Brower, David Dean of the Modern Environmental Movement (1912-2000) Encyclopedia Article

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Often called Earth's best friend, David Ross Brower built a fire under the environmental community and kept it stoked for more than half a century. Sound-bite genius, both gracious and fierce, Brower was a master organizer, and his story is the story of the modern environmental movement.

During seven decades of environmental activism, Brower helped transform the Sierra Club from a small, genteel group of hikers to a powerhouse political force and helped found more than thirty environmental groups, such as the mainstream League of Conservation Voters and Friends of the Earth.

Brower led successful campaigns to prevent dams in Dinosaur National Monument and the Grand Canyon, aided Howard Zahniser in establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System, and helped add nine areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System, from the Point Reyes National Seashore in California to New York's Fire Island. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times.

Brower was also one of the first environmental leaders to adamantly oppose nuclear power. His stance against the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California led to his forced resignation as the executive director of the Sierra Club after seventeen years.

David Brower. (©Roger Ressmeyer/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.)

As Brower grew older and the planet became more polluted, he was transformed into the most creative and radical green activist of his generation. He launched the Earth Island Institute, which organized the consumerled boycott that resulted in dolphin-safe tuna. As a coalition builder, Brower brought union workers and environmentalists together to found the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment.

Brower later served several terms on the Sierra Club's board of directors, before finally retiring when he was in his eighties. "The planet is burning," he said. "And all I hear from them is the music of violins."

Bibliography

Brower, David R., with Chapple, Steve. (2000). *Let the Mountains Talk, Let the Rivers Run: A Call to Those Who Would Save the Earth.* Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers.

Internet Resource

Earth Island Institute Web site. Available from http://www.earthisland.org.