

Environmental Scientists as Censors

An Introduction

BY LEON KOLANKIEWICZ

This collection of essays concerns a heretofore little documented phenomenon. That is the strong proclivity of the U.S. environmental science community to avoid open discussion of the environmental impacts of population growth driven by high immigration rates and its propensity to censor factual information and opinion on these topics when advanced by those who refuse to kowtow to political correctness. In this tendency, disappointingly but perhaps not surprisingly, the environmental science community closely mirrors the environmental advocacy community. Yet because we expect scientists, presumably less constrained by social taboos and squeamishness, to pursue rather than obfuscate the truth, this disappointment stings more sharply.

The cases of censorship documented here concern three organizations: the Ecological Society of America (ESA), the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS), and the Columbia River Basin Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). In each case the initial protagonist was Dr. Stuart H. Hurlbert, a biology professor (now emeritus) at San Diego State University.

Hurlbert has long tried, unsuccessfully, to get the ESA to address U.S. population growth. In 2008 he was invited by the editors of an ESA journal to submit an essay on the topic of immigration control and biodiversity. His essay was first accepted, then rejected as “too political,” and is finally published here, verbatim. This is followed by an account of his acrimonious battle with the editors and eventually the entire governing board of ESA. Additionally, we include a letter by Jack Martin and Dick Schneider, also rejected by ESA editors. Finally, we present an essay on the hypocrisy of environmentalists incensed about border fences but indifferent to immigration-driven U.S. population growth.

Lake and Reservoir Management is a scientific

journal published by NALMS. In 2007 the journal’s editor invited Hurlbert to publish the proceedings of a symposium on the Salton Sea that Hurlbert was editing and accepted his preface for the special issue. The political directorate of NALMS then intruded and demanded, without explanation, that much of the material on population growth and its threat be deleted. Hurlbert refused, withdrew his entire preface, and the issue was published. That saga and its aftermath are recounted here.

In 2005 Hurlbert was invited to become a member of the Oregon-based ISAB. This body provides independent advice and evaluation on the salmon, fisheries, and wildlife in the large, ecologically important Columbia River Basin. When ISAB was charged with developing a white paper on regional human population trends, their possible effects on fish and wildlife, and possible ways to minimize those effects, Hurlbert’s input on immigration’s key role in unsustainable U.S. population growth was rebuffed, because once more he insisted on broaching the immigration taboo.

The final essay, by author and *Newsweek* Contributing Editor Robert J. Samuelson, emphasizes that “democracy doesn’t work well without good information.” We pay, and we depend upon, scientists to generate good information. In their reticence and cowardice, the censorious natural scientists have a lot of company and are, in fact, victims themselves of a widespread socio-political phenomenon. Yet their inability to break free of the chains of the immigration taboo does the nation a disservice.

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This special issue is dedicated to the memory of the late James F. LaBounty for reasons made clear in the essay, “The North American Lake Management Society: Axing Truth, Threatening Lawsuits” (see p. 37). ■

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