A Conservationist's Politician

An interview with Richard Lamm, former Governor of Colorado

by John F. Rohe

On February 6, 2004, John Rohe conducted a telephone interview with former Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado, the longest serving governor in Colorado's history.

John Rohe: Good afternoon, Governor.

Richard Lamm: Hello.

JR: Thank you for sharing time with The Social Contract *this afternoon. Governor, this edition of* The Social Contract *will include portions of your curriculum vitae and several of your writings. The readership will know much of what you did, but not necessarily why. It might be helpful to revisit experiences in your childhood and impressionable years. Let's discuss the influential persons and events leading you to the forefront of the social issues championed in your time.*

RL: My parents taught me to love the outdoors. I think that's the single biggest influence. I gained a love and passion for outdoor experiences of all kinds. People who love the outdoors are sort of harbingers for the rest of society, because it is our values that are being trampled on first by the inexplicable forces that we're interested in. So, I start off with number one, the fishing, the hunting, the hikes, the love of the outdoors. Second of all, I was not a high school athlete. That led me to have a variety of exotic jobs that absolutely stamped my life. When I was in high school, I worked in a resort that you had to fly into way up in Canada. And then the following summer, I was a deck hand on an ore boat in the Great Lakes. The following summer I worked in a lumber camp in Oregon, and the following summer, I was a runner on the New York Stock Exchange and lived in Greenwich Village. Adventurous things compensated in my psyche for the fact that I couldn't make the team. They had the indirect benefit of making me self-reliant and an independent thinker. Those are two that come to mind.

JR: Where did you grow up?

RL: I lived in northern Illinois until age 12. I went to a one-room school house. That was all part of loving the outdoors. I lived in a very rural community. When I was twelve, my family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where I graduated from high school. Those are the two formative places.

JR: Was your father both a hunter and fisher?

RL: He was.

JR: How about your mother?

RL: She wasn't. But she was encouraging of it. There were three boys in our family. They would send us to camp; they would encourage our love of the outdoors. She was very supportive.

JR: Where would your family go on vacations?

RL: Well, because we lived in northern Illinois we would go up fishing in Wisconsin. That was a very common vacation. And when we moved to Pennsylvania, my father and I used to do a lot of trout fishing in the Pennsylvania streams. And then we would hunt – I didn't hunt until after I was 12-years old. My father would take me out a couple times a season and teach me how to use a gun and how to hunt.

JR: What years would we be looking at?

RL: About 1946 to 1953. Those were the times when he was busy in his business, but he always found time to take us into the outdoors.

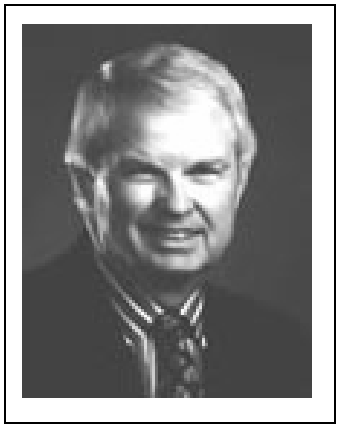
***John Rohe**, a practicing attorney in Petoskey, Michigan, is guest editor of this issue of* The Social Contract.

JR: Would you characterize your father as a conservationist?

RL: Absolutely.

JR: Were there influential writings at that time?

RL: Yes. The love of books was also promoted by my parents. My mother and father both would read to us. I remember my father reading *Black Beauty* and *The Yearling,* among many others. The books would teach us to love the outdoors. All three boys are great readers, with houses just filled with books. I did not, however, come across the rich literature on the environment until I was in college.



Richard D. Lamm

JR: Were there other people in the early days to nudge you in a certain direction; to instill the sensitivities that carried you through life? Family members? Teachers?

RL: Well, beyond that, I think I was fairly autodidactic. A lot of people were a small influence, but I was sort of a rolling stone. I can remember all kinds of people on the ore boats, or people in Oregon. We would go out and do things together. I'd find people who had a mutual respect for the outdoors, and we would recreate.

JR: You were elected to the Colorado House of Representatives between 1966 to 1974. Were there any elected posts before that?

RL: I ran once for class office when I was in school and lost.

JR: What prompted you to take an interest in the House of Representatives in the mid-60s?

RL: I had no prior interest in politics. I was in law school in Berkeley from 1958 until 1961, and a guy named John F. Kennedy came along. This really changed my life. It was literally a conversion experience. I went from having no interest in politics to a great and perhaps naïve idealism about using government to solve the world's problems. So the inspiration for me getting into politics was John F. Kennedy; the hope and the electricity that he shot through our generation of young people.

JR: Did you ever have occasion to meet him personally?

RL: Never did.

JR: Did you work on his campaign?

RL: The first campaign I ever worked on was Kennedy's 1960 campaign. He touched what somebody called "The better angels of our nature." We were an idealistic generation, and Kennedy reflected that. Stevenson had before that too, but Stevenson did not affect me. He affected a number of other people, but I was only vaguely aware of Stevenson. But when Kennedy came on the scene, I began to see that public policy was among the highest of callings. When the student is ready, the teacher appears.

JR: Were you and your family Democrats before the Kennedy era?

RL: My family were Republicans; fairly conventional business people, and I voted for Eisenhower the first time he ran for office in 1956. I was in college. That was before law school obviously. I just went ahead and voted, I suppose, my family's predispositions and voted Republican for Eisenhower. I, by the way, am not sorry that I did that. Eisenhower, I do think, was quite a guy in a lot of ways, but that's a more complicated story.

JR: So it was Kennedy that nudged you over to the Left?

RL: I would not say nudged me to the Left, but probably the same thing. He inspired us to use government to correct problems.

JR: How did it happen that about six years after the electric inspiration from John Kennedy, you found yourself in the Colorado House of Representatives?.

RL: I moved to Colorado in 1961 right out of law school, and I didn't know a soul when I arrived here. Because I was young and idealistic, I got involved in the Young Democrats, and soon became president of the Denver Young Democrats. Then I became vice president of the Colorado Young Democrats, and then in 1966, as vice president of the Colorado Young Democrats, I realized that there was a seat in the legislature that I could possibly win. With great audacity, and little realization of what I was undertaking, I ran for the legislature and won. I was 31 years old.

JR: Was it your love of the land that drew you to Colorado?

RL: It was love of the outdoors. It was mountain climbing, kayaking, and skiing.

JR: Downhill or cross-country?

RL: Both.

JR: What causes were you aligned with in 1965 when you were running for the House of Representatives for the first time?

RL: Well, I think the biggest cause of all those early years was the Civil Rights Movement. There were lots of good things that we wanted to do, but Civil Rights was the passion of our time. I started recognizing that growth was bringing both benefits and harm to Colorado, and that we should find ways to minimize the harm. As a young lawyer, I became a non-paid lobbyist for the Colorado Women's Garden Club. The first time I walked into the Colorado State Capitol, I was fighting for billboard legislation.

JR: Let's talk billboards. What year was that?

RL: It would be about 1962. I was working at one point for the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Commission as a lawyer – but I never really got very far away from some aspect of the environment. Ironically, it may not be the biggest issue now, but billboards seemed to me a particular interesting cause because a billboard doesn't make people sleep in any more beds. In a beautiful tourist state, it doesn't make people eat any more meals. It just directs them to specific establishments. People don't generally spend any more tourist dollars. I had a real concern and passion on this issue. I wrote a *Law Review* article on billboards. I recognize now that it was my concern about sprawl and growth, and a lot of other things. But it first manifested itself in asking why we litter our beautiful highways with billboards.

JR: *Edward Abbey's characters went after billboards in* The Monkey Wrench Gang. *Was the book released by then?*

RL: It was later. I got to know Edward Abbey.

JR: When did you meet Ed Abbey?

RL: I met Ed Abbey in 1974.

JR: What is your recollection of Abbey?

RL: Well, I used the power of the governor's office. I was elected in 1974. I wrote to Ed Abbey and said I would like to take a river trip with him. We never got together on that river trip. We tried, but we never did. But he came to see Dottie and me, in the governor's mansion. It was one of the charms of being governor. You would issue an invitation, even to a guy as unorthodox as Edward Abbey. He came by, I would say, four or five times when we were in the governor's mansion. He had dinner with us, or joined us in a social obligation of some sort. Quite a lady's man.

"I wrote a Law Review article on billboards. I recognize now that it was my concern about sprawl and growth, and a lot of other things. But it first manifested itself in asking why we litter our beautiful highways with billboards."

JR: One of his memorable quotes was "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of a cancer cell."

RL: Exactly. I'm just sorry – I thought I would have a lifetime to get to know Ed Abbey, and he went way too soon. He was an incredibly romantic character in addition to being a great environmentalist.

JR: Governor, I tend to see you on the forefront of three basic categories of causes: civil rights, environment, and health care. There might also be others. You were there for civil rights in the early 60s, for the environment, population (births and deaths), and for health care. You probed our conscience on the leading issues of the day. Is there a unifying theme among these causes?

RL: One attribute ties those categories together, and also inspires others. It is confronting growth. Early on I recognized that we were living on the upper shoulders of awesome geometric curves.

JR: Where were you introduced to this concept?

RL: In part, this results from my high school algebra

teachers. The whole geometry of growth, the demands of geometry, and how fast it multiplied when you lived on the upper slope. I can remember this very vividly. Actually I almost stayed in California. It really related to the same thing. I looked half a lifetime down the road in California. As much as I loved California at the time, I thought I was perceptive because California, to my values, was going to be overrun. So I moved to Colorado. Immediately I saw it overrun. It sort of followed me. I wasn't as smart as I thought.

JR: What did the algebra lesson teach you about the human experience?

RL: At some point in the geometric curve, society has to recognize, and recognize in time, the implications. During my professional lifetime, health care has grown at two-and-a-half times the rate of inflation. No trees grow to the sky, and no element of our budget can grow at two-and-a-half times the rate of inflation. So I got on that because I had to balance the budget as governor, and health care was driving it so much. I started really looking at how many of our resources were going into health care and not keeping us any healthier than countries that spend half of what we spend. That led me into death and dying, and of course, the whole appreciation of senectitude was always in my mind with regard to the environment. I couldn't understand why people couldn't see that we were growing a "Los Angeles" of the Rockies in Colorado. I used to say, I didn't blame anybody for Los Angeles growing like it did, because they had no precedence, but Colorado could look at Los Angeles and see what this mindless lust for growth was getting us. So, yes, I think that the one thing that tied these things together was an appreciation of how fast the curves involved were ascending.

JR: Did you have any advanced math courses in college or beyond?

RL: I was in business school, and I actually graduated with an accounting degree. I took a lot of accounting classes, but that is not mathematics, and I did not have any higher math.

JR: The students of a business and a CPA curriculum often have an affinity for growth. Somehow people make it through our educational curriculum without ever having occasion critically to examine the assumption that growth is good and more growth is better.

RL: That is a very important point, and I think that is absolutely right. Accounting is a field for often myopic people. It taught me, however, that you have to think of a balance sheet. You have to think about both assets and liabilities. The business page would run here in Colorado: "Good news today, we got a new Martin Marietta plant that would account for 3,000 jobs." I would immediately try to think about the implications of this. Is this going to last for 200 years? Are we going to continue to say this is the way we should run the economy? Early on, I didn't use the word "sustainability," but instinctively, I have passionately believed that we have to move from growth to sustainability. Many of my battles have contained that theme.

JR: Why is it so difficult for us to make the transition from growth to sustainability?

RL: Well, that's one of the reasons they called me "governor gloom" out here. I certainly hope I'm wrong. My own take on this is that the traits that allow humans to prevail in a harsh and cruel natural world and overcome both their competitors and their harsh environment now threaten us. Survival traits that worked for us against a cruel world now threaten to doom us. One of the things that impassions me is that there is very little time left to try to make the world move from growth to sustainability. If we don't, we are condemning our children and grandchildren to a very unfortunate future. I have this sense of immediacy that we have to find a way to stabilize population and to reduce the consumption. This is, in fact, a hinge of human history that is not unlike the agriculture revolution or the industrial revolution. We have to move to a more benign way of living.

JR: You invoke the phrase, "governor gloom." I just wonder if there really is a sense of pessimism or if there is an overriding spirit of optimism that might actually be driving you to think that you can meaningfully impact and direct where we're proceeding.

RL: Very perceptive, John. Of course, it is optimism. I think there is a chance, a good chance. I wouldn't be working this hard, I guess, if I thought that there wasn't a chance. Every generation is called upon for different functions. My father had to deal with the Depression and the Second World War. I think our generation has had to deal with civil rights and some of the other issues, which are subsets of sustainability. I think that we have to learn to live within certain limits in health care, and certainly in environment.

"I can't imagine an environmental organization not dealing with what I consider to be one of the top environmental issues of any society, and that is its population, its ultimate demographic impact."

JR: At the time of this interview, you are a candidate for the Sierra Club Board of Directors. What prompted you to throw your hat in the ring for the Sierra Club Board.

RL: I can't imagine an environmental organization not dealing with what I consider to be one of the top environmental issues of any society, and that is its population, its ultimate demographic impact. To me it would be the same as if you say you're for civil rights, but you're not for fair housing. Or you're for the women's movement, but you're not for equal pay or equal work. It is integral in my definition. I think the biggest environmental challenge falls under an umbrella term called "sustainability." Under that, are a number of things, and very chief among them are the questions of reducing consumption, reducing the toxic impact, whether that is water or air pollution, and population. I think the Sierra Club could win absolutely every battle it has been fighting for, and still lose America if they ignore population. If you wave a magic wand, they automatically win: no drilling on the North Slope, clean air, and all those other things. If present immigration continues, you still would have a terrible and poor environment in America with half a billion people; I think it's environmental malpractice to ignore immigration. That's what I think they are doing. They just ignore immigration in pursuit of smaller, though important issues. They ignore the looming issue of the demographic destiny of the United States. How many people can live satisfied lives in an ecosystem within the carrying capacity of our region?

JR: Well, the opposition has not refrained from labeling people concerned about immigration reform and concerned about our demographic destiny with unsavory terminology. I would welcome your thoughts on the philosophical framework under which the other side of the Sierra Club is operating. What is behind it? What makes it tick? Where is it coming from?

RL: Like it is with so much else in life, I think the things people say and the perceptions that they evidence say more about them than they do about the people that they're often making the perceptions about. When we didn't have the money, we raised the money for my wife, Dottie, to participate in the famous Selma civil rights march. I organized and was the first vice president of the NAACP at the University of California in 1959.

JR: Your record stands for itself.

RL: Yes, and I have sadness and pity for people who say these things to hold on to power. To me it is McCarthyism. What's practically at work here is the philosophical and the practical. An ex-president of the Sierra Club told me that they have made a nefarious political deal with the Hispanic Caucus where they will get Hispanic Caucus votes in exchange for votes on the North Shore drilling and issues like that, but they then have to keep away from immigration. I asked this guy, "What would you think if I ran the Sierra Club, and I would sell out drilling on the North Shore in favor of some sort of political advantage?" You just wonder what kind of unprincipled people are these? The Sierra Club looks at itself as a wheeler dealer in the environment. I've been reading a book by Michael Cohen about the history of the Sierra Club. Dave Brower was involved in a very similar thing. The Sierra Club became very big and powerful with people running it who felt they had a lot of power with the forest service and the agricultural

department, and this was what they were doing. They ceased fighting for certain things. David Brower came along and kicked them. I think there are a number of us now who are trying to kick the Sierra Club in the same way.

JR: Governor, there have been a number of articles that you have written over the years that deal with community. Titles such as "Commandments of Community" come to mind. Please comment on how you define a community, and what those commandments might be.

RL: I believe a community is not a state of nature. A herd, or a flock, is a state of nature. I think America has been very lucky that we took incredibly diverse people from all over the world. We made them Americans. The only way my grandfather could speak to your grandfather was to learn a common language. They both came from a long way away. They had to throw themselves into the continent. They didn't have enough money to go back like the Spanish conquistadors south of us. So the society we developed here in the United States assimilated a group of very diverse people, and I now am very much worried about whether or not balkanization isn't in the slow process taking place in the United States. I find nowhere in the world where diverse people live together in peace if their language and their culture compete within a geographic area. Just like I think that I have been on the cutting edge of population and health care, and other issues, I now think there is a new issue in addition to sustainability. It isn't quite as grandiose, but it is a very important issue. What kind of social glue does society need to keep diverse people together?

JR: How do you reconcile your concerns about diversity with your activism on civil rights?

RL: I think that the genius of America has got to be the fact that we take diverse people and we absorb them into our society and treat them equally as our fellow citizens. In the case of the black community, and in some cases of the Hispanic community, that was not being done. I think there was racism and discrimination in the United States that needed to be fought. I think now, however, that while there still is racism and discrimination, that the dialogue has to move on. It has to move on to some of these other issues. Nobody will even talk about community. Unfortunately you have certain issues like bilingual education or bilingual society that are being ignored. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual, but it is a curse for a society to be bilingual. I know of no place in the world where two different competing languages live together in peace. They generally are fighting and killing each other.

"I find nowhere in the world where diverse people live together in peace if their language and their culture compete within a geographic area."

JR: Immanuel Kant once said, "The great dividers are language and religion."

RL: I think Kant turned out to be wrong on religion today. I think we have now overcome religion [as divisive]. I don't know the religious inclinations of most of my friends, but I do think he was right on language. You've got to, at minimum, be able to speak to your neighbors. This relates to the whole question about what social glue ties us together. It seems a diverse people is like a nuclear power plant with rods that pull in and keep the explosion from happening. Not to mix my metaphors, but you need bridge builders, you need people to come along and mediate, to have some common symbols, like the flag, and a common history that everyone honors. You need to have some sort of civic engagement. You have to ask your community what you can do for it, not the other way around. Just as every house is not a home, every spot on the map is not a community. A community is not something that just happens. It is something that is built and sacrificed for and worked for. Right now when I look at the fact that, let's take California, New York, New Jersey, and Florida where in a very short period of time, you are going to have a majority of minorities working and paying into Social Security and the health care system. They will support a minority of "majority" people, when they often can't even afford to have health care of their own. I think that there is some tension building into this society; there is geographic tension, there is ethnic tension, there are all of these, there are partisan tensions. But I think a smart society has to anticipate, to foresee, and to forestall. We are not doing this well presently.

JR: Have you given any thought to the factors

affecting the assimilative capacity of a community?

RL: I suppose that would be a factor of a couple different things. Numbers would be the chief one. We are taking so many immigrants from Spanish speaking societies, that we risk becoming a bilingual/bicultural society. We assimilate better when the numbers are not so large, and we don't allow competing societies within our society. I think presently, we risk becoming an Hispanic Quebec.

JR: I have heard you speak in the past, Governor, on the notion that we need to think about becoming good ancestors. Please elaborate on that.

RL: I do that as a Democrat. I think that the Democratic Party makes great neighbors. They care about their neighbors, and that's what attracted me to the Democratic Party. But I think this great party that I so passionately adopted in the sixties is now buying social justice on our children's credit card. So, I think the Democratic Party, and the Republican Party too – I'm still a Democrat because it still is better of the two parties by far – can't purchase social justice and then hand the bill to your children and your grandchildren. So I'm arguing that the Democrats have been great neighbors; they really have wanted to develop programs to help people. But they've been poor ancestors because of their tendency to build up a fiscal chain around the necks of our children and grandchildren. This tendency is now much more marked recently by the Republican Party.

JR: Do you see that as an offshoot of both the Democrats' and the Republicans' inability to come to grips with the notion of finitude that you spoke of earlier?

RL: Absolutely. We have no sense of limits. I think Keynes was right. What the Democrats did originally was to borrow money when they fought the depression and WW II, but they paid it back. Now the Republicans have locked us into endless borrowing– at least the Democrats had an intellectual basis for this. Keynes said you could borrow money in bad times to stimulate the economy, and you pay it back in good times. Well, the Democrats sort of forgot the second part of that equation, and started borrowing year after year, and then the Republicans have come along cynically and purposefully running up debt, I think, because they want to put government under incredible fiscal constraints. Yes, I definitely feel this is all the same thing. I think that my definition of sustainability is that I should leave my children a sustainable society. And that is not only the environment; although that's one of my biggest passions. It is also this: I inherited the world's largest creditor nation, I'm leaving to my children the world's largest debtor nation. I inherited a nation that produced more than it consumed, and I'm leaving to my children a nation that consumes more than it produces. I inherited a small federal debt, I'm leaving my children with a staggering federal debt. I think all of that is the same, whether it is the environment or the economy. Our generation, John, I believe have been poor ancestors.

JR: Okay, there is a final thought I would like to explore with you Governor. In all of the cutting edge issues you have pioneered, you're ultimately trafficking in the world of ideas. You, more so than perhaps any other person of our day, have actively seen several ideas start from a seedling and grow into a national movement. Some, like immigration, are still in the earlier stages of development. Others have come full circle and blossomed. I wonder if you could comment on how ideas emerge in the world of ideas in this nation of ours. How do they build and how do they grow to the so-called tipping point and beyond?

RL: My college roommate was Steve Ambrose, the historian. I've always had a passion for history. One of the things history teaches me is that the world is ever-changing. It's a kaleidoscope. Time moves that kaleidoscope and presents a different pattern. If you really appreciate history and you appreciate how history has changed, you realize that it is of immense importance for every generation to sit down and think about and anticipate how that world is changing and how we can keep on top of that change. I would have voted for the whole New Deal. But I think that the New Deal has become demographically obsolete. I'm living too long, and my kids aren't having enough children. I've been wrong many times too, but I think I've at least had an appreciation that the status quo is always going to be undercut by some trend that is out there. It may be like when OPEC was announced on page 43 of the *Wall Street Journal*. If people were perceptive enough, and I wasn't, but if people were perceptive enough, they would look at that and say, "Well, wait a minute." So I have had a great passion for trying to foresee and forestall.

JR: Those are great words, we have to foresee and forestall, and if we don't . . .

RL: I think that I spend a lot of time thinking about where is our society going. I'm often wrong. I wrote a book called *Megatraumas: America in the Year 2000* that I'm very proud of to this day. I certainly was right in a lot of things, but I also said that gold was going to be $2,000 an ounce.

JR: Let's take the immigration issue. Eventually this country is going to recognize this as an enormous issue. Before we become a nation of a billion people, it seems that conventional wisdom might be connecting the dots. When the light bulb comes on, it will be a recognized topic that people can discuss freely without having their parentage questioned. How will we get to that point?

RL: I think that there is almost a pattern of change in our lifetime. The first stage is "no talk, no do." This just wasn't an issue. This was the way God made the world. Then all of a sudden somebody comes along, it could be a Martin Luther King or a Gloria Steinham, or a Betty Friedan, or a John Tanton who says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." So, the second stage is "talk, no do." Nothing is happening on it, but the perceptive people are saying, "now wait a minute, have you thought about this?" We're heading America towards unacceptable numbers. The third stage is "talk, do." That's where you will not only be talking about a problem, but you'll be forming organizations and trying to get some political muscle to what you're concerned about. Then the fourth stage, and I can't wait until we get there on immigration, is "no talk, do." People aren't even arguing about the women's movement anymore. The paradigm has shifted. We went from "no talk, no do" to "no talk, just do." Half the medical schools and half the law schools are filled with women, so the paradigm has shifted, and I think with immigration, we're still at the third stage where we're talking about it and doing something about it. We have most of society persuaded. But the epicenter of power in our society continues to look at this problem with old eyes.

JR: Do you see the sentiment of the nation already being well on the side of talking and doing, but yet the opinion leaders, the government, the elected officials, the media are not quite there yet?

RL: Every poll that you look at for the last 20 years shows that a majority of Americans are concerned about the rate and pace of population growth. I think that there is an elite in the United States, either for business reasons or political reasons, or for political correctness reasons, who have refused to recognize and honor this. It's building up. I think it's very unwise to have a majority feeling very strongly about a subject while allowing it to, in fact, get worse and worse and worse. At some point there will be a backlash. Right now, it's very hard to see how that's going to come about. The new minority in America is Hispanic. Most Hispanics agree with the majority on terms of limits on the numbers. Every once in awhile in history, the people will have to take a very different viewpoint from their leadership on an issue, and it generally causes some turmoil.

"Every poll that you look at for the last 20 years shows that a majority of Americans are concerned about the rate and pace of population growth....It's building up. I think it's very unwise to have a majority feeling very strongly about a subject while allowing it to, in fact, get worse and worse and worse. At some point there will be a backlash."

JR: Can you think of any other causes in your lifetime where there has been such a divergence between the conventional wisdom of the people and the mindset of the elected officials?

RL: I can't. I suppose you could say Vietnam. It's the whole thing about the leader who says, "there goes my people, I have to hurry to get ahead of them." I think the political leadership is often reactive. By the time it gets to

the political system, the political system is almost always reactive. I think you're only going to get something through the legislature by a majority vote of very conventional people. And so I think that the agents of change out there always have a frustrating time trying to change the status quo, but it changes. But on this one, I very much worry about your point, because this isn't just another issue. This is an issue that people really do feel very strongly about. If we continue to take four times the number of immigrants, legally plus illegal immigrants and nobody does anything about it, I think that we do run the risk of social turmoil.

JR: Are there any other issues that touch your conscience today?

RL: We haven't talked about one issue that just haunts me. I guess it haunts us all. If global warming is a reality, and I think it is likely to be, how do we live lives, how do we structure society, how do we solve poverty, how do we continue to have justice?

JR: How might you answer your question?

RL: Again, history teaches me that there is a real race between enlightenment on an issue and waiting too long at which time there is turmoil. I think that during the first part of my political career, and the last 40 years of American political history, you could solve problems by giving people additional rights and protection. I think that it wasn't a zero-sum game at all. Now, whether it's the environment or Social Security or health security, there is no recognition that finitude is going to require us to take back things from people. What unions call give backs – where the company has to take back benefits that have been given to the unions for a couple of years. It has to be taken back because it is unaffordable. Well, I think our political system – Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, a lot of our retirement programs – are not sustainable. So we are going to have to take back some benefits. I think our children are paying into systems like Social Security and Medicare that are not going to be there in the same form when they get to be that ripe age. So all of these things are coming to a head. But the biggest one, the biggest take back is the American sense that we can continue to grow and grow and consume and consume without limits. I think this is why this problem of sustainability is going to be such a gigantic challenge. I don't think it is going to be achieved by democratic means. I think it's most likely to continue to get worse, until some sort of traumatic event happens. And traumatic events are things that change the course of history. If through democratic means you can't get people to develop a greater recognition of the environmental and fiscal dangers, then apparently you have to run the economy, and/or the environment off a cliff, and try to pick up the pieces. I hate to say it, because that's not my first choice. That might be the most likely scenario. We're going to drive both the fiscal stability of the United States, the environmental sustainability, and the ecosystem of our world into chaos. For our successors, it's going to be a matter of picking up the pieces rather than preserving what we have.

JR: Well, as we strive to proceed on that course, hopefully, for your advocacy, you're able to know in your heart that you're carrying the message as best you can.

RL: That's a wonderful way to end.

JR: Governor, again, thank you very much for your time. •