

The Future of the Environment

by Philip Orme Miller

The environmental movement in America is comprised of a broad cross section of political views. These range from old-line conservationists like the Audubon Society and Nature Conservancy to the Sierra Club to the even more radical, anti-capitalist and anarchist types. You have no doubt seen their street demonstrations at recent meetings of the World Trade Organization, etc.

Despite the extreme radicalism and shaky science promoted by these fringe groups, the preservation of our rapidly shrinking wilderness and our environmental treasures is really a very popular issue with widespread support. Unfortunately, because of this growing radicalism we must be concerned at the loss of our individual liberties and property rights.

This growing radicalism, one must understand, is the result of an increasing sense of urgency to preserve the last remaining unspoiled places as we continue to rapidly develop the country. We are, in effect, turbo-charging our economy with a rapidly increasing population every year. Let's look at the very clear and simple facts. More and more people equals more and more sprawl, congestion, and environmental degradation. The biggest generator of people is immigration and the offspring of immigrants. Immigration alone is adding approximately 1.6 million new people every year (1,000,000 legal, 400,000 illegal, and over 195,000 H 1 B Visas – which was recently increased). That is the equivalent of adding another New York City (8,000,000) every five years! And that's not including their offspring! California has to build a new school every single day to keep up with this demand. It is axiomatic: with more people come more laws necessary to control everyone. If you are a landowner and are embittered by excessive government intrusion and regulation now, just wait until we have 400

million people here.

Despite every poll showing a substantial majority of Americans wanting both legal and illegal immigration dramatically reduced, *nothing* is done. We have all become victims of ferocious ethnic identity politics and extreme corporate greed. Growing powerful and hostile ethnic blocks are leading to divisiveness not "diversity" and Big Business wants the new consumers and the new workers, which are also constantly compressing wage scales. People at the lower end of the economic scale thus have no bargaining power. Their jobs go to China or Mexico or they have to compete with the constant influx of the unskilled. You can bet your last dollar if we were importing a million and a half lawyers every year, compressing their hourly billing rates, we'd have legislation passed before you finished reading this.

It is estimated that 70 percent of our growth in population since 1970 has been from immigrants and their offspring. From 1990 to 2000 the overall population increased by 32 million, an increase of 13 percent. Virtually all demographers now predict a U.S. population in excess of 405 million by 2050 and 570 million by 2100. What does this mean? I'll tell you what it means. It will be the end of America as we know it. You can forget about the national forests, national parks and the nation's beaches. Even now many of our national parks have become so packed that it is hardly a wilderness experience. The year 2000 was the first year at the Grand Canyon you couldn't take your car to the rim – too congested – you had to ride on a bus. I'm 57 years old and was born and raised in Miami. It is now massively bigger but most assuredly not better. It is "paradise lost." The sprawl and congestion are unspeakable. Vast areas of wilderness, farms and ranches are now subdivisions. Just look at the endangered and precarious state of the Everglades with its reduced size and water practically choked off. The waters of the eastern section of the Everglades are actually so polluted with mercury one can't eat the fish – a Florida panther actually died of mercury poisoning several years ago. Ah, but we need

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more people, more customers, more condominiums and strip malls. If you look at a photo of Florida taken from space the extent of development is astounding. The old saying of the past "Come watch us grow" must be countered with "at what price?" "You can't stop progress," begs a response of "What is your definition of progress?"

The proponents of constant population growth suggest we look at all the sparsely populated states like the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas that we can use for more people and landfills. This is absurd as it is the mountain states and the metropolitan areas that are attracting the sprawl. From cities to airports we are getting overwhelmed with congestion.

When I attended the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona in 1967 there were still magnificent long-range western views everywhere. Recent trips to the West have been saddening with the discovery of widespread housing, travel trailer parks, golf courses and commercialization. The wonderful ranches and the heritage of our wide-spread scenery are rapidly disappearing with an increasing population escaping the congestion and barbarism of the big cities. People are pouring into the inter- mountain states. This crush of humanity is not just transforming America but the world as well and its last remaining beautiful places. Fifty years ago there were 50,000 tigers in the wild, today there are less than 4,000. In twenty-five years they may disappear altogether.

It is unfortunate the leadership of practically all of America's top environmental and conservationist groups have retreated from speaking about reducing the one driving force that is ultimately destroying our way of life – mass immigration and its resulting population growth. Their abdication of responsibility on this clearly fundamental issue is nothing less than astonishing. Twenty-five years ago overpopulation was recognized as the critical factor in habitat destruction. Think about it. There are a multitude of articles comparing cities' congestion, driving times, airport congestion, urban sprawl, along with Bush and Cheney's call for more refineries and 1,300 or 1,900 more power plants. Yet nothing is said about the underlying cause. This can't be

an accident.

Perhaps these groups are afraid they won't get their funding from the usual leftist, pro-immigration foundations. Also, the media has successfully smeared anyone who is in favor of immigration reduction as a bigot, racist, xenophobe, nativist, etc. They know what is happening and are promoting it. All the hard-fought gains in preserving this or that little environmentally sensitive piece will ultimately be swept away in a tide of humanity and development. As Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Nothing in politics happens by accident". With the relationship between immigration and population growth and environmental degradation so easy to see, why and who in the media is promoting it? Why are we radically increasing and altering our demographic base? Who has been behind this? We all know Big Business is for it but the liberal media is usually very hostile to Big Business. Why is the media so purposefully silent? Why and who is the driving force behind this overpopulation and radical multiculturalism?

Aside from the radical agenda of the liberals in the media and academia it must be noted that Big Business today is neither patriotic nor responsible; it has evolved into transnational capitalism on steroids. The greedy and ignorant anti-conservationist attitudes of many "Country Club Republicans" and Rush Limbaugh with his characterization of "environmental whackos" – often to the accompaniment of the sounds of chainsaws – are completely out of step with the great majority of Americans. However, the average person has not yet quite made all the connections between rampant immigration and population growth as a cause of environmental destruction as well as political and cultural fragmentation and dispossession. It seems we Americans know the price of everything and the value of nothing with our myopic and greedy emphasis on quantity not quality.

As true conservationists we must embrace this issue. It has been our tradition and history: the preservation of our environment, our heritage and culture. We can make a difference. We must get involved. As conservationists, what are we trying to conserve – the nation for more Wal-Marts? •