

Thinking Outside the Box

Environmental scientist investigates if politics is concealing 'America's greatest environmental issue'

BY LEON KOLANKIEWICZ

In the early 1990s, when I was living in Southern California and working as an environmental planner for the Orange County Environmental Management Agency, I was president for a while of the Orange County chapter of the California Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP).

AEP is a non-profit association of inter-disciplinary environmental scientists, planners, and engineers, hailing from both the public and private (i.e., governmental and consulting) sectors, whose profession it is to conduct environmental assessment in California. Environmental professionals include wildlife and fisheries biologists, botanists, zoologists, ecologists, geologists, civil, transportation, and acoustical engineers, archeologists, paleontologists, wetland scientists, and air quality modelers, among others. Environmental assessment, as charted by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the similar California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), aims to predict the potential environmental consequences of proposed projects such as flood control facilities, dams, and reservoirs, water supply, transportation infrastructure and roads, power plants and transmission lines, pipelines, airport expansion, timber harvesting, and mining. The projects and their possible impacts run the gamut.

In 1994, I helped plan and organize AEP's annual statewide conference, held that year in upscale Newport Beach. I managed to snag MIT professor Henry W. Kendall as one of our keynote speakers. Dr. Kendall was a Nobel laureate in physics and a co-founder of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Incidentally, Kendall was very concerned about human overpopulation at both the global

and national scales, as I was to learn several years later.

I also proposed and organized several conference sessions, one of which was on the environmental implications of population growth. For this session, I lined up two impressively credentialed panelists. Robert Gillespie, president of Population Communication, would address population issues from an international perspective. Gillespie had spent much of his career overseas promoting family planning, and he had authored the "Statement on Population Stabilization" by world leaders, signed by the heads of government of a diverse assortment of more than 60 countries.¹ Ric Oberlink, executive director of Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), would focus on population issues closer to home in the United States and California, including immigration.

PANDORA'S GREEN BOX

Have Politics Concealed America's Greatest Environmental Issue and Threatened America's Way of Life?

By Paul Clark

Aberdeen, MD: Harford Publishing, 2016

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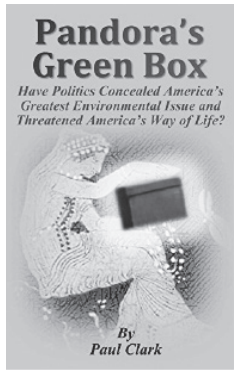


I remember being excited that environmental professionals would just eat up this session, given that rapid, unending population growth was the "root cause" of so many of the environmental challenges California, the nation, and the world were facing and continue to face today two decades later. Alas, my premonitions couldn't have been more wrong.

Of the 400 or so conference attendees, only four of them showed up to the population session, a measly one percent. I felt especially bad for Ric, who had traveled all the way down from Northern California to participate. It was a vivid and depressing lesson for me of the apathy or antipathy most environmental professionals and environmentalists have toward the population issue. Could the AEP conferees possibly have been so ignorant of population's role in environmental pressures that they couldn't even imagine what bearing it had on *environmental* issues? Or

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did they consider population growth, creeping along year after year at a “mere” 1 percent or 2 percent per annum — barely discernible from one year to the next — to be old news, and therefore boring? (Were they examples of the late Al Bartlett’s dictum that “the great shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function?”) Or perhaps they considered a growing population simply a given, a *fait accompli* — inevitable — and therefore not worth concerning themselves with. Maybe the immigration taboo, at least in California, had already become toxic and oppressive. Or,



in a more self-interested vein, did California’s environmental professionals believe that nonstop population growth was a sign of economic vitality and good for our business as environmental analysts — because a steady stream of new growth-driven projects to analyze meant a steady flow of new work and income for us — even if these projects were bad for the environment. Maybe the cold, hard reality was that my fellow professionals

were not about to bite the hand that feeds them, even if that hand is a fist pummeling nature.

All these years later, even though by now I have been toiling in the trenches of America’s population skirmishes for more than two decades, I still don’t know the answers to these basic questions. Thus, I am inclined to think that all of these factors may be involved to some extent.

In view of the foregoing negative experience and other similarly disillusioning ones with those of my ilk (environmental professionals and environmental activists), I am delighted to see the appearance of a new book on America’s disastrous and unsustainable immigration-driven population growth by a fellow environmental scientist, Paul Clark: *Pandora’s Green Box: Have Politics Concealed America’s Greatest Environmental Issue and Threatened America’s Way of Life?* (Harford Publishing, 2016). Author Clark is a professional environmental scientist with 10 years of experience in the field, a bachelor degree’s from Towson University in Maryland, and a Master’s in Environmental Science from Johns Hopkins University. His master’s research at Hopkins focused on the impacts of population growth on America’s natural environment.

In *Pandora’s Green Box*, Clark adopts a scientific approach to the hypothesis he poses, sifting through the evidence to see what it reveals. The book is divided into two parts or segments: population and the environment in the United States, and the effects of politics on the population issue in our country. His concluding chapter — “America’s Greatest Environmental Challenge” — answers the question that he raises at the outset: Is

politics concealing the most important environmental threat our country faces early in the twenty-first century?

Roy Beck and I came at this question from a somewhat different angle at the outset of the new millennium 16 years ago in our 2000 paper, “The Environmental Movement’s Retreat from Advocating U.S. Population Stabilization (1970-1998): A First Draft of History,” published in the scholarly *Journal of Policy History*. Paul Clark’s book represents, in essence, a second draft of this unhappy history. With regard to immigration, he reaches conclusions consistent with our own, but expands upon them, provides much additional documentation, and covers the more recent, wholesale neglect of the population cause by the so-called environmental movement, or what Beck and I termed less enthusiastically, the Environmental Establishment.

Sadly, the situation has only gone from bad to worse. In 2000, Beck and I documented “the virtual abandonment by national environmental groups of U.S. population stabilization as an actively pursued goal,” and called this “perhaps the most striking change” in the environmental movement since the era of the first Earth Day in 1970. But in recent years, as documented by Clark and others, environmental elites are no longer just ignoring U.S. population growth because of their squeamishness about publicly acknowledging the need to reduce immigration if U.S. population growth is ever to be tamed. Now, in effect, these environmentalish posers have actively endorsed endless U.S. population growth by shilling for “comprehensive immigration reform.” This misnamed “reform” is an environmental travesty that would grant amnesty to many millions of illegal aliens and double future legal immigration levels.

In Segment I of the book, “Population-Environment in America,” Clark asks: “*Is population growth in America a justifiable domestic environmental issue?*” The nine chapters in this segment methodically and rigorously address this question. Chapter 1 examines the population explosion on Earth and in the United States in particular, while Chapter 2 takes up the population debate, including Malthus, the neo-Malthusian movement spearheaded by Paul Ehrlich and others, and the ill-starred Ehrlich-Simon wager on mineral prices. In spite of ongoing disagreement and debate, the chapter correctly notes that there is indeed a broad scientific consensus that human population size is generally correlated with environmental impacts, and that, *ceteris paribus*, larger populations have greater environmental impacts than smaller ones.

The World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity, initiated by Prof. Henry Kendall and the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1992, was signed by over 1,600 distinguished scientists around the world, including more than 100 Nobel Laureates in the sciences (a majority of the living winners of the Nobel Prize in the sciences). The Scientists’ Warning states, in part:

The earth is finite. Its ability to absorb wastes and destructive effluent is finite. Its ability to provide food and energy is finite. Its ability to provide for growing numbers of people is finite. And we are fast approaching many of the earth's limits....

Pressures resulting from unrestrained population growth put demands on the natural world that can overwhelm any efforts to achieve a sustainable future.

The remaining seven chapters of Segment I prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that population growth in the United States is indeed a legitimate environmental issue. In Chapter 7, Clark presents pollution in Chesapeake Bay on the East Coast and Puget Sound on the West Coast as case studies of population density's role as a powerful driver or force multiplier of human environmental impacts. He then compares a number of environmental parameters in Wyoming (the smallest-population state) with California (the largest-population state). He proves that in spite of California's vaunted reputation as "the nation's poster child for environmental stewardship," its environmental impacts far exceed those of Wyoming's in many respects, entirely because of the reality that California's population is about 70 times larger than Wyoming's (39 million vs. 0.58 million).

In Segment II of *Pandora's Green Box*, "Politics and the Issue," Clark gets to the meat of his inquiry, posing the question:

If population growth in America is a justified environmental challenge, are political motives responsible for keeping the issue concealed?

He shows that immigration is indeed the main driver of continuing population growth in the United States, and he documents the Democratic Party's growing embrace of what amounts to open borders, abrogating its traditional concern for the impacts of mass immigration on American workers. The change in the Democratic National Committee's platform on immigration in just the four years between the 2008 and 2012 elections is nothing short of shocking:

Here is a brief comparison:

2008 DNC Immigration Platform

"We cannot continue to allow people to enter the United States undetected, undocumented, and unchecked...those who enter our country's borders illegally, and those who employ them, disrespect the rule of law."

2012 DNC Immigration Platform

"Comprehensive immigration reform that brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows ...on a path to earn citizenship."

Clark also shows that since the 1980s, environmen-

talists were pushed (by hostile Republicans like Ronald Reagan, who openly mocked environmentalists and their beliefs) and pulled (by eager Democrats) into the open, waiting arms of the Democratic Party. But as a loyal new constituency of the Democrats, how were environmentalists to react to the Democrats' shift toward embracing mass immigration, open borders, and the environmentally ruinous, unending U.S. population growth these entailed? We now know how they did react. Initially the response was silence, amounting to a tacit endorsement of population growth that would inevitably undermine every environmental goal they supposedly stood for. Sell-out enviros made a Faustian Bargain that promised greater short-term political power and influence at the expense of the long-term wellbeing of the environment.

More recently, in just the last few years, the Environmental Establishment has literally toed the Party Line, actively supporting the so-called "comprehensive immigration reform" that will result in endless, rapid, ruinous population growth in their own homeland. In what reeks of Orwellian logic, environmentalish groups like the treasonous, treacherous Sierra Club try to convince us that more immigrants and population growth will actually result in less environmental impact, but what I hear is so much twisted doublethink and "newspeak," and echoes of "war is peace" and "freedom is slavery."

Paul Clark documents all this, and more, in his exposé of how a cabal of environmentalists, Democrats, liberals, and the mainstream media have managed to conceal the gravest of environmental issues facing our country. They have sold out and forsaken the environment. For this, Clark is to be commended and welcomed to the ranks of the select few environmental scientists and environmentalists who have opted to tell the truth. And to quote Orwell once more: "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act." ■

Endnote

1. Signatories of this 1996 United Nations document included, among others: Austria, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Haiti, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea (both North and South), Libya, Macedonia, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. The Statement recognized that: "Degradation of the world's environment, income inequality, and the potential for conflict exist today because of rapid population growth, among other factors." It concluded: "Recognizing that early population stabilization is in the interest of all nations we earnestly hope that leaders around the world will share our views and join with us in this great undertaking for the wellbeing and happiness of people everywhere."