

Mitsubishi Stumped!

BY NYC EARTH FIRST!

"Earth First! Profits Last! Boycott Mitsubishi!" The chanting echoed through the main entrance to Mitsubishi International as employees looked on in shock at New York City's World Rainforest Week action on their doorstep. NYC Earth First! and Wetlands Rainforest Action Group had blockaded the offices using two cement barrels, lockboxes and a wooden door, demanding an end to Mitsubishi's worldwide pillage of forests and ecosystems.

The action began as an activist with a megaphone taped to his hand entered the north doors of the building shouting and drawing attention. Another person followed him with a lockbox disguised as a package and locked down to a banister in the north lobby. Meanwhile, at the south entrance, people wheeled two 600-pound concrete-filled barrels, painted as stumps and concealed in cardboard boxes, on appliance dollies up to the main entrance. Protesters entered the building and announced that it was closed. One person sat down in the turnstile of the revolving door, and the person

protests: outright denial of any destructive forest practices, citing the fact that they no longer own any direct tree-felling operations, and denial of any connection between the various Mitsubishi companies. Both of these claims are proven false by a brief look at practices throughout the *kieretsu*.

Three main companies own part or all of each Mitsubishi company. One of these three, Mitsubishi Corporation, owns parts of all these companies. These companies do more than just "share a logo;" they conduct business in a way that would violate US antitrust laws. They rotate executives, have interlocking boards of directors, maintain exclusive contracts with each other and aggressively finance each others' projects.

Mitsubishi's destructive practices span the globe. In Washington and Oregon, Mitsubishi is consistently the largest exporter of whole logs, accelerating job loss and forest destruction in the US. Mitsubishi is one of the largest investors in the ALPAC paper mill, the world's largest chlorine bleach paper mill, causing the destruction and poisoning of the forests and waterways of Alberta, Canada. In Indonesia, Mitsubishi is the largest exporter of plywood from rainforests stolen from the indigenous occupants by the repressive, genocidal Suharto regime. In Japan, Mitsubishi is also a primary importer of logs from Siberia's boreal forests. In Ecuador, Mitsubishi's Bishi Metals illegally operated the country's largest exploratory mining operation in a highly biologically diverse, undisturbed area. In retaliation, indigenous people carefully removed and catalogued objects in the mine and then burned down the empty mine site.

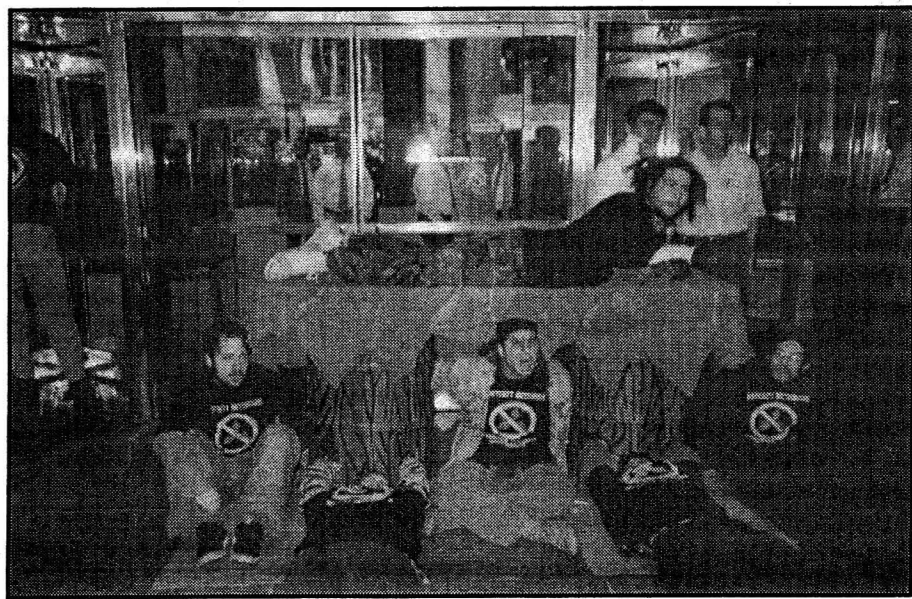
But forests aren't Mitsubishi's only victims. Mitsubishi Oil's use of shoddy, single-hull oil tankers, now condemned within the industry, resulted in the largest oil spill in Japanese history, killing an untold amount of aquatic life. A subsidiary of Mitsubishi working with the Mexican government is attempting to build a salt refinery in San Ignacio Lagoon in Baja California, endangering the most vital and pristine breeding and birthing areas for

the California gray whale.

The battle against Mitsubishi is daunting, but there have been many victories by both international and grassroots groups. In San Francisco, Mitsubishi had a \$147-million airport-construction contract canceled and has been banned from holding other city contracts because of its dealings with the brutal, illegitimate military dictatorship in Burma. Mitsubishi was stopped from clearcutting the Tongass National Forest when the United States Forest Service caught it keeping double books and cheating the US out of millions of dollars in logging fees. Mitsubishi, feeling the pressure of the six-year boycott, recently sold its half of the largest wood milling operation in the Amazon. Students from 33 colleges have voted to bar Mitsubishi products and recruiters from their campuses. Dozens of Mitsubishi automobile dealerships have condemned Mitsubishi's destructive forest practices, including the world's largest auto dealership, New York City's Potamkin Mitsubishi. Due to public pressure, Mitsubishi sold the world's largest disposable chopsticks manufacturing company in British Columbia, Canada, which wasted 85 percent of the wood that came into the plant. At least 30 car shows have been disrupted by protesters locking themselves to cars and closing down exhibits, drumming, chanting, distributing flyers and circulating petitions. Caving in to public pressure, Mitsubishi Motors Sales of America and Mitsubishi Electronics of America agreed to fund comprehensive research to reduce wood consumption and change corporate wood use practices. In Malaysia, Mitsubishi has sold its partnership, but continues purchasing logs cut from the oldest rainforest on Earth, believed to be 180 million years old, and clearcuts it by floodlight 24-hours a day.

You can help sustain this pressure on Mitsubishi by boycotting all products with the red three-diamond Mitsubishi logo, including Kirin Beer, Bank of California, Mitsubishi fax machines, film, art markers, computers, TVs, cars, trucks, Nikon photography and Mitsubishi Bank.

Contact Minoru Makihara, President of Mitsubishi International Corporation at 520 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022; (212) 605-2000; fax (212) 605-3597. Order the Mitsubishi Boycott Organizer's Guide and other anti-Mitsubishi materials from the Rainforest Action Network at 221 Pine Street, San Francisco, CA 94109; (415) 398-4404; e-mail: Boycottmc@ran.org.



Six-person lockdown shuts the door on Mitsubishi!

locked to the banister unlocked and joined him.

Within seconds, five activists had locked down. Two people laid down, their backs on the ground, in front of the barrels and stretched their arms over their heads and into lockboxes embedded in the barrels. Three people also locked into the barrels from sitting positions between and next to the barrels. A sixth person placed a door covered in green cloth, cut and painted to look like a treetop, on top of the barrels and laid down on it. From there he reached his arm through a pre-cut hole in the door to lock into another lockbox embedded in the top of one of the barrels.

The media and a diversionary demonstration which had met at another location arrived soon after. Fifty-four cops followed them and soon arrested the person with the megaphone. The police gave the building manager a statement to read, formally asking those locked down to leave or be charged with criminal trespass. The blockaders held their ground, demanding a meeting with Mitsubishi's president.

The police decided to deconstruct the blockade and arrest everyone resisting their orders. First, they sawed through the door and attempted to pull off the attached activist, almost breaking his arm in the process. Next, they tried to cut through the barrels using a circular saw and the jaws of life, almost dislocating another person's arm. Finally, they jackhammered through the concrete, which took three hours. When the dust settled, the arrests totaled ten. We made Mitsubishi's life hell for a day and got our message out with great newspaper, TV, international newswire and internet website coverage, bringing home the message: "Earth First! Profits Last! Boycott Mitsubishi!"

But why Mitsubishi? Mitsubishi is actually one king corporation, known in Japan as a *kieretsu*. Viewed as a single entity, Mitsubishi is the world's largest corporation and has the world's tenth largest economy (the nine larger are all nations). Mitsubishi companies have their hands in mining, ocean engineering, chemicals, cables, beer, life insurance, steel manufacturing, petrochemicals, carbon, cameras, banking, textiles, atomic power and many other things, including, ironically, cement. As the world's largest corporate destroyer of forests, Mitsubishi has been the subject of a boycott by over 200 organizations led by the Rainforest Action Network since 1991.

Mitsubishi companies have two standard responses to

BARE BONES

Amazon Burning!

A total of 24,549 fires were reported burning in the Amazon by 1997 NOAA-12 satellite images. Only 19,115 fires appear in the 1996 data, an increase of 28 percent. The average number of fires per day increased from 466 to 599. The actual increase for the year may be even greater, since 1997 is drier than 1996 and the burning continues.

Increased burning strongly suggests that deforestation rates continue to rise in the Amazon. The most recent deforestation analysis, released last year, showed that forest clearing rose about 34 percent between 1991 and 1994, reaching 14,896 square kilometers a year.

Of the 12 to 13 percent of the forested area of the Amazon cleared and burned to date, an area about the size of California, only about 12 percent is farmed. The rest is cattle pasture. New areas are made accessible to ranching and agriculture by the building of logging roads.

A recent Brazilian national security agency report on forestry policy concluded that 80 percent of the timber produced in the Amazon is extracted illegally. The 1965 Forestry Code specified penalties to be applied by the courts but failed to authorize executive agencies to enforce the law. Consequently, IBAMA, Brazil's environmental agency, is powerless to levy fines, apprehend timber stolen from public lands or otherwise carry out its enforcement powers. In fact, the agency collects only about 6.5 percent of the fines it levies. There is thus practically no environmental law enforcement in the Amazon.

Five US Species Extinct

On September 19, 1997, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a notice in the Federal Register declaring that five species have been deleted as candidates for listing as threatened or endangered because they have gone extinct. The USFWS's systematic failure to promptly list candidate species is one of the greatest abuses of the ESA.

The High Rock Spring tui chub formerly inhabited three connected springs on the California/Nevada border. Prior to 1980, groundwater pumping extirpated the chub from the Nevada springs. In 1982, the California Department of Fish and Game permitted a business to rear an exotic predatory fish in the same spring system. It escaped from the rearing facility and decimated the chub, which was declared extinct in 1993.

The Marianas euploea butterfly was endemic to the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific Ocean. It was common in the 1930s but declined steadily due to habitat loss. A 1995 survey found no trace of it, and it was declared extinct this year. Three Hawaiian pomace flies with very limited ranges on the islands of Hawaii and Molokai are also extinct.

Fast Track Blocked

In a surprising move, Congress successfully blocked the passage of the fast track trade bill that would have made it possible for corporations to circumvent existing trade regulations and given Clinton ultimate power in negotiating international trade agreements. The bill would have set into law the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which would allow transnational corporations the unrestricted right to buy, sell and move businesses and other assets wherever they want, whenever they want. First NAFTA, then GATT, now MAI. Declare your opposition to MAI and fast-track! Call Congress at (888) 723-5246. For more information contact Public Citizen's Trade Campaign at 215 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 546-4996; e-mail: ctaylor@citizen.org.