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November 27, 1995

Steve Schwartzman  
 Instituto Socioambiental  
 Av. Higienopolis, 983,s.30  
 01238-001 San Paulo-SP  
 Brasil

Dear Steve,

Rainforest Action Network has escalated the Mahogany is Murder campaign. We have been working diligently on educating the public as to the evils connected with the illegal logging of mahogany, accomplished through demonstrations and non-violent direct action. So far, we have received a good deal of national media attention from television stations, trade press, radio, and newspapers. Also, CNN has expressed interest in the mahogany issue and will encourage CNN Brazil to keep up with the story.

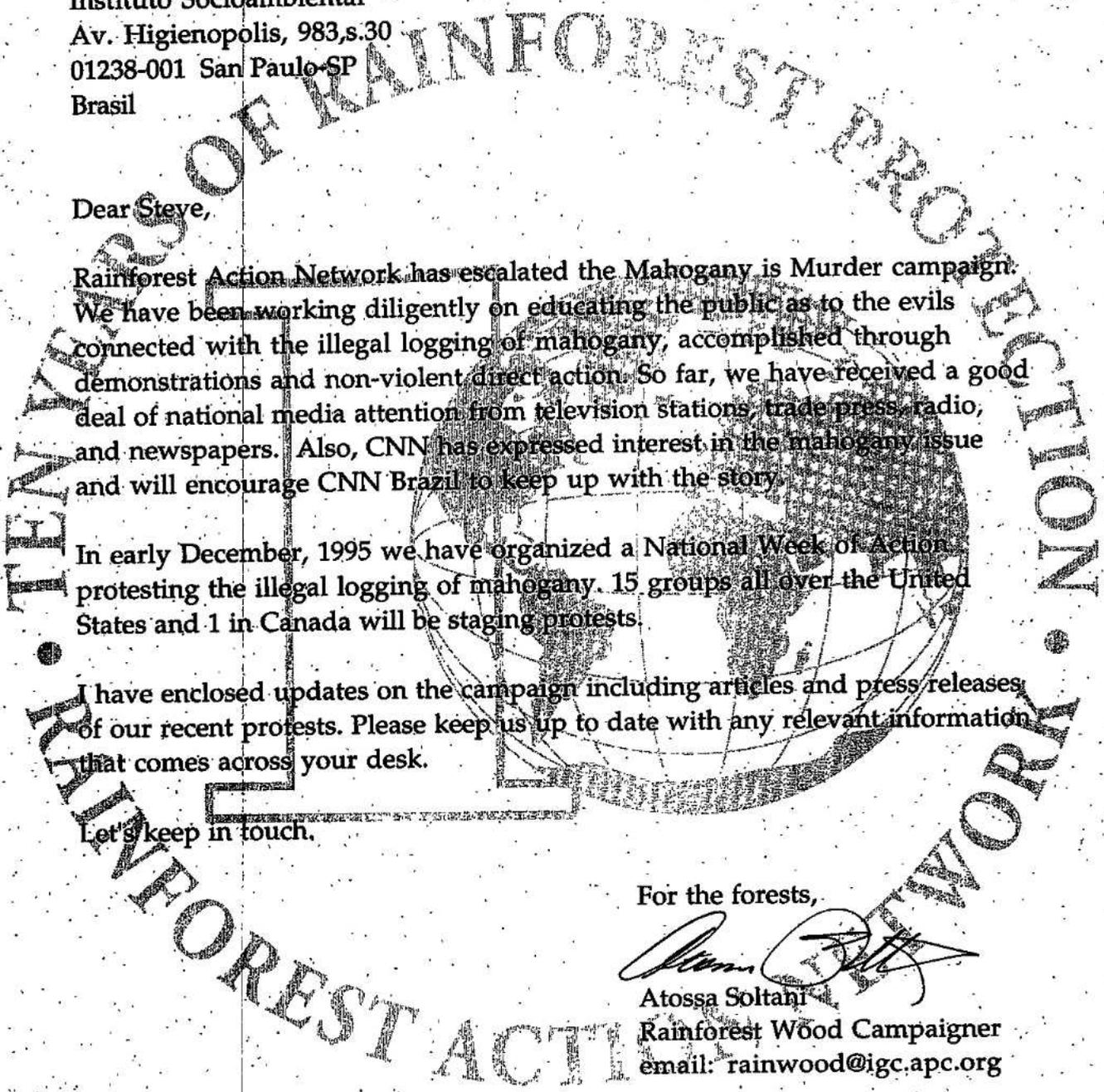
In early December, 1995 we have organized a National Week of Action protesting the illegal logging of mahogany. 15 groups all over the United States and 1 in Canada will be staging protests.

I have enclosed updates on the campaign including articles and press releases of our recent protests. Please keep us up to date with any relevant information that comes across your desk.

Let's keep in touch.

For the forests,

Atossa Soltani  
 Rainforest Wood Campaigner  
 email: rainwood@igc.apc.org





## LOGGERS RAID AMAZON FOR MAHOGANY

The South American timber cartel is brazenly defying human rights and the world's environmental well-being in a bloody frenzy to seize the Amazon's last remaining mahogany. Never mind that the trees are on protected land. Loggers and importers have depleted the legally accessible mahogany stands of Brazil; vast numbers of trees are gone, the species nearly extinct, wiped out to satisfy First World taste for ornamental hardwood. The U.S. is the largest importer of mahogany from Latin America, and the high price the wood gets on the international market lures outlaw timber profiteers to log illegally on indigenous peoples' land and national parks. They harass, maim, and murder those who dare stand in their way.

Violent attacks on native communities have increased in frequency and intensity in the past two years all over the Amazon. The situation is particularly hot right now in the Xikrin Kayapó's Bakaja Reserve, in the state of Pará. Federal police and officials from Brazil's Indian Affairs Bureau

came to the region at the beginning of October to defuse a potential armed conflict between the Xikrin Kayapó Indians and the Sudoeste logging company. In September, in the state of Acre, two hired gunmen threatened the life of Father Paolino Baldassari, a 70-year-old missionary and defender of indigenous rights. Brazilian newspapers report that members of eight indigenous groups have met violent deaths at the hands of mahogany loggers. The Korubu, Flecheiros, Tikuna, Awá-guajá, Zoró, Mura-Praha, Guaporé, and Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau have all lost tribespeople in the battle to protect their lands.

Several large timber companies, Sudoeste included, seek to overturn the Brazilian government's decree that guarantees land for indigenous control. Paid squatters occupy areas that the government has demarcated for parks and indigenous reserves. This strategy of land occupation allows the timber companies to challenge legal indigenous land-claims. Moreover, since the government is unwilling to confront those engaged in illegal logging, the companies—Bannach, Impar, Perachi, Campos Altos, Juary, and Maderobco—pay no local taxes or tariffs on the lumber they extract. This is a no-win situation for the Indians, who are left with no resources and no remuneration.

Loggers and complicit regional politicians work to turn the population against the Indians. The timber industry's hired killers, whose names are well known in the region, seldom see the inside of a court house. On the rare occasions that the government has prosecuted pirate loggers, it has not revoked a single export license,

and the fines are nominal compared to the value of the timber. The Network of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon claims that mahogany loggers have staged marches against the Indians, threatened leaders in Vale do Javari with bodily harm, and threatened to set fire to the headquarters of local indigenous organizations, including the Alto Solimões Indigenous Centre that oversees land rights.



Mahogany logging in Brazil

photo: Greenpeace

The mahogany trade also leads to the rapid death of the rainforest itself. Mahogany trees grow sporadically in the forest, and timber companies have carved over 1,500 miles of illegal roads through the Amazon basin to allow logging access. Studies estimate that for each mahogany tree harvested, at least 3,000 square feet of forest gets destroyed. The roads open the wilderness to tens of thousands of settlers who dislocate the traditional rainforest communities and clear the remaining trees for fields and pastures.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Rainforest Action Network calls for a moratorium on mahogany logging until the murder of indigenous people stops, and an independent panel can certify that the trees are harvested in a manner acceptable to the natives and not harmful to the environment. We urge consumers and suppliers alike—including importers, the furniture industry, and artisans—to stop all use of mahogany right now.

December 2 is RAN's National Day of Action Against Mahogany, just in time to dissuade holiday shoppers from buying frivolous mahogany pen sets and toilet seats. You can organize a protest in your area, or join the demonstration nearest you. Contact RAN's Mahogany is Murder campaign, 415-398-4404, E-mail: rainwood@ran.org.

Also, please send a letter to Gustavo Kraus, Minister of the Environment, Esplanada dos Ministerios, Brasilia, D.F. 70000. Fax: 011-55-61-223-1958. Here's a sample letter:

*Dear Gustavo Kraus, Minister of the Environment*

*I am deeply concerned that the timber industry in Brazil is invading indigenous land and instigating violence. Your administration is fully aware of the extent of illegal logging in the Amazon, yet has done little to stop it.*

*I urge you to uphold native land rights, to expel illegal loggers and colonists, and to revoke the export license of companies logging or buying from illegal sources. Until you stop this illegal trade, I will boycott all Brazilian mahogany and urge others to do the same.*



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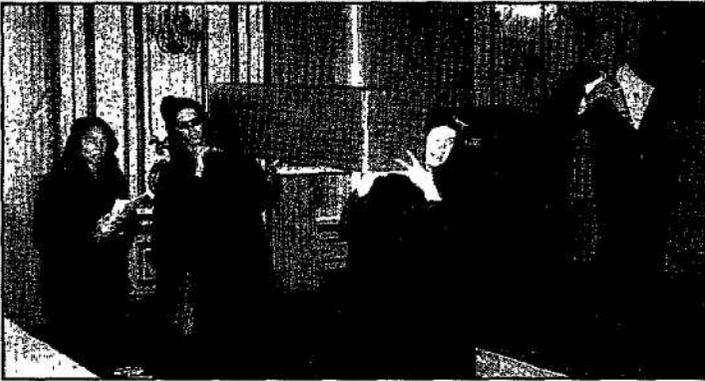
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## Action Alert 114

**100%** Printed in U.S.A. with soy-based inks on chlorine-free, 100%-recycled paper (100% newspapers, magazines, and catalogs, minimum 50% post-consumer) • Please share, save, or recycle this newsletter. Rainforest Action Network works to protect the Earth's rainforests and support the rights of their inhabitants through education, grassroots organizing, and non-violent direct action

# MAHOGANY IS MURDER!

Rainforest Action Network led a demonstration October 6 against the Casket and Funeral Supply Association, which held its annual convention in San Francisco. Over 8,000 mahogany caskets are made—and buried!—annually in the U.S. The message was clear: Amazonian indians shouldn't have to die so we can get planted in style!



A grim procession through the Funeral Supply Association's breakfast meeting



Campaigner Atossa Soltani addresses the gathering with a plea for human rights.

## RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK OFFICE WISH LIST

As the holiday season nears, we at RAN wish for all kinds of good things: peace on Earth, good will toward all, a green planet, and the survival of our species. But to get our job done, we have to focus on the realities of our work place. In-kind donations help RAN keep overhead costs down, and all donations are tax deductible. Please contact office manager Ana Gerhardt at 415/398-4404 if you're able to help. Here's what we need:

- Apple Computers (Mac Classic II's & up)
- PC Server Network (hardware, software, consulting)
- Car, van, or recreational vehicle (yes, we're serious!)
- Laser Printer (Color would be swell!)
- Modems (14.4 & up)
- Overhead Projector
- 35mm Camera (zoom lens & water resistant)

- High-8 Video Camera & Tape
- Binoculars
- Cellular telephone
- Walkie-Talkie Radios
- Office Furniture
- Airfare (frequent flyer vouchers)
- Video Services
- Artist Services
- Advertising
- Coffee & Tea
- Percussion Instruments
- Foot Locker or Road Case
- Toaster Oven

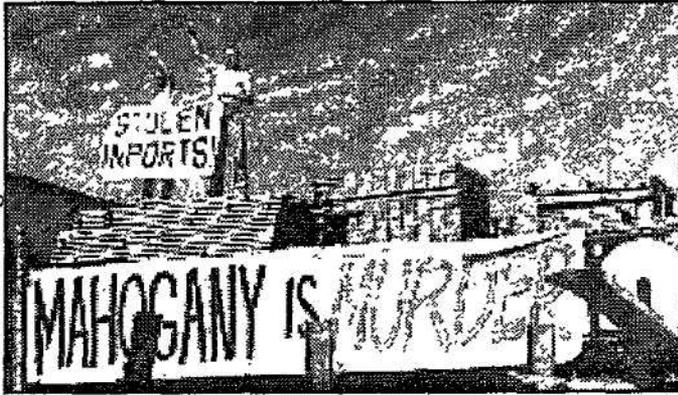
### OOPS!

Our computer took ill. In the process of nursing it back to health, some membership information was folded, spindled, and otherwise mutilated. Please forgive us if you got a newsletter this month when you weren't supposed to, or if you missed an issue.

—The Membership Dept.

# MAHOGANY IS MURDER.

Credit: Beto Borges



Rainforest activists protest illegal mahogany imports from Brazil.

## BUYING MAHOGANY IS CRIMINAL

The harvesting of Latin American Mahogany causes severe destruction to the Amazon rainforest, and is responsible for violence and in some cases the death of indigenous peoples. The majority of mahogany on the world market today is logged illegally from the rainforests of Brazil and Bolivia. Outlaw timber companies often invade protected conservation reserves and indigenous areas, destroying the rainforest ecosystems and the livelihood of its inhabitants. Nearly half of all mahogany exports end up in U.S. markets in the form of lumber, furniture, paneling, doors, window and picture frames, boat fittings, toilet seats and coffins. Don't be an accomplice to this crime. Boycott all mahogany products.

## ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

Latin American Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), also known as "Bigleaf" Mahogany is in danger of extinction, according to the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources as well as the Brazilian Botanical Society. However, Latin American Mahogany continues to be logged at an unsustainable rate; an annual total volume estimated at 500,000 cubic meters or about 137,733 trees. This lucrative trade is driven by the high international demand, and the hefty price paid for the lumber and products derived from it. Mahogany is priced as high as \$850 per cubic meter on the U.S. market.

## MAHOGANY MEANS VIOLENCE AND MURDER OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

It is fitting that mahogany is sometimes used for making coffins, because violence and death has ensued as a consequence of the mahogany trade. As the richest legally available stands of mahogany trees have been depleted, logging companies have moved into the areas set aside for indigenous control and wildlife protection. At the hands of hired gunmen, indigenous people have had their lives threatened, and in some cases they have been killed defending their land. Eight different indigenous groups in Brazil have had people murdered by loggers. In other cases, indigenous groups have been coerced into striking inequitable deals and signing contracts they don't understand, which give loggers the legal right to exploit their lands in exchange for trinkets.

After the logging roads are built, an influx of colonist invade these areas and bring with them diseases to which indigenous peoples have no resistance. Also, indigenous and other traditional forest communities are often displaced and lose their source of livelihood.

Most of the indigenous areas where mahogany is found have been invaded. As a result, the mahogany industry has now become one of the greatest threats to the long-term survival of the Amazon's indigenous peoples.

## MAHOGANY MEANS DESTRUCTION OF THE RAINFOREST

The extraction of mahogany causes irreparable damage to the rainforest ecosystem. The impact of logging extends well beyond the area in which the tree is cut. Because mahogany is found sporadically throughout the forest, its extraction requires an extensive network of logging roads which penetrate large tracts of remote primary rainforest. These roads open up the forest for further degradation, making protected and

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indigenous reserves accessible for intrusion by loggers, miners, ranchers, and farmers. The vicious combination of roads built to access the mahogany trees, and the heavy machinery that tears the delicate rainforest underbrush, result in an estimated 1,450 square meters of forest destroyed for every one mahogany tree extracted. This translates to the destruction of approximately 28 trees for every mahogany tree cut.

The impact of the mahogany trade amounts not only to the loss of countless acres of forests, but also the loss of animal species inhabiting them. Once logged, these forests are so physically altered that they cannot properly regenerate. Each year more primary forests are opened up to meet the growing demand for tropical hardwoods.

### **WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED**

The goal of the Mahogany Is Murder campaign is to drastically reduce the U.S. demand for mahogany, subsequently reducing U.S. imports. This is an important step in defending indigenous communities and the Amazon rainforest against intrusion, and the resulting ecological destruction caused by the illegal mahogany trade. To accomplish this, public pressure needs to be directed at U.S. mahogany importers, suppliers, furniture makers and other users. Rainforest Action Network is asking all buyers of mahogany wood products to boycott mahogany. There are many alternatives.

One way to restrict illegal trade and to protect the Latin American Mahogany is through the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES serves to monitor and control species decline attributed to international trade. Every two years, 124 countries convene to add, delete or change species to either an Appendix I or II listing. An Appendix I listing prohibits a species from being commercially traded (as in the case of elephant ivory). The less stringent Appendix II listing places restrictions on international trade and helps to curtail illegal trade. In the 1994 CITES meeting, Latin American Mahogany was just 6 votes shy of

the 2/3 majority vote needed to list it under Appendix II. Brazilian and Bolivian governments, along with U.S. importers, were at the forefront in lobbying against the listing.

### **BOYCOTT MAHOGANY**

When we buy mahogany products we contribute to driving an already endangered species into extinction, damaging the rainforest ecosystem, and supporting violence and intrusion, which threaten the survival of the Amazon's indigenous people. RAN along with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and over 80 environmental and Brazilian indigenous groups are calling for a moratorium on mahogany logging and trade. Mahogany is Murder, so boycott mahogany.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

\* **Refuse to buy mahogany products.**

\* **Write letters** to Orleir Cameli, Governor of the State of Acre in Brazil, urging him to immediately expel illegal loggers from Acre. Send the letters to S.O.S. Amazonia, an NGO working to obtain injunctions against illegal loggers. Address to:

*Your Excellency Orleir Cameli-Governor of Acre  
c/o S.O.S. Amazonia  
Rua Para 51  
Bairro Cadeia Velha  
69900-440  
Rio Branco-Acre  
Brazil  
Fax: 011-55-68-224-0866*

\* **Write letters** to local mahogany dealers urging them to discontinue their use of mahogany. Most **importers and local distributors** are aware of the problems but continue to sell mahogany, so target them for protests.

\* **Write letters** to the Presidents of Brazil and Bolivia urging them to support Appendix II listing for Latin American Mahogany in 1996, and to immediately expel illegal loggers from indigenous land and conservation areas. Send to:

*The Honorable Fernando Henrique Cardoso  
Palacia do Planalto  
Brazilia DS  
Brazil 70000  
Fax#: 011-061-321-1461*

*Lic. Gonzalo Sanchez De Lozana  
President of Republic of Bolivia  
Plaza Murillo  
Bolivia*

\* **Contact** Rainforest Action Network - Mahogany is Murder Campaign at (415)398-4404 for more info.

# RAINFOREST WOOD CAMPAIGN

**Campaign  
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## DEAR CAMPAIGNERS:

The response to our last RAG update was encouraging. Considering the demand various campaigns put on your time, a good many of you expressed interest in the Mahogany Is Murder campaign. Lots has been happening on the ground in the Brazilian Amazon. Your involvement is much needed to help draw attention to the horrible injustice going on there. This update will brief you on several incidents including a **timber company led mass migration on the Xikrin Kayapo territory**, and recent threats to the lives of logging opponents. Plus the latest on the National Day of Action coming up December 2.

On the **British Columbia** front, a 21 day joint Nuxalk / Forest Action Network blockade in Bella Coola, came to an end last week. Nuxalk chiefs, Ed Moody, Lawrence Pootlas, whom many of you met at this year's chautauqua, and a third chief Charlie X, **remain jailed since September 27**. More details on the action and where to write letters in section "Nuxalk / FAN Blockade".

### This update includes:

- New name for campaign
- Clayoquot update-MB gets cut block permit
- Indigenous lives threatened in Brazilian Amazon over mahogany
- Casket makers demo
- Nuxalk/FAN blockade in Bella Coola

### Enclosures:

- Articles on casket maker demo
- Article on invasion on Arara Indian land
- Map of indigenous reserves being illegally logged

In **Clayoquot**, MacMillan Bloedel just received approval for its first cut block permit under the science panel. "The science panel's honeymoon is over," said Chris Hatch of the Friends of Clayoquot Sound. MB is defining an end to conventional clearcutting as clearcutting a long skinny clearcut two hectares wide and up to 15 hectares long which meanders like a snake through the forest. What's more is that the BC government has failed to even codify the panel's recommendations which look as though it will be misinterpreted anyway.

The first media action for RAN's mahogany campaign went off extremely well at the **Casket Makers Annual Convention** in San Francisco and had even the Wall Street Journal calling for more information.

**What's In a Name?** For some time now, we have been struggling with the perfect name for this campaign. First it was the "Tropical Timber Campaign" but we began working on more than just tropical timber. Next was Wood Conservation Campaign, and that worked for a while. But once we launched the new Wood Reduction Clearinghouse to reduce wood use by 75%, it became apparent that RAN's part of that was about working on rainforest wood issues. So was born the **RAINFOREST WOOD CAMPAIGN** - This is 100% appropriate and rolls off the tongue quite nicely. Don't you think?



Our new logo

### In Brazil

Just last week in Acre, two gunmen threatened to kill a priest, Father Polino Baldassari, who has been an outspoken opponent of the logging companies in the state. Two leaders of the Xikrin Kayapo tribe are in Washington this week seeking help and attention to their current situation. In the last month, thousands of settlers have invaded their territory via logging roads and with support and encouragement of the region's timber company.

Friends of the Earth - UK reported receiving a letter from the Coordinator of Indigenous Groups of the Brazilian Amazon (COLAB) this week which details the continuing suffering of the Indians at the hands of the loggers. In the letter, Sebastiao Manchinery of COLAB [3] states that:

'Indigenous peoples are constantly threatened by death and their villages and plan-

# RAINFOREST WOOD CAMPAIGN

tations are destroyed by invaders, hired by the logging companies. .... Invasions in order to procure mahogany are causing great devastation to the forest and its inhabitants'.

The letter [4] goes on to say that:

'Indigenous leaders opposing illegal extraction are constantly threatened by loggers, as in those recent cases of Vale do Javari and Alto Solimoes'

The letter concludes that the situation has resulted in deaths of both Indians and loggers - as the Indians try to protect their land and the loggers remain motivated by the fact that mahogany is in high demand on the international market. Actions are needed in the U.S.

## Casket Makers Implicated in Mahogany Deaths

San Francisco, September 29 - Thirty-five demonstrators in black shrouds staged a burlesque 'funeral procession' at the Casket and Funeral Supply Associations Annual Convention held at the Fairmont Hotel. Present were pallbearers carrying wood-alternative coffins and mourners carrying tombstone placards. Activists also called on aging former world leaders Gorbachev, Bush and Thatcher—who were attending the The State of

the World Conference at the same hotel—to pledge not to be buried in mahogany caskets.

## An Account Of The Action For Inquiring Minds

Activists from Rainforest Action Network used the garage entrance and elevators, to sneak into the Fairmont Hotel carrying caskets and picket signs the shape of tombstones. Activists entered the conference room where the Casket Makers annual meeting was about to begin. Surprised to see all the theater, the Casket makers initially laughed and joked as activists handed out letters informing them of the atrocities connected with using mahogany caskets. Meanwhile the shrouded pall bearers marched through the center of the conference room with caskets raised on their shoulders beating a solemn drum.

Then Atossa Soltani, RAN's Rainforest Wood Campaigner, took the stage appealing to the casket makers to boycott mahogany caskets. The Chairman of the Association, who finally realized what was happening, got on a microphone and attempted to drown out Atossa's message. She grabbed a cordless microphone on the nearby audio visuals table and continued speaking. Angered by her audacity, the Chairman came down from the podium and wrestled the mike from her hand. By the time he captured it, activists were able to free a bull horn and get it to



Atossa speaks to the funeral industry at the casket makers convention, asking them to refrain from using mahogany for caskets. Activists stand in support holding placards.

# RAIN FOREST WOOD CAMPAIGN

Atossa. She continues her spiel while the media snapped away.

Activists left peacefully, marching through the Fairmont Hotel chanting "Boycott Mahogany, Mahogany is Murder." Outside the protest continued in front of the hotel.

The event received a good deal of media coverage in the local press. Additionally local coverage was picked up by Gannet News Service while CNN and the Wall Street Journal both called to find out what the protest at the World Forum was all about.

**MAHOGANY DAY OF ACTION: December 2**  
Plans for the national day of action are underway. Altogether, RAGs in ten cities are rearing to go. After the momentum created by the Casket Makers Convention protest, and the High Point Furniture Show protest (going down as you read this update), the December day of action shall surely be a high point in terms of raising the U.S. visibility in this international boycott.

The National Day which falls smack in the middle of holiday shopping season, will be the perfect time to get out to the U.S. and the world that Mahogany is Murder. To buy mahogany is to contribute to the death and violence of forest peoples. You can even read about it in U.S. papers. In August, the Detroit Tribune reprinted a story from the LA Times on the violent threat facing Arara Indians of Brazil (see enclosure.) The LA Times ran a second story in early September on the Kayapo tribe in dire straits over mahogany. The mahogany trade has its Karma to deal with. Here's a recent quote by Dali Lama on the cutting of the Redwoods "karma is a reality and that rebirth is a reality and that whosoever is responsible for the cutting of even one Redwood tree will spend many lifetimes in the lower realms as a hungry ghost or as a hell being. This is what the Buddha taught." I don't want to put words into the Dali Lama's mouth, but I feel that this fate could be a reality for the cutters of mahogany trees as well.

Anyway Tracey, my faithful intern says "by educating the public and getting them to boycott mahogany, we are helping to save trees, save lives, and purify karma". Sounds good? So if you haven't already spoken to Tracey about getting involved in the day, then do so now.

As mentioned in the last update, there are many

ways to get involved. A demo and leafletting outside a prominent furniture store or lumber yard that sells mahogany is an option. Another option some folks are considering is a noble act of civil disobedience coined by UK activists as 'ethical seizure' or "ethical shoplifting". That is reclaiming mahogany items from stores and turning it into the police, where the authorities and courts can decide what course of action should be taken next.

Given better than an 80% chance that the mahogany comes stolen from either indigenous lands or conservation areas, that mahogany coffee table or door is probably from an illegal source. Can you just see the news reports "A group of activist were seen today, marching to a nearby police station carrying items made of mahogany. The items were said to have been "seized" by the activists who suspect Furniture Company X is sourcing mahogany illegally logged from indigenous people's lands in the Brazilian Amazon."

Call for a useful kit with tips and materials to help make your event a success.

### Nuxalk/FAN Blockade In Bella Coola

On Sept. 26th RCMP and Swat teams descended on the Nuxalk Nation and activists from the Forest Action Network who were blockading an International Forest Company (INTERFOR) logging site on King's Island near Bella Coola and sitting in trees since September 5. At least 14 people were arrested and flown to Vancouver (200 miles south) to face charges of contempt of court.

All but four people have been released from jail after signing conditional release forms. Three Hereditary Chiefs and a member of the First Nations Environmental Network are refusing to sign the form of terms of release and therefore will remain in jail until at least their next court date of October 16. Many of you met two of the chiefs, Chief Ed Moody and Lawrence Pootlas at this year's chautauqua.

The Chief's have stated that they can not sign the form which would mean that they agree not to return to the area which INTERFOR wishes to log. "We have a responsibility for this land and territory. We can not sign a paper that would mean we could no longer care for this land."

Further, the Chiefs will not enter into any land claims issue as they are a sovereign nation who never gave up title to this land. "We do not need

# RAINFOREST WOOD CAMPAIGN

to go to anyone and request or seek a claim to this land. It is our territory."

About eight or so activists who took part in the tree sit were RAN activists who went from the Action Camp to the chautauqua in Clayoquot and then to Bella Coola. Way to go to all of you, you know who you are. We are very proud of you. Maybe next summer, a thousand of us flock up there and risk arrest in the Bella Coola Days, sequel to Clayoquot Days.



Chiefs and members of the Nuxalk Nation who blocked an INTERFOR logging site in Bella Coola.

Please, show support for Nuxalk's struggle by faxing letters today to:

BC Supreme Court, Fax: (604) 660-2420  
BC Premier Mike Harcourt, Fax: (604) 387-0087  
email: Premier <cmerkley@galaxy.gov.bc.ca>

Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien, (613) 941-6900  
BC Attorney General, Ujjal Dosanjh, Fax: (604) 387-6411  
email: Attorney General  
<nlane@galaxy.gov.bc.ca>

Send copies of your letters to:  
Nuxalk Nation Office  
House of Smayusta  
P.O. Box 8  
Bella Coola, B.C. V0T 1C0  
Fax: (604) 799-5707

September 27, 1995

Prime Minister Jean Chretien  
House of Parliament  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Fax: (613) 941-6900

Dear Jean Chretien,

I am greatly distressed to hear that members of the Nuxalk Nation from Bella Coola have been arrested for contempt of court. This charge is the result of their actions to prevent logging on their traditional territory.

We urge you to look at the larger picture in this case. The Nuxalk Nation never signed any treaties with Canada or BC giving away this land. They still are a sovereign Nation and hold title to the land which INTERFOR wishes to log. They are protecting their land. They are protecting the forest which has sustained the Nuxalk Nation for generations. They are protecting an environment with a rich biodiversity of life. What is INTERFOR doing? Who is the criminal here?

Please act now. Please do all within your power to stop all logging on Nuxalk territory.

Sincerely,

#### Welcome New Interns

Rainforest Wood is pretty lucky to have been blessed with the arrival of two amazing interns. I am pleased to announce Brett Gilmore and Jennifer Krill. Brett, a gung ho activist and really nice guy, will be working on updating our databases, and assisting in upcoming actions. Jennifer has a degree in landscape architecture and has already designed a killer logo for the Mahogany is Murder Campaign (pardon the pun) and will be producing a mailing to six hundred mahogany dealers.

Until Next Time,  
May the Forest Be With You,

*Atosa*

# San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

A20 San Francisco Chronicle ★★★★★

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1995



BY VINCE MAGGIORA/THE CHRONICLE

## In Defense of Mahogany

**D**avid Beck of the Columbus, Ohio-based Clark Grave Vault Co. removed a microphone from the hands of Rainforest Action Network's Atossa Soltani at the Casket and Funeral Supply Association annual convention at S.F.'s

Fairmont hotel. Soltani, the network's wood conservation campaign director, was one of protesters who crashed the meeting to denounce the illegal removal of mahogany, which is used to make caskets, from the Amazon rain forests.

## Activists mourn fancy caskets

### Precious wood is too good to be buried, protesters say



BY PAUL ROGERS  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Americans who are hoping to meet their makers in style by purchasing mahogany coffins are pushing the rainforests of South America to an early grave.

That was the message Friday morning when environmental activists confronted about 150 bewildered casket makers at San Francisco's posh Fairmont Hotel, where the annual convention of the Casket & Funeral Supply Association of America is taking place.

About 30 demonstrators from the Rainforest Action Network, some wearing white skeleton face paint and black robes, sparked a raucous confrontation with delegates, many of whom had come from the great coffin-building capitals of the Midwest — Batesville, Ind., Columbus, Ohio and Evanston, Ill. — expecting little more than a relaxing weekend of golf, cable car rides and motivational talks on selling more funeral supplies.

"Loggers are cutting these endangered trees down so we can bury them," said Pam Wellner of the Rainforest Action Network. "Some people even bury their pets in mahogany coffins. There's something wrong with that."

Top-of-the-line, hand-carved mahogany caskets can cost as much as \$10,000 each. A more environmentally friendly way to push up the daisies is to choose a coffin made of metal, pine or better yet, fiberboard made from recycled telephone books, the protesters said.

To them, the moral choice is as simple as a two-car funeral.

Not surprisingly, the coffin

makers saw nothing frivolous about building a casket of rare od, then burying it in a hole feet deep. They said a decision as important as funeral arrangements should be a matter of personal choice.

"Why does someone buy a His-Royce rather than a Yugo?" asked David Beck, president of the association. "You tell me. Wood is a renewable resource anyway."

Beck, who also is president of Ark Grave Vault Co. in Columbus, said coffin-building is a \$1 billion business in America.

A shiny hardwood casket can take up to six months to make, he said. But few people shell out the bucks to go first-class.

Of the 2.2 million people who die in the United States every year, about 80 percent are put in caskets, said George Lemke, executive director of the coffin builders' group. The rest choose to be

cremated or to have their remains donated to science.

That means 1.8 million people need caskets every year. About three-quarters of them choose metal coffins, which can cost as little as \$1,000, said Lemke. Because of the price, less than 1 percent of the deceased — about 8,000 people — are buried in mahogany coffins.

"It's such a small volume of wood it's inconsequential," said Lemke.

Any amount is too much, the demonstrators argued. Not only do the earth's richest forests suffer, but Brazilian Indians have been injured and killed in clashes with loggers. Groups such as Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network have recently begun to put pressure on furniture makers and other users of rainforest hardwoods. They hope to prompt boycotts of mahogany, similar to efforts in the 1980s to limit the use of ivory.

Brett Doran, at right, with sign, protests mahogany coffins outside the S.F. Fairmont Hotel, where casket makers led by David Beck, below, were meeting.

LUCI'S WILLIAMS  
— MERCURY NEWS



See COFFINS, Page 5B

## WORLD REPORT

## Lure of mahogany behind encroachment of Arara Indians

As loggers invade reservation, Brazil looks for way to avoid conflict.

By Ron Harris  
*Los Angeles Times*

BELEM, Brazil — When the reports dribbled into his office here recently, Benigno Pessoa Marques, an area superintendent for Indian affairs, knew they spelled trouble, possibly murderous trouble.

About 100 loggers and their families had invaded the Arara Indian reservation deep in the Amazon forest 300 miles southwest of this northern city. Such incidents are familiar to Americans mostly from old Western movies, but they occur often in modern-day Brazil.

The way the scenario usually goes, gold or the prospect of riches is believed to exist on one of the many reservations set aside for Brazil's 320,000 Indians. Prospectors, often just local Brazilians trying to scratch out a life, illegally rush in to grab what they hope will be their share of the wealth.

This time the riches are not shiny metal, but a precious wood. The Arara reservation, an area slightly more than twice the size of Los Angeles, is home to one of the world's last remaining mahogany forests.

The invasion has pitted 120 Araras, members of a particularly aggressive tribe that had no formal relations with Brazilians until 1980, against well-armed, hard-bitten loggers.

A fight, Marques fears, is imminent. "If that happens, it could wipe out this tribe," he said. "They could disappear."

Twenty-one tribes have been wiped out in Brazil since 1900, by guns or foreign diseases, Indian affairs officials say. About 270 remain.

Marques is particularly mindful of the slaughter two years ago of members of another Amazon Indian tribe. Gold miners illegally operating on the Yanomami Indian

## Brazil

**Population:** 158.7 million.

**Ethnic groups:** Most are of Portuguese and African descent; also Italians, Germans, Japanese, Indians, Jews and Arabs.

**Official language:** Portuguese.

**Area:** 3.3 million square miles; larger than United States and the largest nation in South America.

**Industries:** Steel, autos, ships, appliances, petrochemicals and machinery.

**Resources:** Chromium, iron, manganese, diamonds, gold, nickel, gemstones, tin, bauxite, oil and timber.

**Chief crops:** Coffee (largest grower), cotton, soybeans, sugar, cocoa, rice, corn and fruits.



**Gross domestic product per capita:** \$2,350, compared with \$23,400 in United States.

*The Detroit News*

reservation killed 20 tribespeople near Brazil's Amazon border with Venezuela.

The miners lured the Yanomami men out of their huts with food and then opened fire with shotguns. They then beat and stabbed the women and 10 children to death, hacked off their limbs with machetes and set fire to their homes.

To avoid a repeat of the Yanomami massacre, the federal government dispatched a team of Justice Department officials and federal police to the area early this week to remove the loggers from the Arara reservation.

The Araras, whose existence came to light in 1968 when they

attacked workers and tractors constructing the Trans-Amazon Highway, fought repeatedly with outsiders, including Indian affairs officials, until a reservation was set aside for the tribe in 1980.

While government officials attempt to remove squatters from the Arara land, they will also be investigating reports that the encroachment is actually the work of city officials in Medicilandia, a frontier town of 25,000, with only one telephone, that sits on the edge of the Arara reservation.

According to the reports, the loggers are being sponsored by Mayor Joa Batista Barbieri and City Council members with the

backing of some of Brazil's large logging companies.

Barbieri has been supplying trucks to loggers so they can bring mahogany out of the forest and then sell it to the huge national logging concerns, observers told Indian affairs officials.

Diego Pelizares, a Roman Catholic priest who reported the encroachment to officials, said several loggers have told him that they are in effect doing the dirty work for the big companies. One major logging company has set up a wood-processing plant nearby, said Pelizares, who has been ministering in the area for the past five years.

Sydney Possuelo, former head of Brazil's department of Indian affairs and currently director of the division for isolated tribes like the Arara, said such invasions continue despite strong laws against them.

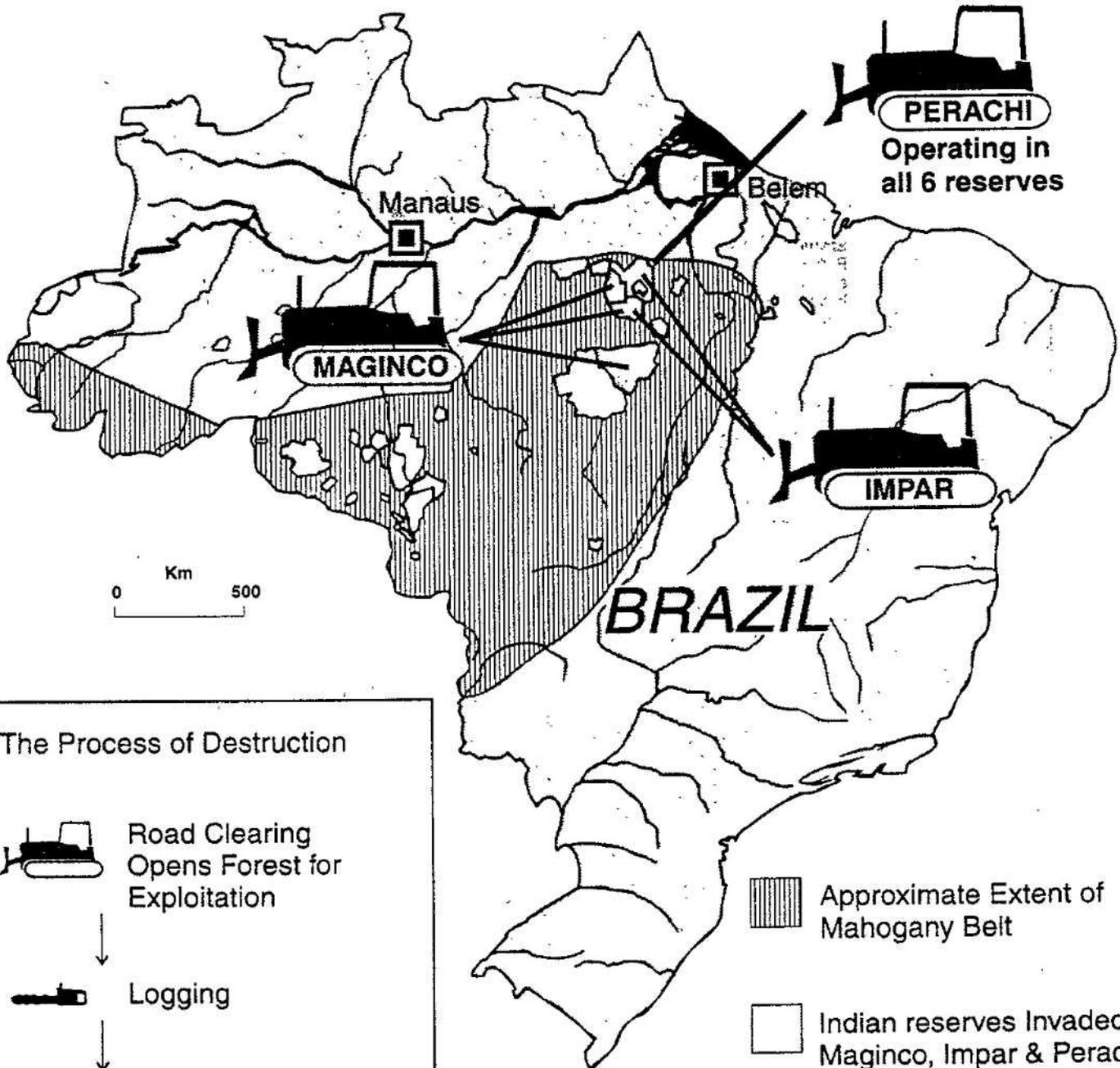
"The problem is that between the law and practice there is a very big distance," said Possuelo, who made first contact with the Araras for Indian affairs officials.

"There are certain cases where the Indians call in the miners and loggers to do work in the area, and they are paid by the miners and loggers. It's all illegal. But it happens."

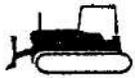
Indian affairs officials and local observers are fearful that even their attempt to remove the loggers from the Arara land could worsen the situation.

"Whether they can remove the loggers will depend on how forceful they are going to be," said Pelizares.

# INDIAN RESERVES AND THE MARCH OF THE TIMBER COMPANIES



## The Process of Destruction



Road Clearing  
Opens Forest for  
Exploitation



Logging



Further Impacts on  
Surrounding Forest  
and Native Peoples



Colonisation or  
Ranching



Approximate Extent of  
Mahogany Belt



Indian reserves Invaded by  
Maginco, Impar & Perachi



Main Terminals  
Exporting Tropical  
Timber to the UK



Indian Reserves Invaded by  
Other Timber Cutters

Thanks to information provided by Friends of the Earth.



Contact: Atossa Soltani or Mark Westlund  
September 28, 1995

RAN Office (415)398-4404  
during event pager: (415)280-2141

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY! PHOTO OPPORTUNITY! PHOTO OPPORTUNITY!**

## **Casket Makers Implicated in Mahogany Deaths Plea to World Leaders: Don't be buried in Mahogany!**

- What:** 35 demonstrators in black shrouds stage a burlesque 'funeral procession' at the Casket and Funeral Supply Association annual convention, with pallbearers carrying tombstone placards and wood-alternative coffins. Activists also call on aging former world leaders Gorbachev, Bush and Thatcher—who are attending the The State of the World Forum at the same hotel—to pledge to not being buried in mahogany caskets.
- When:** 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM, Friday, September 29, 1995
- Where:** Outside the Fairmont Hotel, 950 Mason at California Street
- Why:** Mahogany is taken illegally from the indigenous peoples' land in the Amazon rainforest. Brazilian newspapers have reported dozens of mahogany opponents from at least nine indigenous groups have been murdered since 1988. Amazon Indians should not have to die so we can be buried in style.

Activists from Rainforest Action Network and other organizations stage a protest and funeral procession 8:30 AM this Friday morning, September 29, at the Casket and Funeral Supply Association annual convention at the Fairmont Hotel. Activists also urge world leaders attending the State of the World Forum, concurrent at the Fairmont, to pledge to not being buried in mahogany caskets.

The U.S. is the largest importer of mahogany from Latin America. The high price for mahogany on the U.S. market—\$850 per cubic meter—lures outlaw timber profiteers to log illegally on indigenous peoples' land and on protected conservation areas in the Brazilian and Bolivian Amazon. They kill those who dare stand in their way. The Casket Makers and other mahogany buyers are party to these criminal activities.

The mahogany trade leads to the demise of the rainforest. Mahogany trees grow sporadically in the forest, and more than 3000 miles of illegal roads have been carved through the Brazilian Amazon to allow logging access. Studies estimate that for each mahogany tree harvested, at least 25 other trees get cut down.

International groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace along with over eighty indigenous and environmental groups in Brazil call for a moratorium on mahogany logging. Rainforest Action Network urges consumers and suppliers—including casket makers—to boycott mahogany until this illegal trade is brought under control. ■



For Immediate Release: October 18, 1995

Contact: Rick Spencer, Environmental Awareness Foundation Office: (910)334-5324  
 Atossa Soltani Eve: (910)370-0135, ext. 116; Cellular phone during event:  
 (910)888-4660  
 Tracey Osborne, RAN-S.F.: (415)512-9025

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AT FURNITURE MARKET: "Mahogany Is Murder! Don't Buy It!"

**WHAT:** Two activists are locked to a mahogany chair at the Kimball furniture display at the High Point Furniture Market (Booth #M1008). 30 protesters in black shrouds stage a mock funeral procession, and carry tombstone placards, wood-alternative coffins, and a giant 35' inflatable chainsaw bannered: "Mahogany Is Murder! Don't Buy It!"

**WHEN:** Thursday and Friday, October 19 and 20, 4:00 to 5:00 PM

**WHERE:** International Home Furnishings, 200 Block of Main St., High Point, NC

**WHY:** Mahogany is contraband. Trees are taken illegally from the indigenous peoples' land in the Amazon forest. Brazilian newspapers report that dozens of logging opponents from at least eight indigenous groups have been murdered since 1988. Amazon Indians should not have to die so we can have ornamental furniture.

Activists from Environmental Awareness Foundation & Rainforest Action Network are locked to a mahogany chair at the Kimball International Furniture booth (NOW). 30 activists stage a protest and funeral procession Thursday and Friday, October 19 and 20, 4-5 PM EDT (TODAY & TOMORROW) at the International Home Furnishings Show, 200 Block of Main St., High Point, NC. Activists demand that U.S. furniture makers abandon the use of South American mahogany.

The U.S. is the largest importer of Latin American Mahogany, and the high price the wood gets on the market lures outlaw timber profiteers to log illegally on indigenous peoples' land and national parks. Loggers harass, maim, and murder those who dare stand in their way.

The top ten U.S. mahogany importers handle about 80% of the total volume of mahogany shipments. Customs data shows that these importers regularly buy mahogany from suppliers that the Brazilian courts have found guilty of illegal logging.

The mahogany trade leads to the demise of the rainforest. Mahogany trees grow sporadically in the forest, and more than 3,000 miles of illegal roads have been carved through the Brazilian Amazon to allow logging access. Studies estimate that for each mahogany tree harvested, nearly 3,000 square feet of forest get destroyed.

"Given the corruption and poor law enforcement in Brazil and Bolivia, there is no way to ensure that a mahogany shipment is legal, and not stolen from Indian communities," says RAN campaigner Atossa Soltani. "Furniture companies can help protect rainforest and indigenous people by refusing to buy mahogany products." ■

# Police arrest two in market protest

A group of 30 demonstrators at the High Point show opposes the use of mahogany in furniture manufacturing.

BY MARSHA GILBERT  
Staff Writer

HIGH POINT — A group of 30 protesters dressed in black carried placards, coffins, tombstones and an inflatable chain saw Thursday in a demonstration outside the International Home Furnishings Center against the use of mahogany.

Two members of the group were arrested when they took their cause a step further by sneaking into the market and chaining themselves to a bed.

The protesters, UNCG students affiliated with the Environmental Awareness Foundation and the Rainforest Action Network gathered outside between 4 and 5 p.m.

They chanted slogans including "Mahogany is murder! Don't buy mahogany!"

"The students were well behaved," said Lt. Robert Linville of the High Point Police Department. "I'm glad they are interested in politics."

Atossa Soitani, 30, of San Fran-

© The students were well behaved. I'm glad they are interested in politics. ©

Lt. Robert Linville.

High Point Police Department

cisco, and Richard Michael Spencer, 22, of Hilton Head, S.C., allegedly entered the center with false identification badges and chained themselves to a bed in the Kimball Home Furniture showroom on the 10th floor, police said.

But the bed rail they chained themselves to was pecan, not mahogany, Linville said.

When police officers informed the two that they would have to pay for damaged merchandise if the bed had to be sawed apart to unchain them, they unchained themselves. They left the building under arrest, continuing to shout their slogans.

They were charged with second-degree trespassing and held on \$5,000 secured bond each.

According to a statement released by the protesters, "indigenous people have had their lives threatened and in some cases they have met their deaths at the hands of mahogany loggers."

The release also said mahogany extraction was pushing some spe-

cies to extinction and causing irreparable damage to the tropical forests of Latin America.

From inside the market came a rebuttal.

"The Bolivian government has very, very strict regulations on logging," said Chris Anderson, the president of Simex International, the largest importers of mahogany chairs and parts in American furniture manufacturing.

"Every tree that we cut down is replaced by three trees. Over 80 percent of the deforestation of the Amazon basin comes from slash and burn farmers.

"The protesters are having the exact opposite impact than they would like because the only people that can stop this deforestation by the farmers are the lumber and furniture manufacturers," Anderson said.

Greensboro, North Carolina

RECORD & NEWS

Friday  
Oct. 20, 1995

# FURNITURE/TODAY®

The Weekly Business Newspaper of the Furniture Industry

OCTOBER 20, 1995 • FREE AT MARKET

## Protestors demonstrate against mahogany abuse

By Susan Andrews

**AT THE MARKET** — Demonstrators protesting the use of illegally harvested mahogany for furniture came to market yesterday.

Two were arrested for trespassing when they locked themselves to a bed in the Kimball showroom. Rick Spencer and Atossa Soltani were taken away by police before the main demonstration began on Main Street.

Carrying tombstone-shaped placards proclaiming that "mahogany is murder" and a cardboard casket bearing the likeness of a native Amazon Indian, about a dozen people marched and chanted to draw attention to what they believe is illegal harvesting of mahogany in tropical countries such as Brazil.

Lauren Tuttle, a student at Appalachian State University, said the protestors want the public to be aware that America's abundant use of mahogany hastens the species' hurtle "toward extinction and undermines native tribes, whose members have been massacred and murdered by loggers" who have moved into protected areas.

According to Soltani, "given the poor law enforcement and corruption in Brazil and Bolivia, there is just no way to ensure that a given mahogany shipment is legal and not stolen from Indian communities."

The first demonstration here, held at April market, was led by students from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Environmental Awareness Foundation. This time, the EAF was joined by supporters of the San Francisco-based Rainforest Action Network, and the

Student Environmental Action Coalition, in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Chris Anderson, president of mahogany supplier Simex, said 90% of the mahogany harvested worldwide is cut down by farming concerns. Protesters like those staged this market and in April

distort the issue at the expense of furniture producers, he said.

Simex controls more than a half-million acres of mahogany forestlands, all of which are harvested legally, said Anderson.

A larger group of demonstrators is expected this afternoon, accord-



Members of human rights and environmental organizations protest the use of illegally harvested mahogany.



Staff photo by Howard Tibery

Officers escort demonstrators who protest illegal use of mahogany in furniture

## 2nd rally coming

### Mahogany protest gets some attention

By Thomas Russell  
BUSINESS EDITOR

A group of protesters sent a message against the use of mahogany in furniture during the opening of the International Home Furnishings Market Thursday.

More than a dozen young adults carried banners with messages such as "Boycott Mahogany" and "Save The Rainforest" while loudly chanting slogans and marching across from the Main Street entrance to the the International Home Furnishings Center.

Two others drew attention by getting arrested for chaining themselves to a bed in the Kimball furniture showroom on the 10th floor of the IHFC.

Organized by the Environmental Awareness Foundation, the group was protesting the use of illegally harvested mahogany. They say that process is claiming the lives of indigenous peoples and destroying rain forests in Brazil.

Participant Katie Faulkner said the group was trying to let buyers and manufacturers know the product is being used in the products they are selling and purchasing. They plan to protest again today.

"Because of propaganda, they don't know the truth," echoed Leslie Chong, an independent supporter of EAF. "Some say it is legally harvested, but we have documents that show it is not. We just want to make a difference because we care."

Some stopped to criticize or comment on their march. Among those was Jake Froelich, a managing partner in Market Square Partnership.

"I think they are misinformed," Froelich said. "They do not have any concept of what really is going on."

Froelich claimed most mahogany comes from well managed forests in Africa and Central America. He said the same is true for any product that comes from Brazil or other parts of South America.

Anthony Mitchell, a buyer for American Furniture Co.,

## High Point Late Spring MARKET

only caught a glimpse of the protest. However, he said he wouldn't be surprised if the group's claims were accurate.

"It wouldn't surprise me because of higher profits and easy access," he said.

Whether anyone else paid attention to their message was another matter. Most buyers simply chuckled about the event as they hurried off to meet business appointments.

But while the march didn't attract much attention from marketgoers, it did draw the attention of the High Point Police Department. Shortly after the march began, they arrested the two protesters who chained themselves to the bed inside the Kimball showroom.

EAF representative Rick Spencer and Atossa Soltani of the San Francisco chapter of the Rainforest Action Network were charged with second-degree trespassing.

The two apparently got into the showroom when two other protesters distracted people at the front desk.

"They did a good job of surprising us by getting into the showroom area," said company Sales Manager Paul Wahl.

Officials say the bed they chained themselves to actually was made of pecan and not mahogany. However, protesters said they were not focusing on the bed itself, but rather information they obtained that alleges Kimball is the nation's fifth largest importer of illegally harvested mahogany from Brazil.

Company officials dispute that claim, saying the mahogany they import is not from Brazil, but from an island off the coast of South America. They receive that product from a supplier in Alabama. They also claim to have a strong environmental policy that lets them plant more trees than they use for the manufacture of product.

"Kimball is very environmentally conscious," Wahl said.

HIGH POINT, N.C. **High Point Furniture** SUNDAY

# MULTINATIONAL MONITOR

THE FRONT

## Mahogany Coffins

**D**EMAND FOR mahogany caskets among rich people in the United States who want to take some wealth to the grave is propelling illegal attacks on rainforests and indigenous people in Brazil, say activists who are trying to open a Northern front in the tropical timber battle.

"The U.S. is the largest importer of Latin American mahogany and the high price the wood gets on the international market lures outlaw timber profiteers to log illegally on indigenous peoples' land," says an October 1995 statement from San Francisco, California-based Rain Forest Action Network (RAN). "They harass, maim and murder those who dare stand in the way."

Motivated by mounting mahogany demand, armed gangs of illegal loggers killed 14 Tikuna Indians in Alto Rio Soli in Amazonas state in 1990. A few days after denouncing invasions by mahogany loggers in May 1993, rubber tapper Arnaldo Ferreira was killed in southern Para state, according to Roberto Smeraldi of Friends of the Earth's Amazonia Program. A Nhamiquara Indian was killed in neighboring Rondonia state in 1994. Loggers who wanted to harvest mahogany on Nhamiquara land were again considered likely suspects, Smeraldi says.

RAN argues that most legally available mahogany has been harvested, pushing loggers into wildlife protection areas and territories that are supposed to be under indigenous control. Brazilian media have reported suspected links between loggers and killings of people belonging to eight different indigenous groups: the Korubu, Flecheiros, Tikuna, Awa-guaja, Zoro, Mura-Praha, Guapore, and Uru-Eu-Wau.

Mahogany is in danger of being cut into extinction in the Amazon, according to the Brazilian Institute of Envi-

ronment in Brasilia. Representatives meeting under the auspices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Miami, Florida in November 1994 considered listing mahogany as an endangered species, though the step has yet to be taken. Loggers have carved more than 3,000 miles of illegal roads through the Brazilian Amazon, destroying 3,000 square feet of forest for every cut tree, according to RAN.

### Top Mahogany Furniture Makers

Universal Furniture  
Basset  
Karges  
Baker  
Drexel Heritage  
Lane  
Hickory Chair  
La-Z-Boy Chair  
Bernhardt Contract  
Cabot Wrenn

ronment in Brasilia. Representatives meeting under the auspices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Miami, Florida in November 1994 considered listing mahogany as an endangered species, though the step has yet to be taken. Loggers have carved more than 3,000 miles of illegal roads through the Brazilian Amazon, destroying 3,000 square feet of forest for every cut tree, according to RAN.

growing U.S. mahogany market. Traditionally used for fine furniture, mahogany also is becoming trendy for last rites in the United States, where 80 percent of the 2.2 million people who die each year wind up in a box. An increasing number of wealthier stiff are buried in hand-made mahogany caskets that fetch as much as \$10,000 each.

The lumber and coffin industries welcome the trend. Asked why people are buried in mahogany, David Buck, president of Columbus, Ohio-based Clark Grave Vault Company, told the San Jose Mercury News, "Why does someone buy a Rolls Royce rather than a Yugo?" Beck, who is also president of the Coffin Manufacturers Association, said \$1 billion in coffins are sold in the United States each year.

Commerce Department records indicate that the United States imported 48,648 cubic meters (CM) of mahogany in 1991 and 66,416 CM in

1992, declining thereafter to 48,740 CM in 1994. Despite this reduction in the volume of mahogany imports, demand kept the value of imports high. U.S. mahogany imports, which were worth approximately \$27 million in 1991, kept at a steady value of approximately \$32 million for the years 1992 through 1994, even with declining volumes. The import value of a cubic meter of mahogany in 1994 was \$661.

Almost half of all Latin American mahogany is exported to the United States, where half of it is used for furniture and the rest is sold as lumber and coffins, according to RAN. The top 10 U.S. importers, including the North Carolina-based industry leaders Nordisk of Greensboro and Dan K. Moore of Lexington, handle 80 percent of all mahogany imports. RAN says customs records indicate that U.S. importers regularly buy mahogany from suppliers that Brazilian courts have convicted of illegal logging.

### Stumping for imports

"Despite being convicted, these exporters don't lose their export licenses, which gives them access to American markets," says Mark Westlund, a RAN campaigner in San Francisco.

The furniture industry denies links to illegal logging. "No logging company is involved in attacks" on indigenous people, says Robert Waffle, government affairs director of the Alexandria, Virginia-based International Wood Products Association. "I think there may be some independent people doing this."

"Given the poor law enforcement and corruption prevalent in Brazil and Bolivia, there is just no way to ensure that a given mahogany shipment is legal and not stolen from Indian communities," says RAN activist Atossa Soltani. To avoid these complications, Soltani says furniture companies should stop buying mahogany.

"It's stupid to say that mahogany imports should be banned," Waffle says. Activists "don't understand that indigenous people would like to raise their income" through mahogany sales, he says.

— Haider Rizvi