

We Have Only One Earth

by Charley Reese

The word “environment” often triggers a negative reaction among people who fancy themselves as conser-vatives. It seems to invoke hippies, tree-huggers and vegetarians in their minds.

Drugged by the twin deceivers – mass media and urban life – it is easy to forget that our lives and prosperity depend 100 percent on the land, its air and its water. Many urban children today have probably never seen a cow or chicken, except in the form of hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken. But every single one of us, regardless of our diet, lives off the farm, the ranch and the commercial fisherman. Every morsel that goes into our mouths has to be grown, raised or caught.

Rural areas in America were once a strong voice in American politics. But mechanization and the growth of giant agribusiness concerns in place of family farms have virtually depopulated many rural areas. Population growth has spawned urban sprawl, which eats

Charley Reese is a syndicated columnist. © 2004, this column is reprinted by permission from King Features Syndicate.

up farmland at an alarming rate. The stupid and unconstitutional federal-court ruling of “one man, one vote” shifted the political power to the far more corrupt urban areas.

One thing you should know: land is a resource that can be exhausted and lost. When we speak of land in terms of growing food, we are talking about topsoil, and topsoil is always being eroded by wind and water, especially if it is neglected. It can also be poisoned with herbicides and pesticides. It can be ruined by exhausting the underground water supply. And, of course, paved over and built upon, it becomes useless in terms of sustaining life.

Climate change is also a factor. The ancients tell us in their extant writing that it was once possible for a man to walk across North Africa and never leave the shade of a tree. North Africa today is largely desert. In fact, deserts are expanding in several parts of the world, and in the United States water tables are dropping because we are irrigating land that is naturally arid.

You don’t have to believe in global warming. The geological record shows that Earth’s climate has many times been subjected to radical climate changes. Some scientists believe that the common gene pool of the present human race is directly the result of the fact

that barely 10,000 humans survived the last catastrophic climate change.

Since most of our 100 senators and 435 representatives come from essentially urban environments, and since they pay the most attention to the 40,000 or more lobbyists and special interests permanently camped on the Potomac, agriculture’s voice is rarely heard. Years ago, the insanity of Washington was illustrated when a congressional committee invited three Hollywood actresses who had played farmers’ wives to testify on farm matters.

The final threat to arable land, potable water and breathable air is population growth. Don’t let neo-conservative corporate whores pooh-poo the population problem because there is “plenty of land.” Land capable of growing food is quite limited and nonrenewable.

True conservatives will emulate one of the greatest environmentalists who ever occupied the White House – Theodore Roosevelt. Environmentalists were called conservationists in those days, and that’s what every one of us, regardless of party affiliation, should be. It is, after all, a matter of life and death. •