Andy vs. the Bureaucratic Deadwood

April 23, 1979

Andy Lipkis, a 19-year-old college freshman very much into ecology, had this idea a couple of years ago. The trees in the San Bernardino National Forest are dying from the smog that drifts east out of Los Angeles, so find some smog-resistant trees and replant them there.

After all, Lipkis thought, the experts say the forest, in the Big Bear-Lake Arrowhead-Burton Flats area could be dead in as little as 20 years if nothing is done.

A pure case for a bit of individual initiative, right? One young man could get the ecologic bandwagon rolling.

It wasn't quite that easy. There were some complications along the way. Like the bureaucracy of the California Division of Forestry.

Lipkis discovered a few months ago that the division had 20,000 smog-resistant Sierra redwoods and sugar pines, all under a year old, growing in a tree nursery up near Davis.

And he told the forestry people his plan. They said it was a nice idea, but rules are rules, and the state doesn't give its baby trees away. If they aren't sold, they're plowed over.

They cost two and one-half cents per tree and Andy wanted all 20,000 trees.

Right Student Budget

Which is more money than a kid on a tight college-budget can handle.

He went to a few of the bigger corporations that talk a good ecology game. But Andy, an environmental studies major at Cal States Sonoma, had his luck in coming up with the $300 needed to buy the trees.

And while he was making the rounds, those trees were slipping away.

"They" (the forest division administrators) said they had to get the money by March 15 or they'd kill the trees," Andy said.

They were going to plow them under to replant.

Please Turn to Page 7, Col. 1

Before but it was a good idea.

Unfortunately, Andy's problems weren't over yet.

"The Division of Forestry trucked the trees to me in Sonoma in bunches and told me I had a week to plant them before they died," Lipkis said.

We got a local milk company to donate 8,000 milk cartons, paid $60 for a truckload of topsoil, and then talked a Sonoma land developer into paying for another load of soil.

Then with 15 friends from the college plus a Boy Scout troop, Andy Lipkis went at it with trowel in hand. They had all 8,000 baby trees planted in the milk cartons within a week. The trees are being kept on the seven-acre grounds of a home.

Andy rents with others near Sonoma.

The next phase of Lipkis' project—three years in the planning—includes planting the trees on 20 summer camp sites scattered throughout the Big Bear region in the national forest.

He has the camps lined up. Kids and campers will help in the planting this summer as well as join in a guerilla-style publicity campaign in the area, cleaning up public campgrounds and trails.

Lipkis still needs $4,000 for the project this summer to cover the cost of renting a truck for two months, obtaining tools and mulching materials, and paying $200 a month salaries for two full-time trained assistants. He asks that anyone willing to help out contact him at 1745 Safby Ave., Los Angeles, 90024.

We give up trying to get money from big business and now I'm paying to take it to 486 people," he said. "If each person has contributed 50 cents for one tree, we could get it done. That's all it costs."