

On Going Through the World with Our Hats Off



Interview: William C. Dennis

William C. Dennis is a Senior Fellow at Liberty Fund, Inc., in Indianapolis, Indiana. He served as a special assistant in the United States Department of the Interior during the Reagan administration and was professor of history at Denison University. An avid mountaineer, Dr. Dennis has had an abiding interest in issues pertaining to liberty and the environment.

R&L: *At the heart of any discussion about the environment is the question, “What kind of world do we want to live in?” What, to your way of thinking, is the best environment for man?*

Dennis: The best environment for man is the environment for liberty. This is an environment that has been hard-won over the years and was somewhat accidental in its occurrence; that is to say, one thousand years ago, men did not go out and say, “We want to live free,” but they learned through trial and error that freedom is a better way for human beings to live. It gave them an opportunity to act like men rather than as slaves, to free their creative capacities, and so, as a by-product, it has created substantial wealth and brought many material benefits and other blessings. Further, it

is an environment that, over time, has led to greater amounts of peace among peoples and nations. It is a true, scarce resource.

R&L: *What does this environment for liberty consist of?*

Dennis: To describe it simply, such an environment consists, first, of limited, balanced, and checked government that does not try to do too much and that leaves most of the responsibilities for daily life in the hands of individuals who may then act freely—alone or together with others—to pursue what they conceive of as the good. Second, it is an environment that is based upon secure, well-defined, transferable property rights, because the manipulation of property is the means by which people

exercise their freedom. And third, it is based upon some understanding of the rule of law—not law as a positivist thing, promulgated by the judges and the legislators, but law grounded in the nature of things.

R&L: *Many are skeptical that a free society, such as you have described, is good for the natural environment. How would you address that skepticism?*

Dennis: If we look at the very earliest archeological explorations of the origins of human beings, we see, right from the start, human beings manipulating the environment to suit their own well-being. With the development of agriculture around ten thousand years ago, people began farming the fields and living in towns and villages—that is, living apart from the natural world. So, I think it is in our nature to live apart from the natural environment. As human beings expand their capabilities to manipulate the world for their own interests, the natural world will be changed. This has been happening for a long time; it seems to be a part of the nature of things, and I do not see it as a crisis in and of itself.

Furthermore, until fairly recently, the

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natural world was a real threat. It brought hardship that made the difference not only between survival and well-being but between life and death. It has only been within the last two or three hundred years that human beings have really had the material luxury of looking upon the natural environment as something that might, in and of itself, be of interest to them. The fact that we now have the material means to approach the natural environment in a way in which we can appreciate and enjoy it is something that ultimately will be good for the natural environment, because now humans include substantial contact with open spaces, wildlife, and wild areas as part of living the good life.

R&L: How can markets contribute to environmental conservation?

Dennis: Markets do two things: They make you take account of the real costs of things, and they make you consider other peoples' interests and demands. On the first point, it is very easy to say, "I want lots of wilderness," but it is very different to say, "What sorts of costs am I willing to entail to have that wilderness?" Costs are opportunities forgone, and markets make you think seriously about the costs of your demands. On the second point, the market price for something is established through competition

for scarce resources and allows human beings to express imperfectly understood and differential interests in a particular resource. If you look at wild nature as a resource about which people have different attitudes, markets allow you to make some rough comparison between apples and oranges.

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Another thing, of course, that markets and private property do is give the owner of a particular resource an incentive to do good things with it. "Good" here is defined by the owner—that is true—and all owners will make decisions about their property with which some other people will disagree. However, if the owner makes a decision about the use of his property radically out of step with the market value of that resource, he will see that it quickly depreciates in value, that he is losing value as other people assess things. What we need to remember, though, is that private property and markets help us make decisions, but they do not ensure good decisions. Some people are sure to make

bad decisions, but those decisions will be paid for largely by those people themselves through the decline in the value of their property. On the other hand, their good decisions will be largely rewarded through the appreciation by others of what they have done with their property.

R&L: But markets are not perfect.

Dennis: No, they are not perfect, but they are much better than the alternative, where the government comes in and says, "We believe that in our infinite wisdom we know what the ranking values of different resources should be, and we are going to assign relative ranks to them."

We see again and again that when governments do that, they will almost certainly, at some time or another, make a mistake, just as individual property owners do. And when they make a mistake, it is usually a massive one. Look through the history of the world and you see that most massive environmental destruction has been caused by governments.

R&L: Then, a free market institutional arrangement is superior to a command economy. Having said that, though, are markets enough?

Dennis: That question can be answered on two different levels. On the one hand, do we need other kinds of values than

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market values? And on the other, are there some things that, when it comes to the natural world, governments have a responsibility to do? Let me say something about governments first. One thing governments are capable of doing is defining and protecting property rights. I am not saying that property rights are a governmental construction, but they are a social construction, and once constructed, it helps to have governments enforce them.

There may be another function for government; there may be a few things that government should own and control in the name of the public good, but we need to be very cautious in thinking about what those things should be. For example, there may be a governmental role in preserving the great natural treasures of the nation that somehow define who we are as a nation—Yosemite, Yellowstone, the Great Smoky Mountains—but that is a long way from saying that the U.S. government should own over six hundred million acres of our land, much of which could be ably managed in private hands.

R&L: *What about the other part of that question? Do we need other kinds of values in addition to market values?*

Dennis: Of course we do. This is a beautiful world we live in, and we are immensely fortunate to live in it. We should have respect for it. We should take care of it. There are different ways to approach that and different people have different ideas of how best to do that. Some will want golf courses, some will want wild woods, some will want carefully tended gardens. These are all good landscapes that human beings can admire and enjoy. For many people, that appreciation, that aesthetic understanding, will be rooted in a religious view of the world. And that is to be applauded.

R&L: *In speaking of peoples' appreciation for the natural world being rooted in a religious viewpoint, it seems that you are addressing the Judeo-Christian concept of stewardship. How do you understand the religious foundation of man's responsibility for the care of creation?*

Dennis: The Judeo-Christian view of man is that he is God's creature, that he belongs here on this planet. More than that, he has a special place on it, he is made in God's image, and therefore, to some extent, it is not incorrect to say that the world was made for man. That does not mean that man can do anything with it he pleases—quite the reverse. It means he has great responsibilities toward it. It seems to me that the understanding of the Old and New Testaments is that all of this world is God's creation, that all of it is good, and that, to some extent, it is a part of God's mind, His vision. Therefore, human beings who believe in and love this God owe it to Him to treat His vision with respect.

People with real understanding see that some things are better than others, and living in this world with respect is better than treating it with contempt.

R&L: *This perspective differs vastly from most environmental thinking. How would you address these differences between the spirituality of the Judeo-Christian heritage and most environmental thinking?*

Dennis: Well, suppose man does not have a spiritual root? Suppose there is not a creator of some personal loving sort, but merely a spiritual presence that put it all into action? What is there to keep man from exploiting the land as

he sees fit? Professor E. O. Wilson, whose writing I admire, thinks that a biocentric view of the world will lead us to appreciate it more, to love it better, and to keep the ants and the beetles that he cares about in better shape. I think such a view is just as likely to lead us not to care about ants and beetles at all. I think there is a way you can care about ants and beetles, by seeing that they are a part of God's creation and, because of that, human beings should not treat them carelessly.

R&L: *Stewardship is tremendously important, then. How can we faithfully observe this stewardship mandate from both a Christian and a free-market perspective?*

Dennis: I realize that when economists talk about the environment, it seems like all they see is the raw stuff out of which to increase economic productivity. It looks like the materialist, acquisitive approach to things, and, of course, that is true for some people. For the great bulk of people most of the time, however, economic prosperity is important because it provides the means to create better physical environments around us. We paint our houses, we plant our rose gardens, we reduce the sewage we throw into the nearby creek, we plant trees. We do such things with the world we live in because we enjoy doing them and we can afford to do so. Such things only a relatively wealthy and free people can do well, and the market allows that to happen.

When I get talking about free market environmentalism, I am afraid people always see me as someone who wants to cut it all down and turn it into factories and suburban housing developments—quite the contrary. I would like to buy some of that wilderness and own it myself and take good care of it and teach people why it is fun to go out

in the woods. With the great wealth in this land, the money available to environmental groups, and the vast private fortunes we have among us, it would be good for people to start thinking about how they can own their own wilderness, so to speak, and to use that ownership as good stewards to teach others about those higher values and better ways of life.

One can begin in simple ways, like planting native shrubbery in your lawn, joining a garden club, putting out bird feeders in the winter, contributing to the local conservancy group that purchases private parkland. There are hundreds of groups around the country who are ready with advice about how private things can be done to preserve our environments.

R&L: *And the point, I suppose, is that a regime of private property rights and markets best fosters creative ways to conserve wilderness.*

Dennis: It leads to creativity, it leads to diversity in that creativity, and it leads to the production of wealth upon which that creativity and diversity can act.

R&L: *One thinks of Rosalie Edge and the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.*

Dennis: What a wonderful example. She was a woman of vision who saw an opportunity to save an important piece of real estate, and long before the Audubon Society saw the importance of preserving the hawks migrating in central Pennsylvania every autumn. She was able to do it because she could get together a group of wealthy contributors and because she lived in a regime in which it was possible to purchase private land and turn it to alternative purposes. Hawk Mountain is now the world's leading center of scientific raptor study and one of America's great private preserves. America has lots of private preserves of one sort or another, and we need to tell

the stories of these private efforts of preservation.

R&L: *Tell us some of these stories, then. What are some of the exemplars of this kind of stewardship?*

Dennis: An example of this kind of private conservation is Avery Island, Louisiana, owned by the McIlhenny family, the producers of Tabasco Sauce. One of the family members created a preserve to protect the snowy egret, which was on the verge of extinction because it was being hunted for its feathers for the manufacture of women's hats. They preserved a sufficient breeding population of snowy egrets so that the egrets survived and could eventually be released back into the wild. It is a great private preserve.

Another great example is Sea Lion Caves in Oregon. These caves were preserved as a tourist attraction by a private entrepreneur at a time when sea lions were being exterminated because fishermen were afraid they were destroying the fishing along the Oregon coast. It is still there today, with a great elevator down through the cliffs to the ocean where you can see the sea lions come in out of the water onto the rocks.

These private efforts and others like them are at least equally significant—and much more creative and diverse—than the national government's great public land-owning agencies.

R&L: *These sorts of efforts do generally go unreported. Most seem to want the government to do this job.*

Dennis: I get impatient with environmentalists who view their attitudes toward the natural world as so obviously superior and who think that superiority gives them the moral high ground and the right to force others to support their values. I think one of the real principles of liberty is that you should support what

you are about with your own resources and efforts. Whenever I say this, they reply, "Oh, we are just small humble people. The great corporations of America will run over us." Well, that is not true. In the kind of world we live in, humble people banning together and making their contribution toward the preservation of natural beauty can have just as much effect.

R&L: *On occasion, you have used the phrase, "We shouldn't go through the world with our hats on." Could you unpack that a bit for us?*

Dennis: It is a phrase I heard from the economist Paul Heyne, who teaches at the University of Washington. It used to be that when you entered a church, you took your hat off as a means of respect. It used to be that you took your hat off when the flag came by. Such formalities are ways in which we can make some kind of expression about the things that we feel are important and deserving of our special attention.

That is the way I think we should go about this world. Every day when we get up, we should be in awe. We should listen to the bird calls and insect noises and identify the plants around us and begin to grasp not only the world's physical beauty but how all the different parts are related to each other and how there seems to be something good about it all. When you build human things, when you put in a road or dig a hole, you should take that natural world into consideration. You should try to bring a good bit of it close to you and care for it as you care for human artifacts. Many people do not look at the world that way, but I think it is a superior value, just as I think Mozart is better than Rock-and-Roll. People with real understanding see that some things are better than others, and living in this world with respect is better than treating it with contempt. A

Environmentalism: The Triumph of Politics

Doug Bandow

President Bill Clinton's commitment to an activist environmental agenda was apparent early in his administration. The problem is not that he favors conservation but that he supports political control of the environment. Unfortunately, despite the common assumption that government is the best means of protecting the environment, politics has more often thwarted than advanced sound ecological stewardship.

The real political divide is not between right and left, conservative and liberal, or Republican and Democrat. Rather, it is between market process and central planning, market mechanism and command and control. Most politicians believe in government solutions. They may differ on the specific ways they want the state to intervene, but they like government involvement. Although liberal enthusiasm for state action is best-known, conservatives, too, often want government to arbitrarily rearrange environmental outcomes. There are no more fervent supporters than conservative Republican legislators of irrigation projects that deliver below-cost water to farmers, subsidies to promote logging on public lands, and cut-rate range fees on federal grazing land for ranchers.

A Remarkably Poor Steward

This reliance on politics has infected environmental policy-making and created real ecological problems. Indeed, despite sustained environmentalist support for public programs, the government has proved to be a remarkably poor steward. Consider Uncle Sam's 191 million acres of forestland. The Wilderness Society estimates that losses on

federal timberland amounted to \$400 million annually during the 1980s, while losses on Alaska's Tsongass rain forest alone hit ninety-nine cents on the dollar. The problem is that the government both undertakes expensive "investments"—for example, road-building in mountainous wilderness terrain—and underprices the timber that is produced. Washington's reason for doing so is to "create" a few jobs. The cost, however, is both needless environmental destruction and squandered taxpayer funds (resulting ultimately in fewer jobs).

Federal water projects and rangeland management have consistently led to similar results. The government has expended billions of dollars to subsidize such influential groups as farmers and ranchers, all the while leaving environmental despoilation in its wake. In fact, the greatest threat to wetlands is not private development but federal efforts like North Dakota's \$1.2 billion Garrison Diversion project, which destroyed some 70 thousand acres of wetlands to benefit a few thousand farmers.

Nearly 90 percent of all federal water in the West is sold at heavily subsidized prices to already subsidized farmers. In California's San Joaquin Valley, for instance, irrigation projects typically cost three to five hundred dollars an acre foot, yet the water is marketed to farmers for less than a tenth of that—even when Los Angeles and other parts of the state suffer severe water shortages. Only the government would subsidize production of a water-intensive crop such as rice in a desert.

The federal government similarly mismanages its 307 million acres of

rangeland. The Bureau of Land Management has typically charged ranchers half of what it costs to administer the land, and up to one-tenth the rental price for comparable private lands. The BLM also spent millions of dollars "chaining" land—ripping out trees to create more rangeland on which it would lose more money. Not surprisingly, federal lands are generally in poor condition—and generate a steady flood of red ink.

It is not just Uncle Sam who is at fault. Many localities have essentially socialized trash collection and disposal, barring any private competition to increase industry efficiency and innovativeness. Further, few cities charge citizens based on how much garbage they generate, providing no incentive to either recycle or change their buying habits. Political restrictions on landfill development and incinerator construction have exacerbated the problem.

But the United States government remains the most culpable party. World Bank loans, underwritten by American taxpayers, have financed the destruction of Brazilian rain forests. Federally-subsidized flood insurance has encouraged uneconomic construction on the environmentally sensitive Barrier Islands. Years of energy price controls inflamed demand and discouraged conservation. And so on.

Apocalyptic Visions: Acid Rain

Unfortunately, this sort of political malfeasance is not the only way government harms the environment. Politicians are also remarkably vulnerable to scaremongering by special-interest groups and activists.

One apocalyptic vision is Acid Rain. In 1980 the Environmental Protection Agency claimed that Sulfur Dioxide emissions caused Acid Rain, which had supposedly increased the average acidity of Northeast lakes one-hundred-fold over the last forty years and was killing fish and trees alike. A year later the National Research Council predicted that the number of acidified lakes would double by 1990. So, naturally, Congress included stringent provisions to cut SO₂ emissions (already down 50 percent from the 1970s) at a cost of billions of dollars annually when it reauthorized the Clean Air Act.

Yet in 1987, EPA research raised doubts about the destructiveness of acid rain. Then came the most complete study of Acid Rain ever conducted, the half billion dollar National Acid Precipitation Assessment Project (NAPAP), which concluded that the allegedly horrific effects of Acid Rain were largely a myth. Among other things, the study found that lakes were, on average, no more

remained undamaged at acidic levels ten times present levels. In the end, NAPAP's scientists figured that liming the few lakes that were acidic would solve the problem at a fraction of the cost of the Clean Air Act's Acid Rain provisions.

Apocalyptic Visions: Global Warming

Perhaps the most famous form of the "sky is falling" claim today is global warming—the so-called "Greenhouse Effect." Last year's Kyoto summit focused on this issue. The fear is that pollution, particularly such "greenhouse gases" as Carbon Dioxide, stay within the atmosphere, eventually leading to a rise in the earth's temperature, which will create deserts, melt the polar icecaps, and flood coastal nations.

In fact, warnings of global warming are not new: The theory was first advanced in the 1890s and reemerged in the 1950s. But soon thereafter a new theory gained sway—that we were entering a new ice age. In 1974 the United

States National Science Board stated that "during the last twenty to thirty years, world temperature has fallen, irregularly at first but more sharply over the last decade." In the same year *TIME* magazine opined that "the atmosphere has been growing gradually cooler for the past three decades. The trend shows no indication of reversing." Similarly, observed Dr. Murray Mitchell of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-

istration in 1976, "Since about 1940 there has been a distinct drop in average global temperature." Five years later Fred Hoyle's *Ice: The Ultimate Human Catastrophe* appeared, warning that a new ice age was long overdue: "When the ice comes, most of northern America, Britain, and northern Europe will disappear under the glaciers.... The right conditions can arise within a single decade." He advocated warming the oceans to forestall this "ultimate human catastrophe." Two years passed and *Rolling Stone* magazine declared that: "For years now, climatologists have foreseen a trend toward colder weather—long-range, to be sure, but a trend as inevitable as death.... According to [one] theory, all it would take is a single cold summer to plunge the earth into a sudden apocalypse of ice."

But a decade later we passed into a new crisis. Climatologists like Stephen Schneider, who not too long ago warned of a cooling trend that looked like "one akin to the Little Ice Age," now berates the media for covering scientists who are skeptical of claims that global warming is occurring. He is, at least, refreshingly honest, admitting that "to avert the risk we need to get some broad-based support, to capture public imagination.... So we have to offer up some scary scenarios, make some simplified dramatic statements and little mention of any doubts one might have."

He does this precisely because the doubts about global warming are serious, so serious that both the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* have run stories debunking the apocalyptic predictions of everyone from Vice President Gore to Greenpeace. Observed the *Post*: "Scientists generally agree that it has been getting warmer over the last hundred years, but the average rate of change is no greater than in centuries past, and there is no consensus that human activity is the cause. And while there is no



Today politics has routinely distorted the debate, making Americans less free, the economy less efficient, and the environment less clean.

—Doug Bandow

acidic than before the industrial era; just 240 of 7000 Northeast lakes, most with little recreational value, were critically acidic, or "dead"; most of the acidic water was in Florida, where the rain is only one-third as acidic; there was only very limited damage to trees, far less than that evident elsewhere in the world where SO₂ emissions are minimal; half of the Adirondack lakes were acidified due to natural organic acids; and crops

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doubt that continued emissions of 'greenhouse gases' tend to aid warming, it is not clear that cutting back on emissions could do much to stop a natural trend, if that is what is happening." Indeed, a survey by Greenpeace, one of the most radical environmental organizations, found that only 13 percent of scientists involved in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change believed there is a probable future point-of-no-return leading to a runaway Greenhouse Effect. Just 17 percent of climatologists in a broader Gallup poll said they believed that human-induced warming had occurred at all, while 53 percent did not.

The problems with the theory are many. First, there is no reason to assume that any change in temperature is undesirable. In fact, people living in colder climates would benefit from small increases; higher temperatures at night also would likely have a positive impact, such as lengthening growing seasons.

Second, the evidence is less than conclusive on humanity's role in raising temperatures. We have seen slight warming over the last century, but 45 percent of it occurred before 1945, when greenhouse gas emissions started rising dramatically. The models suggest that daytime temperatures should rise in the Northern Hemisphere, but most of the limited warming so far observed has occurred at night in the Southern Hemisphere. The ice caps have been growing, not shrinking. And so on. Even those analysts predicting a much hotter future have had to lower their forecasts over the last decade. In the end, it is obvious both that mankind, which accounts for just a couple percent of total atmospheric CO₂, has only a limited impact on the earth's climate, and that the globe has an incredible ability to adjust. For instance, increased pollution may help shield the earth from sunlight, counteracting temperature increases. Higher temperatures at the poles actu-

ally allow more precipitation. Since sustained, large-scale warming could cause serious damage, there is cause to monitor changes in climate, but not yet to implement the sort of draconian changes demanded by the greenhouse crowd.

Apocalyptic predictions regarding a number of other issues—such as ozone depletion, population growth, toxic wastes, and desertification—have proved to be equally flawed. It is important to emphasize that the point is not that there are no environmental problems and that government has no role in environmental protection but, rather, that environmental issues tend to be quite complex and that one makes costly, long-term policy changes based on short-term trends at great risk.

Market Forces, Private Strategies

Environmental protection is important, and good people can disagree on the best policies to adopt, but today politics has routinely distorted the entire debate, making Americans less free, the economy less efficient, and the environment less clean. Policy makers need to act on facts, not myths, and balance the full range of values and interests, including liberty and cost. Policy should reflect prudence rather than ideology.

The public should be particularly skeptical of government solutions and recognize the many opportunities to use market forces to promote environmental ends. Political agencies have consistently proved to be poor stewards of resources. The government, which can regulate everything within its borders, has far more power to do harm than does any private person, who controls only his or her own property. At the same time, entrepreneurs and businessmen have an economic incentive to preserve the value of their property and to promote environmental amenities, as, for instance, do timber firms that develop wildlife populations in order to offer permit hunting. There do exist serious

problems, like air quality in the Los Angeles Basin, which require some state action. But people should reject today's conventional wisdom that government must always act first.

There are many ways to creatively use private strategies to protect the environment. Privatizing federal timber and range land, for instance, would end subsidized development, since no private individual or company would willingly turn a dollar investment into a few cents of revenue. Establishing full private property rights in water would help conserve this precious resource in the western United States. Creating a market for ivory, as done by such nations as Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, which have enjoyed an increase in their elephant populations, would better preserve elephants than outlawing the ivory trade, the strategy adopted by Kenya and Tanzania, which have suffered a steady decline in their elephant herds.

Where the state must intervene, we need to develop cost-effective means of advancing conservation. Setting overall emission levels and allowing the trading of permits, or imposing pollution taxes based upon emissions, would be more cost-effective in reducing air pollution than are present policies. Taxing cars based on their emissions would be a superior means of reducing auto-generated pollution than imposing more and more restrictions on new vehicles.

Americans need to depoliticize the environment, making the issue one of balancing competing interests rather than imposing ideological or religious dogmas. Doing so would result in not only a cleaner society but also a wealthier and freer one. *A*

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Solving Problems by Elimination

Kateryna Fedoryka

We live in a time that places a high value on community. The European Economic Community, global markets, the global village, accords and governance—universal fraternity is the wave of the future. Consequently, Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, with its emphasis on the human person in community, could be seen as simply following these current trends. For those not aware of its continuity with a living tradition, it appears to be an attempt to build bridges where there are none.

This encyclical, however, does indeed stand in continuity with the great tradition of Christian moral teaching. Further, its universal perspective, spanning all places and peoples, argues against the criticism that the pontiff has succumbed to the trendy globalism of our day. What sets it apart from the contemporary passion for community is how it sheds light on the ironies that riddle and, in many respects, embarrass the world community-building machine.

A distinct paradox is threading its way throughout the history of this century. On one level, we see concerted activity toward breaking down divides, abolishing borders, and fostering international cooperation. On another level, we see growing distrust between countries, the rise of nationalism, and the fracturing of societies into rich and poor, North and South, East and West. Our world is struggling stubbornly toward an ideal of community but is unable to attain it. *Centesimus Annus*' genius rests in its ability to address this failure and to lay out the conditions for authentic human community. In so doing, it pro-

vides principles that explain why the contemporary efforts to achieve community continually fall short.

Humanitarian Aid: Building the Community of Tomorrow?

Undoubtedly, the great "community builders" of our time are humanitarian aid and development programs. Governments of all developed nations have international aid budgets that, even if comprising a fraction of their total expenditures, total billions of dollars yearly. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for instance, has requested 7.3 billion dollars for its world wide humanitarian aid programs in 1999. Such programs have a clear "society building" objective; for instance, two of the five stated USAID goals are "promoting economic growth" and "advancing democracy." Humanitarian aid is seen as both an act of solidarity and an investment in the future. Beyond USAID, the United States appropriates other monies for international development (i.e., United Nations, World Bank, or International Monetary Fund contributions), and other governments have similar budgets. Meanwhile, the U.N. continues to call for increases in the percentage of GNP set aside for assistance to the international community.

At face value, this solution seems reasonable enough and has a long historical precedent. The reality, however, is that the old idea of humanitarian aid as a community builder has slowly been replaced by a paradigm of development that emphasizes family planning programs beyond all else. As such, family planning has become the core of the

modern fight against poverty, injustice, and totalitarianism. Family planning, we are told, empowers the poor to better their economic situations, empowers women to become equal participants in society, and empowers societies to deal with problems such as poverty, overcrowding, and unemployment.

In theory, family planning concerns couples' decisions about their fertility and provides them with the means to do so. In practice, planning a family means limiting its size; thus family planning programs concentrate on supplying the Third World with condoms and contraceptives of every sort, sterilization, and abortion. Played out on a societal scale, planning families means controlling population growth.

The logic of this approach is rather straightforward: We live in a world of limited resources, inequitable access to these resources, and difficulty in providing educational and training opportunities. Reducing the number of people in the world relieves the competition for these resources and reduces the development burden by reducing the number of those dependent upon outside aid. We can be more effective, this approach argues, because we have less to do. It is a hard reality, but one demanded, we are told, by "responsibility" to future generations—and, ultimately, realism about our own.

This principle—that we fight poverty by eliminating the poor—stands in stark contrast to John Paul II's analysis of true human community. Contrary to this fundamental assumption, John Paul II writes in *Centesimus Annus* that "besides the earth, man's principal resource

is man himself” (§ 32) and that “man too is God’s gift to man” (§ 38). These two points are the fundamental insights of what John Paul II’s calls an authentic human ecology. Lose sight of these truths, and you lose the path to building true and lasting community.

“The first and fundamental structure for ‘human ecology’ is *the family*,” John Paul II writes (§ 39). A development paradigm that focuses on family planning, in the sense spoken of earlier, cuts to the core of human community, for it does not focus on a mutual, loving, and self-giving relationship as the context for procreation but, rather, on severing the bond between sexuality and procreation. In sum, it pollutes the ecology of the family by introducing not only the methods but also the mentality of contraception.

Family Planning at the Cost of True Development

There is no need to elaborate here the links between contraceptive practice and mentality and the breakdown of the family. The consequences of exporting these ideas to the developing world will not necessarily be felt this year or next, but they will in a generation. With these consequences will come the slow disintegration not only of families but of whole societies. The family is the basis of community because, as John Paul II writes, it is the place where a person learns “what it means to love and to be loved ... what it actually means to be a person” (§ 39). Without this experience, a person is unable to “enter into a stable relationship with another person” (§ 39). People remain “individuals,” unable to enter into the universal “brotherhood” that both motivates the humanitarian project and functions as its good.

What we have with this modern development paradigm and its family planning mentality, then, is a model that discourages the formation of the fundamental component of human ecology—

the family. Because of this disposition, it neglects authentic human development, which John Paul II identifies as creation of “the proper conditions for human reproduction.” The realities of contemporary practice confirm this assessment only too well.

What is more, family planning programs not only focus on restricting the size of families but also work subtly to eliminate them altogether. “Reproductive health,” “gender equality,” and “adolescent rights” (all explicit targets of family planning programs) are new euphemisms for the old cant and values of the sexual revolution. The world of the development paradigm explicitly espoused by, for instance, the International Planned Parenthood Federation or the various U.N. agencies and implicitly articulated by USAID is a world where “family” means any combination of two or more individuals; where parents have no rights over the education and upbringing of their children; and where contraception, sterilization, and abortion

Mexico was 17.8 million dollars. 12.9 million (72.58 percent) of this was spent on population activities, compared to \$500,000 on health activities, and a mere \$150,000 on economic growth. Mexico has a total fertility rate of 2.97 women per children (1997 est.), and a country-specific replacement fertility recently set at 3.3 because of infant mortality. The demographic realities of Mexico hardly seem to warrant spending more money on population control than on health or economic growth.

Consequences of the Family Planning Approach

Centesimus Annus describes the ultimate consequences of such undermining of the human ecology: lack of freedom, promulgation of the idea that children are a commodity that must compete with other commodities, and, ultimately, the spread of the culture of death (§ 39). A brief look at international development programs confirms the truth of this analysis.

“Family planning” ultimately fails because it espouses one of the anthropological errors John Paul II identifies as underlying mistaken views about the social order.

—Kateryna Fedoryka



are the safeguards against unwanted consequences of this “freedom” that family planning programs are intended to foster. Traditional moral and religious values are seen as obstacles to this liberation and must be eliminated since they stand in the path of this new, universal self-awareness.

Individual country aid portfolios bring the point home starkly. In 1997, the total USAID development budget for

China and its brutal one-child policy have long been the example of what is usually considered family planning run amok. In the name of development, over two decades of parents have been denied the freedom to have the children they desire. Coerced abortion, sterilization, and contraception have become the official mechanisms of enforcing this policy; infanticide and gender-selective abortion are the unofficial mechanisms

of policy compliance. Permission for second children may be bought, at a price often reaching the equivalent of several years' worth of salary. Children are reduced not only to commodities but to luxuries that cannot be afforded.

China, sadly, does not stand alone. Government-sponsored family planning programs of forced sterilization have been aggressively carried out in Indonesia, China, and, most recently, Peru. Thirty-eight countries, to date, are on record for the human rights abuses that occur within their family planning programs, and reports of new abuses in new locations continue to grow. Far from an exception, China is now only the most-obvious and best-known embodiment of the idea that a country's population is a liability to be controlled rather than an asset to be nurtured.

De-sanctified People, Destabilized Social Orders

Peru stands as one of the most recent cases in point, with a program that has led some to call it, "the China of the 1990s." In Peru, women are being pressured to submit to sterilization in order to receive necessary medical attention or to keep their children enrolled in nutritional supplement programs. Many who resist this pressure have been sterilized anyway while undergoing other medical procedures (such as a caesarean section delivery) or simply by strength of force. The death toll mounts as government health workers perform the procedure without adequate training and in unhygienic conditions in a scramble to meet the quotas set by government population policy and to keep their jobs.

The Peruvian government continues to deny responsibility for the deaths and human rights' abuses that result from this program. This denial illustrates well one of John Paul II's key insights: Our policy decisions give rise to social structures that can "impede the full realiza-

tion of those who are in any way oppressed by them" (§ 38). So, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori did not, in instituting this program, target the freedom, existing children, and lives of Peruvian women, but the program he created does, for it encroaches upon the most intimate decisions that constitute a family. By instituting the program, Fujimori signaled the de-sanctification of individual dignity and the freedoms that argue against this arrogation of family rights. He set off a chain of events that is swiftly destabilizing the social order of his country.

A similar disruption is gathering momentum on the international level. As aid policies of developed countries place increased focus on family planning and population control programs, there is a growing distrust of these programs and a perceived "new colonialism" by the developed world. People in developing countries are dying of pneumonia, malaria, and dehydration—all of which take pennies per case to cure—for lack of vitally necessary drugs. Meanwhile, Third-World family planning clinics are bursting with condoms and mechanical and chemical contraceptives generously donated by bilateral and multilateral aid. The counter-productiveness of this approach from a development point of view is clear.

One African doctor has paired family-planning programs with AIDS, labeling them as the "twin scourge" that is depopulating Africa and consigning it to poverty "like none that we have ever known." A nurse from the Philippines testified during a Washington press conference that "of the twenty-five-plus million dollars [USAID] spends on population and health [in the Philippines], twenty-two million is for population activities, less than three million is for health services. Are you trying to help mothers in my country, or just stop them from having children?" As these testimonies accent, there is a growing dis-

trust on the part of aid-dependent countries, but dependence on the aid they receive makes it impossible for these countries to effectively protest the programs that they recognize as detrimental to their social and economic orders. The combined experiences of exploitation and powerlessness only deepen the rift between North and South.

"Man ... Is God's Gift to Man"

If we look to *Centesimus Annus* for insight, two implications stand out clearly for the development community to learn. First, the way to build brotherhood is to emphasize the value of people, in word and in deed. Family planning as the means of development ultimately fails because it denies this value and thus espouses one of the anthropological errors John Paul II identifies as underlying mistaken views about the social order. "Man too is God's gift to man." The basis of a stable society is the acceptance of the other as "gift"—in the mutual self-donation of married love, in the procreation that is the natural result of that love, and in the solidarity of reaching out to the other in need.

Second, it is not enough to keep intentions pure. There is a natural order. When this order is violated, it is unavoidable that very specific consequences should follow. Arguments that these were not intended are simply disingenuous, and genuine surprise at unintended consequences is unable to repair the damage that has been done. If development programs continue to promote population control under the euphemism of family planning, no amount of high ideals can prevent the disintegration of the social order, and their efforts will be in vain. A

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Setting the Record Straight

Jane S. Shaw

In recent years, the press has latched onto the work of the Evangelical Environmental Network, an organization formed under the auspices of Evangelicals for Social Action. Because many newspaper reporters and editors view evangelicals as part of the conservative “religious right,” the arrival of evangelicals who sound just like mainstream environmentalists is a news event—sort of a “man bites dog” story.

This attention has given the Evangelical Environmental Network and its associates more prominence than they would otherwise have—and, unfortunately, more than they deserve. Like many mainstream environmentalists, these evangelical environmentalists hold “doomsday” views that are unsupported by the balance of the evidence. It turns out that they also bolster their views with questionable scriptural authority.

Doomsday Predictions and Unscientific Claims

E. Calvin Beisner, associate professor of interdisciplinary studies at Covenant College, has written *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* to explain where they go wrong. To begin with, they have swallowed whole the view that the earth is experiencing massive, global, and irreparable environmental problems, from global warming to overpopulation. An important part of Beisner’s book refutes these claims. Citing the work of authors such as Ron Bailey, the late Julian Simon, and Gregg Easterbrook, Beisner provides extensive

evidence that we are not running out of natural resources such as oil; that we are not losing our topsoil in dangerous amounts; that overpopulation is not the cause of most environmental problems; and that vast numbers of animal species are not being wiped out every year—to

*Where Garden Meets Wilderness:
Evangelical Entry into the
Environmental Debate*
by E. Calvin Beisner

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
1997, 256 pp. Paper: \$16.00

mention a few of the claims that he undermines.

In addition to marshaling evidence of this kind, Beisner points out the unscientific nature of many environmentalists’ claims by citing inconsistencies in their materials. For example, an issue of *Green Cross*, another offshoot of Evangelicals for Social Action, has two articles about deforestation, one a sidebar to the other. The first article says that the annual destruction of the rain forest in Africa amounts to an area the size of Ohio, while in Latin America “twice as much, in proportion to the total area,” is destroyed each year. Making some assumptions about what the phrase means (he decides that it means that the percentage of land deforested in Latin America each year is twice the percentage of African land lost), Beisner figures that the author is saying that an area of rain forest measuring 275,232

square kilometers (or 106,240 square miles) is being lost each year in these two continents.

In the same magazine, two pages later, another author writes that each year the world loses 154,000 square kilometers (or 59,444 square miles) of rain forest. In other words, the first figure, which excludes Asia, is 78 percent higher than the second figure, which supposedly covers the loss in the entire world! To Beisner this sloppiness illustrates “a propensity for doomsayers to pick numbers at the scary end of the spectrum while paying little attention to evidence that those numbers may be vastly exaggerated.” Furthermore, even the larger figure is

only slightly over half of one percent of the land in the two continents. (To be fair, I should point out that in the complicated process of analyzing these figures, Beisner himself makes a slight mistake, mislabeling kilometers as miles, but his point is correct.)

Scriptural Sloppiness and Sins of Omission

Beisner does not stop at identifying sloppiness about the environmental facts. He also points to scriptural sloppiness. Evangelical environmentalists often create the impression that devastation of the earth, when discussed in the Bible, comes about because human beings are acting in environmentally irresponsible ways. For example, an evangelical environmental writer describes his experience looking down from an airplane and seeing forest clearcuts. This makes him think of a passage from the

book of Jeremiah that reads, “you defiled my land,” which he describes as one of “numerous biblical references portraying the unfaithfulness and sins of humanity expressed in the destruction of the environment.” The implication is that environmental destruction comes about because of human exploitation of the land. In response, Beisner points out that the actual context indicates that the destruction of the environment was God’s response to human sin—not the result of poor environmental practices but, rather, of infidelity to God’s covenant.

Similarly, another evangelical environmentalist quotes the book of Isaiah (“The earth is defiled by its people”) to illustrate humans’ “arrogant assault on the fabric of the biosphere.” But, once again, the author ignores the context: God, not man, devastates the earth in response to human sin.

A more fundamental error is one of omission: Most evangelical environmentalists ignore the curse that God

Fall. In spite of what environmentalists say about “this Eden of a planet” (as one phrases it), “creation by itself simply does not abundantly yield blessed fruits,” says Beisner. It becomes “abundantly fruitful only under the wise and resolute hand of man.”

A New Dimension to the Debate, But Will Critics Listen?

My criticisms of *Where the Garden Meets the Wilderness* are few. Most of Beisner’s citations are secondary sources, rather than primary ones, but they are reliable. They indicate a breadth of reading and also confirm the fact that in recent years a number of books have been written that authoritatively counter “doomsday” environmentalism. (One of these books is *Eco-Sanity*, whose coauthor, PERC economist P. J. Hill, Beisner acknowledges as an important source of advice in the preparation of this book.)

Unfortunately, it is likely that the people who need to hear the message of this book will resist it and may well ig-

Prism responded with an editorial charging him with denying the existence of environmental problems. When he responded in a letter that the editorial completely misrepresented his views, one editor wrote back, accusing him of “racism, sexism, and cold-heartedness.” Apparently, religious affiliation and a religious basis for environmental concern do not guarantee civility.

But if Beisner does not convince the Evangelical Environmental Network, at least he has a chance to sway others not yet caught up by its erroneous assumptions. His arguments are helpful to all Christians, not just evangelicals (a point made clear in the introduction by the Roman Catholic priest John Michael Beers). Will those Christians read this book? Certainly some will, but this is a fairly academic, carefully argued work, densely packed with quotations and citations. While it is not difficult to read, it will still appeal more to scholars than to a large lay audience. I worry that many pastors, priests, and laypeople who come under the influence of the Evangelical Environmental Network will still succumb to their claims because they have not read the counterarguments.

That worry aside, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* has added a new dimension to the discussion of environmental issues. Over time it will find its appropriate place in the growing body of literature that provides more careful consideration of environmental problems than most environmentalists, evangelical or otherwise, provide. **A**

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Where Garden Meets Wilderness has added a new dimension to the discussion of environmental issues.

—Jane S. Shaw

placed on the earth as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. “Cursed is the ground because of you,” said God after the Fall, telling Adam that the ground will produce “thorns and thistles for you....” Ignoring the Curse, says Beisner, environmentalists speak as though there was a “pristine planet beautiful” that existed before the earth was damaged by industrialization. But such a pristine planet never existed, at least after the

nore it. Evangelicals who have made up their minds about the environment and environmental policies are not likely to pay attention if they can avoid it.

That they intend to reject his message is clear from Beisner’s report on his communication with the editors of *Prism*, a publication of the Evangelicals for Social Action. After Beisner criticized an Evangelical Environmental Network document in *World* magazine,

Enviro-Capitalists Doing Good While Doing Well

by Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal

Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997. 189 pp. Paper: \$16.95

Review by Gregory Dunn

Aldo Leopold, one of the fathers of the modern American conservation movement and author of *A Sand County Almanac*, in his essay “The Farmer as Conservationist” described conservation as “harmony between men and land.” Leopold envisioned the practice of conservation as “not merely a negative exercise of abstinence or caution” but “a positive exercise of skill and insight” whereby the “pure fire of intellect” is made manifest. In defining conservation in such terms, he consciously placed the burden of responsibility for it not in the hands of government agencies but with individual landowners. Why? “Government cannot own and operate small parcels of land,” he wrote, “and it cannot own and operate good land at all.” Government approaches tend to be too clumsy, its solutions too general, and its policies too monolithic; only private, individual owners have the local knowledge needed to manage land wisely and conserve its wealth and beauty. So, for Leopold, responsibility for land management rests not with the state but at “the farmer’s doorstep.”

It is in this spirit that Terry Anderson and Donald Leal have written *Enviro-Capitalists: Doing Good While Doing Well*. Anderson and Leal, like Leopold, value private and creative initiatives toward the achievement of environmental goals, with the added virtues of markets, private property rights, and rule of law.

Enviro-Capitalists builds upon

Anderson and Leal’s book, *Free Market Environmentalism*. In that earlier work, they describe the heart of free market environmentalism as “a system of well-specified property rights to natural resources.” Property rights are important because incentives are important. In such a system, “the wealth of the owner of the property right is at stake if bad decisions are made,” so it follows that people acting in their self-interest will tend to make better decisions about the use of their property. The converse is also true: “The further a decision maker is removed from this discipline—as he is when there is political control—the less likely it is that good resource stewardship will result.”

Enviro-capitalism, then, in the words of the authors, is an approach “that begins when environmental entrepreneurs discover new opportunities for improving environmental quality and then figure out how to produce it in the private sector.” *Enviro-Capitalists* tells the stories of how individuals and organizations, because of this institutional arrangement, apply their entrepreneurial abilities to such areas as wilderness and wildlife preservation, development, and water conservation. In the process of telling these stories, we see some fascinating examples of a private ethic of conservation at work.

We meet, for example, Tom Bourland, wildlife manager for International Paper. Responsible for 1.2 million acres of IP forests throughout Texas, Louisiana,

and Arkansas, Bourland was faced with a cluster of problems: In the thirty years it takes a forest to mature, IP expended much revenue but received no profits. Further, the existing wildlife and recreation program was geared more toward keeping the locals happy than turning any kind of profit. Moreover, as hunting, fishing, and hiking grew more popular, IP incurred costs from litter, arson, poaching, and off-road traffic. Bourland was eager to improve wildlife conditions on IP lands, but his efforts were stymied by its status quo policy.

Utilizing his entrepreneurial acumen, Bourland realized that a fee-based recreation program would solve many of these problems while adding to IP’s bottom line. And he was right. Asking users to pay for these resources limited demand and instituting a creative system of leasing recreational amenities linked the self-interest of the users to the health of the land. Further, the program was wildly profitable and gave IP the incentive to provide even better wilderness experiences, which meant forestry techniques that promoted wildlife growth. Through the application of the “pure fire of intellect,” Bourland turned wildlife from a liability into an asset.

We also visit the Huron Mountain Club in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. As virgin forests became increasingly scarce at the end of the nineteenth century, recreationists began to discover the beauty of the Huron Mountain region, located on the Lake Superior side of the Upper Peninsula near the Pine River. One of these wilderness enthusiasts, Horatio Seymour of the Marquette-based Michigan Land and Iron Company, envisioned establishing a private club that would offer such amenities as hunting, fishing, and camping. The organization, initially named the Huron Mountain Shooting and Fishing Club, was established in 1897.

Since the continued solvency of the

organization was dependent upon the health of the woods and wildlife on its land, preservation was taken seriously. The club limited the amount and types of development on its land and even enlisted the services of Aldo Leopold to make recommendations on how to best manage the Club's environmental assets. As a result of the organization's foresight and stewardship, the Huron Mountain Club continues to be a wilderness gem, as well as the steward of one of the last tracts of untouched climax maple-hemlock forest in the Midwest.

Through stories like this, Anderson and Leal show the great diversity of approaches to the preservation of environmental amenities that results through free market environmentalism. Some are motivated by a purely conservationist ethic. Others desire to profit from people's desires for environmental amenities such as uncrowded trout streams or unobstructed views from their homes. Still others have a particular environmental problem that they want to solve—overfished oceans or overburdened water supplies, for example—and utilize the incentive structures of markets to achieve their goals.

If Leopold is right—if individuals have the responsibility to exercise an appropriate stewardship ethic toward their land, and if such exercise must be done in a creative and entrepreneurial manner—then the task at hand is to ensure the preservation of an institutional arrangement that enables and encourages such creative and ethical activity. *Enviro-Capitalism* is a persuasive argument that such an environment is not that of the heavy-handed approach of state regulation but a regime of markets, private property, and rule of law. **A**

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Book News



Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork

Calvin B. DeWitt, et al.
Center for Public Justice/Baker Book House, 1998
104 pp. Paper: \$11.99

The primary argument of this book is that Christians, particularly Reformed ones, for all their talk of confessing Christ as Creator, Integrator, and Reconciler have neglected or “even despised” God's creative handiwork. “Honoring the Creator in word, they destroy God's works in deed.” DeWitt is perplexed by the indifference of Christians to what he sees as human actions that “uncreate” the world through degradation, disintegration, and abuse. But what is the precise nature of this ecocrisis? It is “the crisis of one peculiar and special species having amplified its presence to such an extent that it has become a major geological force.”

While it is certainly true that some careless human action has tarnished the splendor of God's glorious theatre, the scientific community lacks a unified assessment of the nature and extent of environmental despoilation. DeWitt lists seven principal degradations of creation among which he includes such scientifically dubious theories as global warming, “episodic” species extinction, and global toxification. The weakness of his argument, as with so many environmental polemics, is that it hinges upon inconclusive scientific data.

However, at least three other items make this volume worthwhile: The first is the author's treatment of evangelical Christianity's seduction toward a “me first” religion. The second is his focus upon stewardship as the guiding norm

for life within human economy and the economy of God's wider creation order. Finally, the responses to DeWitt's essay by Richard Baer, Thomas Derr, and Congressman Vernon Ehlers express valuable criticism, appreciation, and disagreement.

Self, Earth & Society: Alienation and Trinitarian Transformation

Thomas N. Finger
InterVarsity Press, 1997
408 pp. Paper: \$27.99

This book focuses on the common thread uniting three “alienations” of late-twentieth-century existence, namely, psychological alienation (of a person from his or her deepest self), ecological alienation (of technology from nonhuman environments), and social alienation (of individuals from groups and institutions). Laudably, the author's motivation for writing this book was prompted by the alarming tendency among academics to implicate orthodox Christianity's belief in a transcendent God as the chief source of alienation. The author responds to this criticism by developing his understanding of how the “alienations” are interrelated.

Conceptually, there is much to commend Dr. Finger's bold integrative proposal, but it becomes less persuasive as the connections are mined for depth. For instance, the precise connections between psychological and ecological alienation are tenuous and heavily psychologized. In the end, it is not clear whether Finger's case has been successful or fully coherent, but it is certainly thought-provoking.

—**Stephen J. Grabill**



Rev. Robert A. Sirico

The Ultimate Economic Resource

Friends of liberty lost a staunch ally earlier this year when Julian Simon passed away on February 8, just shy of his sixty-fifth birthday. He was infamous for his principled and fact-driven defense of the free society and its ability to unleash the creative force of the human person. In contradistinction to the neo-Malthusians and anti-natalists who monopolized the conversation about population growth and resource use, Simon pointed out that, according to the data, the condition of the human family was, in fact, improving year by year—especially in countries with political freedom and market institutions.

Perhaps the most archetypal of Simon’s stratagems was his celebrated wager with Paul Ehrlich, ecological doomsayer. Ehrlich, you will remember, in the late 1960s and early 1970s helped found the flowering cottage industry of apocalyptic prophesizing with his grim visions of a future marked by population growth outstripping the natural resources needed to sustain it. In 1980, Simon dissented in the pages of *Science*, disproving each of Ehrlich’s predictions in a tightly argued article backed up by reams of statistics, charts, and graphs. Ehrlich countered with new predictions of future scarcity. Simon, appropriately goaded, challenged Ehrlich to put his money where his mouth was. If it was true that certain resources were becoming more and more scarce, Simon reasoned, then it would follow that, according to the principles of economics, their prices would rise; if not, their prices would stay the same or decrease. Thus his “public offer to stake US \$10,000 ... on my belief that the cost of non-government-controlled raw materials (including grain and oil) will not rise in the long run.”

Ehrlich, with his colleagues John P. Holden and John Harte, dutifully stepped up to the challenge; they selected five metals they predicted would become more scarce—chromium, copper, nickel, tin, and tungsten. On paper, they purchased \$200 dollars of each using 29 September 1980 prices as an index for a total wager of \$1000. If, ten years

later, the inflation-adjusted prices of this basket of resources rose, Simon would pay Ehrlich the difference. If they fell, Ehrlich, et al., would pay Simon. And they waited. In the ensuing decade, the world’s population grew by more than 800 million. In that ten years, the prices for each of the five resources fell. Chromium dropped from \$3.90 per pound to \$3.70. Tin plummeted from \$8.72 to \$3.88. And Paul Ehrlich sent Julian Simon a check for \$576.07.

There could have been no clearer refutation of the notion

We are not simply mouths that consume; we are minds that create, souls that worship.

that population growth is an unbearable drain on the world’s resources. In truth, as Simon put it, “It is your mind that matters economically, as much or more than your mouth or hands.” The current fads of population control

and ecological catastrophe are rooted in a false view of man. We are not simply mouths that consume; we are hands that work, minds that create, souls that worship. In highlighting this crucial fact about the human person, Simon echoed a dominant theme of the whole tradition of Christian social teaching, most recently articulated by Pope John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*: “Besides the earth, man’s principal resource is *man himself*. His intelligence enables him to discover the earth’s productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied.”

We have been commissioned stewards of creation and, as such, have a holy responsibility to cultivate creation wisely and for the benefit of all. Further, as bearers of the *imago Dei*, we have been blessed with the gift of creativity and, so blessed, have a holy responsibility to exercise it in service to God and the human community. Simon reminded us of the great dignity and potential of the human person and the need for an environment of liberty; let us honor his memory by always striving to preserve the dignity of free human persons exercising their creativity in service to the good. *A*

Fr. Sirico is the President of the Acton Institute.

“Not only has God given the earth to man,
who must use it with respect for the original
good purpose for which it was given to
him, but man too is God’s gift to man.”

—Pope John Paul II—

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