

RELIGION & LIBERTY

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Population Growth Benefits the Environment



Interview: Julian Simon

Julian Simon is Professor of Business Administration at the University of Maryland and a member of the Acton Institute Advisory Board. Educated at Harvard and the University of Chicago, Dr. Simon is one of the most prominent advocates of individual liberty, particularly regarding population and immigration questions. His numerous works include *The Economics of Population Growth* and *Population and Development in Poor Countries*.

A second edition of his *Population Matters* was published recently by Transaction. Acton Institute president, Rev. Robert A. Sirico, C.S.P., interviewed Dr. Simon in Cannes, France, at the 1994 Mont Pelerin Society Conference.

R&L: *You have written extensively on the subject of population growth. Could you explain the thesis of your argument that population growth and density are beneficial for countries in the long run.*

Simon: Population growth does not have a statistically negative effect upon economic growth. We know that from 30 years of careful quantitative scientific studies—just the opposite of what the public believes. Because human knowledge allows us to produce more finished products out of fewer raw materials, natural resources are becoming more available. The air and water in rich countries are becoming cleaner.

Most importantly, human beings are living much longer than ever before.

R&L: *Yet we hear the fear that if there are too many people who consume the resources of a given society, life there will become untenable.*

Simon: You say this while we are here in Cannes, a densely populated city, measured by the number of persons per square mile. But if we were to look inside those hotel rooms to see how much space those people have, we would see that they are living with luxurious amounts of space. People have more and better living space than ever before. If we array the countries of the world according

to population density, and then look at the rate of economic growth, we see that it is the more densely-populated countries—such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Holland, Japan—that are growing faster, and that the less-densely populated countries—such as those in Africa—are growing at slower rates.

The view that I have expressed to you thus far is precisely the view held by experts on these topics. Every agricultural economist knows that people have been eating better since World War II, the period for which we have data. Every resource economist knows that natural resources have become cheaper rather than more expensive. Every demographer knows that life expectancy in the wealthy countries has gone up from under 30 years at birth 200 years ago to over 75 years at birth today. And life expectancy has risen in the poor countries from perhaps 35 years at birth only 50 years ago to 60-65-70 years at birth today. Those are the facts which are known by the economists and demographers who study these subjects.

R&L: *If that is the case, then how do you explain the popular view on*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE • Interview: Julian Simon © Articles: “The Ecological Gospel” by Robert H. Nelson • “On Coercive Environmental Education” by Jo Kwong © Book Reviews: Gene Healy on Al Gore’s *Earth in the Balance* • Doug Bandow on Ray and Guzzo’s *Environmental Overkill* • John A. Baden on Blast, Hill & Rue’s *Eco-Sanity* • Mark St. John Couhig on Anderson and Leal’s *Free Market Environmentalism*.

that subject?

Simon: For the past 25 years, whenever I would give people the facts about population and resources, they would say, "Well then, why do we hear so much bad news?" And for 25 years I have been struggling to work out the answers. The question is extraordinarily complex. The influences range from a genetic propensity deep in human nature to prophesy bad news to a lot of everyday factors such as the media's tendency to seek out and report bad news.

R&L: Share some thoughts on your debate with Paul

Ehrlich, who made the "population bomb" thesis popular.

Simon: I remember my reaction in 1970 when seeing Ehrlich for a full hour on Johnny Carson's television show. Carson said something like, "Paul, explain the population problem to me." And Ehrlich answered, "Johnny, it's really very simple." At that time I was not sure exactly what the answer to the problem was, but the one thing I was absolutely certain of was that it is not simple. As a result of that debate I began to see that part of the problem is our "common-sensical" approach to problems

which inevitably over-simplifies a complex problem like this.

Malthusian common sense is a very attractive idea. But the heart of the growth of civilizations and economies is the non-Malthusian adjustment process that is inevitably complex, and indeed counter-intuitive. The common-sensical Malthu-

And if we array the countries of the world according to population density, and then look at the rate of economic growth, we see that it is the more densely-populated countries ... that are growing faster.

sian view sees only the short term rather than the long term. But in the long term these adjustment processes tend to produce opposite results to what the short term results happen to be. Here we should note that science is only interesting when it produces results which are the opposite of common sense. Otherwise you wouldn't need scientists at all.

R&L: It is rather similar to the difficulty of making classical liberal ideas popular as compared to statist or socialist ideas. The latter seem more easily condensed to a bumper sticker.

Simon: Absolutely. That is one of the reasons for their great success. The underlying ideas of socialism are marvelously attractive—for example, the idea of economies of scale that bewitched Marx: Remove the waste of having six competing steel mills and the advertising and marketing which accompany them.

Combine them sounds good. But the opposite results occur. Yet this simple-minded idea bewitches people such as Andre Sakarov, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell and others who are marvelously clear and penetrating thinkers in other spheres of life. But in this sphere—if you will permit

me—they are just plain stupid.

R&L: What indications of coercion in family planning do you find in the official Cairo Conference documents?

Simon: The UNFPA people have learned over the years to be extremely careful to frequently mouth platitudes such as "everything is voluntary." At the same time, they espouse goals in population growth. The idea of goals and the idea of voluntarism are fundamentally contradictory. If you are attempting to require some level of population

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growth, whether it be zero population growth or two percent population growth, inevitably you will have to do something to people to get them to that stage, unless they will do it themselves. If they will do it themselves, then you do not need a

rant to limit population growth even in contemporary China.

R&L: What are the main causes of poverty in developing nations if population growth is not a major factor?

resources. That may be true, but people in rich countries make available even more than 40 percent of the resources.

R&L: Give us an overview of your thoughts on immigration policy.

When identifying why Holland was the richest country in Europe, Hume said that “Liberty, necessity, and a multitude of people” were the causes.

population conference or UNFPA. So inherent in the idea of stabilization of population, or any positive growth rate, is the idea of coercion.

R&L: In China there have been coercive family planning policies in place for some time, including forced abortions. What kind of arguments do you give against state efforts to coerce couples into having families of a certain size?

Simon: The first reason I oppose these coercive policies is because they are morally wrong. They deny individual liberty in one of the most important choices a couple may make—the number of children they will have. So I would be against this coercion even if there were an economic rationale for it. The most tragic aspect of the matter is that there is no economic warrant for forcing people to have fewer children.

It may be true that under socialism or communism, as in China, it takes longer for additional people to receive benefits, and the benefits of additional people are less than those in a capitalist system. It would be better if China would shift to a system where people were free in all ways, including economically free. Additional children then would more quickly benefit others than now. Still, there is no economic war-

Simon: By 1994 we have solid statistical evidence about the determinants of economic development. What could only be said on economic faith 30 years ago, we can now document scientifically. We now know statistically that what David Hume wrote on the subject in the 1700s was exactly right. When identifying why Holland was the richest country in Europe, Hume said that “Liberty, necessity, and a multitude of people” were the causes.

Simon: Immigrants are human beings above all, and more human beings are beneficial because of their minds and the goods their minds produce. Immigrants also have additional beneficial properties because they usually migrate when they are young and strong. Therefore, in a welfare society such as the United States which taxes some and gives others benefits, immigrants are large net contributors to the public coffers. Thus we benefit greatly from immigrants.

R&L: Tell us how important the Sabbath is to you. Does it have a connection to the contents of this interview?

Immigrants are human beings above all, and more human beings are beneficial because of their minds and the goods their minds produce.

A free society with social rules enables people to exercise their talents for their own sakes. This inevitably benefits others by bringing forth prodigious productive efforts which cause growth. And each generation creates a little bit more than it uses. Hence each new generation is richer than the previous generation.

This process is made more rapid by a free society. We frequently hear in the press how people in rich countries, such as the United States, constitute only five percent of the population and use up 40 percent of the

Simon: Though in no sense am I a conventional orthodox Jew, I do observe the Sabbath by refraining from all work, and by celebrating the Sabbath in life. And almost every Sabbath when weather permits—nearly half the Saturdays in the year in Washington—I sit outside in the garden behind my house, amidst both the glories of nature, and the beautiful homes of others. I admire and am thrilled by how both the natural and the man-made come together to make our dwelling place a more beautiful spot than wild nature alone. A

The Ecological Gospel

Robert H. Nelson

David Brower is, by wide agreement, the most influential environmentalist of the past 50 years. In the 1950s and 1960s he pioneered many of the tactics later used by environmentalists to stop the construction of dams, roads, shopping centers, and all manner of projects all over the United States. He was the executive director of the Sierra Club for seventeen years, and later founded another environmental organization, Friends of the Earth.

Brower was also a leading figure in a book by one of the most observant chroniclers of our time, John McPhee. In *Encounters with the Archdruid*, McPhee wrote in 1971 that “Brower, who talks to groups all over the country about conservation, refers to what he says as The Sermon.” McPhee found that, “to put it mildly, there is something evangelical about Brower. His approach is in some ways analogous to the Reverend Dr. Billy Graham’s exhortations to sinners to come forward and be saved now.” Viewing the spread of the environmental movement across the United States, McPhee offered the judgment that Brower’s crusade may have been “even more effective” than Graham’s.

It was not just the obvious religious enthusiasm of many environmentalists; it was also the substantive content of the environmental message that was a reminder of Billy Graham. Indeed, McPhee observed that “sooner or later in every talk,

Brower describes the creation of the world.” But the innocence and harmony of the original creation have given way to our current separation from the natural world—our loss, although Brower did not put it quite this way, of the Garden of Eden. Having fallen from the Garden, we

of human beings created in harmony with the world; tempted into evil; spreading corruption and depravity; and now facing disaster and perhaps the end of the world. There is here a distinctly Calvinist flavor. The sins of mankind are overwhelmingly large; as a founder of Greenpeace,

One bioregionalist argues that what is needed “is a ‘treaty’ or spiritual bond between ourselves and the natural world similar to God’s covenant with creation after the flood.”

are living in a condition of deep sinfulness. As Brower preached to audiences across the United States, the so-called “progress” of the modern age has not meant the advance of mankind, but has instead plunged human beings into evil ways: “We’re hooked” on material things, leading to “grand larceny against our children.” Indeed, for Brower the state of human depravity is so great that human beings are truly a “cancer” on the earth. Brower warns all the sinners of the world that their “addiction” to growth “will destroy us”; there will be a final “last scramble for the last breath of air”—the environmental apocalypse.

A Distinct Calvinist Flavor

In all this there is an obvious biblical quality. It is the story, although now offered in a new secular dress,

Tom Watson has said, human beings are the “AIDs of the earth.” The roles of reason and natural law are limited; in fact, for many environmentalists it is precisely our attempt to understand nature through rational scientific inquiry that is a prime cause of our current plight. The end of the world is near at hand; the only hope to be saved is a great moral awakening across the land. Given such qualities, it should perhaps not be surprising that in Europe environmentalism has been strongest in Germany, Scandinavia, and England. The environmental gospel is for many the secular substitute for their lost Protestant faith of old.

In the United States, a nation with a strong Calvinist heritage dating back to the Puritan settlement of New England, environmentalism has also been enthusiastically re-

ceived. Many members of the U.S. environmental movement are candid about its religious inspiration. Writing in *The Voice of the Earth*, environmentalist Theodore Roszak says that “the emerging world view of our day will have to address questions of a frankly religious character.” The environmental message must include answers to “ethical conduct, moral purpose and the meaning of life,” thereby “seeking to heal the soul of its wounds and guide it to salvation.” Writing on “the ecophilosophers” in the journal of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Peter Borrelli explains that “most bioregionalists believe the trend toward ecological destruction will not be reversed until there is a spiritual awakening.”

One bioregionalist argues that what is needed “is a ‘treaty’ or spiritual bond between ourselves and the natural world similar to God’s covenant with creation after the flood.” It is in the natural world that we find “the ultimate psychic as well as the physical context out of which we emerge into being and by which we are nourished, guided, healed, and fulfilled.” The theme of “protecting the Creation” is found frequently in environmental writings. It is a secular version of the biblical message that God made the world; intended that it should be as it is; and that to alter the world through human action is to try to play the role of God—to commit a great sin for which punishment must eventually be forthcoming.

The End Is Nigh

Indeed, the wide fears of recent years about global warming seem to have more to do with religion than

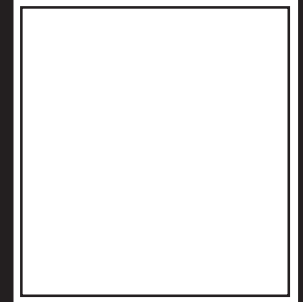
science. The heating of the earth, global warming alarmists tell us, will melt the polar ice caps, raise the seas, and thereby cause widespread flooding. Higher temperatures will parch the land, creating famine. Global warming will alter the normal weather patterns of the earth, bringing on drought. Perhaps it will en-

warming involves great uncertainties; while close attention to future developments is warranted, there is little in climate science to justify the current apocalyptic fears of so many people.

Environmental theology is having a great influence on other aspects of environmental policy. The Endan-

“Environmental theology is having a great influence on ... aspects of environmental policy. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 is a modern version of God’s command to Noah to save two of every species.”

—Robert H. Nelson



courage insects and bacteria, spreading disease. Flooding, famine, drought, pestilence, all are the traditional instruments of a wrathful God imposing a just punishment on a world of many sinners.

Robert M. White, a former chief of the U.S. Weather Bureau and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), observed in an article in *Scientific American* that “in this final decade of the 20th century, a different kind of apocalypse causes widespread concern.” It is no longer the “hand of God” but “more visible agents: belching smokestacks, gasoline-powered automobiles, power-generating stations, and the voracious destruction of forests.” All this is “turning up the heat on an overburdened environment” and, as our environmental preachers warn, threatening “the very habitability of the planet.” Yet, the truth is, as White writes, that the science of global

gered Species Act of 1973 is a modern version of God’s command to Noah to save two of every species. Indeed, the Act provides for a special committee that can convene to issue exemptions from its requirements; this group is commonly referred to in Washington policy circles as the “God committee.”

The more than 90 million acres of wilderness, created by the Congress since 1964, amount to a national set of environmental “cathedrals.” The early American advocate of wilderness, John Muir, wrote that primitive areas were his “temples” and the trees of the forests were “psalm-singing.” He said of the wilderness that “everything in it seems equally divine—one smooth, pure, wild glow of heaven’s love.” The Wilderness Society today explains that we must preserve wilderness areas because “destroy them and we destroy our spirit ... destroy them and we destroy our sense of values.”

Natural is Good, UnNatural is Evil

In environmental theology, the traditional Judeo-Christian categories of good and evil have been replaced by “natural” and “unnatural,” a moral standard that is today driving government policies in

years in Yellowstone National Park. Under guidelines adopted in the 1960s to promote “natural” conditions in parks throughout the United States, mountain goats entering Yellowstone from the west side have been protected by Park authorities.

because elk are deemed “natural,” but at the same time some mountain goats can be removed because they are deemed “unnatural.” They do not think that government policies towards global warming should be driven by the apocalyptic fears of many people that divine punishment for the sinfulness of the current age must be forthcoming.

I do not mean to suggest that there is not a wide range of views— theological and otherwise—within the environmental movement. Some environmentalists are motivated largely by traditional scientific considerations. There are probably several basic varieties of environmental religion. Some environmental faiths are more pagan and pantheistic than they are secularizations of biblical themes.

Yet, the policy examples above are only a few of many that could be developed of how our current environmental policies often are not shaped by pragmatic concerns of how to improve human welfare. Instead, these policies follow a logic grounded in an environmental theology.

For the majority of Americans who simply want a clean and attractive environment, they are paying a high price—many tens of billions of dollars—for their current willingness to leave much of environmental policy making to those people who see it as a religious crusade. A

Robert H. Nelson teaches at the School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, and has authored *Reaching for Heaven on Earth: The Theological Meaning of Economics* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1991).

... human beings are exposed to many more carcinogens that are natural to the chemistry of ordinary foods we eat. In terms of the presence of carcinogens, peanut butter is more dangerous than many chemicals tightly regulated by the government.

many areas. The government is requiring industry to spend many billions of dollars in the regulation of pesticides and other “artificial” chemicals that are thought to cause cancer. Yet, as Bruce Ames has explained in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and other publications, human beings are exposed to many more carcinogens that are natural to the chemistry of ordinary foods we eat. In terms of the presence of carcinogens, peanut butter is more dangerous than many chemicals tightly regulated by the government. Environmental organizations have demanded that the government go to heroic lengths to exclude unnatural chemicals from the environment, even while showing relative unconcern about other larger dangers, as long as they are “natural.” The risks created by naturally occurring radon may be greater than the risks of nuclear power, but have never been much of a priority on the environmental agenda.

This theological logic is illustrated by a policy followed by the National Park Service for many

However, goats entering from the northeast or the south side have been slated for destruction.

In either case, it would be the same goat species whose members would have the same biological impact on Yellowstone. The difference was that the west side goats were deemed a “natural” population, while the northeastern and southern goats had been introduced outside the Park some years ago by hunters. Hence, one group of goats was “natural” and thus desirable; the other group was “unnatural” and an unwanted presence.

Paying a High Price

Most Americans favor strong environmental policies to clean the air, improve drinking water, reduce cancer, and achieve other important goals. However, they do not find it useful to distinguish between cancer that is caused by a “natural” substance and cancer attributable to an “unnatural” agent. They do not think that Yellowstone Park should be severely damaged by excess numbers of elk, as is now happening,

On Coercive Environmental Education

Jo Kwong

In *The Religion of Environmentalism*, John K. Williams wrote “Extreme environmentalism ... is a decidedly dangerous religion. Its vision of the world and of humanity’s place in it reeks of superstition. The pattern of behavior it prescribes is morally grotesque....”

Williams’ sentiments are hardly unique. A growing number of people are disturbed by the methods and strategies used by the environmental special interest movement, particularly in the realm of environmental education. In a previous special edition of *Religion & Liberty* (Fall 1992), I wrote of how environmentalism is being taken to extremes—extremes in which man is viewed as intrinsically evil or incapable, having failed miserably at caring for the earth. As a result, nature worship and the elevation of “nature” above man are prescribed as necessary remedies.

In the battle to determine a role for man in nature (if there is any role for man at all), our nation’s children are caught in the crossfire. To some, environmental education poses one of the greatest threats to the moral education of our kids. Educators have embraced environmental extremism, fully accepting the anti-man, anti-technology, and anti-economic growth positions. School systems across the nation, often at the requirement of government mandates, are incorporating environmental education into traditional subjects such as mathematics, his-

tory, languages, and civics.

My review of environmental education teachings revealed a number of unsettling trends and strategies. For example, it is apparent that 1) children are being scared into becoming environmental activists, 2) there is widespread misinformation in materials aimed at children, 3) children are being taught *what* to think, rather than *how* to think, 4)

Environmental professionals have learned that sensationalism sells. It sells in boosting donations to their non-profit organizations and it sells in peddling their materials to educators.

children are taught that man is evil, and 5) environmental education is being used to undermine the simple joys of childhood. These findings raise an important question: Are we raising critically-thinking leaders, or are we merely raising automatons that can recite the latest environmental dogma?

Raising Eco-Kids

Recommended books for kids in Friends of the Earth’s “Environmental Education Resource Guide” include *Going Green: A Kid’s Handbook to Saving the Planet*, *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth*, and *Earth Book for Kids: Activities to Help*

Heal the Earth. Newsweek’s Just for Kids!?! publication recommends *Save our Planet: 750 Everyday Ways You Can Help Clean Up the Earth*, and *At Home in the Tide Pool and Will We Miss Them?*

The textbook, *Your Health*, published by Prentice Hall, encourages children to “Consider joining an environmental group.” Its suggestions for further contacts include Greenpeace, Zero Population Growth, Planned Parenthood, and Earth First! (a group that has solicited terminally-ill people to undertake life-threatening eco-terrorist activities).

The Alley Foundation, a non-political, non-profit organization, tells the children, “Unless you take action NOW, the beautiful forests where you go hiking, the beaches where you swim in clean water, the clear morning when you take a breath of sweet-smelling air could all become things of the past. This booklet will give you an idea of some of the many things you can do.”

What’s so wrong with these calls to activism? Nothing, really, if children are taught good solid facts about environmental sciences and understand the trade-offs involved in adopting alternative courses of action. Yet this hardly seems the case. Instead, children are taught by people who are not necessarily trained in the environmental subjects they teach. Consider that the United Nations Environment Programme markets its publication, *Environmental Education for Our Common Future*,

to teachers “whatever subject they teach.” Furthermore, choosing between alternative options typically ignores consideration of the trade-offs or consequences involved. Instead, the emphasis is on choosing the one that is simply “right.”

Myths vs. Facts

Environmental professionals have learned that sensationalism sells. It sells in boosting donations to their non-profit organizations and it sells in peddling their materials to educators. The focus is typically on the negative: how man or an evil corporation is somehow devastating the environment.

Unfortunately, the truth loses out if a more sensational version is plausible. Consequently, children are taught that acid rain is destroying our forests, overpopulation will exhaust our resources, the ozone layer is rapidly being destroyed, and global warming will lead to disastrous climatic change. Yet each of these, and many other scare scenarios, have been widely debated or refuted by experts. Nonetheless, they are taught as facts, rather than hypotheses, to children.

Global warming, for example, is portrayed as a sinister process resulting from greedy human behavior. A Prentice Hall “Science Gazette” article tells how global warming could cause severe drought in the western United States. “Farms might have to be abandoned because of lack of water.” In other places, more rain will fall, but this is not good news because wet weather will cause an insect explosion. “Valuable food crops would be gobbled up by millions of insect pests.”

But in fact, the earth’s warming is a natural, necessary phenomena.

Essential for the existence of life forms on earth, greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, raise average temperatures to about 60 degrees fahrenheit. What scientists disagree on is whether increased carbon dioxide from coal burning and auto emissions will change the climate. The understanding is so vague that, in the mid to late 1970s, scientists predicted we were headed for a disaster via global cooling.

Understandably, it is difficult to present a balanced picture in text-

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books for a number of reasons. For one thing, the need for simplicity in writing for children leads some authors to present issues as black-and-white, right-or-wrong. Furthermore, the need to appease many interest groups in order to gain statewide approval leads many textbook authors to write from the “politically correct” perspective. Nonetheless, it’s well worth considering the impact such doom and gloom scenarios may have upon our children.

Raising Automatons

In order to educate our children, we need to give them basic tools. They need the scientific knowledge to understand environmental issues. This includes studies of botany, ecol-

ogy, hydrology, entomology, and so on. They also need to understand the basic scientific method: that scientific hypotheses must be verified by observation and experimentation. Surely, some of this is technically beyond the understanding of the younger ones, but if they aren’t able to understand the science, they shouldn’t be called upon to lobby for specific policy options.

Beyond the science, children need to learn about decision making if they are to be thinking contributors to the activism network. They need to see why certain types of energy, for example, are preferred by consumers, even though some people feel they are sinister or wasteful. They need to understand what we give up when we pursue one course of action over another.

Yet that perspective is a far cry from the litany of goods and evils in the environment. As nearly all school children can recite: Oil is bad, hydroelectric is good. Disposable diapers are bad, cloth diapers are good. Landfills are bad, recycling is good. Automobiles are bad, bikes are good. Using teak or mahogany wood is good, using rainforest woods is bad.

As an example of the teaching tools used to get these messages across, consider *National Geographic’s* Wonders of Learning Kit. It suggests that teachers of science or *language arts* “Have the children write or dictate stories about two imaginary planets, ‘Trashoid 4’ and ‘Recyclet.’ What would the planets look like? How would they be different? What would the beings who live on these planets look like? How would they live?”

While students may be adept at describing the evils of planet

Trashoid, few can satisfactorily tell you exactly why something is classified as an environmental good or bad. Children are drilled, for example, to accept that recycling is the only correct way to deal with resources. By coercing their parents to sort paper, plastic, aluminum, and glass, and then to haul it all out to the curbside, the children are making their environmental mark on the world.

With this clean conscience, there's no need to look at the facts. To name a few: each additional recycling truck rumbling through the neighborhood adds vehicle emissions to the air, consumes oil and gas, and increases noise pollution. At the recycling plants, energy resources are consumed to process the materials, typically releasing huge volumes of waste water or other wastes into the environment. Rather than focusing on the trade-offs, however, the educational focus is finding ways to get others to recycle. In the words of the Alley Foundation's book, "Cry out to others to cut down on their waste and to recycle whenever possible!"

Man Is Evil

The many kid's books mentioned above clearly suggest another underlying theme: that man is evil. For example, in *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth*, kids are told "When your parents were kids, hardly anyone ever worried about saving the environment ... They developed some bad habits. They made as much garbage as they wanted; they wasted energy whenever they wanted; they used up the Earth's treasures, just for fun." The underlying suggestion of evil couldn't be more apparent.

Other statements simply suggest parents are dumb. In a discussion of the ozone issue, children are told "We don't think adults would keep on making these [CFC] gases if they realized they were harming all life on Earth." At a time when family values are an important concern, perhaps caution should be exercised in using the environment as a wedge between parents and children.

In addition to being anti-parent, teaching aids are patently anti-man.

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At the recycling plants, energy resources are consumed to process the materials, typically releasing huge volumes of waste water or other wastes into the environment.

In one pre-school exercise, four-year olds were given four pictures and asked to choose the one that does not belong. They were shown pictures of three different animals in the forest and a picture of a logger.

Environmental Education: Morally Correct or Morally Bankrupt?

Commenting on the declining moral, spiritual, and aesthetic character and habits of society, William Bennett recently opined that "the worst of it has to do with our children":

Apart from the numbers and spe-

cific facts, there is the on-going, chronic crime against children: the crime of making them old before their time. We live in a culture which at times seems almost dedicated to the corruption of the young, to assuring the loss of their innocence before their time.

Isn't this exactly what we are doing by burdening children with the fright of environmental catastrophes caused by man? Consider Vice President Al Gore's environmental preaching about ozone: "We have to tell our children that they must redefine their relationship to the sky, and they must begin to think of the sky as a threatening part of their environment." Is this a good message for the young, who are characteristically known for crayon drawings of clear blue skies and shining, smiley-face suns?

It certainly seems as if we are dedicated to assuring the loss of their innocence before their time. How else can we explain comment after comment coming from the mouths of our children that express nothing less than fear of dying and guilt of living? Consider some of the now-famous quotations by several eco-heroes:

Catherine Mitchell:

Our Earth is getting hotter every minute and the only way we can stop it is to stop burning styrofoam. I'm also too young to die, might I add, so STOP BURNING THE EARTH! (FACE newsletter).

Melissa Poe, age nine:

Mr. President, if you ignore this letter we will all die of pollution and the ozone layer.

Jesse Hornstein, age 10:

No gases! No air pollution! It's
life or death.

Adam Adler, age 11:

I think global warming and the
greenhouse effect are very bad!
What do we want the earth to
become, a flaming ball?

Teaching Values Once Again, But Whose Values?

In a society where we are no longer free to teach traditional values in the school systems, it's unsettling to find a new set of values in the classroom. We have allowed the widespread teaching of environmental values based upon politically-cor-

rect propaganda. Those concerned about traditional values and the moral corruption of our children should keep an eye on environmental education. As suggested earlier, it poses one of the greatest threats to the moral education of our kids. We need to learn more about methods and strategies in environmental "education" and, taking our cue from the activists, dare to "speak out." Our challenges may not be politically correct, but, hopefully, they are morally grounded. A

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Earth in the Balance

by Al Gore

Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992. 407 pp. Cloth: \$22.95

Review by Gene Healy

There has been much talk in the last couple of months about the Religious Right's growing involvement and influence within the Republican Party. Amid all the concern about the threat to our civil liberties represented by Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, the media has greatly neglected the emergence of a more serious menace: Capture of the Democratic Party by the Ecological Religious Left.

Vice President Al Gore has emerged as the spokesman of ecopaganism, a pantheistic prophet of global environmental catastrophe. As made clear in his book, *Earth in*

the Balance, Gore envisions himself as the leader of an international movement to make "the rescue of the environment ... the central organizing principle for civilization."

Gore's treatise on environmentalism became a bestseller when it first appeared and remains a standard reference work for eco-activists. Now that we are half-way through the Clinton Presidency, a re-examination of Gore's magnum opus is in order.

In *Earth in the Balance*, Gore calls for an "environmentalism of the spirit," and praises primitive peoples for their reverent attitude toward the

environment. Though Gore, a U.S. senator for twelve years before moving to the White House, is far removed from man in his natural state, he nonetheless hawks a quasi-religious ideology that urges man to re-establish his lost primal link with nature.

Consumed by apocalyptic visions, Gore writes of "an ecological Kristallnacht," and declares, "the ferocity of [industrial civilization's] assault on the earth is breathtaking, and the horrific consequences are occurring so quickly as to defy our capacity to recognize them."

These words cannot be blindly accepted. Gore's premises, like those of all environmentalists, must be challenged, subjected to rational analysis and scientific scrutiny, before his conclusion can be accepted. Thus, his repeated pronouncements of impending ecological doom beg the question: Are things really so bad? The answer: No, they are not.

Gore devotes large sections of his book to the issue of global warming. At one point, he alleges that only 2 percent of scientists disagree with him about catastrophic warming as a result of the greenhouse effect. This is demonstrably false. A February 1992 survey of climatologists—conducted by Greenpeace—found that the largest group of respondents, 47 percent of those polled, expressed serious reservations about the threat of global warming. (Keep in mind that in the mid 1970s environmentalists were alarming the world about the coming ice age!) Despite Gore's assertions, there is no consensus in the scientific community as to whether rising levels of CO² in the atmosphere will lead to significant global temperature changes.

Nor is there any conclusive evi-

dence proving that ozone depletion, another looming menace Gore identifies, represents a significant threat to human well-being. The various scenarios for ozone depletion predict a range of thinning from 5 to 20 percent. If this occurred, it would result in an increase in ultra-violet radiation similar to what one would encounter by moving 120 miles closer to the equator, where UV exposure tends to be greater. Such a development, while significant, would not force parents to tell their children that "they must begin to think of the sky as a threatening part of their environment," as Gore suggests.

In any event, chloroflourocarbons, the villainous chemicals indicated in the ozone scare, are being phased out, as per the requirements of the 1990 Montreal Protocol. The scientific consensus is that, after about the year 2000, the ozone layer will slowly start to gain in thickness and protective ability. Even Michael Oppenheimer, an atmospheric scientist with the perpetually alarmist En-

The ecological doom-crier role has worked well for Al Gore.

vironmental Defense Fund, admits that, "the current and projected levels of ozone depletion do not appear to represent a catastrophe."

Despite the lack of scientific support for his apocalyptic brand of environmentalism in Earth in the Balance, Gore proposes some dramatic and unsettling policy changes. He is convinced that society must undergo a "wrenching transformation," if mankind is to avoid the coming environmental catastrophe. Specifi-

cally, the vice president advocates these economically devastating "solutions": a "Global Marshall Plan," steep taxes on carbon, more stringent vehicle fuel efficiency standards, and a phase-out of the internal combustion engine over the next twenty-five years.

The ecological doom-crier role has worked well for Gore. It helped him garner the vice-presidential nomination, and earned him a devoted following among left-leaning activists. But what has been good for

Gore will not necessarily be good for America. Tomorrow's leaders are being weaned on scientifically insupportable, nursery-rhyme environmentalism. Equally frightening, today's leaders are ignoring the facts, too. Their central message, like Gore's, is that we will have to lose our liberties and empty our wallets in order to avert the latest impending apocalypse. A

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Environmental Overkill
 by Dixy Lee Ray and Lou Guzzo
 Regnery Gateway, 1993. 260 pp. Cloth: \$19.95

Review by Doug Bandow

If one believes what passes for science these days, the world is about to end. The globe is warming, ozone is disappearing, smog is expanding, forests are shrinking, species are dying, and carcinogens are spreading. What were once thought to be good—population growth and technological advance—are actually bad. Without radical change, it is said, the environment and mankind are doomed.

Sadly, this is what Vice President Gore, Environmental Protection Agency head Carol Browner, a host of congressmen and senators, and much of the media establishment believe. As a result, federal policy is becoming increasingly costly and draconian making Americans both poorer and less free. This course might arguably be worth it if the re-

sult would be to save us from otherwise certain destruction.

But, as Dixy Lee Ray, the former governor of Washington, and Lou Guzzo, newspaper columnist and editor, document, we face no crisis, and the problems that are present can be solved with far less expensive and intrusive approaches than those which come out of Washington today.

The premise of *Environmental Overkill* is simple common sense: "we believe that problems should be proved to be real before we lavish money on them. And we believe that it's important to demonstrate that a proposed solution is appropriate, practical, and affordable" write Ray and Guzzo.

The problems of 'environmental overkill' were well encapsulated by

the 1992 Rio Summit, the well-publicized but ideologically biased U.N. environmental conference. Ray and Guzzo began their book by looking at what was really a global fraud, with U.N. control over the activities of the industrialized West and massive wealth transfers to poorer states, rather than global environmental protection, as the prime goals. Indeed, little concern was evinced about the actual facts regarding the extent and causes of global environmental degradation. Alas, write Ray and Guzzo, "by every measure the conference represented a single victory for the foes of scientific progress, knowledge, and economic development."

With Rio as their backdrop, the authors move on to a variety of alleged "crises" that are supposedly threatening to overwhelm us. What they find is that the Rio mentality—yelling "the sky is falling" in order to advance a collectivist, redistributionist political agenda—permeates the environmental debate. Genuine evidence is all too often ignored as ideologues shape policy.

Global warming, a major issue at the Rio Summit, is one of the most important examples. The claim is that growing CO² emissions are causing temperatures to rise on the earth, with the eventual result of melting ice caps, flooding coasts, expanding deserts, and so on. In fact, report Ray and Guzzo, the majority of atmospheric scientists doubt the theory and past climatic changes suggest that the scary models are grossly inaccurate: there has, for instance, been little warming over the last century, and virtually none since 1940, when CO² emissions began to increase dramatically.

To the contrary, temperatures ac-

tually dropped from 1940 to the 1980s. Barely fifteen years ago some environmental popularists were predicting a new ice age. And in another fifteen years that may again become the professional environmentalists' cause.

We see much the same phenomena regarding other apocalyptic scare mongering. Ozone depletion is a much-distorted issue. The alleged danger of a shrinking ozone layer, supposedly caused by CFCs used in refrigeration and air conditioning, is increased exposure to UV radiation.

Yet during the 1980s, at a time

What they find is that the Rio mentality—yelling "the sky is falling" in order to advance a collectivist, redistributionist political agenda—permeates the environmental debate. Genuine evidence is all too often ignored as ideologues shape policy.

when ozone was supposedly being destroyed, UV radiation levels actually fell. Report Ray and Guzzo: "According to scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the University of Colorado, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, the amount of ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth has, in some urban areas, decreased by 5 to 18 percent." This fact, however, has had no effect on the behavior of the U.S. government, which in 1992 accelerated the planned phase out of CFCs.

Much the same story occurs elsewhere—toxic wastes, asbestos, acid rain, and electro-magnetic fields, to name a few. These and other issues are driven by politics, not facts, with ideologues attempting to scare the public in order to achieve broader objectives of reordering society and mulcting taxpayers. Some of these issues have theological as well as practical objectives.

Consider the assault on population growth, now led by the Clinton Administration, which is again going to fund international population control groups that have supported abortion and coercive birth control policies. "Sometime in the future, when the accomplishments of the 20th century are recorded for posterity, it may finally be acknowledged that our greatest achievement by far has been the introduction of high-tech, high-yield agriculture," contend Ray and Guzzo.

Yet to the followers of Paul Ehrlich—the Stanford biologist who erroneously predicted hundreds of millions of famine deaths during the 1970s but continues to make new, equally apocalyptic, forecasts—such unambiguous good news is actually bad news. For they want fewer people as a matter of principle; thus, technological advances that allow more people to prosper are by definition bad.

Ray and Guzzo have performed a public service by penning *Environmental Overkill*. The book is not original—indeed, the authors rely a bit too heavily on articles and reports by others—but it is accessible to the layman and an easy read for even those whose eyes usually glaze over at the mere mention of "public policy." At a time with a certified environmental apocalyptic as vice president, *En-*

Environmental Overkill deserves the widest audience possible. A

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dedicated columnist, Contributing Editor to The Freeman and author of numerous books including *Beyond Good Intentions* (1988), *The Politics of Plunder* (1990) and most recently, *The Politics of Envy* (1994).

environmental paranoia. The real tragedy in this town is that none of the fears that cause suffering and economic hardships have any scientific basis. The authors believe that to varying degrees, the paranoia of the fable is common in America. In the authors' words:

Eco-Sanity
by Joseph L. Blast, Peter J. Hill
& Richard C. Rue

Madison Books, 1994. 313 pp. Cloth: \$22.95

Review by John A. Baden

Americans continue to pay a heavy price for their irrational fear of chemicals. Billions of dollars are being wasted on attempts to reduce toxic and other emissions to levels far below those shown to have any negative effect on human health or wildlife. People have lost their jobs because environmental regulations were imposed without regard to costs or consequences. In 1989,

The authors of *Eco-Sanity* have addressed a formidable challenge in bringing empirical analysis to the religious subject of environmentalism. By looking at a wide array of issues, they give readers a solid sense of the diversity of environmental problems as well as the recurrent similarities. They have done a commendable job, and I admire their efforts.

However, I encourage the authors and sympathetic readers to defer optimism about the impact of this book's important perspective. We should carefully separate our hopes from our expectations when dealing with the prospect of environmental reforms. Even solid analysis, compelling recommendations, and substantively important payoffs do not guarantee useful reforms.

Existing laws, regulations, and perspectives are seldom accidents, but rather are the result of cultural, political, economic and ecological evolution. They resist dramatic changes. Thus while many of my friends and colleagues have advanced substantial reforms that

promise improvements in social equality, economic efficiency and ecological sustainability, none have

The stifling effect that many regulations have on innovation is being offset by new products and processes that lie outside the control of cumbersome centralized bureaucracies. The information revolution fosters this process.

been realized. The academic and semi-popular literature is replete with arguments for reform that would seem to leave nearly everybody better off, yet these reforms are rarely if ever advanced by the politicians and policy activists whose support is required for implementation.

None of these caveats are meant to detract from this excellent book. Rather, I hope to forestall frustration and disenchantment by emphasizing the political economy of environmental policy. The book's nine chapters begin with a brief fable of an otherwise pleasant town inflicted with

when an environmental group and compliant national media frightened fruit buyers with the Alar scare, orchard owners across the country lost hundreds of millions of dollars in sales.

This example illustrates an important factor responsible for much of the eco-insanity that this book seeks to address. Namely, the selective pressures within the environmental industry have generated a class of "crisis entrepreneurs" who create, exaggerate or amplify problems in order to generate revenues for the \$600-\$800 million environ-

mental activist industry. This minority group among environmentalists contains predators who prey upon citizens' good intentions. In the Alar case, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), together with a professional public relations firm,

of personal gain. Decency and the canons of science are ignored as laws and politics are twisted for private ends.

Eco-Sanity also hints at reasons for optimism. As the authors explain, environmental concern and

and as scientific understanding improves, we may become more sophisticated in expressing our environmentalism. At some point, opinion leaders are likely to understand that economies are like ecosystems, and that economic tools and concepts such as risk assessment, marginal analysis and opportunity costs provide the most effective and just means for addressing environmental problems.

I strongly recommend *Eco-Sanity* as an excellent primer for the intelligent non-specialist who is interested in the environment and puzzled by the pervasive irrationality, inconsistency and occasional duplicity of many environmentalists. It makes a constructive contribution to the foundations of a new environmentalism, an environmentalism predicated on solid science and political economy. For this the authors deserve our gratitude and respect. A

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The stifling effect that many regulations have on innovation is being offset by new products and processes that lie outside the control of cumbersome centralized bureaucracies.

utilized the slimmest of scientific reeds to construct a monumental public relations crisis. This crisis did, in fact, generate short-term support for NRDC.

The point of this is not that "greenies" are "baddies." In fact, several national organizations (Environmental Defense Fund, Defenders of Wildlife) as well as hundreds of local and regional groups are initiating efforts identical or complementary with the proposals advocated by *Eco-Sanity*. Rather, a subset of scavengers has developed that has a vested interest in generating fears and inspiring guilt, and then providing avenues down which well-meaning citizens can parade their good intentions by writing checks and signing membership forms. Elected politicians are the parasitic hosts for these groups.

In addition to providing brief but reasonably complete treatments of the various "crisis of the month-club" events, *Eco-Sanity* helps unmask the attorneys, MBAs and "scientists" who posture as selfless defenders of the public interest. These opportunists use the perceived importance and legitimacy of their mission as a cloak to conceal the pursuit

ability to address that concern increase with income and education. Although poorly designed environmental policies are clearly retarding economic progress, especially of our poorer citizens, so far technology is trumping political pathologies. The stifling effect that many regulations have on innovation is being offset by new products and processes that lie outside the control of cumbersome centralized bureaucracies. The information revolution fosters this process.

As we become more wealthy

Free Market Environmentalism
by Terry L. Anderson & Donald R. Leal
Pacific Research Institute, 1991. 190 pp. Paper: \$16.95

Review by Mark St. John Couhig

In the decade or so preceding her death this past spring, the noted scientist and occasional politician, Dr. Dixy Lee Ray, earned a reputation as the nation's most insightful critic of modern environmentalism. In a letter written three years before

her death, she summed up what she had learned, observing that environmentalism, "as we have come to know it in the waning years of the twentieth century," is "anti-development, anti-progress, anti-technology, anti-business, anti-established insti-

tutions, and, above all, anti-capitalism.”

Many in the environmental movement would agree. A published report in the newsletter of the Earth First! environmentalist group, for example, says “industrialism [is] the main force behind the environmental crises.” One noted environmentalist, Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich, says the world’s environmental problems are caused by “too many rich people.”

Given the common currency of these notions regarding “environmentalism,” the title of *Free Market Environmentalism* will strike many as an oxymoron. But the authors, Terry L. Anderson, a professor of economics at Montana State University, and Donald R. Leal, a research associate at the Political Economy Research Center, intend no irony. Their purpose is to establish a new environmental paradigm, one based on free men making free choices. The authors recognize the difficulty they face. As they note, most environmentalists and government officials believe that “if markets are the problem ... government must be the solution.”

Leal and Anderson disagree, citing case after case in which government control of natural resources—the “environment,” in current usage—has resulted in greater degradation.

Consider, for one, our national farm policy. By subsidizing farmers, we have encouraged the cultivation of land that is unsuitable for farming, but which is perfectly suitable habitat for dozens of native species of game. The result: billions of taxpayer dollars spent subsidizing special interests and concurrent environmental devastation.

This example reveals the one basic flaw in the theory of governmental control of natural resources, to wit: political capital is more important to these agencies than taxpayer money. (An economist with a sense of irony would note that this is a consequence of the law of supply and demand. There is a perennial short-

It posits a positive role for government, specifically by noting that government must be diligent in enforcing property rights.

age of the former, and a surfeit of the latter.)

Free Market Environmentalism articulates an alternative “vision” by recognizing that man is essentially “self-interested”; this leads to the desire for greater profits. Inherent in the drive to greater profits is the efficient use of resources. This self-interest also leads to greater development and use of specialized knowledge. Monolithic government agencies can, at best, operate within one or two guidelines. But the creative power of millions is unleashed when markets are free. Finding a niche is the name of the game, and the greatest niche of all is reduced prices. And again it should be noted: reduced prices are largely the result of enhanced efficiency.

Free Market Environmentalism is not a libertarian diatribe, by the way. It posits a positive role for government, specifically by noting that government must be diligent in enforcing property rights. Indeed, to attack many of our environmental problems, property rights should be

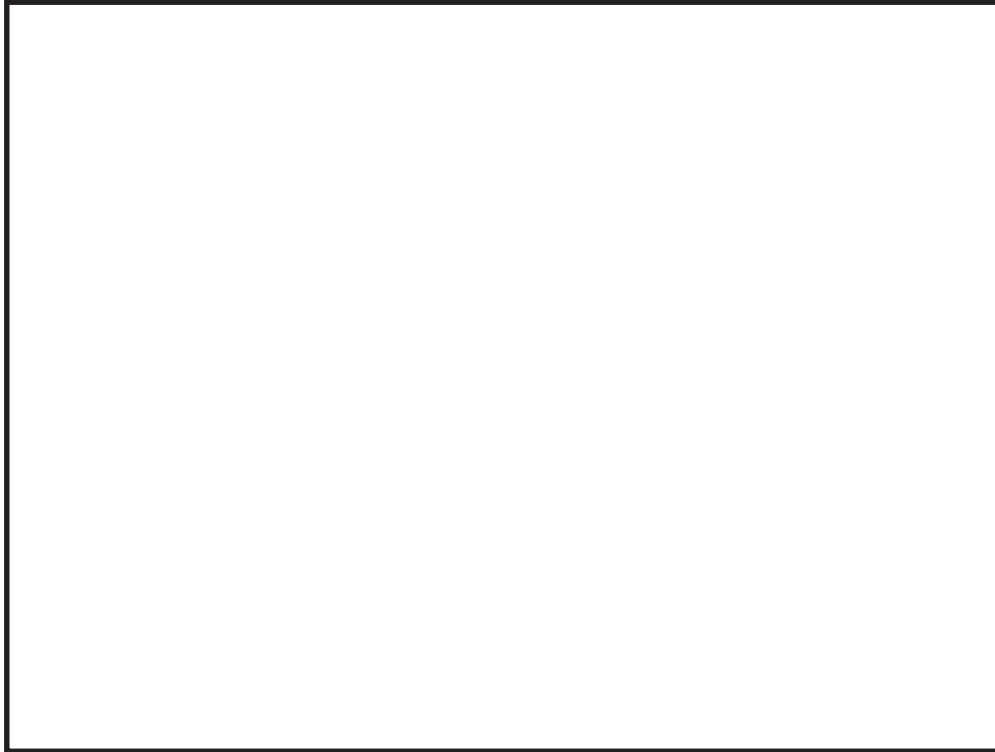
expanded. For example, automobile emissions could be reduced by privatizing congested highways. Here, simply put, is how free market environmentalism would be put to work on auto emissions:

First, the atmosphere would be regarded as having economic value, and would also be regarded as a publicly held asset. Emissions from automobiles would then reduce the value of this asset. If we privatized our highways, the owners of highways would be liable to the public for damages. In turn, this would force changes to maximize profits—cars with better pollution control equipment would receive lower tolls and those with no equipment might be banned altogether. Moreover, congestion could be reduced at peak pollution hours by having higher rush hour rates.

The primary contribution of *Free Market Environmentalism* is that it provides any number of these elegant, inexpensive and liberating ideas.

That’s the good news. The bad news, of course, is that elegant, inexpensive and liberating ideas are anathema to environmentalists, and to government officials. But if the course of American environmentalism is to be changed—and for the sake of the environment and the economy it must be—then opposing ideas and alternative solutions must be clearly and forcefully articulated. Anderson and Leal have provided the text for this revolution. A

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