

How the Environmental Movement Became a Casualty of Political Correctness and the Leftist Agenda

BY BRENDA WALKER

Not that long ago in the scheme of things, environmentalism was pretty much a non-partisan issue. Keeping air and water clean was seen as necessary by all sensible people after events like Ohio's Cuyahoga River catching fire in 1969 and the big oil spill off the Santa Barbara coast from an ocean drilling rig the same year. Senator Gaylord Nelson helped found Earth Day 1970 and led in the creation of legislation to protect air and water quality. The media began reporting on sustainability issues like overlogging and overfishing which damaged nature's ability to replenish the living things we humans need.

Overpopulation was also discussed in a realistic manner in those days of pre-PC environmentalism. In 1970, the planet was home to around 3.7 billion souls, and mathematically realistic persons warned that the ballooning number of humans would be harmful to natural systems, not to mention the likely wars over resources to come. Population stabilization was a widely agreed-upon goal, both for the globe and also in high-consuming America.

Now, however, the world population is well into seven billion, and nobody talks about it. There has been an inverse relationship between the solvability of overpopulation and the discussion about it — the worse the problem gets, the more it is off the table in polite society.

What happened? We were doing pretty well for a while, at least in the U.S. But basic principles have been abandoned between the modern birth of the environmental movement and now.

In an important example of integrity lost, the devolution of the environmental movement's flagship organization, the Sierra Club, is instructive. In 1996 some concerned members of the club objected to the organization's change to remove immigration limitation as part of

general policy. In 1989, the official position was "Immigration to the U.S. should be no greater than that which will permit achievement of population stabilization in the U.S.," but that policy was rescinded. The grassroots members organized to place the issue before the entire membership as a ballot proposition, done by collecting enough signatures to make the initiative part of the annual election. The result was a firestorm of vicious attacks from the club's management that lasted for years, until it was finally learned in 2004 that a billionaire donor had specified his generosity would dry up if the Sierra Club ever identified immigration-fueled population growth as a negative environmental influence. Wall Street brainiac David Gelbaum gave over \$100 million for land purchase and preservation, but warned, "*I did tell [Sierra Club Executive Director] Carl Pope in 1994 or 1995 that if they ever came out anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me.*"

The Sierra Club collapsed like a cheap lawn chair in the face of so much money, and had no trouble in selling its virtue for \$100 million, and it did so in secret while outwardly attempting character assassination on principled opponents by calling them racists. When the truth was told, the club's priorities demonstrated that it was just another money-grubbing non-profit with pretensions of morality.

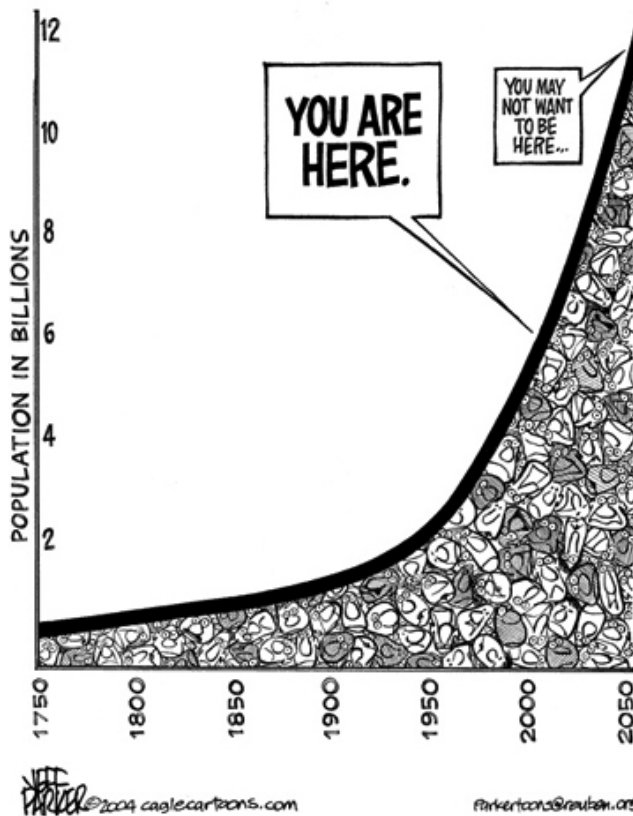
Did the Gelbaum big-money bribe signal the end of the environmental movement as an honorable endeavor? It should have, but the lapdog liberal media weren't interested in the Enron scandal of the greens, so the public didn't learn that the Sierra Club's integrity had been sold, and the mendacious perps got off with no blemishes to their reputations.

The biggest loser was the American public, which no longer had a strong environmental voice calling for population sanity. And of course the environment lost, with the downside of population growth left out of public policy discussions. One practical example: productive farmland is rapidly being turned into housing for the growing numbers of residents. In California (pop. 37,691,912 — July 2011), more than 60 percent of

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developed land in the Central Valley was previously prime farm acreage, according to a recent accounting by the American Farmland Trust.

In 2001, Roy Beck and Leon Kolankiewicz wrote a lengthy paper observing the changes in the movement titled “Forsaking Fundamentals: The Environmental Establishment Abandons U.S. Population Stabilization.” It noted that among the many pressures arrayed against prudent policies were the dropping fertility rate among Americans plus the growing effects of the 1965 immigration legislation opening the doors to tens of millions. It would have been a waste of time for population Cassandras to convince young American women to have smaller families, since the new top contributor became mostly non-white foreigners entering at breakneck speed.



Since then, the refashioning of the environmental movement into a whole new agenda has continued. In the following decade, traditional concerns of conservationists were largely put aside for the new emphasis on global warming, or “climate change” as it is more shrewdly characterized. As an all-encompassing cause, climate has the advantage of being a central organizing principle that simplifies fund-raising and messaging. Plus, left-wing supporters of big government find the threat of future disaster to be a handy stick for further intrusion of regulations into every aspect of society.

In addition, the Sierra Club, has become a green purveyor of the diversity-is-best ideology, and now takes pains to appease its open-borders colleagues of the Democratic Party, particularly the Mexican ones with whom Sierra honchos have a corrupt political arrangement of convenience. One symptom is the club’s outspoken opposition to a border fence, portrayed in a 20-minute agitprop film titled “Wild Versus Wall.” The club objects to the “militarization” of the border while it ignores the mountains of trash dumped by illegal crossers. It was reported in March 2012 that the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality estimates that illegal aliens leave behind about 2,000 tons of trash every year. Isn’t that garbage plus millions of feet tromping through the desert a severe environmental problem? Sierra management thinks not.

Even more remarkably, the Sierra Club has raised no hue and cry over Mexican marijuana-growing mobsters’ takeover of parts of Sequoia and Yosemite, the crown jewels of the park system. What would John Muir think of his beloved Yosemite being poisoned and despoiled by foreign thugs, while the organization he founded remains silent on the destruction because of unprincipled politics?

The Sierra Club appears quite comfortable in the more partisan political climate of today. One hears no regrets for the loss of reaching across ideological lines to partner in environmental protection. Also missing are traditional conservationists in leadership, such as the late Dr. Edgar Wayburn, a lifelong Republican who served as president of the club for five terms and led campaigns that acquired more than 100 million acres in wilderness and parklands, including Point Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Today’s Sierra leadership is well vetted to be global and lean properly left.

In short, the Sierra Club has shelved its mission of being a non-partisan protector of the earth to become a left-wing diversity organization with hiking boots. It has corrupted itself with both money (the Gelbaum bribe of \$100 million to ignore immigration) and socialist ideology, including support for massive immigration to alter American society by flooding the nation with millions who prefer big government. The club now follows the Saul Alinsky leftist playbook of demonizing anyone who disagrees with the party line, such as when it shamefully accused members of racism for arguing against the political switch about immigration. That conflagration of lies occurred during the crucial 2004 election, when one of the reformers running for election to the Sierra board of directors was black (Frank Morris) and another

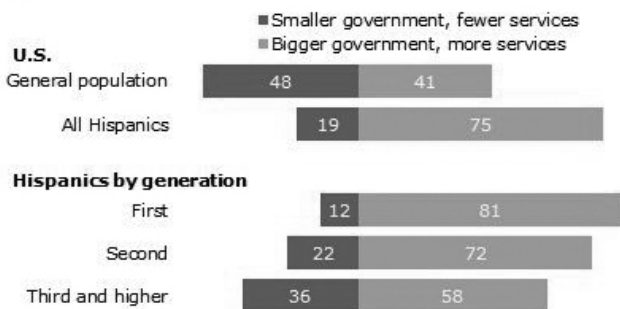
was the former Democratic governor of Colorado, Dick Lamm, who also helped found the campus NAACP at UC Berkeley in 1959! These highly qualified candidates were excoriated by the Sierra Club and its MoveOn.org digital goon squad, and their scurrilous accusations were repeated by the compliant mainstream press.

Sadly, the devolution of the Sierra Club into yet another leftist hack organization is not so unusual. The trend away from values like traditional conservation is on the uptick. The universities have been foundational in spreading left-wing ideas like one-worlder politics combined with tribal loyalties cleverly characterized as “diversity.” Those notions have filtered down to the point where grade school kids are indoctrinated with issues of cultural identity where diversity is celebrated, instead of young students being taught America’s history and traditions.

Figure 4.2

Would You Rather Have a Smaller Government Providing Fewer Services or a Bigger Government Providing More Services?

(%)



Notes: N=1,220, 2011 National Survey of Latinos; N=2,410, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Responses of “Depends,” “Don’t know” and “Refused” are not shown.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011 National Survey of Latinos; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, October 2011.

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Diversity is presented as an unassailable virtue in the new secular society, replacing the older values of patriotism and religion. Victor Davis Hanson reflected in his excellent 2002 article, “The Civic Education America Needs,” on how in the 1960s his central California school taught American exceptionalism to the kids even though most were of Mexican heritage. Nowadays the brown kids are inculcated with the culture of the failing state their parents fled. Assimilation is not fashionable among the left.

The idea of diversity has been used like a club, to force obedience to the utopian multicultural state, as traditional Americans are assailed by affirmative action and benefits for illegal aliens, which are not available to citizens. Persons brave enough to voice environmental arguments against immigration-fueled overpopulation

(like water supply!) are smacked down as Bad People or Racists, using the Alinsky strategy of personal demonization via name-calling or worse.

The nonprofit Earthjustice has a catchy motto: “Because the earth needs a good lawyer.” (Interestingly, the organization was founded in 1971 as the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund.) In addition to lawyers, the earth also needs an honest voice with genuine sustainability in mind. Environmental groups have lost the vital overpopulation message in their move toward cultural sensitivity and broader political influence. They define overpopulation as a global problem only, and then with little enthusiasm if the topic is mentioned at all. But the whole point of the Sierra Club reform movement discussed earlier was that millions of additional immigrants coming to the U.S. would vastly increase their resource usage compared to what it would have been at home. American families have become smaller since the Baby Boom, and the country would have been approaching a near-sustainable population if the tsunami of legal and illegal immigration had not been unleashed in 1965.

There are other, more immediate arguments to end mass immigration, such as crime, gangs, failing schools, and ethnic fragmentation. But leaving an America with a billion residents in a hundred years would be a sorry end to a once great country, showing that we were unable to preserve our own society and values in the face of big-money interests. The big brains over at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce lobby for endless population growth because it’s such an easy way to make piles of money. But growth as the controlling principle of the country certainly doesn’t help the average citizen whose income is suffering, and too many people lead to the loss of quality of life for all.

The environmental argument against unlimited immigration is the strongest and most principled. When an environmentalist declares that America is full and immigration should end, period, there is no racial or ethnic component. It would be similar to the Census declaring in 1890 that the frontier was closed because there were no tracts of land remaining with no settlement. In 1968, British statesman Enoch Powell began his now famous 1968 speech with an observation that could have been made by an environmentalist: “The supreme function of statesmanship is to provide against preventable evils.” Isn’t the immigration-fueled overpopulation of our beautiful country the most preventable evil of all?

It would help to have an ethical and responsible environmental movement to speak honestly about the effect on natural systems of so many humans on the earth and in this country, but there is no such voice now. ■