From the ringside

1994 letter to Congressman Herger

Congressman Wally Herger

55 Independence Circle Suite 104

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Dear Mr. Herger: Early spring, 1994

I was outraged when I read the front page story (“Only The Unqualified Need Apply.”) in the newspaper regarding the hiring practices of the United States Forest Service, but the article only fueled my existing fury as I was already in the midst of writing a letter of protest to you. I had already taken pictures of the incredible office building that the Forest Service has just moved into in Alturas, California. If you study the pictures, you will see that this building is located next to the Bureau of Land Management office in Alturas. The B.L.M. building is nearly as large as the F.S. building, but I'll save my comments about the B.L.M. for the next letter.

I have watched with dismay for forty years as the Forest Service has grown to be my best example of runaway, incompetent government. Nowhere have I seen a more blatant perpetration and expansion of a mostly unnecessary bureaucracy. Not only am I angered, but perhaps worse, I am frightened. These people are power hungry, arrogant, ignorant, and incompetent! What a great combination of attributes for the agency that controls some of our most precious assets! (And would like to have even more control.)

I don't write without some authority. My father worked for these people for thirteen years. I am a professional miner and prospector. (No, I am not a weekend dredger with unrealistic expectations. I am honored to have worked with pretty damn big companies who have the resources to develop viable mining properties) We were ranchers in Modoc County for years and my family pioneered much of that county. Shirt tail relatives now own the very last sawmill that is anywhere near operational in Modoc.

I have hunted and fished the lakes rivers and streams of northern California since I could walk, and during this fifty year tenure as a user of those public lands, I have watched the F. S. grow more and more powerful, and I have watched as the F.S. has become staffed with tree hugging idiots who have no idea of how to manage our resources.

We are, I hope, emerging from the worst drought situation that anybody I know can remember, and because of this there are millions of board feet of timber dead, dying, and rotting where it stands on the national forest lands of Modoc and Lassen counties. It is being allowed to rot and create a fire hazard such as we have never seen before. I am not talking about spotted owl country, I am talking about log-able, salvageable, no goddamn owl trees that need to be harvested now or they will be lost forever. And all of this while willing loggers and mill hands are on unemployment or welfare?! And there would be employers are in the throes of bankruptcy because there are no logs for their mills. Bullroar!!

Now these people want to hire more incompetents to do work that is unneeded in the first place? Of course they do. Then they can screw up even faster and become more and more powerful as they do it.

If you haven't guessed what my point is yet, I'll go on for you and try to be a little more explicit. As memory serves me there weren't any more people in Modoc in 1955 than there are now, but there were some twenty operating sawmills or other wood supported businesses. There was a railroad. There were jobs! Jobs that weren't invented by some stupid S.O.B. that worked for the government, but jobs that needed to be done because there was a need for the products produced here! I am not sure how many F.S. employees there were in 1955, but there was a hell of a

lot less than there are now, and they did a good, if not better, job of fire control and forest management even when there was enough logging going on to support the twenty mills. Modoc County did pretty good job of taking care of itself back then by producing timber and cows and by providing recreation for thousands of people . And they did it without the thousands of federal employees that are now driving around up there in new vehicles on roads that didn't need to be built or improved or controlled in the first place.

Our government, and some of the population, has lost touch with reality! We don't need nor can we afford to turn Modoc or any other place into a park! We don't need and can't afford federal employees walking the hills in the summer telling people where to walk.

I could go on forever but I'll stop here, my point being that when we talk about downsizing government, lets do it, damn it. I chose to write about the Forest Service in Modoc because I know the people and the county, but I suspect that this remote, sometimes forgotten corner of California is only the tip of the iceberg. I want you guys that I campaigned for and voted for to do something about this. I would like to see the Forest Service in Modoc reduced in size and numbers by 75%. There would still be plenty of people to do what had to be done. We don't need anymore. We can't afford anymore

I would challenge you or your staff to visit Modoc County as my guest and meet some of the people if you think I exaggerate. If you doubt for a minute that this getting old fast republican is going to stand by and watch government destroy what this county could and should be, you are wrong. I intend to fight with all of my means. (Which are limited because of government B. S. .) I hope to win back America for my kids and grandkids.

Sincerely

John Busch

Agenda 21? Sounds like it to me. Nothing ever changes, does it Wally?

Next week…. Wally’s answer.