrate the groups. The leaderless structure also guards against the type of ideological fracturing that often plagued earlier radical environmentalist groups like Earth First!. **The net result is an amorphous organizational structure of loosely bound illicit actors who are able to persist over time and across vast geographic areas, posing tremendous challenges to the law enforcement community at the federal, state, and local levels.**[55]
> [56]

Because these groups are not tied to a figurehead and because a complete separation is achieved between the underground and aboveground portions of ALF/ELF (which were more news clearinghouses with an ideological bent than a movement as envisioned by DGR), there is great difficulty in actually stopping them because (from *DGR*'s reading) there are no leaders to kill to cripple the movement. Additionally, while *DGR* is enamored with the idea of institutional learning, where the parent aboveground organizations teach the theory,

[55] *DGR*, 175

[56] START, 12

strably false. That is, there is zero interest by any repressive government agency in Lierre Keith or Derrick Jensen; there are zero mentions of Deep Green Resistance in any study of environmental terrorism or potential environmental terrorism, in spite of the fact that wholesale government repression against environmentalism, even tepid liberal forms of environmentalism,[53] is in full swing. Keith and Jensen continue to publish books (and occasionally call the cops on other activists) without any observable repression targeting them. If their leadership is important it is certainly not important because it draws attention away from other activists.

The centerpiece of *DGR*'s insistence on the importance of leaders is that leadership is a necessary component of an effective organization. This is predicated on a selective reading of the revolutionary canon (*DGR* is interested in groups that have centralized leadership and are outright dismissive of groups that don't, regardless of their actual impact) and occasionally a baffling insistence on something contrary to known history, such as their belief that Anarchists lost the Spanish Civil War because Durutti died, rather than a complex host of factors. Thus, in a somewhat transparent jab at contemporary anarchists, *DGR* argues that "a wholesale rejection of leadership means a movement will be stuck at a level of ineffective small groups. It may feel radical but it will change nothing:"[54] However, contrary to the assertions of *DGR*, the government is most worried about radical environmental groups eschewing leadership because of how difficult that makes them to track. Counterterrorist publications by the United States government stress that:

[53] *DGR*, 421

[54] Cf. Will Potter, *Green is the New Red* for more on the contemporary Green Scare and repressive legal measures set up against environmentalism worldwide.

individual action (Keith specifically makes a big deal out of consumer choices as a faux activism incapable of addressing the scope of the problem of our catastrophic environmental impact). If individual (liberal) actions are untenable, and DGR has already emerged fully formed as our last, best hope, DGR's radicalism is an inherent part of the process. By utilizing this metaphysics, regardless of the numerous incoherencies in their analysis[20] or even patent falsehoods, DGR moves on to illuminate their own strategy. A strategy which often falls short of its lofty goals because it is completely intertwined with an inability to identify a completely integrated set of enemies instead isolating a particular problem and looking at it non-holistically, thus setting the stage for a problematic conception of tactics.

A Tactical Analysis (Based on Unwarranted Comparison)

Because DGR views itself as a singular entity with the sole purpose of taking down industrial civilization, which as previously stated they erroneously believe can be separated from institutions such as capitalism and the state, it also couches it's analysis of revolutionary movements in fallacious comparisons, specifically by repeatedly and inappropriately comparing themselves to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Lierre Keith's set of rhetorical closing questions frequently evokes the comparison[21] and the text is littered with glowing reviews of MEND as an organization. Some of this is based on a misconception of the organization of MEND (Keith repeatedly insists it is a totalizing organization rather than an umbrella group) and contradicting many of the actual aims of the organization (*DGR* repeatedly insists that

[20] And quite a few that are not even given coverage here, given that it often seems like Jensen, Keith and McBay are writing at cross purposes.

[21] *DGR*, 494–495

they are interested in the cessation of oil production in the Niger Delta rather than a greater share of the wealth from oil extraction staying in the area and being distributed to those impacted).

Thus *DGR*'s analysis that MEND is willing to say to the oil industry, "Leave our land or you will die in it" has some truth to it, but also is fundamentally misstating the aims of MEND.[22] To some extent, this is because the construction of MEND in *DGR* is a projection of the writers fantasies, specifically the fantasies of a "culture of resistance;' that is their idea that in order to build a broad based activist movement there must already be a culture opposed to whatever the activists are working against (*DGR*'s most pertinent example of this is the continuous struggle oflreland against British colonial rule). For *DGR* resistance to oil extraction began with the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) under the direction of Ken Saro-Wiwa against the collaboration between Shell and the Nigerian government and cumulating in Saro-Wiwa's execution by the Nigerian government. Thus, MEND "is the second generation of the resistance. They conduct direct attacks against workers, bridges, office sites, storage facilities, rigs and pipelines, and support vessels."[23] However poetic this imagery may be, the execution of Saro-Wiwa is never mentioned by any members of MEND in any statements they have given nor does the organization trace any lineage from the MOSOP nor, in fact, does the organization highlight the issues faced by the Ogoni people; the only real similarity between these movements is that they are opposed to the collaboration between their government (by not enforcing regulations) and oil companies (in extracting wealth from their lands) yet MEND has not made any real movement towards criticizing the damage caused by oil extraction (a central piece of Saro-Wiwa's analysis) and despite their

[22] DGR, 495
[23] *DGR*, 479

participants and engage in work to lessen the catastrophic (human) impact of industrial collapse.

The other major reason that *DGR* is so enamored with organizational structure is their insistence that "real movements require leaders. Despite all the contempt that contemporary radicals heap on anyone who rises to a public position, leaders emerge. A collection of individuals, no matter how angry or inspired will remain inchoate without language and ineffective without direction:'[50] Without the direction provided by leadership, and the language from their leaders to form a culture of resistance, *DGR* argues that movements will remain scattered and ineffectual. Therefore, leadership is a reality for *DGR* that is completely inseparable from efficiency. As Lierre Keith bluntly puts it "underground groups engaged in coordinated or paramilitary activities require hierarchy" although she seems to be ignoring contemporary advances in military theory which state that self-directing small units are far more responsive than large ones directed by a single commander.[51] DGR also believes that aboveground organizations with their constant grooming of new recruits will be necessary because otherwise the leadership cannot be replaced when the government, knowing the importance of leaders, kills them. Derrick Jensen elucidates *DGR*'s thinking when he argues that the role of leaders, specifically the leaders of DGR, is to "put big bull's-eye targets on our chests so that we can help to form a culture of resistance. Our role is to be public."[52] This sounds nice, especially the idea that Derrick Jensen and Lierre Keith are acting as firebrands to draw attention away from other radicals and to start creating the culture of resistance that is necessary for a real transformative environmentalist movement. While any response to the latter clause is speculative, the former is demon-

[50] *DGR*, 442
[51] *DGR*, 174–175
[52] *DGR*, 175

a culture of resistance[46] as "a framework that provides meaning" which gives purpose to actions and provides a groundwork from which a far more robust resistance movement can spring (it also should magically inoculate participants against burnout):[47] Thus, for *DGR* a frequent comparable is the IRA, which rather than a diffuse set of actors with similar principles (such as Sinn Fein and Cumann na mBan) along with completely separate organizations based on cultural revival is instead conceived of as a total organization that DGR seeks to emulate. If this mythological capacity to be an almost infinite number of organizations with completely different agendas is possible, *DGR* argues there is a great benefit to it. As they rhetorically ask when considering the possibility of resistance taking root "What if there was a serious aboveground resistance movement combined with a small group of underground networks working in tandem?"[48] Within the framework of Decisive Ecological Warfare (the end goal of *DGR*, see below) the answer is: quite a lot. One of the major advantages for *DGR* to a large aboveground network is quite obvious: it works to recruit new members to become radical actionists and it can provide resources to those groups along with support work. One especially important role of an aboveground movement for *DGR* is fostering militancy and normalizing radical resistance. As noted in the four phase action plan, above ground activists can "push for acceptance and normalization of more militant and radical tactics where appropriate. They vocally support sabotage when it occurs. More moderate advocacy groups use the occurrence of sabotage to criticize those in power for failing to take action on critical issues like climate change (rather than criticizing the saboteurs):'[49] Also, aboveground organizations can make connections with people who are not direct action

[46] *DGR*, 400
[47] Cf 113 — 191
[48] *DGR*, 189
[49] *DGR*, 432

occasional bombing of pipelines they are primarily concerned with kidnapping and ransoming oil company employees and siphoning oil for sale on the black market, hardly a reflection of the puritanical antiindustrialization stance held by DGR.[24] *DGR*'s MEND has nothing to do with MEND as an actual organization but instead is an angel of history that represents the best course of action for the radical anti-industrialization movement. It is not my point here to vilify MEND (who are born out of the conditions of many movements that are exploited by industrial capitalism: desperation and poverty) but to illustrate how wrongheaded the analysis presented by *DGR* is. MEND is cherry picked and massaged for DGR consumption because much of the text of *DGR* is dedicated to poking holes in the theories of other groups.

While an overwhelming part of the DGR analysis is based in the failures of previous revolutionary movements, DGR collectively fails to offer more than a throwaway analysis of recent direct action revolutionary environmental movements in the United States. Many relevant individuals and organizations are neglected in favor of an exhaustive discussion of the American Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement, the IRA, MEND, and the early suffragette movement. Notable exclusions are: Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), along with theorists such as John Zerzan, Murray Bookchin, Freddy Perlman and Feral Faun. Firstly, we will address the ways in which *DGR* neglects to analyze relevant theorists. While *DGR* is, ostensibly, a theoretical document (that is, regardless of the protests of the authorial collective, *DGR* is a work of theory even if that theory is wedded to praxis), *DGR* notably evades sustained theoretical

[24] For more information on MEND it is worth consulting: news.bbc.co.uk, www.economist.com and especially www.irinnews.org which deals with the collateral damage of MEND's actions.

discourse with pretty much any thinker who would be considered foundational for contemporary radical environmentalism, especially primitivists.[25] In some cases this is because most of the thinkers work is anathema to *DGR*, specifically Bookchin, whom they frequently borrow from but never credit.[26] This is perhaps because his conception of municipal libertarianism rests on gradual, democratic social change and views many forms of direct action as individualistic terrorism and contrary to the goals of Social Anarchism. Additionally, Bookchin was *extremely* critical of deep ecology, which he denounced as being both mystical and callous, especially in its cavalier attitude towards a mass human die off.

Zerzan,[27] on the other hand, advocates for the total destruction of industrial society and a return to hunter/gatherer societies along with the abolition of technology writ large (ranging from industrial agriculture to mathematics). However, Zerzan (along with other primitivists) have faced a number of persistent challenges to their vision, which Chaz Bufe articulates quite well in his piece "Listen Anarchist:':

> A notable feature of the anti-technology fringe is their refusal to get down to specifics. They'll spend thousands upon thousands of words attacking technology in the abstract, but will rarely discuss specific aspects of it. When they

[25] There is some debate over whether or not Primitivism is an actual anarchist movement and because this is such a dead horse, I have no interest in debating the topic.

[26] Specifically their conception of Radical versus Liberal solutions is suspiciously similar, without any acknowledgement, to his conception of social versus lifestyle anarchism; additionally, much of the history of Spanish Anarchism in *DGR* draws from his writings because they fit their ideological mold, although this is beyond the scope of this paper.

[27] In the interests of space I am focusing on Zerzan and evading discussing the work of Perlman and Feral Faun, while their omission is worth noting it is simply exhaustive to cover it in depth.

Jose, CA, in an apparent attempt to knock out power in Silicon Valley and perhaps touch off a cascading chain of outages across the region. This would appear to fit *DGR*'s definition of a decisive attack, and against one of their favorite targets at that. The attack failed, and despite speculation in the press that it was merely a "dress rehearsal" does not seem to have been repeated in the last year plus. This illustrates another problem with decisive attacks — they take a lot more planning and preparation than minor acts of sabotage, and if they fail all of the time, effort, and risk that went into them is wasted.

If we accept for a moment that there needs to be an organization to co-ordinate attacks on industrial society how is DGR to fulfill that role? By *DGR*'s estimation, the necessity of a large scale organization is rooted in the fact that: "Larger organizations have a better capacity for sustaining operations (and decisive operations, for that matter) than individuals and small groups, but they rarely apply it effectively. Internal conflicts limit operations to the lowest common denominator: the lowest risk, the lowest level of internal controversy, and the lowest level of effectiveness:>xxviii While *DGR* is critical of large institutions, to some extent they seek to mirror them at least in terms of membership, because they see a broad based movement (and a large number of participants) as a compelling means of meeting their objectives. The first somewhat startling part of the organizational plan is that DGR is intended to be an aboveground movement committed to shaping and sustaining operations (see above) while simultaneously having firewalled-off cadres who engage in underground actions. Partially this is because they see numbers as being a critical part of success (although they admit that their projected rate of participation is proportionally small) and partially it is because they see aboveground and underground organizations under the DGR umbrella as being able to work in lockstep to fulfill their organizational goals. This approach reflects DGR's messianic character; that is, for DGR one of the conditions for success is creating

attack from a variety of groups for a variety of purposes will eventually bring some sort of decisive end but the idea of a centralized planning committee directing things runs counter to an antiauthoritarian politics. An example of the anarchist view of how such an action could come about is found in the coverage of the Bolt Weevils in "Fire at Midnight; Destruction at Dawn:' In the 1970s a 435 mile power line was to be constructed in order to feed suburban areas around Minneapolis and St. Paul with little concern for how "farmers along the proposed route of the power line viewed the project as sacrificing their land to feed energy-hungry urban centers. The state was planning to expropriate 160-foot-wide swaths through their fields and erect 180-foot pylons to support the wires:'[44] When legal resistance to this project failed farmers took to sabotage, shooting out insulators and taking down towers at such a rate that the electrical company had to turn the project over to the federal government to get it finished. While it can be pointed out that this action ultimately failed, the power line was constructed, it took an exceptional amount of effort to finish this project and no arrests were made. Rather than viewing it as a failure, one can contrarily look at the success involved in delaying such a project and requiring such expense for it to reach completion. Sabotage in this case is illustrative of how an elite or tasked vanguard is unnecessary and how the proliferation of "petty" acts of sabotage can greatly increase cost. On the other hand, DGR believes that such attacks are doomed to failure because industrial civilization can adapt to these dispersed attacks and continue grinding along.[45]

For an example of an attempted decisive operation we turn to last year's attack on the west coast power grid, in which 17 transformers were shot out at an electrical substation in San

[44] A Murder of Crows, "Fire at Midnight, Destruction at Dawn: Sabotage and Social War"

[45] NB DGR, 461–468

> do, they invariably pick the easiest possible targets, things such as nuclear and automotive technologies, technologies which are so obviously and overwhelmingly harmful that they would be drastically reduced if not eliminated outright in any type of sane society.[28]

DGR is exceedingly opaque about what tools are classified as technology, and even their post-industrial collapse goal "To defend and rebuild just, sustainable, and autonomous human communities, and, as part of that, to assist in the recovery of the land" is remarkably nebulous.[29] This quote brings to mind another persistent critique of Zerzan, that there is no guarantee that the society produced post-industrialization would be any more egalitarian than the one we presently occupy. It is unclear why DGR does not address critiques that have been circulating of intellectual movements similar to theirs for almost two decades before its publication. (One can only assume the authors are reluctant to admit they stole the ideas in the first place.)

Such critiques do not address whether or not DGR's tactics are effective, only the desirability of their assumed outcome. *DGR* unequivocally states that the aim of their tactics is to "disrupt and dismantle industrial civilization; to thereby remove the ability of the powerful to exploit the marginalized and destroy the planet."[30] In order to accomplish this lofty (if ill-defined) goal, Arie McBay[31] turns to a variety of manuals on military tactics and guerrilla warfare in order to develop the tactical party line espoused in *DGR*. While

[28] Chaz Bufe, "Listen Anarchist"

[29] DGR, 442

[30] DGR, 442

[31] Various sections of DGR are predominately written by particular members of the editorial collective and the heavy lifting of military strategy seems to have fallen on Arie McBay.

DGR is ostensibly concerned with tactical efficacy rather than tactical morality; that is, with the immediate outcome of an action rather than collateral damage,[32] *DGR* still has a strange moralism underlying their analysis of strategy and tactics. Lierre Keith, for example, is distressed by the idea of symbolic (as she reads it) violence against private property, relating how she has "been at demonstrations where young men smashed windows of mom and pop grocery stores and set fire to random cars in the neighborhood. This is essentially violence as a form of self-expression-for a very entitled self. Such random acts of destruction against people who are not the enemy have no place in our strategy or in our culture."[33] In her analysis, these actions are pointless because they fail to accomplish the concrete goals set out by *DGR* and are actions taken out for personal or symbolic reasons. Setting aside the gender essentialism and strangely moralistic tone, this is an excellent transition to DGR's tactical analysis.

Arie McBay is enamored with a somewhat dated set of military maxims specifically the idea of a decisive attack. For McBay, this means the ideal DGR action is one where overwhelming force is applied to a critical juncture in industrial functioning rendering it useless.[34] This is presented with the somewhat simplistic idea that DGR "must engage those in power where we are strong and they are weak. We must strike when we have overwhelming force, and maneuver instead of engaging when we are outmatched."[35] Partially this rests on analysis of industrialism as an inert set of locations where particularly odious industrial processes take place (clear cut logging, coal extraction, etc.). However, what is most important for *DGR* is that the analysis taken by the

[32] For example, their willingness to bite the bullet that Decisive Ecological Warfare will end in the deaths of over 7 billion people.

[33] DGR, 84

[34] McBay reviews military terminology in DGR 346–48

[35] DGR, 34

"Fire at Midnight; Destruction at Dawn" lay out a fundamentally insurrectionist counter-reading of isolated and individually inspired actions, arguing that:

> One of the oldest and most destructive acts of revolt is sabotage. To be clear, we define sabotage as the deliberate act of destroying or damaging physical structures. From workplace machinery sabotage to monkeywrenching housing and industrial developments, to smashing a window at a bank, fur store or cop station, sabotage has become a common and well-dispersed instrument of social struggle. This tactic is often used to achieve a greater goal, or employed within a larger campaign or a struggle. **However, the potential of destructive direct action lies in its ability to be carried out individually or in groups without any need or desire for formal organization, hierarchy, or campaign to act in unison with. Sabotage, like all tactics, should be easily reproducible, therefore increasing the possibility of its spread. This spreading threatens the structures of power precisely because it is difficult to manage and contain.** Sabotage can be used in all situations, in all terrains, and by anyone who wishes to use it. It requires no specialization or skill, just initiative.[43]

Both arguments contain roughly the same point but from completely opposed trains of thought. For McBay individual actions without a grand organizing platform will always be ineffectual because they cannot bring about collapse in a singular attack, while from an anarchist standpoint the proliferation of

[43] A Murder of Crows, "Fire at Midnight, Destruction at Dawn: Sabotage and Social War"

other groups by an act of goalpost moving. McBay essentially argues that industrialism is a complete and integrated system, rather than more realistically a variety of practices, businesses, individuals, government agencies and more which act with a set of competing and occasionally co-operative aims; thus, if industrialism is a symbolic whole, attacks on the periphery (like members of ELF torching construction projects, SUV s, etc. or members of ALF freeing animals from feedlots or testing facilities) are easy to dismiss because they do not completely paralyze the workings of industrial civilization. From this analysis McBay makes the following argument for a centralized organization running things:

> A massively coordinated set of actions is fundamentally different from an uncoordinated set of the same actions. Complex systems respond in a nonlinear fashion. They can adapt and maintain equilibrium in the face of small insults, minor disruptions. But beyond a certain point, increasing attacks undermine the entire system, causing widespread failure or collapse. Because of this, coordination is perhaps the most compelling argument for underground networks over mere isolated cells.[42]

There are a number of problematic aspects to this line of thinking which I will attempt to elucidate while drawing in the fundamental weakness of *DGR*'s organizational nature. Firstly, McBay's conception of a mass organization that can direct all actions runs contrary to anarchist thinking on direct action, and while a long form debate on the subject is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worthwhile to read his idea against the insurrectionist model of diffuse direct action. A Murder of Crows in

[42] *DGR*, 411–412; emphasis my own

organization mirror that of military thinking to maximize efficiency; as McBay states: "the military strategist has the same broad objective as the radical strategist: to use the decisive application of force to accomplish a task."[36] Thus there are two central factors at work: firstly, DGR is committed to strategically attainable goals that rest on a decisive action targeting industrial society where it is weak, and secondly, the way of analyzing how to carry out these actions is to utilize militarized understandings of targets, which means eschewing symbolic action for a utilitarian calculus of damage. In order to understand this better we will examine DGR's analysis and classification of actions and *DGR*'s role in them.

Within *DGR*'s analysis actions are broken down into decisive operations, that is quasi-military operations that accomplish a final goal (such as the complete shutdown of the power grid, although *DGR* admits to smaller decisive operations such as planting a garden depending on the scale of a goal), sustaining operations which work to support and assist those carrying out decisive operations, and shaping operations "which help to create the conditions necessary for success."[37] For the purposes of this section we will be focusing on decisive operations, although much of the case for DGR's organizational structure is tied up in their conception of sustaining and shaping operations. DGR also differentiates between aboveground and underground actions. While they apply the same three categories of action to aboveground organizational structures, clandestine decisive actions are (for DGR) the big payoff and therefore deserve more in-depth coverage. Here DGR is generally correct in their analysis of decisive actions, although the act of projecting a concrete outcome (rather than accepting that actions can have multiple unpredictable results) tends to limit DGR's scope of actions. By creating a section on target selection, McBay is

[36] DGR, 348
[37] DGR, 391

acknowledging that there is a variety of tactical considerations to any target (and that purely symbolic targets are not always effective). Most importantly, McBay asks the question "what target(s) can be disrupted or destroyed to cause maximum damage to the entire enemy system?"[38] For McBay, these are targets which are difficult to replace (recuperability) and which are essential for some part of the industrial process (criticality). Additionally, to be decisive they should have a fairly extensive effect on an entire network of industrial processes.

Additionally, despite the moralistic tone that DGR takes in rejecting smashing the windows of "mom and pop" stores, McBay does explicitly state that the destruction of machines is a non-violent act especially when considering the loss of life, human, animal and environmental that industrialization inflicts according to DGR's analysis. Furthermore McBay opens up the topic of assassination and intimidation as valid tactics. While the coverage is somewhat brief, extolling how various organizations effectively integrated targeted assassination into their destabilizing efforts breaks with the history of the extreme wing of the environmentalist movement. That is, while ELF, ALF, SHAC, et al. are considered domestic terrorist organizations, none of them have given the go-ahead to killing individuals, although they have some history of intimidation and stalking as a political tactic. *DGR* stresses tactical utility of attacks and refuses to disavow certain tactics (provided they are effective). What remains interesting then, is *DGR*'s almost complete failure to contrast their conception of tactics with those of other direct action radical environmentalist groups.

For *DGR*, groups such as ELF, ALF and SHAC warrant little mention because such groups are largely ineffective. McBay states that:

> One of the reasons that the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) has had limited decisive success so far is that its targets have had low criticality and high recuperability. New suburban subdivisions are certainly crimes against ecology, but partially constructed homes are not very important to those in power, and they are relatively replaceable. The effect is primarily symbolic, and it's hard to find a case in which a construction project has actually been given up because of ELF activity — although it may have certainly been made more expensive.[39]

Contrary to the dismissive tone taken by *DGR*, the federal government is quite concerned with ELF (and similar groups) as it was considered notable that "radical actors affiliated with ELF and ALF caused more than $ l l0 million in damage between approximately 1995 and 2005."[40] If this is not convincing enough ELF makes up 37% of Eco-Terrorist activity in the United States and was described as "one of today's most serious domestic terrorism threats" by the FBI in 2005.[41] How can we account for this contrast in tones?

An Authoritarian Structure Incapable of Adaptation

Because of the nature of a decisive attack in *DGR*, that is, an attack which completely and permanently stops a process rather than hindering it, delaying it, or making it simply more expensive, *DGR* is able to avoid addressing the successes of

[38] DGR, 416

[39] DGR, 418

[40] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. "Countering Eco-Terrorism in the United States The Case of 'Operation Backfire' : Final Report to the Science & technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security:' September 2012, 2 accessed at: www.start.umd.edu

[41] Ibid, 15 & 11