

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT,  
1997

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support the amendment by the gentleman from Washington. I could not agree more with his words that are still echoing in this Chamber, that this is not to punish any single company. Indeed, I am concerned about the tenor here that sort of makes a cartoon process out of rules and regulations that a number of responsible timber owners in the Northwest are working with us to try and deal with the issues of environmental protection.

It is not about a handful of small property owners, as has been repeatedly documented throughout the course of this conversation. It is, rather, for the overwhelming benefit of the single large property owner.

It is not about using a process against somebody. This is what other companies are, in fact, doing. They have learned to use habitat protection plans and, in fact, even light-end timber companies are, in fact, advertising that point to their customers throughout the Northwest. To observe that there is no science involved when, in fact, what we are giving is a political fix to solve the problem primarily of one large owner really stretches credibility here in this regard.

If we adopt this approach, what we are suggesting to people is, rather than working in a cooperative fashion under the framework of the law, seek a political fix. Rather than working with the Government, with other landowners, with environmentally concerned citizens, seek a political fix. And if this political fix fails and, in fact, it goes through the progression of increased requirements for protection, what we will, in fact, have ended up doing is putting an even greater burden on the responsible private owners who have been playing by the rules because they are going to have to pick up the slack if it fails.

This Riggs proposal is a blow against cooperation and voluntary compliance. It sends the message to go to Congress to circumvent the laws. It is the wrong message to business. It is the wrong message to the environment, and it suggests that we are turning our backs on people who are committed to keep and improve our environmental protections.