

The Environmental Movement's Retreat From Advocating U.S. Population Stabilization (1970-1998): A First Draft of History

By Roy Beck and Leon Kolankiewicz

The years surrounding 1970 marked the coming of age of the modern environmental movement. As that movement approaches its fourth decade, perhaps the most striking change is the virtual abandonment by national environmental groups of U.S. population stabilization as an actively-pursued goal.

To begin to understand why that shift has occurred and the significance of that shift, it will be important to review the 1970-era movement and its population roots.

Population Issues and the 1970-Era Environmental Movement

Around 1970, U.S. population and environmental issues were widely and publicly linked. Probably nowhere was that more true than on college campuses. A college student in the late 1960s and early 1970s would have tended to have seen environmental and population issues as subsets of the same public-policy agenda. In environmental “teach-ins” across America, college students of the time heard repetitious proclamations on the necessity of stopping U.S. population growth in order to reach environmental goals; and the most public of reasons for engaging population issues was to save the environment. The nation’s best-known population group, Zero Population Growth (ZPG) -- founded by biologists concerned about the catastrophic impacts of ever more human beings on the biosphere -- was outspokenly also an environmental group. And many of the nation’s largest environmental groups had or were considering “population control” as major planks of their environmental prescriptions for America.

As Stewart Udall (Secretary of the Interior during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations) wrote in *The Quiet Crisis*: “Dave Brower [executive director of the Sierra Club] expressed the consensus of the environmental movement on the subject in 1966 when he said, ‘We feel you don’t have a conservation policy unless you have a population policy.’”¹ Brower encouraged Stanford University biologist and ZPG co-founder Paul Ehrlich to write *The Population Bomb*, published in 1968, which surpassed even Rachel Carson’s landmark work *Silent Spring* to become the best-selling ecology book of the 1960s.² Ehrlich’s polemic echoed and amplified population concerns earlier raised by two widely read books, both published in 1948: In *Our Plundered Planet*, Fairfield Osborn, chairman of the Conservation Foundation, lamented that, “The tide of

¹ Stewart L. Udall. 1963, 1988. *The Quiet Crisis and the Next Generation*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books. p. 239.

² Paul R. Ehrlich. 1968. *The Population Bomb*. New York: Ballantine Books; Rachel L. Carson. 1962. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

the earth's population is rising, the reservoir of the earth's living resources is falling.”³ And in *Road to Survival*, William Vogt, a former Audubon Society official who later became the national director of Planned Parenthood, declared the United States already overpopulated at 147 million. “The Day of Judgment is at hand,” he proclaimed apocalyptically.⁴

The seeming consensus among leaders of the nascent environmental movement was paralleled, and bolstered, by widespread agreement among influential researchers and scholars in the natural sciences, such as the University of Georgia's Eugene P. Odum, a leading ecologist and author of the textbook *Fundamentals of Ecology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1971); the University of California-Davis' Kenneth E. F. Watt, a pioneering systems modeler and author of *Principles of Environmental Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); the Conservation Foundation's Raymond Dasmann, a zoologist and author of *The Destruction of California* (New York: MacMillan, 1965); the University of California-Berkeley's Daniel B. Luten, a chemist, natural resource specialist and author of *Progress Against Growth* (1986); and the University of California-Santa Barbara's Garrett Hardin, a human ecologist, president of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and author of the most reprinted article ever – “The Tragedy of the Commons” – in the prestigious journal *Science*⁵. Moreover, the Club of Rome-Massachusetts Institute of Technology project on “the predicament of mankind,” published in the provocative 1972 title *The Limits to Growth*, identified population growth as one of the five basic, interrelated factors driving global environmental, social and economic systems to eventual collapse.⁶

Such views were not confined to the United States. In 1972, Great Britain's leading environmental journal, *The Ecologist*, published the hard-hitting *Blueprint for Survival*, supported by 34 distinguished biologists, ecologists, doctors and economists, including Sir Julian Huxley, Peter Scott, and Sir Frank Fraser-Darling. With regard to population, the *Blueprint* stated: “First, governments must acknowledge the problem and declare their commitment to ending population growth; this commitment should also include an end to immigration.”⁷

Organizers of the first Earth Day in 1970 note that U.S. population growth was a central theme.⁸ The nationwide celebration revealed a massive popular groundswell that helped spur Congress and the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations to enact a host of

³ Stephen Fox. 1981. *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement, 1890-1975*. Boston: Little, Brown. p. 307.

⁴ . p. 307.

⁵ Garrett Hardin. 1968. “The Tragedy of the Commons.” *Science*, 162. December 13. Hardin communicated to one of the authors in 1993 that *Science* informed him that they had received more reprint permission requests for his paper than any other in the journal's history.

⁶ Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, William W. Behrens III. 1972. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. New York: Signet.

⁷ Edward Goldsmith, Robert Allen, Michael Allaby, John Davoll, Same Lawrence (eds.). 1972. *A Blueprint for Survival*. Penguin Books. p. 48.

⁸ Gaylord Nelson. 1998. Personal communication. Former U.S. Senator and Wisconsin Governor Nelson is widely credited as the founder of Earth Day.

sweeping environmental laws⁹ and create a federal bureaucracy to implement and enforce those and others that had been pushed through in the 1960s. Two months after Earth Day, the First National Congress on Optimum Population and Environment convened in Chicago.¹⁰ Religious groups – especially the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church – urged for ethical and moral reasons that the federal government adopt policies that would lead to a stabilized U.S. population.

In an unprecedented 1969 speech, President Nixon addressed the nation about problems it would face if U.S. population growth continued unabated: “One of the most serious challenges to human destiny in the last third of this century will be the growth of the population. Whether man’s response to that challenge will be a cause for pride or for despair in the year 2000 will depend very much on what we do today.”¹¹ On January 1, 1970, Nixon signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA),¹² often referred to as the nation’s “environmental Magna Carta.”¹³ In Title I of the act, the “Declaration of National Environmental Policy” began: “The Congress, recognizing the profound impact of man’s activity on the interrelations of all components of the environment, particularly the profound influences of population growth...”¹⁴ President Nixon and Congress jointly appointed environmental, labor, business, academic, demographic, population and political representatives to a bi-partisan Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, chaired by John D. Rockefeller III. Among its findings in 1972 was that it would be difficult to reach the environmental goals being established at the time unless the United States began stopping its population growth. Rockefeller wrote that “gradual stabilization of our population through voluntary means would contribute significantly to the nation’s ability to solve its problems.”¹⁵

Environmental advocates envisioned making the transition to U.S. stabilization within a generation – by the time the college activists of that period had children of their own in college. The Sierra Club, for example, in 1969 urged “the people of the United States to abandon population growth as a pattern and goal; to commit themselves to limit the total population of the United States in order to achieve a balance between population and resources; and to achieve a stable population no later than the year 1990.”¹⁶

⁹ Among the more prominent were the National Environmental Policy Act (1970), Clean Air Act (1970), Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972), Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1972) Clean Water Act (1972; amended in 1974 and 1977), Coastal Zone Management Act (1972), Endangered Species Act (1973), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (1976), and Safe Drinking Water Act.

¹⁰ Doug LaFollette, *et. al.* U.S. Sustainable Population Policy Project (USS3P) – Planning Document. Unpublished. June 20, 1998. Doug LaFollette is Wisconsin Secretary of State. Document available from Carole Wilmoth, Executive Committee USS3P 71634.217@compuserve.com or <http://www.iti.com/iti/uss3p>.

¹¹ Quote from the frontpiece of the 1972 Rockefeller Commission Report *Population and the American Future* (note 15).

¹² PL 91-190; 83 Stat. 852, 42 U.S.C. 4321.

¹³ R. B. Smythe. 1997. “The Historical Roots of NEPA.” At p. 12 in Ray Clark and Larry Canter (eds.) *Environmental Policy and NEPA: Past, Present, and Future*. Boca Raton: St. Lucie Press.

¹⁴ 42 U.S.C. 4331.

¹⁵ Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. 1972. *Population and the American Future*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Excerpt above from transmittal letter.

¹⁶ Sierra Club Board of Directors policy adopted May 3-4, 1969.

The environmentalists' population emphasis heavily influenced the news media. Discussions of U.S. population problems were featured regularly on the front pages of newspapers, in magazine cover stories, the nightly TV news and even on network entertainment such as the popular Johnny Carson Show. Suddenly after more than 20 years of the Baby Boom, journalists and politicians were treating population growth as something that could and should be tamed rather than as a natural, inevitable force beyond human and humane control.

Most of that interest had disappeared by 1998, however – but not because population growth had stopped or the problems it causes solved.

The Missing Issue in 1998 Environmental Journalism

When the Society for Environmental Journalists held its annual conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in October of 1998, urban sprawl was a recurring theme.

And no wonder: U.S. population growth was every bit as potent in 1998 as it had been in 1970: Some 2.5 million or more Americans were being added each year, at a rate faster than some third-world countries and ten times faster than Europe. It was a volume of growth nearly matching that of the Baby Boom years that helped trigger the 1970-era environmental/population movement. The Earth Day 1970 vision of a stabilized American population within a generation had never materialized.

To put U.S. growth in perspective, consider that the decades between 1950 and 1970 had added 52 million Americans – driving total population to 203 million. That two-decade growth was not only unprecedented in a long history of continuous expansion, but almost double the growth of the next largest two-decade period. But growth barely abated in the 1970-90 period, with another 46 million added. Furthermore, the Census Bureau projected that growth in the next two-decade period (1990-2010) would exceed even the Baby Boom era. The nation already had surpassed 273 million before the century turned.

Urban sprawl was featured in the keynote address of the environmental journalists' 1998 Chattanooga conference. City officials proudly conducted tours of their efforts to control sprawl (although some admitted that they feared Atlanta's massive sprawl could within a few years swallow all their efforts). Few journalists were from cities not struggling with the bitter fruits of the urban sprawl blighting late-1990s America: Mounting traffic congestion; endless disruptive road construction; spreading smog; worsening water pollution and tightening water supplies; disappearing wildlife habitats, farmland, and open spaces; overcrowded schools; overused parks and outdoor recreation facilities; the end of small-town life in communities that until recently had been beyond the city; the impending merging together of separate, unwieldy metropolitan areas into vast megalopolitan miasmas; and the overall deterioration in quality of life and the increasing social tensions of urban dwellers reflected in such phenomena as gated communities and "road rage."

Yet, the population growth exacerbating all those problems was strangely missing from a popular session in which a panel of newspaper reporters and editors discussed their expansive coverage of the problems from, the causes of, and the solutions to urban sprawl in different parts of the country. The panelists talked about problematic zoning, planning and lifestyle choices, but not about the 25 million new residents added each decade -- or the sheer amount of space required for their housing, worksites, schools, roads, recreation facilities, shopping centers, and other infrastructure.¹⁷

When challenged from the audience, all the panelists agreed that urban sprawl would be far less destructive without the massive population growth that is occurring in America. And they agreed that urban life and environmental losses would be immensely different if some 70 million people had not been added to the U.S. population since 1970. But they indicated that they had not addressed U.S. population growth in their urban sprawl reporting because they wanted to direct readers toward solutions to urban sprawl *per se*. Since nothing could be done about population growth, they indicated, it couldn't be part of the solution; thus, they did not write about population.

In the late 1990s, as in 1970, the *problems* stemming from U.S. population growth were huge news. But the underlying population growth itself and *its* causes were barely being mentioned. Al Gore, the "environmental vice-president," gave it no emphasis in his national campaign against urban sprawl.¹⁸ In virtually a complete reversal of the 1970 conditions, U.S. population growth was treated by most environmental leaders and journalists as an implacable natural phenomenon, which, like hurricanes and earthquakes, we could not prevent but only adjust to.

Historians may find that the key reason for that fundamental shift in the way the public learned about environmental issues through the news media was the behavior of environmental advocacy groups. Journalists tend to look to competing interest groups to define the issues they cover. Business groups always have defined one end of the growth issue spectrum as they pushed for ever more population growth. At one time, environmental groups defined the other end by calling for no growth. By 1998, however, those groups no longer emphasized population growth as something a nation could choose or reject. Most of the scores of American environmental groups either ignored U.S. population growth altogether, treated it as a negative but inexorable force whose effects can only be mitigated, or even suggested that growth in human numbers is environmentally benign.

¹⁷ Roy Beck's notes from participation in conference. On the subject of space and land requirements, Cornell University ecologists David and Marcia Pimentel (two of the world's leading authorities on the environmental dimensions of agriculture) have estimated that each person added to the U.S. population leads to the loss (i.e. "development" or conversion) of about one acre of agricultural land, open space or natural habitat (David Pimentel and Marcia Pimentel. 1997. "U.S. Food Production Threatened By Rapid Population Growth." Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network).

¹⁸ National Public Radio, "The Morning Edition," May 4, 1999. In this 5-minute report, ironically, the only mention of population growth as a force driving sprawl and traffic congestion came from the spokesman of a coalition advocating greater public funding for more highway projects to expand capacity; Terry M. Neal. 1999. "Gore Seeks to Tap Voter Concern on 'Livability' Issues." *The Washington Post*. May 5.

That dramatic change in the strategy of the American environmental movement was reflected in the back of the Chattanooga hotel room where the sprawl panel took place. There, a representative from the national Sierra Club headquarters had placed a display of literature from the Club's major new campaign against urban sprawl. The highly-publicized, multi-million-dollar campaign mentioned population growth only in passing, and then only to minimize its role. None of the materials suggested stabilizing U.S. population as one part of the solution to urban sprawl. The Sierra campaign instead focused its advocacy on creating more regulation and management of U.S. growth to ameliorate its adverse effects on the environment. And it assumed – and tacitly accepted – that the U.S. population would never stop growing.

According to this view, instead of shunning the compact development and higher housing densities of a country like Japan as foreign to the American Dream and our traditional notions of “elbow room” and freedom, more closely packed dwellings ought to be embraced so that population could continue to grow without spurring more sprawl. Pile people on top of each other instead of allowing them to spread out. Yet none of these density enthusiasts bothered to ask whether people like the Japanese actually choose to live compactly – or are forced to by circumstances. “Perhaps nothing defines Japan, the Japanese psyche and a Japanese person's daily life more than space – or the scarcity of it,” concluded a *Washington Post* article. “You definitely have a feeling of no privacy,” said one Tokyo resident, who hears every time a neighbor flushes a toilet, turns on a washing machine or shouts at his children. “Japanese daily life is filled with rules and more rules, and many of them exist because of the space shortage,” observed the story.¹⁹ This was the sort of future anti-sprawl, pro-population growth environmentalists were urging on America.

That Chattanooga room's anecdotal reflection of the news media and environmental movement in the late-1990s was verified in national research by Professor T. Michael Maher of the University of Southwestern Louisiana. He conducted a study of news coverage of urban sprawl, endangered species, and water shortages – all issues profoundly affected by population growth. In a random sample of 150 stories on those issues, he found only about one in 10 even mentioned population growth as one source of the problem. And only one of the 150 stories mentioned that one part of the solution might be to try to stabilize the U.S. population.²⁰

The journalists told Maher they were uncomfortable raising the population issue on their own. Without environmental groups themselves calling attention to the population factor, the journalists had few ready quotes or perspectives that would help them add that element to their stories. With the business and political establishments continuing to push for “more growth” and the environmental establishment now pushing for “smart growth,” the special interest groups had defined a spectrum for the media that

¹⁹ Mary Jordan and Kevin Sullivan. 1999. “Never Far From the Madding Crowd: Japanese Have Most Things in Life – Except Space.” *The Washington Post*. July 29. P. A1, A26.

²⁰ T. Michael Maher. 1997. “How and Why Journalists Avoid the Population-Environment Connection.” *Population and Environment*, Vol. 18, No. 4.

excluded “no growth” and “greatly reduced growth” from the range of available, acceptable options. Maher studied the membership materials for the nation’s environmental groups and discovered: “Population is off the agenda for the purported leaders of the environmental movement.”²¹

So far off the agenda was population for established environmental groups that it actually took a developer’s organization – the 200,000-member National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) – to remind the Sierra Club of population’s decisive role in forcing suburban sprawl. In a news release criticizing a Club report associated with its anti-sprawl campaign, the NAHB stated: “As in previous reports, the Sierra Club failed to acknowledge the significant underlying forces driving growth in suburban America – a rapidly increasing population and consumer preferences. The U.S. needs to construct between 1.3 and 1.5 million new housing units annually during the next decade simply to accommodate an anticipated 30 million increase in the nation’s population.”²² (Obviously, the NAHB was not publicizing population growth’s influence because it wants to stop that growth – because of course its members profit directly from an ever-growing population with an ever-growing demand for housing. Rather, the NAHB was strongly implying the antiquated but still seductive notion that population growth is an inexorable, unstoppable force that must be accommodated at all costs.)

Out of dozens of national organizations in 1998, there remained only one group – the National Audubon Society – which had an aggressive program to spotlight the environmental problems of U.S. population growth. And even then, Audubon did not address immigration, the overwhelming cause of present and projected U.S. growth. Nor did Audubon work for federal policies that could achieve stabilization. (Audubon’s Population and Habitat Campaign, in fact, distributed a fact sheet belittling immigration’s role in U.S. population growth.²³) There were only two other groups – the Wilderness Society and the Izaak Walton League – which had official policies that specified federal action to move the country toward stabilization, but neither one invested program or staff into lobbying on behalf of their official policies.²⁴

That was all that was left of the large coalition of environmental groups that in 1970 endorsed a resolution stating that “population growth is directly involved in the pollution and degradation of our environment – air, water and land – and intensifies physical, psychological, social, political and economic problems to the extent that the well-being of individuals, the stability of society and our very survival are threatened.”

²¹ T. Michael Maher. 1998. Personal communication with Roy Beck via e-mail.

²² National Association of Home Builders. 1999. “Sierra Club Report Ignores Underlying Forces Behind Urban Growth.” Press release distributed by PR Newswire. October 4.

²³ National Audubon Society, Population & Habitat Campaign. 1998. “Population and Migration.”

²⁴ The Wilderness Society had a comprehensive population policy which stated that: “As a priority, population policy should protect and sustain ecological systems for future generations....To bring population levels to sustainable levels, both birth rates and immigration rates need to be reduced.” And the Izaak Walton League (a society of anglers founded in 1922 to conserve fish and their aquatic habitat) stated that “current levels of natural resource consumption and population are not sustainable.” It urged government actions that would help stabilize U.S. population, with the understanding that “international migration must be addressed as part of a comprehensive strategy to manage U.S. population size.”

The same groups had committed themselves to “find, encourage and implement at the earliest possible time,” the policies and attitudes that would bring about the stabilization of the U.S. population.²⁵

The authors have chosen 1998 as the end of the period being analyzed here because that was the year when the environmental movement erupted in a highly public battle over U.S. population issues. After more than two decades of dwindling interest in population issues, many of the old environmental guard from the 1970 era and many of their followers openly challenged the national leaderships of two influential organizations, the Sierra Club and Zero Population Growth, to put U.S. population stabilization – and the reduction in immigration levels it entailed – back on the agenda. The Sierra Club and ZPG, once so outspoken in the 1970s on the urgency of U.S. stabilization, had each changed their policies in the two years prior to 1998 to disassociate themselves from this cause. That is why the pro-stabilization environmentalists focused most of their efforts on these two groups in internal wrangling that garnered months of intense news coverage around the country. Because of that and the fact that both groups were the nation’s strongest proponents of U.S. stabilization in 1970, we use them as primary case studies in exploring how such a remarkable shift on such a core issue of the environmental movement could have occurred since 1970.

In 1998, the national Sierra Club leadership defeated those who tried to return their organization to its earlier pro-stabilization policy, which advocated both lower fertility and immigration.²⁶ It remains to be seen whether this failed attempt represented the last gasp of the 1970-era environmental-population movement or if it was in fact the opening skirmish in a resurgent struggle.²⁷ One indication that the latter might be true is that below national boards and staffs there were large numbers of members and activists who never dropped their commitment to population stabilization; in the 1998 Sierra Club national membership referendum, 40% of voters chose to overturn their national board of directors on the population issue, in spite of a concerted board effort to marginalize and stigmatize stabilization advocates.

Reviewing the Rejected “Foundational Formula” of 1970-Era Environmentalism

How did the American environmental movement change so radically? Answering that question will be a challenging assignment for historians. The authors are not

²⁵ Resolution sponsored and circulated by ZPG; adopted by the Sierra Club on June 4, 1970.

²⁶ Dell Erickson, a 1998 candidate for the Sierra board of directors, in a lengthy 1999 e-mail to the authors, offers numerous details of the sometimes questionable lengths to which the Sierra board and leadership went to defeat what became known as Ballot Question “A”. Other participants corroborate his evidence and conclusions. See Brenda Walker. 1999. “Why the Sierra Club Chickened Out on Population.” *Focus*, Vol. 9, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network. See also Ben Zuckerman. 1999. “The Sierra Club Immigration Debate: National Implications.” *Population and Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May. Zuckerman, a Club board candidate from the Angeles chapter, who was also on the front lines of the Club’s nasty immigration skirmishes, accused the Sierra Club’s leadership of “dirty tricks and demagoguery” in a “win at any cost” campaign that included blatant violations of Club bylaws, obfuscation, suppression of debate, and race baiting.

²⁷ Dirk Olin. 1998. “Divided We Fall? The Sierra Club’s debate over immigration may be just the beginning.” *Outside*, Vol. 23, No. 7, July.

historians. We have spent most of our lives as a journalist and an environmental scientist, respectively. But to the historians who eventually take up the task, we have many suggestions of where to look to find the reasons for the environmental movement's shift away from U.S. population advocacy.

Our hunches are based on far more than casual observance from the sidelines.^{28 29} Our direct work with specific environmental problems, activism inside the environmental movement, and the chronicling of the movement from the outside goes back to the 1960s. It seems only fair to disclose that, after so much work on the population issue, we are not without some opinions. The evidence has long led us to see substantial merit in the U.S. population analyses by the 1970-era environmental movement.

A succession of scientific and governmental commissions have come to the same conclusion for three decades. While national environmental groups have dramatically changed their stance on U.S. population stabilization, government and scientific bodies have not. In 1972, the Rockefeller Commission mentioned above called for stabilizing America's population. The massive *Global 2000 Report to the President*, commissioned by Jimmy Carter in 1977 and carried out by an enormous research team headed up by the Council of Environmental Quality and the Department of State, recommended in 1981 that "The United States should....Develop a U.S. national population policy that includes attention to issues such as population stabilization..."³⁰ The most recent major finding came in 1996 by President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, established in the aftermath of the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the "Earth Summit"). The council acknowledged the integral relationship

²⁸ Roy Beck is the author of four books on U.S. population and the environment and on ethics and politics. A graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, he was one of the nation's first environmental-beat newspaper reporters. He began his career in the 1960s writing about the rapid rise of environmental and population advocacy into national movements. He has written on U.S. population issues periodically for more than three decades, and as Chief Washington Correspondent of the Booth Newspapers chain covered some of the decisions by Congress to speed up U.S. population growth by increasing immigration. U.S. population issues have been his primary focus of research, writing, and speaking for the past decade.

²⁹ Leon Kolankiewicz has a B.S. in forestry & wildlife management from Virginia Tech and an M.S. in environmental planning and natural resources management from the University of British Columbia. He has worked as an environmental professional for nearly 25 years, including stints with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, University of Washington, University of New Mexico, Orange County (California) Environmental Management Agency, as a national parks technical advisor with the Peace Corps in Central America, vice-president of Carrying Capacity Network, and as an environmental project manager for a consulting firm specializing in environmental impact assessment. As an environmental activist, he has volunteered with the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia, Alaska Environmental Lobby, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, New Mexico Public Interest Research Group, Sierra Club, and Union of Concerned Scientists, among other groups. Leon has written more than 70 articles and reports and is the author of *Where Salmon Come to Die: An Autumn on Alaska's Raincoast* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett, 1993).

³⁰ "Global Future: Time to Act." 1981. In *The Global 2000 Report to the President*. A report prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality and Department of State. Gerald O. Barney, study director. p. 11.

between a stable population and sustainable development, declaring the need to “move toward stabilization of the U.S. population.”³¹

Let us offer our understanding of the core goal of the 1970-era environmental movement:

*The environmental movement’s purpose is to preserve, protect and restore the natural and human environment by reducing the **total** human impact on ecosystems – on watersheds, forests, ambient air basins, wildlife and their habitats, wetlands, estuaries, wilderness, and last but not least, on human health and quality of life. Many of these are issues within localized bio-regions. Others are national in scale or even global, such as marine overfishing, whaling, ocean dumping and the ecological and health effects of atmospheric nuclear testing.*

The dominant activism of that time intrinsically included U.S. population stabilization because most environmentalists’ view of environmental quality was deeply shaped by what we will call here the “Foundational Formula” of the movement. That Formula expressed the movement’s understanding of the problem it was tackling and of how to solve it. The 1990s environmental movement is fundamentally different from the 1970-era movement because it has mostly abandoned that Foundational Formula.

There are several ways of expressing the environmental impacts of humanity. One of the best-known is the $I=PAT$ equation offered by biologist Paul Ehrlich and physicist John Holdren: Environmental Impact (I) equals Population size (P) times Affluence, or consumption per person (A), times Technology, or damage per unit of consumption (T).³² The Population and Consumption Task Force of the President’s Council on Sustainable Development expressed it similarly in 1996: “The sum of all human activity, and thus the sum of all environmental, economic and social impacts from human activity, is captured by considering *population* together with *consumption*.”³³ The task force also discussed other formulas, such as the POET and PISTOL models, that attempt to make up for the limitations of the $I=PAT$ equation by accounting for other factors such as human organization, information, and space. Still another writer has suggested modifying $I=PAT$ to $I=PACT$ to account for the importance of culture in determining overall environmental impact.³⁴

³¹ President’s Council on Sustainable Development. 1996. *Sustainable America: A New Consensus for Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 12. The Council included representatives from a wide range of backgrounds, including environmentalists, population activists, women’s groups, minorities, business leaders and Cabinet officials. Quote from p. 21.

³² Paul R. Ehrlich and John P. Holdren. 1971. “Impact of Population Growth.” *Science*, 171, 1212-1217.

³³ Population and Consumption Task Force Report. 1996. President’s Council on Sustainable Development. p. 1.

³⁴ David F. Durham. 1992. “Perspectives: Cultural Carrying Capacity: $I=PACT$.” *Focus*, Vol. 2, No. 3. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network.

However it was expressed, the Foundational Formula considered *total* environmental impact on a watershed or any given ecosystem to be the product of two factors:³⁵

- (1) Individual Impact
- (2) Population Size

Individual Impact is the environmental effect of an average individual's resource consumption *from* environmental "sources" (e.g. forests, fish stocks, petroleum fields, mineral ores, soils, rivers, aquifers, air) and waste generation *into* environmental "sinks" (e.g. the atmosphere, ground, aquifers, lakes, oceans). An individual does not have direct control over all of his or her environmental impact. That impact is determined directly by individual voluntary choices about consumption and lifestyle, and indirectly by collective political choices through laws and regulations limiting the impact of producers and consumers (including private and public sectors, individuals and institutions), by the vigor of enforcement of those rules, by available technology to reduce the impact of economic activities, by the financial ability of a society to utilize available technology, and by the methods corporations use to produce and market goods and services.

Population Size is the total number of individuals living in a given bio-region or ecosystem.

Thus, the Total Environmental Impact on the Chesapeake Bay is the result of the Individual Impact of a person living within the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed multiplied by the Population Size in the watershed.

This Formula for a specific ecosystem does not cover everything. For example, air pollution delivered by rain is a major problem for the Chesapeake. One of the sources of air pollution is the string of coal-burning power plants along the Ohio River – well outside the watershed. Thus, part of the quality of the Bay is determined by the per capita electricity consumption and size of populations both inside and outside the watershed that uses electricity from those Ohio River plants. Nonetheless, the overwhelming cause of Bay problems comes from the population within the watershed itself.

Still, just as some impacts to the watershed originate from outside its boundaries, residents of the watershed are also generating effects on other ecosystems in which they don't live. "Ecological footprint" analysis demonstrates that, as a result of energy and material flows linked to interregional and international trade, individual consumers use or

³⁵ Like any model of highly complex ecological systems, the Foundational Formula is a simplification of actual causal relationships. Its utility lies in helping us conceptualize and predict (or approximate) causes and effects. One of its key assumptions is that individual impact and population size are independent variables. In reality, however, in certain situations they may be dependent or inter-dependent variables. That is, as population size or density grow, this may exert upward or downward pressure on individual impact via intricate feedback loops.

pre-empt ecologically productive land all over the nation and the world.³⁶ The average American has an ecological footprint of 12.6 acres (about 12 football fields), compared to 10.6 acres for Canadians, 1.0 for Indians, and 4.4 for the world as a whole. The “footprint” is the area of ecologically productive land needed to supply per capita demand for food, housing, transportation, consumer goods and services, as well as the land area necessary to sequester carbon dioxide emissions (via photosynthesis) from energy use, i.e. fossil fuel combustion. A large population and high per capita consumption give the United States the dubious distinction of possessing the largest ecological footprint in the world. Even at the current population of the U.S.—to say nothing of its projected population—Americans run an ecological deficit, consuming 80% more ecologically productive land than we actually have. The difference is made up by our resource and energy (mostly oil) imports and our gargantuan appetite for non-renewable fossil fuels like oil, gas, and coal, which provide us, in effect, with “ghost acreage” from the geologic past.³⁷ We are, in other words, consuming our “natural capital” rather than living on “income”—an unsustainable course.

One doesn’t have to work with the Foundational Formula much to realize that changes in the Individual Impact and changes in the Population Size factor have roughly equal power over improving or deteriorating Total Environmental Impact. For example: Increasing the Individual Impact by 30% while holding Population Size constant, would have a tremendously deleterious effect on the Bay. And so would increasing Population Size by 30% (as Individual Impact is held constant). It really doesn’t matter which one is increased; the Bay feels similar pain.

In the real world, both Individual Impact and Population Size are constantly changing. Thus, the relative magnitude of each factor for an increasing or decreasing Total Environmental Impact must be calculated on a case-by-case basis. Consider the particularly important case of energy consumption -- linked directly to a wide range of environmental impacts, such as smog, climate change, acid rain, oil spills, landscape disfigurement, acid mine drainage, radioactive waste, and indirectly to many others. Between 1950 and 1970, the increase in U.S. Population Size accounted for 43% of the rise in total U.S. energy consumption, while the increase in Individual Impact was responsible for 57%. But between 1970 and 1990 (while environmental groups focused primarily on Individual Impact), increases in Population Size caused 93% of the rise in total U.S. consumption.³⁸

Simply ignoring one of the two factors of the Foundational Formula won’t stop that factor from changing the overall results. (As Aldous Huxley said, “Facts do not

³⁶ Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees. 1996. *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact Upon the Earth*. Philadelphia: New Society.

³⁷ The concept of ghost acreage or “phantom land” is attributed to sociologist William R. Catton, *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980). It refers to the fact that the stocks of fossil fuels being consumed today are the products of ancient photosynthesis (“congealed solar energy”) that took place in long-gone forests and swamps hundreds of millions of years ago.

³⁸ John P. Holdren. 1991. “Population and the Energy Problem.” *Population and Environment*, Vol. 12, No. 3.

cease to exist merely because we choose to ignore them.”) A person or group who works to improve the Individual Impact factor while allowing or even supporting deterioration of the Population Size factor may as a matter of intention favor environmental quality. But the effect of that kind of “half-Formula” environmentalism is to retard environmental improvement – and often to actually harm the environment.

This gets to the heart of the difference between the environmental movement of the 1970 era and that of the 1990s. By working on both factors of the environmental Foundational Formula, the early movement had a comprehensive approach to move toward restoration and protection of the environment. The later environmental movement, however, chose a course which allowed the Population Size factor to move ever upward. Every move upward by Population Size ratchets the Total Environmental Impact upward. Thus, the later “half-Formula” environmental movement would forever have to work for lower and lower Individual Impact just to keep the environment from deteriorating further – let alone to achieve restoration – running faster and faster just to stay in place. One needn’t be a physicist to recognize the infeasibility of this as a long-term strategy.

The authors of *Beyond the Limits* use the example of rising, nonlinear costs of pollution abatement as one moves toward 100% removal of pollutants to demonstrate how perpetual growth ultimately undermines environmental protection goals: “If the number of emission sources keeps growing...rising costs will be encountered. It may be affordable to cut pollutants per car in half. But then if the number of cars doubles, it is necessary to cut pollutants per car in half again just to keep the same air quality. Two doublings will require 75% pollution abatement. Three doublings will require 87.5%, and by then the cost of further abatement is usually prohibitive.”³⁹

The 1970-era environmentalists and successive government commissions recognized that correcting the environmental problems of the time through lowering Individual Impact would be a monumental task even if Population Size didn’t grow at all; attempting the corrections while population grew might make the task all but impossible. Consider this simple example:

** Of 10,000 people in a small watershed, each contributes 10 units of pollution. Thus, 100,000 units of Total Environmental Impact are generated.*

** To achieve an acceptable, scientifically-based standard of environmental quality, let’s say that Total Environmental Impact must be reduced by 30% to 70,000 units of pollution.*

** That requires reducing each Individual Impact to 7 units (10,000 people X 7 units = 70,000 units).*

³⁹ Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers. 1992. *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future*. Post Mills, Vermont: Chelsea Green. pp. 181-182.

** But if the population grows by 30% at the same time, all the expense and effort to reduce Per Capita Impact by 30% will fail to meet the quality goal. By adding 3,000 people, there are now 13,000 people times 7 units, which equals 91,000 units of pollution – far over the 70,000-unit goal. Will everyone be willing to now undergo still another campaign of reducing their Per Capita Impact 23% more just to meet the original goal? (And if there is more increase in Population Size during that campaign, they will have to engage in yet a third round.)⁴⁰*

Many analysts in the 1970-era feared that a similar scenario would occur over the next three decades. They knew that if U.S. population continued to grow, even if Total Environmental Impact goals were reached, the government would always have to come back and force ever more Individual Impact cuts on its citizens.

Demographers could project that even if Baby Boomers adopted a below-replacement-level fertility, their very large numbers moving into prime child-bearing years would create a population momentum of around 12% growth over the next two decades. In fact, though, federal increases in immigration resulted in the U.S. population growing by more than 25%. (The Census Bureau projects that, under current immigration policies, U.S. population will grow by yet another 50% over the next 50 years.)

As the Foundational Formula would predict under such rapid population growth, most U.S. environmental goals set in the 1970s had not been met by 1998. The worsening of the Population Size factor had in many respects negated the improvements in the Individual Impact factor. For instance, America's lakes and streams were to have become "fishable and swimmable," according to the 1972 Clean Water Act. But after more than half a trillion dollars spent controlling water pollution (costs passed on to consumers and taxpayers), around 40% of U.S. surface waters still weren't fishable and swimmable in the mid-1990s.⁴¹ The nation has more nitrogen oxide (a smog precursor) and more carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) emissions than thirty years ago, more endangered species and fewer wetlands.⁴² Regulations on Individual Impact that were thought to be sufficient to meet overall goals had to be tightened much further.

The environmental groups never stopped pressing Congress to lessen Individual Impact on the environment by advocating legislation and regulations targeting private companies, government resource managers, and individual consumers. But through the years, they dropped their advocacy for dealing with the Population Size part of the

⁴⁰ This exercise isn't entirely academic. Geologist Robert McConnell has calculated that the human "carrying capacity" of the Chesapeake Bay watershed – the number of people it could sustain in perpetuity and still provide a standard of water quality conducive both to human use and healthy populations of fish, shellfish, and submerged aquatic vegetation, given available, affordable water pollution control technologies – had already been exceeded by 1950. "The Human Population Carrying Capacity of Chesapeake Bay: A Preliminary Analysis." *Population and Environment*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1995.

⁴¹ Council on Environmental Quality. 1997. *Environmental Quality: 25th Anniversary Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁴² Ibid.

environmental Formula. And as Congress numerous times debated and approved policies that increased Population Size substantially, the major environmental groups stood silent.

Historians will likely find that the environmental movement's abandonment of its Foundational Formula has many causes. We list several of the possibilities below, along with some evidence for each, which can serve as a "first draft" for future historians.

CAUSE #1: U.S. Fertility Dropped Below Replacement-Level Rate in 1972

In 1972, the U.S. Total Fertility Rate fell to below the 2.1 births per woman that marks the replacement-level fertility rate. By 1976, fertility had hit an all-time low of 1.7 and hovered just above that for years.

A common remembrance of aging population activists is their memory of the night in 1973 when TV broadcasters announced that the 1972 U.S. fertility rate had reached zero population growth. The American people apparently were profoundly confused by this announcement, with many believing the U.S. population problem had been solved. (In fact, because of what demographers call "population momentum," it takes a country up to 70 years after the replacement-level fertility rate is reached to actually stop growing. But by 1972, the fertility rate had indeed declined to a level low enough to eventually produce zero population growth, as long as immigration remained reasonably low.)

With zero population growth supposedly achieved (or at least approached), many people in the population movement may have felt their activism was no longer needed. Americans had reduced the size of the average family as far as was necessary. On average they were living up to the battle cry of "stop at two." Many activists shifted their former population energies into feminism, other aspects of conservation and environmentalism, or moved on to other pursuits altogether. "Full-Formula" environmentalism that dealt with both Individual Impact and Population Size factors shrank to a small core constituency as quickly as it had burst into a mass popular movement. The population committees of environmental groups lost popularity and significance or disbanded altogether.

The change to "half-Formula" (or "Individual Impact-only") environmentalism would have made sense if indeed the U.S. population no longer was growing, or if overall environmental quality goals had been achieved. Neither was the case in the 1970s, however.

The neglect of the population issue within organizations surely influenced new employees as they came on board during this period. Many of them probably never heard of the "full-Formula" environmental approach. They worked only on the Individual Impact side of the Formula. Many had little background in the natural sciences, resource conservation, or analytical/quantitative fields. To them, population advocacy may have looked like an external issue that could easily be left to external groups to handle.

Some population groups which had been reluctant to expand their worldwide focus to include the much-more-controversial domestic U.S. population issues may have felt they had been let off the hook by the U.S. fertility news. That left the work of keeping the flame of the movement alive to ZPG and to smaller environment-oriented population groups: Negative Population Growth and the Environmental Fund (now called Population-Environment Balance). ZPG lost a large part of its “Johnny-Carson-era” membership. Still, its leaders knew well that fertility could easily rise above replacement-level fertility again and that there was another source of population growth (immigration) in addition to fertility that also needed attention.

Perhaps another factor was at work as well. The overwhelmingly non-Hispanic, white leadership of the environmental movement may have felt it was defensible to address population growth as long as the great bulk of this growth came from non-Hispanic whites, which it did during the Baby Boom. (“We have met the enemy, and he is us!” from the Walt Kelly *Pogo* cartoon was a favorite quote of population activists in this era.) But the situation changed dramatically after 1972. From that year forward, the fertility of non-Hispanic whites was below the replacement rate while that of black Americans and Latinos remained well above the replacement rate.⁴³ To talk of fertility reductions after 1972 was to draw disproportionate attention to non-whites.

Certain ethnic minorities and their spokespersons – with vivid collective memories of disgraceful treatment at the hands of the white majority and acutely aware of their comparative powerlessness in American society – were deeply suspicious of possible hidden agendas in the population stabilization movement. As the Reverend Jesse Jackson told the Rockefeller Commission in 1971: “[any] group that has been subjected to as much harassment as our community has is suspect of any programs that would have the effect of either reducing or levelling off our population growth. Virtually all the security we have is in the number of children we produce.”⁴⁴ Dr. Eugene S. Callender, president of the New York Urban Coalition added: “Within this country, Blacks, Indians, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Orientals feel that such [population] control is solely to the advantage of the majority population. Minority groups at this point in history do not feel that they can afford to trust that the ‘nobler instincts’ of the white majority will prohibit the resurgence of subtle and overt forms of racism.”⁴⁵ And Manuel Aragon, speaking in Spanish, declared to the Commission: “...what we must do

⁴³ In 1970, the “black and other” Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 3.0 (National Center for Health Statistics. 1976. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*). By 1997, black fertility had fallen to 2.2, slightly above the general population’s replacement rate of 2.1. Overall Hispanic fertility even in 1997 stood at 3.0, well above replacement level; that of Mexican-born women was 3.3 – actually higher than that of women in Mexico itself (National Center for Health Statistics. 1999. *National Vital Statistics Report*. Vol. 47, No. 18.

⁴⁴ Supra, note 15. pp. 72-73. Testimony of Rev. Jesse Jackson in hearings before the Commission, Chicago, Illinois, June 21-22, 1971.

⁴⁵ Supra, note 15. p. 72. Testimony of Dr. Eugene Callender in hearings before the Commission, New York City, September 27-28, 1971.

is to encourage large Mexican American families so that we will eventually be so numerous that the system will either respond or it will be overwhelmed.”⁴⁶

During the 26 years after 1972, the non-Hispanic white share of population growth declined significantly from the 1970 era.⁴⁷ Thus, by the 1990s, a majority of the nation’s growth stemmed from sources other than non-Hispanic whites (especially Latin American and Asian immigrants and their offspring). Environmentalist leaders – proud and protective of their claim to moral high ground – may have been reluctant to jeopardize this by venturing into the political minefield of the nation’s volatile racial/ethnic relations through appearing to point fingers at “outsiders,” “others” or “people of color” as responsible for America’s ongoing problem with population growth.

Yet by opting out of this risk, environmentalists effectively abandoned the American environment to the mercy of endless population growth – which will have multiple, adverse, and growing environmental impacts regardless of its source. William Hollingsworth’s book *Ending the Explosion* contains a hypothetical debate in the U.S. Senate on the global population growth issue that is also germane to U.S. domestic population growth:

Senator See now breaks her silence. “....I can easily see why you object to ‘the population explosion’: the populations that are still growing so fast are those of people of color. What some of your ilk call ‘zero population growth’ is but one more example of Western white racism and neocolonialism.”

An upset Senator Sane responds. “Senator See, the sense and sanity I value are woven from all colors. The population explosion would be no less alarming to me were it wholly composed of folks with white skin and pink elbows. But I fear there is no way I can convince you of that, given my race’s shameful record of racism. Perhaps we whites of the North countries should say nothing about population growth in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.”

“But,” begins Senator Straight, “such a cowardly silence would place not *seeming* to be racist ahead of not being racist. One of the most condescending things, and thus one of the most racist things, that can be done to the nations of the South is

⁴⁶ Supra, note 15. Testimony of Manuel Aragon in hearings before the Commission, Los Angeles, May 3-4, 1971.

⁴⁷ According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the TFR of non-Hispanic white females was 1.8 in 1997 (compared to 2.1 for replacement level). Using Census Bureau data, it can be calculated that in 1970, non-Hispanic whites comprised 83% of the U.S. population and accounted for approximately 78% of the births. By 1994, non-Hispanic whites comprised 74% of the population and accounted for 60% of the births. With immigration included (approximately 90% of which originates from non-European sources), the non-Hispanic white share of current population growth drops well below 50%. According to medium projections of the Census Bureau and the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, non-Hispanic whites will account for 6% of the nation’s population growth between 1995 and 2050, blacks for 18%, Asians for 20%, and Hispanics for 54% (James P. Smith and Barry Edmonston, eds. 1997. *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Table 3.7). By 2050, Non-Hispanic whites are projected to have declined to 51% of the U.S. population from 87% in 1950 (Table 3.10, *The New Americans*).

this: ask of them something less than their critical share of responsibility for building a humane global future.”⁴⁸

CAUSE #2: Abortion and Contraceptive Politics Created Organized Opposition

In June of 1960, the Food & Drug Administration approved oral contraceptives for sale. By the late 1960s, the Vatican and American Catholic leadership were engaged in a major counterattack to the growing use of contraceptives in the United States. They focused a considerable amount of their ire on groups advocating population control. Their focus made a certain sense from their point of view. Most population and environmental groups which called for stabilization also made explicit calls, not for abstinence or celibacy, but rather for more availability of reliable, safe contraceptives and sex education. Many of them also called for the legalization of abortion.

Then in 1973, in *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion. That set off a much more intense campaign by the Catholic Church – and increasingly by conservative Protestants – against the whole of the population movement.

Abortion had been something of a minor issue within the population stabilization movement but was included because of the thought that fertility might not be brought to replacement level without the availability of abortion. As it turned out, legalized abortion was not a necessary component to reach replacement-level fertility. America reached its stabilization fertility goal the year *before* the Supreme Court legalized abortion.

But to the Catholic hierarchy and the pro-life movement, the legalized abortion and population stabilization causes have been inextricably linked. In the 1990s, it was still difficult for a pro-stabilization person or group to get a hearing among many Catholic and pro-life groups without being automatically considered an abortion apologist.

A number of leaders of philanthropic foundations and politicians involved with population efforts in the 1970s have said that active measures by Catholic bishops and the Vatican were the greatest barrier to moving population measures and in setting a national population policy. Congressman James Scheuer was a member of the 1972 Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. In 1992, he wrote that “the Vatican and others blocked any reasonable discussion of population problems.”⁴⁹ This opposition applied both nationally and internationally. In a 1993 interview, Milton P. Siegel, Assistant Director General of the World Health Organization from 1946-70, indicated

⁴⁸ William G. Hollingsworth. 1996. *Ending the Explosion: Population Policies and Ethics for a Humane Future*. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press. p. 31.

⁴⁹ James Scheuer. 1992. “A Disappointing Outcome: United States and World Population Trends Since the Rockefeller Commission. *The Social Contract*. Vol. 2, No. 4. Congressman Scheuer (D-NY) was a member of the 1972 Commission on Population Growth and the American Future and at the time this article was written, was Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Environment as well as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education and Health.

that, “one way or another, sometimes surreptitiously, the Catholic church used its influence to defeat, if you will, any movement toward family planning or birth control.”⁵⁰

As population activists reported on the Catholic activism and criticized it, the population movement began to be tarred as anti-Catholic. Environmental groups seeking membership, funds and support from a wide spectrum of Americans had good reason to stay out of population issues altogether, rather than risk offending their own current and potential members who also were members of the largest religious denomination in America. Environmental groups with Catholic board members were known to use them as reasons for not being more involved in population issues.

Roman Catholic opposition, both from the Vatican itself and from American Catholics, apparently played a key role in pressuring government policy-makers as well. On May 5, 1972, gearing up for his re-election campaign, President Nixon publicly disavowed the recommendations of his own Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, which U.S. Catholic bishops had blasted for its permissive attitude toward contraception and abortion.⁵¹ Evidently still concerned about overpopulation, however, Nixon ordered a study in April, 1974, of the national security implications of population growth.⁵² When released in 1975, President Gerald Ford endorsed the findings of National Security Study Memorandum 200 (NSSM 200). The report strongly stated that exploding populations in the third world would threaten the security of the United States. These threats would come from the destabilization of those countries’ economic, political and ecological systems. Besides recommending helping those nations curb their population growth, NSSM 200 called on the U.S. to provide world leadership in population control by seeking to attain stabilization of its own population by the year 2000.⁵³

Although President Ford endorsed the NSSM 200, nothing ever became of it. Historians should carefully sort through the evidence that NSSM 200 was never implemented because of intense pressure applied by the Vatican and the U.S. Conference of Bishops (and that U.S. government officials of Roman Catholic background were particularly susceptible to such pressure). “American policy [toward support of international family planning programs] was changed as a result of the Vatican’s not agreeing with our policy,” President Reagan’s ambassador to the Vatican told *TIME* magazine.⁵⁴ How much pressure was actually exerted is an important question to resolve. With the U.S. fertility rate at such a low level anyway, it was easier for government officials to ignore the recommendations of NSSM 200, the Commission on Population

⁵⁰ “The Vatican and World Population Policy: An Interview with Milton P. Siegel.” *The Humanist*. March/April 1993.

⁵¹ David Simcox. 1992. “Twenty Years Later: A Lost Opportunity.” *The Social Contract*, Vol. 2, No. 4.

⁵² Stephen D. Mumford. 1996. *The Life and Death of NSSM 200: How the Destruction of Political Will Doomed a U.S. Population Policy*. Research Triangle Park: Center for Research on Population and Security.

⁵³ Joyce Arthur. 1999. “Mortal Sins of the Vatican.” *Pro-Choice Press* (Vancouver, Canada) Summer 1999.

⁵⁴ Carl Bernstein. 1992. “Holy Alliance: How Reagan and the Pope conspired to assist Poland’s Solidarity movement and hasten the demise of Communism.” *Time*, February 24. A section of the article was called “The U.S. and the Vatican on Birth Control.”

Growth and the American Future, the *Global 2000 Report to the President*, and numerous scientists and population activists that the United States move forthwith to stabilize its population.

Active efforts within Catholic circles arose to disprove that rising population size had anything to do with deterioration of natural or human environments or the ability of poor countries with rapidly-growing populations to develop economically.⁵⁵ The worldwide – as opposed to the U.S. – population stabilization movement now had major organized opposition that was gladly encouraged and touted by economic and class interests which saw their wealth and power threatened by a slowing of population growth. This counter-movement had its intellectual underpinnings as well. Certain influential writers, scholars and well-endowed think-tanks actually went as far as arguing not just that population growth was benign, but that it was good, even essential to continued economic and technological progress.⁵⁶ The best-known advocate of the “growth is good” school was the late Julian L. Simon, who argued that the human mind was “the ultimate resource,” and that the more of those minds there were, the more collective human ingenuity there would be to solve problems, create new resources and forge a better future.⁵⁷ Simon’s most notorious (and criticized) claim was that “we have in our hands now – actually in our libraries – the technology to feed, clothe and supply energy to an ever-growing population for the next 7 billion years.”⁵⁸

Historians however, will want to be careful in ascribing to the whole of the Catholic Church aggressive support for never-ending population growth. The voices from within the hierarchy have been decidedly mixed. The U.S. Catholic bishops in 1991 spoke glowingly of education, good nutrition and health care for women and children that, “promise to improve family welfare and contribute to stabilizing population....Even though it is possible to feed a growing population, the ecological costs of doing so ought to be taken into account.”⁵⁹ And just before the 1994 U.N. International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the Italian Bishops’ Conference released a study by the Papal Academy of Science entitled “Too Many Births?” It argued that birth control is necessary, “to prevent the emergence of insoluble problems.” It suggested that the birth rate must not, “notably exceed the level of two children per couple.”⁶⁰

CAUSE #3: Emergence of Women’s Issues as Priority Concern of Population Groups

⁵⁵ Supra, note 48.

⁵⁶ Ester Boserup. 1965. *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*. London: Allen & Unwin, and 1981. *Population and Technology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

⁵⁷ Julian Simon. 1981. *The Ultimate Resource*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, and 1986. *Theory of Population and Economic Growth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

⁵⁸ Julian Simon. 1995. “The State of Humanity – Steadily Improving.” *Cato Policy Report*, Vol. 17, No. 5, October. Washington, D.C.: The Cato Institute.

⁵⁹ Roy Beck. 1992. “Religions and the Environment: Commitment High Until U.S. Population Issues Raised.” *The Social Contract*. Vol 3, No. 2. Winter 1992-93

⁶⁰ Anon. *The Washington Times*. 1994. June 11; Anon. *The New York Times*. June 16. Cited in Lindsey Grant. 1994. “The Cairo Conference: Feminists vs. the Pope.” *NPG Forum Series*. July

Another reason environmental groups did not fully engage U.S. population issues in the 1980s and 1990s was that the groups that specialized in population issues drifted away from population stabilization and environmental protection as primary reasons for being. Those groups had played key roles in the 1970 era by prodding the environmental groups to join them and by doing the bulk of the research that was used by the environmentalists. Except for the small groups Negative Population Growth, Population Environment Balance, and Carrying Capacity Network (founded in 1989), however, that role ended by the 1990s.

By the 1990s, for example, Planned Parenthood no longer played a significant role in advocating for U.S. population stabilization to protect the environment. Its focus had narrowed to making sure that women had full access to the whole range of options concerning fertility and births. That had always been a primary mission of Planned Parenthood, but one of the major purposes of empowering women had once been to reduce U.S. population growth.

Another prime example was Zero Population Growth, which did not totally abandon interest in population size, but nevertheless excised “stabilization” from its mission for the United States in the 1990s, as it promoted an agenda focused on women’s issues and international access to birth control.

To understand these shifts, historians will need to look at the differing roots of the 1970-era population movement. While one root included people with high environmental consciousness, several roots did not. Many of the early population leaders were primarily concerned about health issues, others about development issues. Still others were predecessors of the modern feminist movement. The environmentalist angle tended to be pushed out front during the late 1960s as environmentalism reached mass popularity. But as environmentalists abandoned population issues in the 1970s, the population groups more and more de-emphasized their environmental motives as they increased their attention to women’s issues. By the 1990s, some of the groups actually *opposed* helping the environment through population stabilization or reduction efforts. *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent George Moffett observed: “Women’s groups complain that overstating the consequences of rapid population growth has created a crisis atmosphere in some countries, which has led to human rights violations in the name of controlling fertility.”⁶¹

For population groups to focus on women’s empowerment did not necessarily work against stabilization efforts. But there were already women’s emphasis groups, and the shift of focus of population groups left the country with virtually no major voices explicitly calling for stabilization.

The most striking evidence of population groups’ declining emphasis on numerical goals occurred at the 1994 U.N. International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt. As Catholic lay theologian George Wiegler observed,

⁶¹ George D. Moffett. 1994. *Critical Masses: The Global Population Challenge*. New York: Viking. p. 190.

“Over the long haul...the most significant development at the Cairo Conference may have been a shift in controlling paradigms: from ‘population control’ to ‘the empowerment of women.’”⁶² Previous U.N. population conferences in 1974 and 1984, although not without controversy, had focused on population growth itself and the need and means to tame it. At Cairo, non-profit organizations (NGOs) from the United States, dominated by feminists like former New York congresswoman Bella Abzug, were part of a lobby that prevented the Cairo conference from setting any numerical targets or even stating that population growth should be stopped.⁶³ One NGO, called the International Women’s Health Coalition, circulated a declaration at Cairo stating that a woman had the absolute right to have the number of children she wanted.⁶⁴ “The Cairo Programme contains hundreds of recommendations about women’s rights and other social issues but almost none about population,” wrote former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment and Population Affairs Lindsey Grant.⁶⁵

The conferees thus gave short shrift to the concerns of eminent scientists and environmentalists, like Nobel Prize laureate and MIT physics professor Henry W. Kendall, the legendary oceanographer and documentary filmmaker Jacques Cousteau, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the British Royal Academy, and the more than 1,600 prominent scientists who signed the “World Scientists Warning to Humanity.” All of them had advised on the urgency of stopping population growth. Yet these appeals fell largely on deaf ears. One observer identified five interest groups represented at Cairo: the population concerned community, the market preference community, the distribution community, the women’s initiatives community, and the Vatican. Of these, only one (the population concerned community) even wanted to draw attention to the problems of population growth.⁶⁶

Now centered in a feminist rather than environmental mission, many population, family planning, and women’s groups would support no talk of stopping growth or reducing average family size because that implied restrictions on what they considered a universal right of women to choose their number of children entirely free of the merest hint of official or informal pressure. Women’s-issues advocates ensured that the results of the conference were primarily about the empowerment and well-being of women, not the size of populations around the world. The stance was this: If there was a problem with population size or growth rates, it would be resolved by giving women more education, health care, legal rights, employment opportunities and readier access to

⁶² George Weigel. 1995. “What Really Happened at Cairo, and Why.” In Michael Cromartie (ed.) *The Nine Lives of Population Control*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center.

⁶³ Lindsey Grant. 1994. “The Cairo Conference: Feminists vs. the Pope.” *NPG Forum Series* (Washington, D.C.: Negative Population Growth).

⁶⁴ Meredith Burke. 1998. E-mail to Roy Beck. December 9. Meredith Burke is an international demographic consultant and past coordinator of Management Information, Family Planning International Assistance.

⁶⁵ Lindsey Grant. 1997. “Multiple Agendas and the Population Taboo.” *Focus*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network); reprinted from Chapter 16 of *Juggernaut: Growth on a Finite Planet*. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press. 1996.

⁶⁶ Martha Madison Campbell. 1998. “Schools of Thought: An Analysis of Interest Groups Influential in International Population Policy” *Population and Environment*. Vol. 19, No. 6.

contraceptives. Women should be left alone to decide on the size of their families, without any national or international direction as to what size would be best for society.

Lindsey Grant has observed the transformation of population groups for decades. He says the Cairo fight exposed an old fault line between those primarily interested in making contraceptives available to help people limit their contribution to population growth and those wanting to make them available to give women more liberty and power. The two goals are not mutually exclusive. As homemakers and housewives, women in particular bear the brunt of large families.⁶⁷ Furthermore, commentators add, reducing population growth nearly always should improve the quality of life for society as a whole by freeing up scarce time, labor, capital, and resources. The surplus can then be re-directed into capital formation, education, resource conservation, infrastructure, and the like.⁶⁸ Stabilization advocates often cite the fact that no nation has moved out of its poverty without many years of declining population growth.⁶⁹ Asian countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore and China are prime examples. On the other side, empowering women (especially through enhanced economic opportunities) usually helps them avoid unwanted pregnancies and to desire smaller families.⁷⁰ Experience shows, however, that without strong societal education and encouragement, the desired smaller families are often more than two children – sometimes substantially more -- in which case population growth does not cease. Stabilization advocates at Cairo demanded that women's empowerment include strong recommendations that they limit their family size to two children.

The “liberty” side of the movement triumphed over the “limits” advocates, Grant concluded. In the final international agreement for action, nowhere was it said that population growth should stop. Nowhere were growing countries urged to give a higher priority to slowing or stopping population growth. Governmental incentives for reducing fertility were rejected as too coercive toward women.⁷¹ While the Vatican received the most media publicity for its efforts to keep the Cairo conference from establishing population goals, the feminist groups ended up working as if hand-in-glove with the Vatican to ensure that result.⁷² The feminist groups defeated the Vatican, however, on the issue of making contraceptives more widely available. Even then, they changed funding recommendations to put less emphasis on contraceptives than had been requested by international experts. Those experts had told the conference that \$17 billion a year

⁶⁷ Supra, note 59.

⁶⁸ Lester Thurow. 1993. *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe and America*. William Morrow & Co.

⁶⁹ Paul Harrison. *The Third Revolution: Population, Environment, and a Sustainable World*. 1992, 1993. London and New York: Penguin.

⁷⁰ Virginia D. Abernethy. 1993. *Population Politics: The Choices that Shape Our Future*. New York: Plenum.

⁷¹ The shift within the population movement from an emphasis on “limits to growth” toward “personal liberty” has even shaped the choice of language used by activists in the 1990s. In the 1960s and 1970s, those concerned about overpopulation typically referred to the remedy of “population control,” in much the same way the terms “birth control” or “pollution control” were used. By the 1990s, this term had been largely phased out in favor of “population stabilization,” which is somewhat more precise but, more significantly, also lacks the politically-incorrect tinge of coercion implicit in “control.”

⁷² Supra, note 60.

was needed just to provide contraceptives to more than 100 million women who wanted them but could not afford them. The final Cairo decision was to put only \$6 billion of that into contraceptives and the rest into other health projects.⁷³ An Indonesian delegate summarized the shift in dominant perspectives: “We have stopped calling women the receptors of contraceptives. We now call them agents of change.”⁷⁴

Perhaps the clearest sign that many population groups had divorced themselves from the environmental movement was that the long international document from Cairo made no mention of the connections between population growth and the environmental ills of countries with growing populations: deforestation, land degradation, flooding, desertification, wild species decline and extinction, water scarcity and pollution, horrendous urban air quality, and chaotic urban growth, among others.

While many in the non-profit population movement effectively de-linked themselves from environmental concerns, many environmental groups adopted those same de-linked population goals. By way of example, the population program at one of the nation’s largest environmental groups – the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) – became focused largely on promoting the Cairo action plan of advancing women’s rights rather than stopping growth for environmental reasons. An interview with NWF staff convinced one observer that female empowerment had become an end unto itself rather than a means to reduced family size, population stability, and environmental conservation -- green images and verbiage on the NWF population program’s Internet web page notwithstanding.⁷⁵

What is the problem with this, one might ask, if empowerment of women does in fact lead to reduced fertility? There are three problems with substituting the means for the end on this issue. One is that, given the reality of scarce financial resources, diverting already inadequate funds from contraceptives and into other women’s issues means fewer dollars for birth control in a world where more than 100 million women (according the U.N.’s World Fertility Survey) say they would like to stop having more children but lack the means. Worldwide, 30 years after international family planning programs were launched, 40% of married women still do not use contraceptives.⁷⁶ The Washington-based Population Institute stresses that: “Fertility declines in all regions of the world once again prove that economic prosperity is not an essential precursor to population stabilization. Most of the countries that have achieved replacement-level or near-

⁷³ The Population Institute points out that according to the U.N. Population Fund’s 1998 *State of the World Population* report, actual family planning assistance has remained well below even these promised amounts, reaching barely at \$2 billion in 1997 and 1998 (Population Institute. 1998. “1998 World Population Overview and Outlook 1999.” Released December 30, 1998. Washington, D.C.: Population Institute).

⁷⁴ Barbara Crossette. 1994. “Vatican Drops Fight Against U.N. Population Document.” *The New York Times*, September 10.

⁷⁵ Interview conducted in early 1999 by Leon Kolankiewicz with two NWF senior staffers.

⁷⁶ United Nations Foundation. Undated. “Women & Population: Challenge for the 21st Century.” Downloaded May, 1999 from Internet at <http://www.unfoundation.org/issues/women/challenge_wp.cfm>.

replacement-level fertility in the recent past have been less developed ones. The common denominator among them is increased awareness and use of contraception.”⁷⁷

Second, frequent births, large families and rampant population growth themselves hinder the emancipation of women toward educational and employment opportunities. By the time women have achieved a social status acceptable to their advocates, populations may well have doubled, tripled, or quadrupled. Moreover, as anthropologist Virigina Abernethy points out, higher educational attainment (to cite one favored goal) is not a guarantee of reduced fertility. “In some parts of Africa, even highly educated women who are unemployed or marginally employed continue to bear many children,” she writes.⁷⁸ Abernethy also marshalls compelling evidence questioning the comfortable assumptions of the popular “benign demographic transition” theory that has dominated professional demography and international development assistance efforts for decades. This theory holds that birth rates will come down of their own accord as societies develop. “Development is the best contraceptive,” went the mantra at the first U.N. conference on population in Bucharest in 1974. Abernethy argues persuasively that signs of opportunity or prosperity -- such as better child survival, land redistribution programs, political revolutions, indiscriminate foreign aid, opportunities to emigrate, and income increases -- instead of reducing fertility, actually tend to raise it. America’s own baby boom during the booming post-World War II period is one prominent example of this phenomenon.

A third problem, as Lindsey Grant comments, is that “there is no justification for the assumption that free choice will, unguided, lead to the socially desirable level of fertility [i.e. replacement level or below]. It is myth masquerading as truth.”⁷⁹ Even though fertility in developing nations has been cut in half over the last three years, it still averages 3 children per female,⁸⁰ 50% above replacement level, and in some countries the decline may have “stalled.” The preferred number of children in most developing regions, especially Africa, far exceeds the replacement level. Given the great variety of cultures in the world, it is simply unrealistic to assume that women everywhere will choose to follow the fertility patterns of European, North American and some Asian women.

This shift away from an overriding concern with population and environmental limits may be seen most importantly in the group Zero Population Growth (ZPG). In 1968, the Sierra Club published Paul Ehrlich’s sensational book *The Population Bomb*, which warned tersely of imminent famine and ecological catastrophe unless population growth was halted around the world. Population stabilization was ignited into a national movement and helped awaken most environmental groups and activists to the threat of unchecked population growth. Zero Population Growth was founded that same year to take advantage of the incredible publicity the book generated. Professor Ehrlich

⁷⁷ Population Institute. 1998. “1998 World Population Overview and Outlook 1999.” Released December 30, 1998. Downloaded from Internet at www.populationinstitute.org/overview98.html.

⁷⁸ Supra, note 68.

⁷⁹ Supra, note 63.

⁸⁰ Supra, note 74.

appeared on Johnny Carson's show many times. Each time he appeared, ZPG got phone calls or letters from twenty to thirty thousand people.⁸¹

Hundreds of ZPG chapters sprang up overnight. ZPG's first leaders were described as all being pro-environmentalist, pro-choice, and pro-family planning. In the beginning, ZPG had a motto, "Zero Population Growth is our name and our mission." There were several large organizations dealing with population growth in other countries. But ZPG's primary mission was explicitly to stabilize the U.S. population, according to members of the early ZPG boards of directors.⁸² That remained the stated mission through the 1980s.

In the 1970s, ZPG's population policy recommendations covered every contribution to U.S. population growth. It included stands on contraceptives, sex education for teenagers, equality for women, abortion, opposition to illegal immigration, and proposals to reduce legal immigration from about 400,000 a year to 150,000 a year by 1985 in order to reach zero population growth by 2008.⁸³

ZPG started the modern immigration-reduction movement in the 1970s. After American fertility fell below replacement level, the ZPG board recognized that immigration was rising rapidly and would soon negate all the benefits of lower fertility. Even though immigration seemed separate from the family planning issues that had dominated precursor population organizations, ZPG tackled it squarely because it related to the issue of U.S. population stabilization, which was deemed essential to the health of the American environment. By the late 1970s, the ZPG leaders who were the most interested in immigration issues spun off a new organization called the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). Among them was John Tanton, who had also been a member of the Sierra Club's National Population Committee. Their idea was that FAIR would take no stand on abortion and other controversial family planning issues in order to attract a wider constituency which would work for immigration reform not only for environmental reasons, but for economic relief for the working poor and taxpayers, for social cohesion and for national security.

The ZPG leaders who left the ZPG board for FAIR also happened to be most of the people with the greatest interest in population as an environmental issue. That meant that those remaining on the board were more inclined toward the type of population movement that was rooted in family planning and women's issues. While ZPG continued to have policies on U.S. stabilization and the environment – and produce some outstanding educational materials – these policies and programs got less and less staff and board attention as the 1980s progressed. New staff were hired less on the basis of their environmental expertise and commitment and more because of their commitment to women's issues. One former board member and local ZPG activist recalled that board

⁸¹ Judy Kunofsky. 1997. Post to on-line Sierra Club population forum. Dr. Kunofsky was on the ZPG Board of Directors from 1972-84 and was president from 1977-80.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Celia Evans Miller and Cynthia P. Green. 1976. "A U.S. Population Policy: ZPG's Recommendations." Zero Population Growth policy paper.

members and key staff “have been close to women’s groups for some time, and want to please them.”⁸⁴

By 1996, ZPG was focused overwhelmingly on global population issues from the women’s empowerment perspective. A secondary focus was excessive consumption by Americans.⁸⁵ The board removed the word “stabilize” from much of its literature and its Mission Statement. On October 25, 1997, the ZPG board substituted “slowing” for “stopping” so that it then advanced a goal of merely “slowing” U.S. and world population growth. ZPG’s president Judith Jacobsen wrote in the newsletter *ZPG Reporter* that the reason ZPG didn’t support creating U.S. policies to reduce domestic population growth was that population problems in third world countries needed to be resolved first. She said that the “Cairo Conference taught us that changing the conditions of women’s lives is the most powerful answer” for population problems. She then gave a long list of ZPG’s essential commitments, none of which were population stabilization or environmental protection.⁸⁶

Thus, just before its 30th anniversary, ZPG had severed its goals from its name and its founding mission – zero population growth. Also abandoned as a central concern was the protection of the American environment which had been at the heart of ZPG’s founding. ZPG had not necessarily turned anti-environment or anti-stabilization, but it had evolved into an organization with different priorities. For many of those associated with the “old ZPG,” like former president Judy Kunofsky, former board member Joyce Tarnow, and former member of its citizen’s advisory board Albert A. Bartlett, this change was deeply disappointing.⁸⁷

In a April 22, 1997 letter to the ZPG board (to which she never received a reply), Tarnow called the group’s position on legal immigration levels “terribly inadequate” and urged it to engage in a dialogue with immigration reform organizations. The prospects for this looked dim, however, in view of Executive Director Peter Kostmayer’s recent comments to Floridians that “disparaged the immigration reform movement as basically xenophobic.”⁸⁸ Later that year, after 27 years of dedicated membership and service,

⁸⁴ Mike Hanauer. 1998. E-mail to Roy Beck. In addition to having served on the ZPG board, Hanauer is past chair of ZPG of Greater Boston and co-chair of the New England Coalition for Sustainable Population.

⁸⁵ Alan Kuper. 1999. “ZPG or ZCG?” E-mail to list. April 10. Kuper, a long-time Sierra member and one of the population activists who spearheaded the 1998 referendum, pointed out that 7 out of 10 questions on ZPG’s 1999 Earth Day quiz related to consumption. “Based on what I have, I’d say ZPG is promoting in classrooms across the US, reduction in consumption more than reduction in numbers.”

⁸⁶ Judith Jacobsen. 1998. President’s message. *ZPG Reporter*, February.

⁸⁷ Judy Kunofsky. 1998. Post to on-line Sierra Club population forum. October 15; Joyce Tarnow. 1998. E-mail to Roy Beck, December 8. Tarnow started the Miami chapter of ZPG in 1970, served on the national board from 1972-74, and is now president of Floridians for a Sustainable Population. Bartlett, Professor Emeritus of Physics at the University of Colorado, wrote on January 10, 1999: “Zero Population Growth no longer advocates zero population growth? They now advocate ‘slow population growth and sustainability.’ These two concepts are totally in conflict with one another....I was on the board of citizen advisors of ZPG for a decade or two, and I knew nothing about this change until I happened to notice it in reading the ZPG paper. It is not known if the Board of Directors consulted with anyone before they made this major and contradictory change in their mission statement.”

⁸⁸ Joyce Tarnow. 1997. April 22 letter to Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, president, and ZPG board.

Tarnow resigned from ZPG, because of its “unwillingness to take a rational position on legal immigration reform.” She commented with regret that “The actions of this Board, its officers and executive director, have confirmed for me that the purpose of the organization has been abandoned for reasons unknown.”⁸⁹ ZPG board chair Judith Jacobsen responded that:

“Feelings run high and intense on the immigration issue, on all sides. The majority of the ZPG board feels that its position is a careful balance among demographic needs, moral constraints, and political realities. We have spent a great deal of time working it out, most recently in a nine-hour discussion at our October meeting. I’m sorry that you don’t share this position.”⁹⁰

CAUSE #4: Schism between the Conservationist and New-Left Roots of the Movement

Historians are likely to find other important clues to the environmental movement’s shift by studying the roots of the modern environmental movement. Three of the roots are of special interest here.

Two of the roots go back a century: (1) The wilderness preservation movement was exemplified by John Muir, the National Parks, and later, and National Wilderness Areas. (2) The resource conservation movement was exemplified by President Theodore Roosevelt, his chief forester Gifford Pinchot, and the National Forests.⁹¹

The *preservationists* focused on a love of the outdoors and on preservation of natural areas and wildlife for their own intrinsic value as well as for the enjoyment and spiritual nourishment of present and future generations.⁹² They included such well-established, non-profit organizations as the Audubon Society, Izaak Walton League, Wilderness Society, and Sierra Club.

The *conservationists* focused on the prudent stewardship and sustainable utilization of natural resources like timber, water, soils, and minerals, in pursuit of the “greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time,” in Pinchot’s memorable phrase.⁹³ The conservation movement gave birth to such professions as forestry, agronomy, and game (wildlife) and fisheries management. It was represented by such federal government agencies as the U.S. Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, U.S.

⁸⁹ Joyce Tarnow. 1997. November 25 letter to Dr. Judith Jacobsen, ZPG president.

⁹⁰ Judith E. Jacobsen. 1997. December 8 letter to Joyce Tarnow.

⁹¹ Samuel P. Hays. 1959, 1969. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920*. Harvard University Press/Atheneum.

⁹² Roderick Nash. 1967. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Revised edition, 1973. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

⁹³ Gifford Pinchot. 1947. *Breaking New Ground*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. p. 320. In Douglas H. Strong. 1971, 1988. *Dreamers and Defenders – American Conservationists*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p. 83.

Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Geological Service and by state-level counterparts in all fifty states.

Although conservationists and preservationists have often been at bitter odds since the divisive, decade-long struggle over whether to dam Hetch-Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park (which destroyed the friendship of Muir and Pinchot), there is in fact considerable common ground between the goals and leading proponents of the American preservationist and conservationist movements. Aldo Leopold – the founder of modern game management, co-founder of the Wilderness Society, and author of the conservation classic *A Sand County Almanac*⁹⁴ -- straddled both camps. So did Robert Marshall, chief of recreation for the U.S. Forest Service in the 1930s and a Wilderness Society co-founder as well.

A third root of the modern environmental movement is much younger. It was an outgrowth of what was called New-Left politics with a strong strain of socialism, as espoused by its guru of the 1970 era, Barry Commoner. This root was given its strongest impetus with the 1962 publication of *Silent Spring* by naturalist Rachel Carson.⁹⁵ Although Carson was deeply concerned about the unforeseen effects of pesticides and other man-made poisons being released indiscriminately into the *natural* environment, this third root of modern environmentalism came to focus more on urban and health issues such as air, water, and toxic contamination, as they affected the *human* environment. Commoner, in fact, criticized conservationists for putting wildlife ahead of human health. As journalist Mark Dowie writes: “The central concern of the new movement is human health. Its adherents consider wilderness preservation and environmental aesthetics worthy but overemphasized values. They are often derided by anti-toxic activists as bourgeois obsessions.”⁹⁶ A staffer for a regional environmental group working with low-income Hispanic residents of New Mexico to protect their groundwater and drinking wells from industrial contamination startled one conservationist by ridiculing the priorities of those working to protect wildlife in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drilling.⁹⁷

Having much in common with the emerging Green parties of Europe (social justice, peace, and ecology), the new “greens” of America joined with the wilderness preservationists and resource conservationists as the modern environmental movement was born in the 1960s. But the New Left greens held opposite views on population from those of most preservationists and conservationists. In his influential 1971 book *The*

⁹⁴ First published in 1949, and since reprinted many times, *A Sand County Almanac* has been called the finest nature writing since Thoreau. “The Land Ethic” is the most famous of this collection of essays.

⁹⁵ Rachel Louise Carson (1907-64) was a marine biologist and author of widely read books on ecological themes, including *Under the Sea Wind* (1941), *The Sea Around Us* (1951) -- for which she was awarded the 1952 National Book Award in nonfiction -- and *The Edge of the Sea* (1955). Her prose was praised for its beauty as well as its scientific accuracy. She taught zoology at the University of Maryland from 1931 to 1936. She was also an aquatic biologist at the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and its successor, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, from 1936 to 1952.

⁹⁶ Mark Dowie. 1995. *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 127.

⁹⁷ This incident occurred to Leon Kolankiewicz in 1990 with a staff person from the Southwest Information Center.

Closing Circle and elsewhere, Barry Commoner minimized the role of population as a cause of environmental problems. Commoner said the problems attributed to population growth were actually caused by unfair distribution of resources and by profitable technologies. Environmental degradation could be rectified by changing economic systems.⁹⁸

Like free-market libertarians on the right, and like Marxist theoreticians on the left all over the world, the New Left greens believed that population problems could be solved by choosing the correct economic system. They saw few or no limits to growth, believed excessive consumption (on the part of the rich) rather than excessive population was at the root of environmental degradation, and often decried a concern about overpopulation as “blaming the victims of oppression,” at best, or thinly disguised racism at worst.⁹⁹ Left-wing environmentalist and newspaper columnist Alexander Cockburn compared the 1998 Sierra Club referendum on U.S. population stabilization to a Ku Klux Klan rally on the op-ed page of the largest newspaper on the West Coast – concluding that the Sierra vote was the “much more sinister and dangerous...” of the two.¹⁰⁰

Conservationists and preservationists, in contrast, had always been concerned about some aspects of population growth. As far back as 1939, Wilderness Society co-founder Robert Marshall opposed a plan (never implemented) to settle thousands of European Jewish refugees in Alaska – in spite of the fact that he himself was Jewish -- because that federally-sponsored population growth in the country’s last, vast wilderness area “would diminish the opportunity for individualism and self-sufficiency that still flourished in the isolated, unmapped expanse of the north.”¹⁰¹ Conservationists and preservationists became especially alarmed by the Baby Boom impact on the environment. Their decades of experience watching wilderness and other habitats disappear under the constant growth of U.S. population led large numbers of them to confront that growth boldly and directly by the late 1960s. Wilderness advocate and

⁹⁸ Barry Commoner. 1971. *The Closing Circle*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

⁹⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels both lambasted Malthusian theory. Yet once Marxists or Communists actually assume political power in a given country they sometimes have been among the most zealous in pushing population control, as evidenced most clearly in the People’s Republic of China. At the 1996 U.N. Food Conference in Rome, Cuban president Fidel Castro chided the Vatican on population and argued the necessity of stopping population growth if the world was ever to solve the food problem. As ecological economist Herman E. Daly notes in his essay “Marx and Malthus in Northeast Brazil”: “The leftists want a growing proletariat to fight for the revolution...” (*Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development*, 1996, Boston: Beacon Press). Once in power, however, they apparently come to see the infeasibility of providing for ever-growing numbers, and they change their tune radically. The conservative Islamic clerics governing Iran since the overthrow of the Shah in 1979 seem to have undergone a similar shift, from railing against birth control and family planning to actively promoting it as the social and economic burdens of a rapidly growing population became ever more evident.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Cockburn. 1997. “Column Left.” *Los Angeles Times*. October 2.

¹⁰¹ Tom Kizzia. 1999. “Give Us This Chance; Part 2: As German Jews eagerly await immigration word, U.S. government officials are split on plan to bring new settlers to Alaska.” *Anchorage Daily News*. May 17.

popular Southwestern author Edward Abbey spoke for many when he said that “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”¹⁰²

It appears that the New Left greens tried to keep population issues off the Earth Day 1970 agenda. They lost. Conservationists and preservationists succeeded in retaining their fundamental tenet that there could be no permanent environmental preservation without limiting human numbers. The college students and young adults who were rushing into the movement at the time may have been more temperamentally inclined toward the anti-war, anti-establishment New Left greens, but the young new environmentalists – armed with millions of dog-eared copies of *The Population Bomb* – seemed to overwhelmingly accept the old-line conservationists’ assessment of population. Most of the new more-liberal environmental groups that were formed at the time rejected the New Left’s opposition to fighting never-ending population growth and joined with the conservationists on their population stances.

But the New Left wing of environmentalism reversed its losses in the 1990s, according to Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman, one of the most publicized and aggressive players in the first 20 years of U.S. environmentalism.¹⁰³ He said the New Left wing – which he called “Progressive Cornucopians” – established its anti-stabilization view as the dominant one in the national staffs and boards of many groups, including the Sierra Club. Professor George Sessions, one of the founders of the deep ecology movement, commented on the influence of “postmodernists” (who reject the concept of “objective” truth and believe nature is but a “social construct”). He documented the hostility of postmodernists to much of the nature conservation and population stabilization causes.¹⁰⁴

On the winning side of the 1990s population policy conflict were people like Brad Erickson, coordinator of the Political Ecology Group, which played a key role in helping the Sierra Club board abandon its proscriptive population stabilization policy in 1996 and then fight off the pro-stabilization Sierra members in 1998.¹⁰⁵ Erickson said the fight was a replay of the one at Earth Day 1970, which the New Left greens lost.¹⁰⁶ He said the plan of the New Left greens in the 1960s had been to use the environmental issue as one of several they hoped would bloom into a full manifestation of a progressive movement

¹⁰² James R. Hepworth and Gregory McNamee. 1996. *Resist Much Obey Little, Remembering Ed Abbey*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. In John Rohe. 1997. *A Bicentennial Malthusian Essay*. Traverse City, Michigan: Rhodes & Easton. p. 104.

¹⁰³ Dave Foreman. 1998. “Progressive Cornucopianism.” *Wild Earth*, Vol. 7, No. 4.

¹⁰⁴ George Sessions. 1995. “Postmodernism, Environmental Justice, and the Demise of the Ecology Movement?” *Wild Duck Review*. No. 5, June/July; George Sessions. 1995. “Political Correctness, Ecological Realities, and the Future of the Ecology Movement.” *Wild Duck Review*, Vol. 1, No. 6, Sept. By way of example, Sessions quotes a book review by Erik Davis in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* (February, 1995): “When postmodernists hear *Nature*, they reach for their revolvers. [Much of] this is motivated in part by the threat hardcore [radical] ecology poses to postmodernism’s most visibly progressive rhetoric: the politics of diversity.”

¹⁰⁵ A 1998 fundraising letter from PEG claimed that “Sierra grassroots leaders told us that ‘The Sierra Club would not have won this vote without PEG,’” an assessment that PEG’s adversaries would probably agree is not far off the mark.

¹⁰⁶ Brad Erickson. 1998. Personal interview. May.

far beyond the confines of traditional American economics and culture. But conservationists hi-jacked Earth Day, forced their population issues into it and the movement, and have limited the effectiveness of environmentalism ever since, Erickson explained. This view is shared by author Mark Dowie, who argues that population stabilization and immigration reform have retarded the transformation of conservation- and preservation-oriented environmentalism into a movement for “environmental justice.”¹⁰⁷ By abandoning their limits-to-growth population ideology in the 1990s, the environmental groups could at last form coalitions with groups organized around a variety of non-environmental progressive causes, unencumbered by embarrassing population concerns.

CAUSE #5: Immigration – Protected by ‘Political Correctness’ – Became the Chief Cause of U.S. Growth

Immigration emerged in the 1970s as the leading cause of continuing U.S. population growth. Immigration was an issue that none of the environmental groups had ever handled. Almost overnight, the U.S. population growth challenge had changed from being driven by American fertility to federal immigration policy. That forced environmental groups to make a choice to either (a) pursue U.S. stabilization by working for immigration reductions, or (b) abandon U.S. stabilization.

Such a choice surely was a shock to many environmental leaders. Left to future historians is a determination of how many made the choice consciously and how many passively chose option “b” simply by refusing to choose.

When most Americans began to focus on U.S. growth in the 1960s, immigration was an almost insignificant fraction of growth. Over the previous half-century, annual legal immigration had averaged less than 200,000 – below the historical average of around 250,000 a year.¹⁰⁸

Modifications in immigration law in 1965 inadvertently started a chain migration through extended family members that began to snowball during the 1970s. Every aspect of population growth in the United States changed, according to voluminous government reports from the National Center for Health Statistics, the Census Bureau, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

At the very time that American fertility fell to a level that would have allowed population stabilization within a matter of decades, immigration levels were rising rapidly. Father Theodore Hesburgh, then president of Notre Dame University, was the chairman of a federal commission that studied immigration policies and issues in the late 1970s.¹⁰⁹ He warned that immigration numbers would continue to rise because of two

¹⁰⁷ Supra, note 89. pp. 160-166.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1997. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

¹⁰⁹ *Select Commission on Immigration Policy and the National Interest*. 1981. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

powerful political interest groups: (1) conservative business interests which pushed for higher immigration to keep American wages down and the consumer market growing, and (2) liberal lobbies intent on increasing the voting power of various ethnic groups. Hesburgh's conclusions have proved prescient. In the years since, Congress and successive administrations have repeatedly made decisions that caused annual immigration numbers to rise.

By the 1980s, annual immigration had more than doubled over traditional levels and was running above 500,000 a year. By the 1990s, annual average legal immigration had surpassed a million. And that didn't even include a net addition of 200,000 to 500,000 illegal aliens each year. By the end of the 1990s, immigrants and their offspring were contributing nearly 70% of U.S. population growth.¹¹⁰

Environmental advocates of U.S. population stabilization had to confront this scorecard:

In a developed country like the United States, where mortality rates are low and where they change very slowly, the Population Size factor of the environmental Foundational Formula is influenced overwhelmingly by three sub-factors: (a) fertility of natives; (b) number of immigrants; (c) fertility of immigrants. A country is on the road to stabilization if all three of those are at a replacement-level rate.

In the United States at the end of the 1990s, government statistics reveal, these were the trends:

*(a) Native-born Total Fertility Rate: On target for U.S. stabilization. The native-born rate has been well below the replacement level of 2.1 babies per woman since 1972 and has held steady at about 1.9. If the rate continues this low, native-born fertility will stop adding any population growth once the children of Baby Boom women have gone through their child-bearing years.*¹¹¹

*(b) Immigrants: On target for driving U.S. population growth for centuries.*¹¹² *The number of immigrants is more than 400% above replacement level. (Replacement level is currently estimated to be about 225,000 immigrants a year – equal to the number of emigrants – which is just slightly below the traditional U.S. average for in-migration.)*

(c) Immigrant Total Fertility Rate: Far above replacement level and on target to produce ever-larger additions to population growth. Although immigrants are

¹¹⁰ Steven A. Camarota. 1999. "Immigrants in the United States -- 1998: A Snapshot of America's Foreign-born Population." *Backgrounder*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies.

¹¹¹ Lindsey Grant and Leon Bouvier. 1992. *How Many Americans?* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

¹¹² Ibid.

*now about 10% of the U.S. population, they account for more than 30% of the fertility-related population growth.*¹¹³

If immigration and immigrant fertility had been at replacement level rates since 1972 – as has native-born fertility – the United States would never have grown above 250 million.¹¹⁴ Instead, U.S. population passed 273 million before the turn of the century. And the Census Bureau projects that current immigration and immigrant fertility are powerful enough to contribute to the United States surpassing 400 million soon after the year 2050 – on the way toward a billion or more Americans.

Most environmental groups by the late 1970s simply turned away from these kind of stark trends and didn't address them. But a few remained true to the "full-Formula" environmentalism of the 1970-era. They responded directly to the new challenge – at least in their official statements.

The most aggressive was Zero Population Growth – before it shifted away from being primarily an environmental organization. A 1977 *Washington Post* story revealed the public way ZPG confronted immigration.¹¹⁵ Under the headline, "Anti-Immigration Campaign Begun," the story began: "The Zero Population Growth foundation is launching a nationwide campaign to generate public support for sharp curbs on both legal and illegal immigration to the United States." It quoted Melanie Wirken, ZPG's Washington lobbyist, saying the group favored a "drastic reduction in legal immigration" from levels which were then averaging about 400,000 a year. The article reported that ZPG was adding another lobbyist so that Wirken could devote all of her time to immigration issues.

The Sierra Club urged the federal government to conduct a thorough examination of U.S. immigration policies and their impact on U.S. population trends and how those trends affected the nation's environmental resources. "All regions of the world must reach a balance between their populations and resources," the Club added.¹¹⁶ Then in 1980, the Sierra Club testified before Father Hesburgh's Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Reform: "It is obvious that the numbers of immigrants the United States accepts affects our population size and growth rate. It is perhaps less well known the extent to which immigration policy, even more than the number of children per family, is the determinant of future numbers of Americans." The Club said it is an "important question how many immigrants the United States wants to accept and the criteria we choose as the basis for answering that question." In 1989, the Sierra National

¹¹³ Ed Lytwak. 1999. "A Tale of Two Futures: Changing Shares of U.S. Population Growth." *NPG Forum*. March. The National Vital Statistics System in the document "Births: Final Data for 1997," Vol. 47, No. 18, April 29, 1999, lists the U.S. total fertility rate (TFR) for all races in 1997 at 2.03, almost at replacement level. By comparison, the TFR for women of Hispanic origin was 2.99, and those of Mexican origin 3.31, respectively 42% and 58% above replacement level. According to the Census Bureau ("The Foreign-Born Population: 1996," CPS P20-494), about half (49.6%) of all U.S. foreign born came from Mexico (27.2%), Central America (7%), the Caribbean (10.5%), and South America (4.9%).

¹¹⁴ Poster Project for a Sustainable U.S. Environment. 1998. Based on Census Bureau data.

¹¹⁵ Susan Jacoby. 1977. "Anti-Immigration Campaign Begun." *The Washington Post*. May 8.

¹¹⁶ Sierra Club Board of Directors. 1978. "U.S. Population Policy and Immigration." Adopted May 6-7.

Population Committee confirmed that, “immigration to the U.S. should be no greater than that which will permit achievement of population stabilization in the U.S.,” a policy confirmed by the Club’s Conservation Coordinating Committee.¹¹⁷

The immigration-reduction advocacy of the Sierra Club and ZPG beginning in the 1970s was affirmed in the *Global 2000 Report to the President* in 1981, which stated that the federal government should “develop a U.S. national population policy that includes attention to issues such as population stabilization, and...just, consistent, and workable immigration laws...”¹¹⁸ It was reaffirmed in the 1996 report of the Population and Consumption Task Force of the President’s Council on Sustainable Development. The task force concluded: “This is a sensitive issue, but reducing immigration levels is a necessary part of population stabilization and the drive toward sustainability.”¹¹⁹

But even as that governmental recognition was being announced in 1996, ZPG and the Sierra Club were in the final stage of abandoning immigration reduction and, as a practical result, U.S. population stabilization goals.

Over the previous ten years many of the old “full-Formula” environmentalists had gradually been ousted from many of the Sierra Club’s top leadership positions, with the effect of sharply diminishing the priority attached to U.S. population stabilization. It appears that the shift began to be noticeable as early as 1990. Congress that year held hearings about increasing the already doubled level of immigration, a move that led to the Census Bureau raising its projection of U.S. population in 2050 by nearly 100 million. Neither the Sierra Club nor any other large environmental group asked to testify about the environmental consequences of such a dramatic boost in population. After the hearings, however, some of the leaders on the national Sierra Population Committee did some personal lobbying against the immigration bill. But they were admonished by others in the Club’s national leadership that they were out of line, even though the official Sierra policy at the time supported their efforts.¹²⁰

During the early 1990s, the Club considered adopting a more detailed, comprehensive policy on population (including immigration) and consumption. But internal wrangling between pro-stabilization population activists and the emerging “environmental justice” and “immigrants rights” factions led to stalemate.

In February, 1996, the Club’s National Board of Directors declared that no one speaking in the Club’s name at the national or local level could call any longer for immigration reduction to reach U.S. population stabilization; henceforth, the Club would “take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration into the United States.” In effect, the board had ceased the Club’s work for U.S. stabilization, which, at a practical level, is all but impossible given current immigration levels. For

¹¹⁷ Sierra Club Population Report. Spring, 1989.

¹¹⁸ Supra, note 29. p. 11.

¹¹⁹ President’s Council on Sustainable Development. 1996. *Population and Consumption Task Force Report*. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office. Executive Summary, p. iv.

¹²⁰ Memos to the authors from Population Committee members.

example, the only way to achieve immediate zero population growth without reducing immigration would be to cut the number of U.S. births in half.¹²¹ American women on average would have to do away with the two-child family of the last three decades and adapt to a one-child per family scenario – lower than any country in the world. In effect, Americans would be asked to sacrifice their own aspirations to “replace themselves” biologically in the next generation, simply to make way for more immigrants from rapidly-growing countries that had chosen not to make such a sacrifice. Given the patent unfairness of this scenario, and its certain political unpopularity, it is not surprising that not a single environmental or population group – especially those that avoided advocating immigration limits because of their controversy – was willing to seriously propose this as an alternative.

A group of long-time Sierra Club population activists forced a referendum vote by the national membership to return the Club to its full advocacy of population stabilization.¹²² To fight the referendum, the Club leadership chose as one of its major spokesmen in the referendum campaign the executive director of ZPG, former congressman Peter Kostmayer. Thus, the two organizations that had been the most outspoken for U.S. stabilization and immigration reduction in the 1970s and 1980s teamed up to defeat those same goals in 1998. The decision not to fully confront U.S. stabilization issues prevailed in a 60%-40% vote.¹²³

The Sierra referendum campaign was merely the most dramatic example of an almost total array of national environmental groups that had chosen in the 1990s to ignore the Foundational Formula of the 1970-era movement. (Only the Wilderness Society and the Izaak Walton League had proscriptive positions on U.S. stabilization.) Even though rapid U.S. population growth was making it ever more politically and technically infeasible to meet environmental goals set in the 1970 era, the environmental movement of the late 1990s was willing to miss those environmental goals (and newer ones) for the sake of protecting a level of immigration that was four times higher than the tradition before the first Earth Day. What was it about the immigration issue that made environmental groups, by and large, meekly acquiesce to a level of immigration that clashed head-on with the fundamental goal of population stabilization?

Years of pondering this question have led the authors to the conclusion that, of all the factors involved in the environmental movement’s retreat from U.S. population stabilization, the growing demographic influence of immigration is the single most important one. Thus we are devoting the remainder of this monograph to a discussion of

¹²¹ Albert A. Bartlett and Edward P. Lytwak. 1995. “Zero Growth of the Population of the United States.” *Population and Environment*, Vol. 16, No. 5, May.

¹²² “Population and the Sierra Club: A Discussion of Issues About the Upcoming Referendum.” January, 1998. 8 pp. discussion paper authored by Alan Kuper, Dick Schneider, and Ben Zuckerman of Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization (SUSPS).

¹²³ John H. Cushman, Jr. 1998. “Sierra Club Rejects Move to Oppose Immigration.” *The New York Times*, April 26; Marvin Baker (Acting Chief Inspector of Election for the Inspectors). “Sierra Club 1998 Election for Board of Directors and Ballot Questions.” (As posted on the website of Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization, April 24, 1998, at http://www.sni.net/ecofuture/susps/info/votes_980425.html).

its different aspects. Historians will find much to consider in the following possible explanations for the groups' avoidance of immigration numbers:

- **Fear that immigration reduction would alienate “progressive” allies and be seen as racially insensitive**

There is much to suggest that advocacy of immigration reduction is a personally embarrassing position for many who serve as leaders in environmental organizations. For example, one Sierra Club chapter leader in Tucson, Arizona called the immigration referendum “an embarrassment” even though he claimed to be alarmed by overpopulation.¹²⁴

Consider how immigration was perceived before Earth Day of 1970: Very few persons or groups anywhere in America had had any experience with immigration issues for a half-century. Annual immigration numbers had been averaging below 200,000. Immigrants played a tiny fraction of a role in the 1950s and 1960s U.S. population explosion, which was detonated almost entirely by high fertility among the native-born.¹²⁵ Immigrants were assimilating easily and quickly. Polls showed overwhelming American support for the immigration program of those decades.¹²⁶ The little hostility toward immigration policy that reached the public eye tended to be from persons and groups who resembled the textbook cases of nativism (discrimination against Americans who are foreign-born) and xenophobia (irrational fear and hatred of foreigners and immigrants) of the past. But that was before immigration quadrupled and became the predominant contributor to half the Formula for environmental deterioration.

In 1977, the *Washington Post* quoted ZPG's lobbyist for immigration reduction: “Americans have traditionally thought that immigration was good and that speaking out against immigration was just like speaking out against motherhood and apple pie. Over and over at congressional hearings, ZPG is the only group that raises a voice questioning the wisdom of letting in so many immigrants.”¹²⁷

Even when environmentalists knew fully the environmental necessity of reducing immigration, they risked becoming pariahs – ostracized by “progressive” friends and political allies as being like the xenophobes and nativists who also wanted to reduce immigration because of their fear or hatred of foreigners. One example occurred during the acrimonious 1998 debate within the Sierra Club, when two Club activists made a presentation to a northern Virginia chapter's executive committee. Speaking in favor of the immigration-reduction measure, they were abruptly cut off in mid-sentence by the committee's vice-chair, and heatedly denounced as comparable to the KKK, while other

¹²⁴ Rhonda Bodfield. 1998. “Sierra Club Split: Factions in Environmental Group at Odds Over Immigration Limits.” *The Arizona Daily Star*. April 12.

¹²⁵ Supra, note 111. Lytwak calculates that immigration accounted for 1% of U.S. population growth in 1950, 5% in 1960, 13% in 1970, 38% in 1980, 58% in 1990, and 61% in 1996.

¹²⁶ Roy Beck. 1996. *The Case Against Immigration*. New York and London: W.W. Norton.

¹²⁷ Supra, note 113.

committee members sat in awkward silence.¹²⁸ In another blatant incident, UCLA astronomy professor and Club population activist Ben Zuckerman was openly called a racist to his face at an Angeles Chapter executive committee meeting by a chapter officer of Chicano background.¹²⁹ Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope raised the fear himself that if the Club came out in favor of reducing immigration levels, “we would be perceived as assisting people whose motivations are racist.”¹³⁰ Paralleling the larger environmental movement’s decisive shift on the issue, Carl Pope had actually been a ZPG lobbyist in the 1970s at a time when it publicly advocated immigration reductions.

The possibility of being accused of racism was an especially big risk for environmental groups as it concerned their allied organizations outside of the environmental movement. These allies tended to identify themselves in a liberal political camp. Although one key root of the modern environmental movement was a conservationist movement that had a strong conservative and Republican component, environmental groups by the 1980s were predominantly entering coalitions with groups that leaned toward more liberal and Democratic identities. Beginning in 1981, the outright hostility of President Ronald Reagan and most of his political appointees (in contrast to previous Republican administrations) toward the environmental movement certainly helped push environmentalists toward alliances with more liberal and Democratic camps.

Yet, among advocates for immigration reduction in the 1980s and 1990s were some major liberal figures, such as former three-term Colorado Governor Dick Lamm and former U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy, who renounced the 1965 immigration law he had helped enact. In the 1990s, the late Barbara Jordan, former congresswoman and liberal icon, chaired the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, which examined immigration policies in terms of how they affected vulnerable American workers. In 1995, the commission declared: “The Commission decries hostility and discrimination against immigrants as antithetical to the traditions and interests of the country. At the same time, we disagree with those who would label efforts to control immigration as being inherently anti-immigrant. Rather, it is both a right and a responsibility of a democratic society to manage immigration so that it serves the national interests.”¹³¹ The bi-partisan commission went on to recommend elimination of extended family categories (an action that would end chain migration) and stronger steps to curb illegal immigration.¹³² Around the same time the National Academy of Sciences released a

¹²⁸ This incident occurred to Leon Kolankiewicz and Richard Koris in front of the executive committee of the Great Falls Group of the Old Dominion Chapter of the Club, and was reported in the *Washington Post* article (cited below) by William Branigin on March 7.

¹²⁹ E-mail to the authors from Ben Zuckerman, May 26, 1999.

¹³⁰ William Branigin. 1998. “Immigration Policy Dispute Rocks Sierra Club.” *The Washington Post*. March 7.

¹³¹ U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform. 1994. *U.S. Immigration Policy: Restoring Credibility*. Quote from Executive Summary. Barbara Jordan also delivered these remarks in testimony before a congressional hearing.

¹³² The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (or Jordan Commission) issued a number of reports from 1994-98.

major study which documented that immigration was the most important cause in the decline of real wages for less-educated workers over the last three decades.¹³³

But the primary lens through which environmental leaders in the 1980s and 1990s seemed to view immigration was not an environmental – or labor – paradigm but a racial one. According to this paradigm, immigration often appeared to be about non-white people moving into a mostly white country, just as whites themselves had done to indigenous Native Americans in previous centuries. To propose reductions in immigration was not seen as reducing labor competition or population growth but as trying to protect the majority status of America's white population. It was seen as rejecting non-white immigrants.¹³⁴ Thus immigration as an issue became confused with the positive American development of the last three decades in which very few groups would want to be seen as inhospitable to non-white Americans.

Australian sociologist Katherine Betts has examined this phenomenon. She uses the term “new class” (a group similar to what former Clinton Secretary of Labor Robert Reich calls “symbolic analysts”¹³⁵) to describe the intelligentsia, professionally-educated internationalists and cosmopolitans, lawyers, academics, journalists, teachers, artists, activists, and globetrotting business people and travellers. Her cogent analysis of why the new class has eschewed the cause of limiting immigration in Australia is germane to the case of U. S. environmental leaders: “The concept of immigration control has become contaminated in the minds of the new class by the ideas of racism, narrow self-seeking nationalism, and a bigoted preference for cultural homeogeneity....Their enthusiasm for anti-racism and international humanitarianism is often sincere but there are also social pressures supporting this sincere commitment and making apostasy difficult.” And later: “Ideologically correct attitudes to immigration have offered the warmth of in-group acceptance to supporters and the cold face of exclusion to dissenters.”¹³⁶ Similar analysis in the United States suggests that it is “politically incorrect” to talk of reducing immigration.

Taboos against challenging immigration policies are enforced by a “political correctness” that often is based on honorable sentiments tied to an individual's personal connections to immigration. These sentiments are usually strongest among those with the most direct, and recent, immigrant experiences in their immediate families, i.e. those whose spouses, parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles immigrated to the United States. Sensitivity is heightened still more for those who feel a strong personal identity as a member of ethnic groups – such as Irish, Italian, Greek, Slavic, Chinese, Japanese or Jewish – whose members once fled persecution in other countries or who may have met

¹³³ James P. Smith and Barry Edmonston (eds.). 1997. *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Panel on the Demographic and Economic Impacts of Immigration, Committee on Population and Committee on National Statistics, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education of the National Research Council. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

¹³⁴ Emil Guillermo. 1997. “The Sierra Club's Nativist Faction.” *San Francisco Examiner*. December 17.

¹³⁵ Robert Reich. 1991. *The Work of Nations: A Blueprint for the Future*. New York and London: Simon & Schuster.

¹³⁶ Katherine Betts. 1999. *The Great Divide: Immigration Politics in Australia*. Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove. Quotes from p. 5 and p. 29, respectively.

with discrimination in this country. Even when such a person does recognize that U.S. population growth is problematic, and that immigration is a major contributor to it, he or she may well reason that it would be hypocritical, as a descendant of immigrants and indirect beneficiary of a generous immigration policy, to “close the door” even partially on any prospective immigrant. Dealing with immigration can become almost physically sickening for such people, who feel they must make a choice between environmental protection and their view of themselves as a part of an immigrant ethnic group. (For such Americans, their own ethnic group’s experiences seem to obscure the fact that more than 90 percent of present immigrants are not fleeing persecution or starvation but are simply seeking greater material prosperity.) Thus, the response of these Americans to the population dilemma may have more to do with their sense of ethnicity than any scientific analysis of environmental challenges.

Many participants in the 1970-era environmental movement have suggested that the strength of ties to immigrant ethnic identities was a major factor in determining which leaders abandoned population stabilization and which continued to advocate it even when it entailed tackling immigration. To learn if this was an important factor in the movement’s retreat from stabilization advocacy, scholars would need ways of quantifying this claim. Despite the reality of the above discussion about the effect of immigrant ethnic identity on many individuals, it is possible that environmentalists of such ethnic backgrounds were no more likely – and maybe even less likely – than other environmentalists to abandon the population side of the Foundational Formula. Careful research, quantification and analysis are required here.

Environmental groups had also been stung in recent years with criticisms from some quarters that they were white elitist organizations with little concern about how their advocacy on behalf of wilderness, biodiversity and open space might affect the jobs and economic opportunity of working class people – particularly non-white Americans. From other quarters they were hit with the charge that they ignored environmental threats to urban areas and their mostly minority residents. Although environmentalists protested these criticisms, there was no denying that relatively few black, Asian and Latino Americans belonged to mainstream environmental groups or held positions of power within them.

Thus, some environmental groups engaged in aggressive programs to court members in minority communities, encourage greater diversity among their staffs and boards, and promote “environmental justice.” In 1992, at his Sierra Club Centennial Address, then-executive director Michael Fischer went as far as proposing that the Club should be turned over completely to minorities.¹³⁷ Professor and deep ecologist George Sessions commented in 1998 that: “The pressure upon (and even intimidation of) environmental organizations to turn towards social/environmental justice concerns has recently become enormous.”¹³⁸ Environmental justice advocates believe that poor and minority communities have been disproportionately “dumped on” or even systematically

¹³⁷ Supra, note 94.

¹³⁸ George Sessions. 1998. “Will the Real Sierra Club Please Stand Up?” *Focus*, Vol. 8, No. 1. Washington, D.C: Carrying Capacity Network.

targeted by corporate polluters. Arising in the late 1980s, and spurred by civil rights activists like Jesse Jackson and former NAACP leader Benjamin Chavis, the environmental justice movement was given a big boost by the October, 1991, People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., at which the attendees issued a resounding “call to arms.”¹³⁹ (Some observers argue that in the 1990s, the environmental justice movement was “hijacked” by the much broader “social justice” movement, which had primarily non-environmental goals.¹⁴⁰ In New Mexico, for example, one prominent Hispanic activist who served on the boards of two organizations dealing with consumer and environmental issues, denounced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for conducting a sting operation in northern New Mexico, an area with few job opportunities, that led to the arrest of a number of Hispanic residents for allegedly trafficking in endangered species parts, on the grounds that it was discriminatory.¹⁴¹)

The more that supporters of U.S. population growth and quadrupled immigration levels claimed that immigration reduction had racist motives, the more environmental groups appeared to fear that their minority members would desert them if they continued to call for U.S. population stabilization and reductions in immigration. Some Latino Sierrans were very direct in their threats. Angeles Chapter leader Luis Quirarte said that if the initiative passed, “I plan to quit [the Sierra Club]. I am a Chicano and blood is thicker than water.”¹⁴² Another, Al Martinez, wrote of a bad dream he had in which “Sierra Club Envirocops” rounded up hapless immigrants for deportation.¹⁴³

One of the main reasons the Sierra leadership gave in 1998 for avoiding the immigration issue was that they dared not risk appearing to be racially insensitive. Executive Director Carl Pope acknowledged that the official endorsers of the referendum trying to confront immigration numbers did not have racially questionable motives. Rather, he admitted, they were esteemed Sierrans and environmental scholars, with distinguished records of environmental service to their country. In fact, Pope said, he used to agree with them that immigration should be cut for environmental reasons. But he changed his mind because he didn’t believe it possible to conduct a public discussion about immigration cuts without stirring up racial passions: “While it is theoretically possible to have a non-racial debate about immigration, it is not practically possible for an open organization like the Sierra Club to do so. A rational position paper and the desire for national debate do not yield a rational debate in the public arena of America today...[Recent history in California has] caused me to change my view of whether it is possible for the Sierra Club to deal with the immigration issue in a way which would not implicate us in ethnic or racial polarization.”¹⁴⁴ Pope acknowledged that it was the opponents of stabilization who were injecting race into the discussion by publicly “lambasting the club as racist.” But the Sierra Club, he insisted, could not subject itself to those kinds of epithets merely in order to confront the full issue of U.S. population

¹³⁹ Supra, note 94.

¹⁴⁰ Fred Elbel. 1999. E-mail to authors. May 14.

¹⁴¹ This incident was personally observed by Leon Kolankiewicz in 1989.

¹⁴² Frank Clifford. 1998. “Immigration Vote Divides Sierra Club.” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16.

¹⁴³ Al Martinez. 1997. “Listen to the Wind...” *Los Angeles Times*. October 7.

¹⁴⁴ Carl Pope. 1997. On-line post to Sierra members.

growth.¹⁴⁵ This attitude struck a number of observers as an evasion of responsibility on a serious national issue. “The choice for the Sierra Club is whether it wants to grow up and take part in grownup issues,” wrote columnist and editorialist Al Knight in the *Denver Post*.¹⁴⁶

For Pope, the fear of being called a racist was more powerful than the endorsement of immigration reduction by such environmentalist heroes and distinguished scholars as Gaylord Nelson, E. O. Wilson, Lester Brown, Dave Foreman, Paul Watson, Stewart Udall, Herman Daly, Norman Myers, Galen Rowell, George Kennan and Martin Litton. These individuals, and many others, publicly indicated their support for the Sierra Club initiative for U.S. population stabilization including immigration reduction.¹⁴⁷

ZPG’s president Judith Jacobsen addressed the racial issues in a 1998 letter to members: “ZPG is already explicitly committed to building bridges to communities of color and working on immigrants’ rights as part of our long-held goal of improving the success of the population movement by expanding it to include a broad spectrum of American diversity. A policy to reduce legal immigration now would make this work impossible. We want ZPG to strengthen our ties to communities of color, not jeopardize them. In this way, we can build relationships, listen and refine our immigration policy and strategy as the public debate evolves.”¹⁴⁸ Jacobsen said the ZPG board voted to take no position on reduction of immigration, “with full knowledge of immigration’s important role in the U.S. population growth, both today and in the future.”

One participant at a “roundtable discussion on global migration, population and the environment” in Washington, D.C. on November 15, 1995, sponsored by the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative and the National Immigration Forum, was struck by how emphatically then-ZPG President Dianne Dillon-Ridgely dismissed any concern about immigration’s contribution to the country’s population growth as illegitimate.¹⁴⁹ At a March, 1998 speech in West Virginia, ZPG Executive Director Peter Kostmayer, when questioned about immigration, told the audience: “Let me be frank. You are a wealthy, middle-class community, and if you concentrate on the issue of immigration as a way of controlling population, you won’t come off well. It just doesn’t work. The population

¹⁴⁵ Sierra Club population activist Fred Elbel points out that at the Sierra Club as well as other organizations, “everything is now seen through the filter of ‘political correctness.’ It is not politically correct to address population stabilization and immigration reduction in any form if it means harming the interests of immigrant minorities” (written correspondence to authors, May 14, 1999).

¹⁴⁶ Al Knight. 1998. “It’s Not Easy Being Green: Sierra Club Faces New Identity Crisis.” *Denver Post*. February 15.

¹⁴⁷ Three of the initiative’s most famous original supporters – David Brower, Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich – all dropped their public support in late 1997, before their names were printed on the official ballots. Brower and Anne Ehrlich were board members, and might well have felt pressured by the rest of the board to toe the “party line.” Paul Ehrlich presumably dropped off in support of his wife, with whom he works very closely. (In Ehrlich’s case, the record over the years indicates considerable ambiguity and ambivalence on the subject of an environmentally-appropriate stance toward immigration levels.)

¹⁴⁸ Supra, note 84.

¹⁴⁹ Personal communication from individual present at the conference. 1999.

movement has an unhappy history in this regard.”¹⁵⁰ About the same time, in a handwritten note to a ZPG member inquiring about the group’s immigration stance, Kostmayer wrote, “...it would be so, so counterproductive to be perceived as anti-immigrant.”¹⁵¹ By the 1990s, at ZPG, the imperative of welcoming “diversity” had evidently trumped stabilization and environmental concerns.

It appears that many knowledgeable environmentalist leaders privately acknowledged the need for immigration reduction in order to stabilize the U.S. population. However, the harsh manner in which supporters of reduced immigration have so often been treated by the news media and intellectual and social (including environmentalist) elites understandably gave pause to such environmental leaders. Many would take such a stand publicly only if there was no risk of it jeopardizing the reputation, support or funding of their own organizations. For example, the late Henry W. Kendall, a Nobel laureate in physics and the co-founder and chairman of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), initially indicated his willingness to be listed with other prominent supporters of the Sierra Club population stabilization/immigration reduction measure, but retracted it after the group’s executive director told him it could be damaging for UCS.¹⁵² Two other well-known environmentalists also initially signed on to the U.S. population stabilization/immigration reduction measure, but withdrew their public support after phone calls from Sierra Club president Adam Werbach.¹⁵³ (In contrast, at least two other celebrated environmental leaders, Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society founder Paul Watson and Worldwatch Institute founder and president Lester Brown were also approached by Werbach, but turned down his appeal to revoke their support.¹⁵⁴)

Other group leaders would publicly endorse immigration reduction only as individuals or as members of unaffiliated government commissions. At about the same

¹⁵⁰ Georgia C. DuBose. 1998. “ZPG official says law, local action can cut population.” *The Journal* (Martinsburg, West Virginia). March 29.

¹⁵¹ Peter Kostmayer. 1998. Letter to ZPG member. March 30.

¹⁵² Dr. Kendall subsequently indicated to Leon Kolankiewicz that his name could be used privately – and that he as a private individual strongly supported the measure -- but that his name could not be placed on any publicly distributed lists because of the strong linkage in the public’s mind between him and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Ironically, a certain senior UCS staff member did publicly support the opposition. When Kolankiewicz asked Kendall if this wasn’t an inconsistency, Kendall replied that it was this staffer’s prerogative to do as he pleased, and that UCS executive director Howard Ris’ admonition specifically referred to Kendall himself and to siding with the pro-reduction Sierra Clubbers. Once again, it was apparently seen as riskier to explicitly endorse immigration reduction rather than to endorse ostensible “neutrality” (a neutrality that was an implicit endorsement of the high-immigration status quo).

¹⁵³ Documented in private e-mails of members of Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization 1998. Werbach was widely known to be extremely hostile to the immigration reduction measure, which in a July, 1998 *Outside* magazine article he was quoted as saying was “horrendous.” The same article, and other sources, recounted his pledge to have resigned from office if the measure were to have passed.

¹⁵⁴ Watson case documented in January, 1998 e-mail by Ben Zuckerman. According to notes taken by Zuckerman referencing a conversation with Watson immediately after this incident, Werbach was enraged that Watson would sign such a “racist” measure. Brown case documented in personal communication to Leon Kolankiewicz, 1998. After SUSPS members learned that Werbach was himself phoning SUSPS signatories in an effort to dislodge them from the list of supporters, Kolankiewicz was requested to make contact with Brown to ensure that he was still “on board.” Brown informed Kolankiewicz that he had already been phoned by Werbach, but had declined to withdraw his name in response to Werbach’s direct request.

time that the Sierra Club and ZPG both formally disavowed positions on immigration reduction, a Sierra executive along with the then-president and a future president of ZPG all participated on the Population and Consumption Task Force of the President's Council on Sustainable Development. They were joined by the executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council and the executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund (neither of which has ever adopted a policy on U.S. population stabilization) in issuing the aforementioned statement that "reducing immigration levels is a necessary part of population stabilization and the drive toward sustainability."¹⁵⁵

▪ **The transformation of population and environment into global issues needing global solutions**

In 1970, population growth often was discussed in terms of its threat to local or national environmental resources – in countries all over the world. The argument often went something like this: The cultures, traditions, religions, economies, health care, tax structures and laws of each country create incentives for high birth rates. Each country has to make its own changes to bring down those birth rates to protect its own environmental resources, but nations also must act cooperatively in international efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to those nations requesting them. Because some of the problems of overpopulation were indeed global, each nation had a stake in every other nation moving toward population stabilization.

By the 1990s, most environmental group comments about population growth were that it was almost exclusively a global problem. Population growth rarely was described as a threat to localized environmental resources such as specific watersheds, landscapes, species habitats, estuaries and aquifers. Rather, population growth usually was linked to global (or world-wide) environmental problems such as biodiversity losses, climate change and the decline of the oceans.¹⁵⁶ It was not uncommon to hear claims that the environment was a global issue and that efforts to address environmental problems nationally were inappropriate – both unseemly and doomed to failure. Many environmentalist elites and much organizational literature employed lofty rhetoric that seemed to echo the sentiment expressed by Erasmus in the 16th century when he proudly

¹⁵⁵ Supra, note 117; Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, president of ZPG was the task force co-chair; other members included Michele Perrault, then International Vice President of the Sierra Club (as well as a former president and later, a board member), John Adams, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Fred Krupp, executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund. The task force was assisted by Judith Jacobsen, who later became president of ZPG. Of interest is the fact that Perrault's Sierra affiliation was not listed in the task force report, reportedly because the Club had just adopted its "neutrality" stance, and would not associate its name with any document advocating reduced immigration.

¹⁵⁶ A prime example of this global view is Al Gore's 1992 book *Earth in the Balance* (1992, Houghton Mifflin). In 1998 Vice-President Gore again explicitly linked population growth to global issues when he touted increased family planning support as one means of combatting global warming. The Washington-based non-profit Population Action International (formerly the Population Crisis Committee) also released a report in 1998 linking global climate and population futures (Robert Engelman. 1998. *Profiles in Carbon: An Update on Population, Consumption and Carbon Dioxide Emissions*. Washington, D.C.: Population Action International).

proclaimed: “I wish to be called a citizen of the world.”¹⁵⁷ This orientation is sometimes called the “One World” perspective.

Under the new thinking, the population size of individual nations was not nearly as important as the size of the total global population. Certain top leaders of the environmental groups said this was a significant reason they no longer saw U.S. population stabilization *per se* as a priority goal. They especially lost interest in U.S. stabilization when in the 1990s long-term U.S. population growth was being driven almost entirely by people in other countries moving to the United States and having their above-replacement-level number of babies in America. In the ascendant “global” view, this migration wasn’t important because it was merely shifting the growth from one part of the globe to another; the global problem was not increasing because of it, they reasoned.

The Sierra Club’s Carl Pope said: “I seriously doubt that anyone is in a position to calculate exactly which changes in immigration policy would minimize GLOBAL environmental stress...”¹⁵⁸ And after all, the Sierra Club’s mission, stated on the cover of *Sierra* magazine, had by the 1990s expanded to embrace the lofty goal of “protecting the planet,” not just, or even primarily, the American portion of the planet. Any preference for saving U.S. environmental treasures first and foremost was implicitly regarded as parochial, outmoded, and futile. This contrasted with the earlier, more patriotic image of the Club as focused primarily on saving American resources and landscapes – perhaps reflected best in the 1960s-era poster “THIS IS THE AMERICAN EARTH” of a dramatic Ansel Adams photograph of the Sierra Nevada.¹⁵⁹

When some Americans complained in the 1990s that U.S. population growth was threatening environmental resources in their own country, they were told by Sierra Club leaders that immigration-driven U.S. growth was environmentally acceptable because it was not making *global* environmental problems worse. Yet even on this count, the Sierra establishment had it wrong: In general, transferring large numbers of people from low-consumption, poor countries to the richest, highest-consuming country in the world was unequivocally worse for the global environment.¹⁶⁰ The typical American consumer has a much larger “ecological footprint” than the typical consumer of the developing countries which were now the greatest source of immigration to the United States.¹⁶¹ The U.S. had the highest per capita industrial carbon dioxide (the leading “greenhouse gas”) emissions of any country in the world, 19.1 metric tons/yr., compared to 0.9 tons for India (about 1/20th the U.S. figure) and 2.3 tons for China (roughly 1/10th U.S. per capita

¹⁵⁷ Garrett Hardin. 1999. *The Ostrich Factor: Our Population Myopia*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵⁸ Carl Pope. 1997. Post to on-line Sierra Club population forum. December 16.

¹⁵⁹ *Network Bulletin*. 1998. Vol. 8, No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network; Tom Turner. 1991. *Sierra Club: 100 Years of Protecting Nature*. New York: Harry N. Abrams. The Sierra Club also published a book entitled *This Is The American Earth* with text by Nancy Newhall and photos by Ansel Adams in 1960.

¹⁶⁰ Jason DinAlt. 1994. “The Environmental Impact of Immigration Into the United States.” *Focus*, Vol. 4, No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network.

¹⁶¹ *Supra*, note 35.

emissions).¹⁶² U.S. commercial energy production per capita was four times the world average, three times Mexico's, ten times China's, and 28 times India's.¹⁶³ Sierrans who favored U.S. stabilization criticized the Club's national leadership for its inconsistency. On the one hand, the Sierra establishment berated lavish American lifestyles for endangering the global environment with their bloated resource consumption and enormous waste generation. On the other, the Sierra establishment apparently saw no problem with an unlimited number of migrants moving to the U.S. precisely to join in this consumption binge while it lasted.

Certain conservation leaders continued to voice support for efforts to protect American treasures even in the face of massive global environmental problems. "We may not be able to save the world, but we aspire to take care of our piece of it," wrote Geoffrey Bernard, President of the Grand Canyon Trust.¹⁶⁴ The former Sierra Club and Audubon executive Brock Evans wrote the board of the Sierra Club on the eve of the 1998 immigration referendum that, "[Immigration] is an environmental issue (among others). Somehow, if we love our earth – yes, even the earth of this, our own country, where we live (not some abstraction from far away) – we must face it."¹⁶⁵ But the board was not swayed by this or other appeals. Instead, Executive Director Pope wrote in *AsianWeek* that overpopulation and its effects on the environment are "fundamentally global problems; immigration is merely a local symptom....Erecting fences to keep people out of this country does nothing to fix the planet's predicament. It's the equivalent of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."¹⁶⁶

Pope's and certain other environmental leaders' contention that it does not matter where people live acknowledges but a single spatial scale – the global – on a planet which possesses many spatial scales: from micro, to local, regional, state, national, inter-

¹⁶² World Resources Institute. 1996. *World Resources, 1996-97*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Geoffrey Bernard. 1998. *Colorado Plateau Advocate*. Winter.

¹⁶⁵ Brock Evans. 1998. "The Sierra Club Ballot Referendum on Immigration, Population and the Environment." *Focus*, Vol. 8, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network. Evans is the Executive Director of the Endangered Species Coalition, and a former Vice-President for National Issues of the National Audubon Society, Associate Executive Director of the Sierra Club, 1981 recipient of the Club's highest honor (the John Muir Award), and 1984 candidate for Congress from the state of Washington.

¹⁶⁶ Carl Pope. 1998. "Think Globally, Act Sensibly – Immigration is not the problem." *AsianWeek* (San Francisco, CA). April 2. Pope used the same comparison in a February 25, 1998 debate on (Santa Monica, California-based) NPR affiliate KCRW's (Santa Monica, California) program "Which Way L.A.?" and on other occasions. The irony of using the *Titanic* analogy to represent overpopulation and immigration is that if the *HMS Titanic*'s bulkheads had been sealed and reached all the way up (a standard feature in ships nowadays) instead of just part-way, the ship might have been saved from sinking because intruding ocean water would have been confined to several compartments instead of spilling over the top of each bulkhead into subsequent ones. (The *Titanic* could flood four compartments and still float. It breached five.) Thus, another conclusion that can be drawn from this maritime tragedy is that barriers between distinct nation-states may well be essential to preventing one country's failure to address overpopulation from becoming the whole world's failure. Economist and philosopher Kenneth Boulding (author of "The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth"), in another of his insightful essays, wrote that what really disturbed him was the possibility of converting the world from a place of many experiments into one giant, global experiment where failure somewhere would become failure everywhere.

national, continental, and global, or in ecological terms, from organism, to population, community, ecosystem, biome, biosphere, and ecosphere. If it does not matter where any given number of global resource consumers/polluters are living, then by extension it should not matter if Ecuadorans continue migrating to the sensitive, ecologically-unique Galapagos Islands; it should not matter if Asia's squalor and overpopulation were relieved by relocating its teeming multitudes to the unpopulated, virgin Amazon rain forest; and it should not matter if California's mushrooming suburbs were transplanted to the empty Alaskan wilderness that the Sierra Club and other conservation groups struggled to preserve. America's national parks, forests, and other public open space cannot and should not be protected with boundaries and patrolled by rangers from squatters, poachers, loggers, ranchers, rogue recreationists, and miners.

Under this same promiscuous "One World" or "open borders" logic, hundreds of millions of mothers in the Zambias, Indias, Colombias, Cambodias, and Haitis of the world – with their own private reproductive decisions (and the global mobility heralded by "One Worlders") – have effective veto power over whether concerned Americans (and especially Floridians) will be able to save the beleaguered Everglades, Florida Bay, and the Florida keys from pollution and sprawling development due to South Florida's incessant population growth (driven by domestic and international migration as well as higher immigrant fertility). Surely, treating the entire planet as a "global village" or one open commons is a formula for ineffectual local actions, for paralysis, and ultimately, for a disaster of global proportions – a "tragedy of the commons" writ large. The biggest environmental groups have largely eschewed the notion of parallel efforts, of genuinely "thinking globally, and acting locally" in Rene Dubos' popular phrase. They now seem to consider the Earth to be one big common property resource with each and every acre belonging equally to all of humanity. In their policies and rhetoric, they have spurned the philosophy reflected in the following words of astronomer and stalwart population activist Ben Zuckerman: "...it is imperative that in addition to trying to save the world we try to save some – horrors! – merely local spots on Earth, including the U.S."¹⁶⁷

It is ironic that most environmental group leaders endorse what amounts to a *laissez-faire* approach toward migration, even as they scorn this sort of "hands-off" approach to other environmental/ecological issues. In a *Sierra* editorial entitled "Corporate Crime: The consequences of letting polluters police themselves,"¹⁶⁸ Carl Pope inveighed against a growing tendency among government regulators to approve of self-policing by industrial dischargers and collaboration with extractive industries. He cautioned against the naïve belief that "win-win" solutions are always possible in environmental disputes. "Voluntary measures and self-policing sound appealing, but they aren't enough to keep law and order on the environmental frontier," wrote Pope sensibly. Yet when it comes to the actual U.S. frontier, across which ever more people (each of whom pollutes) migrate and wish to migrate, Pope and others seem to believe that self-policing will do just fine. That is, to migrate or not to migrate – to impose or not to impose additional ecological burdens on an already stressed America -- should be the

¹⁶⁷ Ben Zuckerman. 1999. E-mail to the authors, May 26.

¹⁶⁸ Carl Pope. 1999. "Corporate Crime: The consequences of letting polluters police themselves." *Sierra*, July/August.

prerogative of prospective migrants themselves, not those Americans whose environment and quality of life are affected by ever more people. Were this “go with the flow” approach adopted in other areas of environmental policy, the results would be as disastrous for the environment as today’s lax immigration policies are for efforts to contain population growth. The Tragedy of the Commons would convert “America the Beautiful” into “America the Wasteland.”

Learning how population became framed almost entirely as a global problem will require some research. Two of the possible antecedents are the 1945 birth of the United Nations as a reaction to the unprecedented carnage of World War II, and the 1950s movement against the atmospheric testing of atomic and nuclear bombs. Another very strong impetus was undoubtedly rendered, if inadvertently, from an unexpected quarter – outer space. By the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. space program began broadcasting views of the Earth from its moon missions that depicted a breathtaking and seamless blue, white, and brown planet against the black void of space. These moving images certainly helped sell the notion of One World captured in presidential candidate and statesman Adlai Stevenson’s evocative term “Spaceship Earth.” NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida, in its public programs, regales audiences with an expansive, optimistic view of ever grander ventures into space by a united human race.

In a PBS interview with Bill Moyers, the late Joseph Campbell, author of many books on myths and a major influence on George Lucas’ creation of the *Star Wars* movies, spoke hopefully of the emergence of an enlightened planetary consciousness:

Moyers: “There’s that wonderful photograph you have of the earth seen from space, and it’s very small and at the same time it’s very grand.”

Campbell: “You don’t see any divisions there, of nations, of states, or anything of the kind.

“This might be the symbol, really, for the new mythology to come. That [Earth as a whole] is the country that we are going to be celebrating, and these are the people [all humanity in its rich racial and cultural diversity] that we are one with.”¹⁶⁹

Another place to look might be the Nuclear Freeze movement toward the end of the Cold War. Global environmental and climatological disaster were at the heart of the warning from that movement against the nuclear arms race.¹⁷⁰ On this issue, it would have been foolhardy to have talked about protecting one’s own country against a “nuclear winter.” The solution ultimately had to be global. In this sense, the threats of ozone depletion and global warming are similar to those that the Nuclear Freeze movement warned against. The staffs of environmental organizations typically mingle with the staffs of other non-profits, especially those with global orientations working on economic

¹⁶⁹ From “Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth; Program 1: The Hero’s Adventure.” 1988. Mystic Fire Video, Inc./Parabola Magazine.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example: Jonathan Schell. 1982. *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf) as well as many articles in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

development, peace, human rights, women's and hunger issues. As the environmental groups have reached out into global networks, this has become increasingly true. Perhaps that can help explain the transformation of population growth into almost entirely a global issue in the approach of U.S. national environmental leaders.

▪ **Influence of human rights organizations**

The influence of human rights groups and philosophies on environmental leaders may be another part of the explanation for why environmental groups were not willing to work for U.S. population stabilization in the 1990s. Michael Hanauer, the Boston ZPG leader who resigned from ZPG's national board in 1998, pointed out that environmental groups no longer dealt with U.S. stabilization because "much of their roots, associations, history, knowledge, empathies and even networking was within the human rights movement. Offending these groups was not in the cards."¹⁷¹ And many of those groups opposed most measures – whether reducing fertility or reducing immigration – that were needed to achieve U.S. stabilization.

Throughout the U.S. human rights community various concepts had arisen of the human right of poor workers to cross national borders if they could improve their economic condition by taking jobs in another country. Most U.S. human rights organizations – with the American Civil Liberties Union being the best-known example – actively lobbied against any reductions in immigration. Others such as the American Friends Service Committee and Amnesty International actively investigated cases of alleged abuse of illegal immigrants by the Border Patrol and other authorities. Dozens of human rights organizations were formed specifically to advocate for the rights of immigrants and for immigration. Many of those organizations also advocated the rights of workers who successfully enter a country illegally to be free from programs designed to find and deport them.

Admittedly, those immigration rights declared by the U.S. organizations have never been internationally recognized. In December, 1948, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration includes the right to have a nationality, the right of freedom of movement and residence *within* the borders of one's own nation, and the right to *leave* one's own nation.¹⁷² But it does not recognize the right of an individual to enter a nation other than one's own. Permission to move into another nation is a gift that a sovereign nation can choose to bestow or not.

But any environmental group proposing limitations on immigration in the 1990s risked provoking the ire of the U.S. human rights, non-profit advocacy groups – and risked being publicly branded as hostile to human rights and even anti-humanitarian.

¹⁷¹ Michael Hanauer. 1999. "Why Domestic Environmental Organizations Won't Visibly Advocate Domestic Population Stabilization." Draft unpublished manuscript.

¹⁷² Article 13 states: "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. 2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country." Article 14 reads in part: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available on the Internet website of the Geneva-based United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights at <http://www.unhcr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>.

There were a number of signs that 1990s environmental leaders were especially sensitive to that threat. More and more, they worked in coalitions with the human rights groups, especially on international environmental, trade, and development issues, and anti-toxics crusades. It appears that people moved easily back and forth between human rights and environmental jobs. Researchers may want to study how many of the staff members, committee members and directors of environmental groups in the 1990s had previously worked for some kind of rights organization.

In the 1990s Sierra Club, for example, officials began to appoint people from human rights organizations to its National Population Committee. These individuals came from organizations which argued that population growth is not a cause of problems in the United States or the rest of the world.¹⁷³ They opposed stabilization efforts before being appointed; they were among the most aggressive leaders in working to change the Sierra Club's pro-stabilization policy and in fighting the referendum that failed to re-establish the policy.¹⁷⁴ The human rights influence was also seen in the decision by the Sierra national board to take a stand against a California referendum (Prop. 187) that had nothing to do with the environment but which threatened to take away rights from illegal aliens; likewise in its formal support for a state initiative to raise the minimum wage and against another initiative to abolish affirmative action.¹⁷⁵ All of these were issues on which a Sierra Club focusing only on environmental matters would previously have taken no stand.

While the agendas of the human rights and environmental groups should not be seen as fundamentally at odds with each other, they nonetheless are not the same. The human rights agenda is about protecting freedoms and rights of individuals here and now. The environmental agenda since the inauguration of the conservation and preservation movements a century ago, and since its rejuvenation and reorientation in the 1960s, has been about protecting the natural and human environments, now and in perpetuity.

¹⁷³ One of them, Cathi Tactaquin, was the Executive Director of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Another, Santos Gomez, was a board member of the Political Ecology Group, which vigorously attacked any and all organizations promoting U.S. population stabilization as "hate" groups. Still another, Karen Kalla, the Club's former population staff person, stated at a 1997 Population Committee meeting in Colorado that it was her personal belief that the U.S. should not adopt a national population policy (Fred Elbel. 1998. "Open Letter to Sierra Club Board of Directors." *Focus*. Vol. 8, No. 1).

¹⁷⁴ The animus of many of these individuals to the population stabilization message is revealed by the following anecdote from the July, 1997 Population Committee meeting in Boulder, Colorado: "Dinner Saturday night was held to honor world-renowned scientist and environmentalist, Dr. Al Bartlett, who organized committee use of University of Colorado facilities over the weekend. Prof. Bartlett had offered to present his famous after-dinner talk on the consequences of exponential growth. Over half the Committee boycotted the dinner with the result that the talk was never presented to the Committee (Fred Elbel. 1998. "Open Letter to Sierra Club Board of Directors." *Focus*. Vol. 8, No. 1). [This lecture – "Arithmetic, Population and Energy: Forgotten Fundamentals of the Energy Crisis" – has been presented over 1,100 times to audiences in 49 states, several countries, and the U.S. Congress.]

¹⁷⁵ Supra, note 101.

The human rights agenda is by necessity oriented toward the immediate needs of individuals; it has what one observer calls a “temporal focus.”¹⁷⁶ The environmental agenda has often also dealt with immediate threats but just as often works for goals that are far into the future.¹⁷⁷

Human rights work is about people getting their full share of rights; its ideal is freedom. Environmental work is often about asking or forcing people to restrain their rights and freedoms in order to protect the natural world from human actions, so that people who are not yet born might someday be able to enjoy and prosper in a healthy, undiminished environment.

The fact that human rights work and environmental work involve tensions between goals and philosophy does not mean that either of them must be seen as right or wrong. A democratic society ultimately must effect compromises among all of the competing interests within it, based on those interests making their best case.

But by the 1990s, it may be that environmental groups had conceded priority to the human rights groups and at least tacitly had agreed to press for environmental protections only when they did not conflict with the human rights agenda. Hanauer wrote that during the 1990s the moral high ground was often yielded to those who gave precedence to human rights over environmental protection. Alan Kuper, a national Sierra leader in the U.S. stabilization movement, challenged the view that allowing continuous population growth was moral, humanitarian or responsible: “In *The Case for Modern Man*,¹⁷⁸ Charles Frankel defines responsibility as ‘A decision is responsible when the man or group that makes it has to answer for it to those who are directly or indirectly affected by it.’ Thus, those who advocate rapid U.S. population growth are irresponsible since they will not be affected by it nearly as much as others, including those denied jobs, those unborn denied what is being lost due to overpopulation, and those at home and abroad affected adversely now -- non-human as well as human.”¹⁷⁹

▪ Triumph of ethics of globalism over ethics of nationalism/internationalism

¹⁷⁶ Fred Elbel. 1999. E-mail to authors. May 14. Elbel, a long-time Sierra member and population activist, observes that human rights and social justice activists tend, 1) not to consider the long-term consequences of present actions, 2) not to be well-versed in general systems thinking, and 3) not to be “numerate” (able to grasp the significance of numbers). Like most members of society at large, they do not understand the treacherous nature of exponential growth. In a word, they tend to lack “ecolacy,” a term coined in 1970 by human ecologist Garrett Hardin to describe the filter through which ecologists view, understand and predict natural phenomena. As Hardin put it: “The key question of ecolate analysis is this: ‘And then what?’” (Garrett Hardin. 1985. *Filters Against Folly: How to Survive Despite Economists, Ecologists, and the Merely Eloquent*. New York: Viking).

¹⁷⁷ Supra, note 169.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Frankel. 1955. *The Case for Modern Man*. New York: Harper.

¹⁷⁹ Alan Kuper. 1999. E-mail to list. May 12.

It appears that in at least some cases a significant change in ethical frameworks was occurring among many national environmental leaders and a portion of their memberships.

Historians will want to explore the extent to which the rising “globalist” philosophies that took root in the American business communities of the 1980s and 1990s also began to replace the “nationalism” of the earlier environmental movement. The 1990s, after all, was a time in which many scholars, newspapers columnists and other prognosticators espoused the possibility of the impending end of the era of nation-states. Major political fights erupted between those who argued that the United States should stop resisting the “inevitable” forces of globalization and those who argued for the country to retain sovereign control over its labor and environmental standards and its economic destiny.

For the purposes of this analysis of globalism vs. nationalism, we distinguish “globalism” as something quite different from “internationalism.” The internationalism to which we refer is based on the “nationalist” philosophy; it is the inter-relationship of nations, all of which are working together but in their own self-interest. “Globalism,” however, supersedes traditional liberal and conservative ideas of the nation-state and of working toward national solutions of national problems, and toward international solutions for international problems.

The heart of the difference between globalism and nationalism is an ethical viewpoint of whether a community has the right or even responsibility to give priority attention to the members of its own community over people outside the community.¹⁸⁰

That relates to whether a nation has the right to protect its own environmental resources before it succeeds in helping some other country to preserve *its* environment. Is it ethical to stabilize the population of one’s own country when other countries are still growing? Is it ethical to bar a human being who is alive today from immigrating and advancing economically if the reason for barring the immigration is to preserve the natural resources of the target country for the benefit of human beings not yet born? All of these questions came up during the 1998 national debate within the environmental movement about U.S. population stabilization.

“Nationalism” as used here should not be confused with nativism, imperialism, jingoism, or super-nationalism, but is used to describe a philosophy of community. The ethical basis of nationalism is as a community in which every member has a certain responsibility for everybody else in that community. The highest priority of a national government under the nationalist ethic is the members of that community. This has been the dominant ethical principle in the United States and most other nations in which the national government is expected to establish laws and regulations concerning trade, labor, capital and the environment based primarily on the effect on the people of its own nation.

¹⁸⁰ Roy Beck. 1997. “Sorting Through Humanitarian Clashes in Immigration Policy.” Paper presented at the Annual National Conference on Applied Ethics at California State University at Long Beach.

The globalist ethic that we describe here is less communitarian and more individualistic. It gives a higher ethical value to the freedom of an individual (and by extension, the corporate bodies owned by individuals) to act with fewer or no restrictions by national governments. This ethic similarly unleashes laborers around the world to cross borders to work in ways that maximize their incomes and unleashes corporations to move capital, goods and labor in ways that maximize their profits.¹⁸¹ Under the globalist ethic, an American corporation does not owe any particular allegiance to American workers or American communities if the corporation's interests are better served by moving a factory to another country or by replacing its American labor force with imported foreign workers. While some might see such moves as selfish and hard-hearted, a globalist would explain that the corporation would not be able to undertake those actions unless there were ample foreign workers who saw such actions as opportunities for economic advancement.

American globalists on the political left (such as many in the artistic, university and environmental communities) tend to disapprove of plant re-location and of many free-trade agreements. But globalists on both the right and the left (including many in the environmental movement) agree on the ethical correctness of mass movements of labor such as has occurred over the last 30 years through immigration to the United States. (The Sierra Club vigorously opposed the globalism implicit in both NAFTA and GATT, yet actively endorsed globalism with regard to labor flows, immigration, and population stabilization. Journalist Peter Beinart, writing in *Time* magazine, described the more consistent nationalist environmental stance that "distrusts the free movement of goods – the unrestricted flow, say, of shrimp caught in turtle-killing nets – [and] also tends to distrust the free movement of labor: in other words, immigration."¹⁸²)

Globalists on the right have obvious financial self-interest in the globalization of labor. The globalist corporate lobby has been the most powerful in Washington, D.C. in preserving the quadrupled level of immigration of the 1990s.¹⁸³ In 1996, Microsoft owner Bill Gates, reportedly the wealthiest man in America, gave a speech in Washington, D.C. in which he took Congress to task for considering reductions in employment-based immigration, provisions which were soon stripped out of the leading bills in the House and Senate. Microsoft also employed Grover Norquist, a "well-known antitax crusader and fixture in Newt Gingrich's inner circle,"¹⁸⁴ to lobby on its behalf. In

¹⁸¹ For more detailed descriptions and critiques of corporate globalism, see: Sir James Goldsmith. 1995. "Global Free Trade and GATT." *Focus*, Vol. 5, No. 1.; Excerpted from his book *Le Pieu*. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network; Herman E. Daly. 1995. "Against Free Trade and Economic Orthodoxy." *The Oxford International Review*, summer; Herman E. Daly. 1999. "Globalism, Internationalism, and National Defense." *Focus*, Vol. 9, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network; and David Korten. 1995. *When Corporations Rule the World*. West Hartford, CT & San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers & Kumarian Press.

¹⁸² Peter Beinart. 1998. "Greens Flip over Turtles." *Time*. April 27.

¹⁸³ John Heilemann. 1996. "Do You Know the Way to Ban Jose?" *Wired*. August.; John J. Miller. 1998. "The Politics of Permanent Immigration." *Reason*. October; numerous articles in the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* from 1996-98 described the potent efforts of groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Information Technology Association of America to maintain or even increase immigration levels.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

1998, the information technology industry flexed its political muscle when it coaxed the Clinton-Gore administration and Congress to drastically increase H1-B visas (for skilled foreign workers) over the protests of American computer programmers. Right after signing the legislation granting this increase, President Clinton made a fund-raising visit to Silicon Valley. This mass movement of foreign labor helped corporations increase their profits by depressing wages, especially for America's least-skilled and educated workers, according to the National Academy of Sciences¹⁸⁵ and a host of other researchers.

Globalists on the left supported the corporations' immigration policy on the ethical principle that although high immigration might harm vulnerable American workers, most of the new immigrants had escaped economic conditions that were even worse than the ones to which lower-income Americans were being driven by the immigrants' entrance into the U.S. labor market. Under a globalist ethic, immigration policy should not be used to protect America's poor if it blocks the economic improvement of even poorer workers from other countries. The main difference between the two globalist camps is that those on the left often favor expanded federal programs of income redistribution to compensate the American victims of immigration; those on the right do not.

Historians should look for the strains of those globalist philosophies in the voluminous statements, memos, articles and interviews of the environmental leaders who fought the pro-stabilization environmentalists during 1998. Environmental group positions that made no logical sense when measured by the philosophy of the 1970-era environmental movement are understandable when viewed within the globalist ethical framework. For example, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (son of the former attorney general and nephew of the former President), a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), told the *Los Angeles Times*: "The enemy isn't Mexican immigrants, it's the real estate lobby and state highway departments determined to pave over the landscape."¹⁸⁶ Even as he insisted that large-scale population movements from one place to another on the planet (in this case, from Mexico across the border to the United States) were not an environmental problem, Kennedy – a model "environmental citizen of the world" – felt the NRDC was justified intervening south of the border to block plans of the Mexican government and the Mitsubishi Corporation to develop a salt production facility and port in San Ignacio Lagoon on the Baja Peninsula where California gray whales winter and calve. "This is precisely the kind of sacrifice our planet can no longer afford," he wrote.¹⁸⁷

In yet another campaign of globalist or at least continental ambition, Kennedy and the NRDC took Canadian timber companies to task for proposed logging of old-growth, temperate rainforest on the coast of British Columbia. "I, for one, am not prepared to stand by while the living reminder of *our* continent's glorious natural heritage is clearcut

¹⁸⁵ Supra, note 131.

¹⁸⁶ Supra, note 140.

¹⁸⁷ Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. 1999a. Undated direct mail letter for NRDC.

into oblivion!” [italics added] Kennedy wrote passionately.¹⁸⁸ In the same mailing, NRDC president John Adams justified Americans sticking their noses into a Canadian issue: “After all, Americans buy and use most of the rainforest timber that is exported from British Columbia. Our nation is fueling the destruction of the great northern rainforest, and that means we have the power to stop it!”¹⁸⁹ Never-ending growth in the number of American consumers demanding forest products – a less “sexy” trend unopposed by the NRDC – went conspicuously unmentioned by Mr. Adams. Instead, he boasted that Americans had already stopped planned clearcutting in 1993 at another site on British Columbia’s Vancouver Island: “We alerted millions of Americans to the plight of Clayoquot Sound...we helped bring massive pressure to bear on the governments of Canada and British Columbia...”¹⁹⁰

This type of globe-trotting activism by some American and European environmentalists, and their belief that environmental values transcend all others, such as national sovereignty, has led to occasional denunciations of “environmental imperialism,” most notably by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

One of the most common arguments by environmental opponents of U.S. population stabilization in 1998 was that it would be unethical to protect U.S. environmental resources and achieve U.S. population stabilization at the expense of workers and their families from other nations who would not be allowed to move here to better their lives. Another major argument was that stabilizing the U.S. population merely protected U.S. ecosystems at the expense of ecosystems in other countries where population would be higher because people weren’t allowed to emigrate.¹⁹¹ This globalist ethic seems to suggest that the American public and the U.S. government do not have a moral right to effect policies that give priority to, say, preserving and enhancing the Chesapeake Bay over an estuary in another country. Also pointless under this ethic would be heroic efforts now underway by the U.S. Coast Guard to safeguard the vast but dwindling bottomfish stocks in the Bering Sea off the coast of Alaska from marauding Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, Thai, Polish and Norwegian trawlers (which have

¹⁸⁸ Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. 1999b. Undated direct mail letter for NRDC.

¹⁸⁹ John H. Adams. 1999. Undated direct mail letter for NRDC.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ In a 1998 post to the on-line Sierra Club population forum, Executive Director Carl Pope cited a hypothetical example of 100,000 peasants moving from the Guatemalan highlands to the Peten rainforest (also in Guatemala) versus their moving to Los Angeles, and concluded that the former was worse for the global environment. Similarly, environmental filmmaker and author Michael Tobias (*World War III: Population and the Biosphere at the Millennium*. 1993. Santa Fe: Bear & Co.), when questioned after a 1994 Los Angeles speech on overpopulation, said he would favor relocating people from rapidly-growing tropical countries with high and threatened biodiversity to countries like the United States with less biodiversity, although he admitted this notion was “quirky.” (Aside from political considerations, it is problematic for two reasons: 1) because the consumption of a number of products ranging from tropical hardwoods to hamburgers in the rich countries contributes to the demise of biodiversity in the tropics, and with larger populations the rich countries will consume more; and 2) because alleviating population pressures through such “safety-valve” schemes would only act as a temporary expedient unless the more fundamental problem of growth was also addressed. Airlifting colonizers from the Peten to Los Angeles would simply open up that frontier to still more migrants from the rapidly growing Guatemalan highlands unless, simultaneously, birth rates there were reduced and economic opportunities increased.)

already caused fish populations in non-American portions of the Bering Sea to plummet).¹⁹² A globalist view might see protection of the American portion as harming the non-American portion, which excluded fishing vessels might be “forced” to over-exploit even further.

In comparison, one could easily see the nationalist and internationalist ethic at work in 1970 when the Sierra Club and other environmental groups jointly endorsed a resolution that committed them to “bring about the stabilization of the population first of the United States and then of the world.” Solving the population problem in one’s own country and becoming a model for other nations to emulate was seen as the most responsible first step in responding to the international problem. And after all, went the reasoning of the time, the only place a given nation could really exercise full control to make things better was within its own borders.

By 1998, Sierra leaders had turned around 180 degrees. Rather than endorsing “stabilization first in the United States and then of the world,” they now called for, in effect, “stabilization first of the world, and then maybe the United States.”

Under the more globalist ethic of the 1998 Sierra leaders (and the leaders of many other environmental organizations who publicly or privately supported them), it was seen as both selfish and futile for the United States to stabilize its own population before the rest of the world does. In fact, some leaders suggested that if some countries remain poor, Congress should not reduce immigration and U.S. population growth even when the rest of the world’s population *does* stabilize. Only when socioeconomic conditions in the rest of the world are high enough that foreign workers no longer want to move to the United States should this country be allowed to stabilize its population, they indicated. The problem for the United States, and particularly California, is that they may reach extraordinary population densities – and concomitant environmental and quality of life pressures – before this ever occurs.¹⁹³

One of the most direct examples of this globalism was in ZPG’s official explanation for abandoning zero population growth goals in the United States: “It is ZPG’s view that immigration pressures on the U.S. population are best relieved by addressing factors which compel people to leave their homes and families and emigrate to the United States. Foremost among these are population growth, economic stagnation, environmental degradation, poverty and political repression. ZPG believes unless these problems are successfully addressed in the developing nations of the world, no forcible exclusion policy will successfully prevent people from seeking to relocate into the United

¹⁹² Todd Lewan. 1999. “Guarding the Frigid, Perilous Bering Sea.” *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, May 2.

¹⁹³ Ben Zuckerman estimates that California would have to reach a population of perhaps one billion, that is, almost four times the present population of the entire U.S. and over 30 times the current state population – or five times the current density of our most densely-populated state (New Jersey) -- before it loses its allure to prospective migrants from the more desperate reaches of the third world. Of course, the impacts of such an increase on the environment and quality of life are so staggering as to be almost unimaginable. But surely they would render the state virtually unrecognizable – much of it an environmental wasteland – with what is left of nature confined to postage-stamp sized, weed-infested plots.

States. ZPG, therefore, calls on the United States to focus its foreign aid on population, environmental, social, education and sustainable development programs. Changing political conditions present opportunities to work cooperatively with other nations to address the root causes of international migration. Studies show that of the people who emigrate to the United States, the majority would have stayed in their home countries had there been economic opportunities or democratic institutions.”¹⁹⁴

That essentially was the plan touted by Sierra leaders and which 60% of Sierran voters approved in their 1998 ballot (in which turnout was about 15%, the highest in a decade).¹⁹⁵

It is difficult to know if those positions were taken because of a full belief in the globalist ideology that seems to undergird them or simply because of an attraction to globalist rhetoric. There is little sign that the leaders of those groups or their members did any calculations as to what it would take to achieve such grandiose goals of eliminating global poverty -- or whether there was any practicality at all in the thought of raising the living standards of more than 4 billion (going to 8 billion) impoverished third world citizens high enough that they would not want to immigrate to the United States.

Daniel Quinn, author of *Ishmael* (something of a cult favorite among environmentalists) observed: “We have encouraged people to think that all we have to do to end our population expansion is to end economic and social injustice all over the world. This is a will-of-the-wisp because these are things that people have been striving to do for thousands of years without doing them. And why we think that this will be doable in the next few years is quite bizarre to me. They don’t recognize any of the biological realities involved.”¹⁹⁶ According to elder geopolitical statesman George F. Kennan, the most likely scenario for the current quadrupled immigration to the United States declining of their own volition is if the “levels of overpopulation and poverty in the United States are equal to those of the countries from which these people are now anxious to escape.”¹⁹⁷

Unless U.S. living standards collapse toward the average level of the third world (which is only around one-twelfth that of U.S. standards as gauged by GDP per capita), it appears highly unlikely that immigration of the current million level would ever go down without government-imposed limits.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ ZPG Reporter, February, 1998.

¹⁹⁵ William Branigin. 1998. “Sierra Club Votes for Neutrality on Immigration: Population Issue ‘Intensely Debated.’” *The Washington Post*. April 26; John H. Cushman, Jr. 1998. “Sierra Club Rejects Move to Oppose Immigration.” *The New York Times*. April 26; election results provided by Marvin Baker, Acting Chief Inspector of Election for the Inspectors, and posted on Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization (SUSPS) website on April 24, 1998. http://www.sni.net/ecofuture/susps/info/votes_980425.html.

¹⁹⁶ Daniel Quinn and Alan D. Thornhill. 1998. “Food Production and Population Growth.” Video documentary supported by the Foundation for Contemporary Theology. Houston: New Tribal Ventures.

¹⁹⁷ George F. Kennan. 1993. *Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy*. New York: W.W. Norton.

¹⁹⁸ Roy Beck. 1994. *Re-Charting America’s Future*. Petoskey, MI: Social Contract Press.

Thus, if the U.S. government adopted the ZPG and Sierra policies of never legislating lower immigration levels and waiting for the numbers to decline naturally, the United States would be assured of growing to a half-billion population during the 21st century and a billion or more in the next.

It is difficult to believe that any environmental leaders would intentionally choose such a future for the American environment. Yet, not one major U.S. environmental organization has seriously studied whether their globalist solution has any possibility of creating something other than that China-like population density. Perhaps because the solution is impossible, not one environmental group has proposed any specific U.S. federal legislation that is designed to help end world poverty so as to naturally lower immigration flows.

Perhaps with the passage of time, historians will be better able to ascertain if the environmental leaders were truly serious about their global prescription and why they have had so little inquisitiveness about whether their plan could work.

▪ **Fear of demographic trends**

Still another reason environmental groups didn't want to tackle immigration numbers to slow U.S. population growth may have been their fear of changing demographics. As the population of foreign-born Americans and their children rose ever higher, they became an increasingly powerful political bloc whom many environmental leaders feared could thwart environmentalist initiatives and legislation if they perceived environmental groups to be hostile to immigration.

In 1970, immigrants comprised about 5 percent of the American population. By 1998, that figure had risen to almost 10 percent and was still climbing rapidly with no sign of cresting – a predictable consequence of the four-fold increase in immigration levels over the past four decades.¹⁹⁹ In certain key states – particularly California (25%), New York (18%), and Florida (15%) – and a number of influential cities, the percentage of foreign-born in the population was much higher still and was large enough to be the balance of power in some elections.²⁰⁰

The bloc of foreign-born Americans and their children in 1998 already was far larger than the bloc of black Americans. The Census Bureau showed that if Congress did not change immigration policy, the bloc of recent immigrants and their descendants would be more than a third of all Americans by the year 2050.

A number of interests, ranging from private businesses to political parties to environmental groups, assumed that Congress will not change immigration policy and that this revolutionary demographic shift is virtually inevitable, a *fait accompli*. All

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. 1998. "Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 1997 (update)," *Current Population Reports*, P20-507. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁰⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. 1997. "Foreign-Born Population: 1996." *Current Population Reports*, P20-494. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

positioned themselves to take advantage of the shift as best they could and to keep the shift from hurting them.

In the case of businesses, this could mean reaching new rapidly growing markets by advertising in a foreign language. In the case of political parties, it meant nurturing immigrants as a source of donations, votes and political power.^{201 202} And in the case of environmental groups, it could mean trying to avoid any issues that might cause this developing power in American politics to oppose environmentalist political goals.

Particularly in California where the foreign born and their children already comprised more than a third of the population, Sierra leaders worried aloud not only that advocating U.S. population stabilization might lose immigrants, their friends and family as supporters, but that sensitive political alliances with ethnic politicians could be jeopardized as well.

Sam Shuchat, the executive director of the California League of Conservation Voters – an organization immersed in state politics -- pleaded with the Sierra Club not to “...commit suicide over the immigration issue. This is something the environmental community cannot afford.”²⁰³

In this fearful way of thinking, advocacy of immigration reduction to stabilize the population and protect the environment could only be seen by immigrants already here as an attempt to prevent them from becoming a majority of the population in California during the next few years – and of the country later in the next century. Having their future power thus threatened by environmentalists, immigrants would insist that their elected officials vote against environmental protection measures, according to the demographic-fear scenario.

Former ZPG president Judy Kunofsky, who also chaired the Sierra Club’s Population Committee in the late 1980s (in addition to having served as executive director of the Yosemite Restoration Trust), has logged a quarter-century of service and leadership within the environmental and population movements. Kunofsky recalls that some years back, a staffer for a Hispanic member of Congress from Southern California told a Sierra Club representative that the Congressman was outraged that the Club wanted to limit immigration. Later, various Latino citizen’s groups in Los Angeles threatened not to cooperate with the Club on air pollution issues if it were to actively oppose

²⁰¹ Michael A. Fletcher and Ceci Connolly. 1999. “Gore Chases Hispanic Vote On Bush Turf.” *The Washington Post*. July 29, p. 1, 12. “The battle for the Latino vote is crucial to both parties because Latinos have been showing signs of coalescing into a political force. Jolted by a wave of GOP-led proposals across the country to limit immigration, impose English-only provisions and deny social service benefits to illegal immigrants, the Latino electorate grew by 29 percent between 1992 and 1996.” The same article noted that Republican presidential hopeful Senator John McCain of Arizona, addressing a conference of Hispanic leaders, decried the “divisive” efforts to eliminate bilingual education.

²⁰² Ronald Brownstein. 1999. “Latino Clout, Improved Economy Soften GOP Stance on Immigration.” *Los Angeles Times*. July 19, A5.

²⁰³ John H. Cushman, Jr. 1998. “An Uncomfortable Debate Fuels a Sierra Club Election.” *The New York Times*, April 5.

immigration. “When you have ethnic spokesmen saying to environmentalists that ‘we won’t work with you on clean air if you support immigration restriction,’ that is an admission that increasing their own numbers takes precedence over all other considerations and that environmental concerns are secondary.”²⁰⁴

Whether the commitment of immigrants toward the environment was that shallow or whether their desire – or ability -- to be some sort of monolithic voting bloc was that strong remained undetermined. Public opinion polls would suggest that immigrants were not especially wedded to current immigration numbers and would not react as an angry group if the numbers were reduced back toward a more traditional American level. For years, polls showed immigrants generally agreeing with native-born Americans about reducing future immigration.²⁰⁵

UCLA astronomy professor and environmental activist Ben Zuckerman was among those in 1998 who dismissed the suggestion that immigrants would retaliate against immigration reduction by insisting that the natural environment of their new country be despoiled. He wrote that if the Sierra Club renewed its proscriptive commitment to U.S. population stabilization, “Political allies will continue to vote for sound environmental legislation when it is in the interests of their constituents – which is what they do now.”²⁰⁶ Yet even Zuckerman conceded that: “Politically, excessive immigration is very difficult to deal with because, in states with large immigrant populations, politicians are afraid to appear anti-immigrant, and in states with few immigrants, the national level of immigration is not a political issue.”²⁰⁷

Whether the fear of immigrant retaliation was justified or not, if believed by environmental leaders, it could have greatly affected their decisions about pursuing U.S. population stabilization. Certainly there were some reasons for the environmental leaders to have adopted such a belief during the Sierra Club’s referendum campaign. They heard from some self-appointed immigrant spokespersons who made the threat of retaliation. And Sierra leaders may have drawn similar conclusions from a contingent of California Democratic state-level politicians, many of them Latinos, who directly challenged the Club to defeat the immigration-reduction referendum. “A position by the club to further limit immigration would be considered immigrant bashing by many elected officials of color with near-perfect environmental records,” Santos Gomez (an appointed member of the Club’s National Population Committee) wrote in a newspaper op-ed piece.²⁰⁸ Pete Carrillo, president of the Mexican Heritage Corp. of Santa Clara County, California, told a reporter that if the Sierra Club returned to its policy calling for immigration reductions

²⁰⁴ Diana Hull. 1999. “Cry, the Overcrowded County: A Post-Earth Day Requiem.” *The Social Contract*, Summer.

²⁰⁵ In a February, 1996 Roper poll, 73% of blacks and 52% of Hispanics favored reducing immigration to 300,000 or fewer annually. The 1993 Latino National Political Survey, largest ever done of this ethnic group in the United States, found that 7 in 10 respondents thought there were too many immigrants (higher than the percentage of non-Hispanic whites or “Anglos” who did). A Hispanic USA Research Group poll (1993) found that three-quarters of Hispanics believed fewer immigrants should be admitted.

²⁰⁶ Ben Zuckerman. 1998. “Will the Sierra Club Be Hurt If the Ballot Question Passes?” *Supra*, note 115.

²⁰⁷ *Supra*, note 25.

²⁰⁸ Santos Gomez. 1997. Op-ed in *San Francisco Chronicle*. November 17.

it would produce “a gap as wide as the Pacific Ocean between the Sierra Club and the Mexican American Community.”²⁰⁹

Thus, intimidated environmental leaders may have chosen the logic of the executive director of California League of Conservation Voters: *If* immigrants did retaliate, that would be something “the environmental community cannot afford.” It would not be a question of whether the *environment* could afford another doubling of the U.S. population but whether the *environmental community* could afford immigrant retaliation if environmentalists tried to stop the doubling. Protection of the environmental institutions may have been placed ahead of protection of the environment. Professor Zuckerman, a member of UCLA’s Institute of the Environment and one of the initiators of the Sierra Club immigration vote, observed in an op-ed column, “most leading environmental organizations are merely environmental-ish,” that is, they “give plenty of lip service to the environment...but when push comes to shove, the environment takes a back seat.”²¹⁰ Another population activist in Oregon commented: “...population is a very tough and divisive issue. Most people with environmental concerns have taken the path of least resistance.”²¹¹

It may well represent a politically shrewd or realistic decision on the part of environmental organization leaders to have taken the path of least resistance – at least in the short term. In assessing the environmental movement’s collective strengths and weaknesses, and in analyzing their own groups’ missions and finite resources, many may have reasoned that taking on such a “divisive” issue was in essence, “tilting against the windmill” – a course that both fiduciary duty and common sense argued against. It was one thing to tackle the likes of corporate polluters, “Big Oil,” logging companies, the U.S. Forest Service, malodorous pulp mills, multinational mining companies, immense petrochemical corporations, the nuclear power industry, and the Defense Department. The very salience and size of these institutions – and their all too manifest impact on the environment while delivering goods and services to the American public -- readily allowed them to be cast as Goliaths and environmentalists as Davids in a Biblical struggle between good and evil. Much of the time, the media and the public seemed to buy into this simplistic story line and its clichéd characters -- environmental villains vs. idealistic, selfless defenders. Thus, in the typical environmental scenario, the disadvantage of economically and politically powerful adversaries was counteracted by the advantage of perceived moral superiority.

In contrast, tackling immigration meant confronting disadvantages on both fronts. An individual environmentalist or environmental group doing so virtually always paid a high price in the prestige and respect they enjoyed from the media and other elites. It was all too easy for such environmentalists to be condemned by mass immigration advocates and an uncritical news media as parochial, selfish “know-nothings” unwilling to share the

²⁰⁹ Home Builders Association of Northern California. 1998. “Behind the Sierra Club Vote on Curbing Immigration: Do environmentalists risk alienating the fastest-growing ethnic group in California?” *HBA News*, Vol. 21, No. 1, February.

²¹⁰ Ben Zuckerman. 1998. “Cut Immigration, Save the Environment.” *Los Angeles Times*, March 15.

²¹¹ Bill Isbister. 1998. “McEarth Day 98: Corporate Snowjob!” News release circulated by the grassroots group “Too Many People...Too Little Earth!”

fruits of American society with a less fortunate world, or even as closet hate-mongers for whom the environment was just a front. At the same time, very powerful economic and political special interests backed high immigration levels.

Thus, abdicating the Foundational Formula may indeed have been an expedient strategy, but perhaps also an indication of the essentially weak political position of the environmental movement in American society, and its shallow support, at the close of the 20th century. As long as “enviros” played by the unwritten rules and didn’t oppose the perpetual growth ethos at the very center of contemporary American society (as physicist Albert Bartlett has observed trenchantly, our de facto national motto is no longer “In God We Trust,” but “In Growth We Trust”) they could be “team players” who got enough support to stay in the game and who won enough small victories and compromises to keep them contented. Yet in forsaking U.S. population stabilization, environmental group leaders may have made a Faustian Bargain. In the short run they enjoyed less political risk, more prestige, and more power. But over the long run they paid with their souls, for they were condemning the American environment they supposedly cared about to carry an ever-greater burden of insatiable human beings.

▪ **The power of money**

We have saved until last the factor that journalists tend to consider first: the money. There are many observers – and players – in the 1990s who suggest that the shifts in population emphasis have more to do with the funding of environmental groups than any other factor. Certainly, there is evidence suggesting that money has been at least a significant factor. Of course, many of the other factors mentioned previously may have had a role in causing donors to act as they did.

By way of introduction, Professor T. Michael Maher, in his 1990s research on why journalists avoided the population angle in their environmental reporting, noted that others have commented on the inherent bias of the news media in favor of population growth: “Molotch (1976) even suggested that cities can best be understood as entities competing for population growth, with the city newspaper as chief cheerleader.”²¹²

In a very real sense, the entire environmental protection and natural resource conservation enterprise has been “sold” to the American public, 1) as a necessary response to the unintended, adverse environmental consequences of this century’s unparalleled growth in consumption and population, but also, 2) in a great paradox, as an indispensable basis for still more growth in consumption and population, which (it is argued) depends on a healthy environment and abundant resources. In the last thirty years, the environmental sector of the nation’s economy has boomed in tandem with new environmental protection laws reflecting both increased pressures on the environment and greater environmental awareness on the part of the public. To the ranks of foresters, fish and game biologists, geologists, agronomists, and park rangers – resource management professions which have existed for much of this century – were added tens of thousands of pollution control engineers, environmental lawyers, landscape architects, outdoor

²¹² Supra, note 20.

recreation specialists, environmental planners, wildlife biologists, environmental scientists (e.g. climatologists, geochemists, ecologists, zoologists, conservation biologists, oceanographers), government regulators, and last but not least, professional or career environmental advocates.

To the extent that increasing population signifies increasing pressures on environmental resources, the demand for environmental professionals to manage and mitigate the negative effects of this growth will also increase. (There are several caveats: American society must be *affluent* enough and *motivated* enough to pay for such services, and the resources can't have been exhausted or ruined beyond the point of no return; once a species goes extinct so do the jobs of those who tried to save it.) Thus, paradoxically, continued population growth – at least to a point and for awhile – creates more demand for the skills and expertise (and thus better job prospects) of those in the environmental conservation field. This can be seen in a pair of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service publications, one of which states: “Although fish and wildlife in America represent tremendous environmental, creational and economic assets, these resources are increasingly threatened. The mission of the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service grows more complex and critical as a result of these threats.”²¹³ And why are fish and wildlife increasingly threatened? Another Fish and Wildlife Service document spells it out: “Because of the changes that accompany development and population growth.”²¹⁴ The solution? It should come as no surprise that a federal agency in the 1990s does not mention stabilizing U.S. population as one essential part of the solution. Instead, this agency concludes that “wildlife and wildlands need to be protected and managed.”²¹⁵ In effect, these observations from one branch of the environmental profession serve to justify its own increasing importance to American society.

In theory, the same case can be made about the full-time, career environmentalists who head up and staff national environmental organizations. Membership and support for those organizations tend to grow in direct proportion with the real or perceived threat to the environment, as during the early 1980s under the Reagan administration. U.S. population growth increases the real threat to the American environment; ergo, until or unless that growth damages the environment beyond salvation, it is a boon for these groups' membership appeals and donation solicitations. The recent sprawl campaigns of various organizations -- which attempt to spell “sprawl” without the ‘p’ representing population (as Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization cleverly put it) -- are a prime example of a greater loyalty to organizational well-being than the environment's well-being.

On the more specific question of the direct influence of money on the retreat of environmental groups from U.S. population stabilization, historians will need to be

²¹³ Jamie Rappaport Clark and John Rogers. 1997. *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: 1997. Strategic Plan, September 30, 1997 – September 30, 2002*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. p. 1. Clark and Rogers are the Director and Assistant Director of this federal agency, respectively.

²¹⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. undated. DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge Concept Plan. p. 17.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

investigative reporters to get a clear picture. Here are some of the questions we would like to see answered.

Question:

Did the “business” of environmentalism make population stabilization programs unattractive? Is it possible that organizations looked first not at what ultimately would allow them to achieve their environmental goals but at defining themselves for the best financial support from their members and their foundation or corporate benefactors – and stabilization didn’t meet that criterion?

Organizational survival and financial maintenance is not a trivial matter. Taking on “environmentally pure” issues won’t do much good for the environment if in the process the organization loses the financial ability to stay in business.

With scores of environmental groups competing with each other for members and donors, each needs special programs and actions to distinguish itself. They also need programs that can yield short-term victories that they can tout to their funders. Even under very favorable circumstances, a campaign for U.S. population stabilization cannot achieve its goal for several decades. And the benefits are not easily seen at first. In contrast, many other environmental crusades bring about faster, more tangible results. To refer to an earlier example, the Chesapeake Bay today is healthier or at least holding its own in measurable ways (e.g. improved water quality; increased submerged aquatic vegetation; stabilized or increasing fish, shellfish and waterfowl populations) directly as a result of a number of environmental initiatives.

Stabilizing population, on the other hand, doesn’t improve the environment; rather, it keeps environmental conditions from growing worse. You can’t photograph the bad things that you prevented -- because they didn’t happen. Which direct mail package is likely to raise more money: Newspaper clippings about forcing the removal of a dam, cleaning up smog and establishing a park...or a headline stating that the rate of population growth declined incrementally from the previous year?

In 1990, after Congress approved an immigration policy that would force U.S. population growth of tens of millions over the next several decades, one of the authors surveyed the Washington, D.C. offices of national environmental groups. They were asked to name their organization’s top five issues facing America. None named population growth. (This may account for why not one of the big groups testified or lobbied against the 1990 forced-growth legislation.²¹⁶) When reminded about population, most of the environmental spokespersons quickly said that, of course, population growth was a very important environmental threat. But it was a long-term problem, while their organization had to focus on crises that needed immediate attention -- like keeping a shopping mall from wiping out a wetland or saving a virgin forest from being clear-cut. The benefits from population stabilization were too indirect and diffuse to make it a

²¹⁶ Lindsey Grant. 1994. “The Timid Crusade.” *NPG Forum Series*. Washington, D.C.: Negative Population Growth.

brochure issue; and the damage from growth was too incremental to say that it had to be attacked immediately.

John Bermingham, a former Colorado legislator, ZPG board member, and one of the nation's pioneers and long-term stalwarts for stabilization, told the story of approaching a large environmental group to "put some muscle" behind the strong population policy it had on paper. The president told him the group couldn't work on the issue and noted: "That is not to say that population issues do not have a direct effect on what we do, particularly in the area of promoting sustainability. Population is just not our forte and we cannot afford to divert our limited resources to it."²¹⁷

Long-term population analyst and observer Lindsey Grant concluded that major non-profit environmental organizations know that population growth hinders the pursuit of environmental goals, but that, most "stayed away from the U.S. population issue out of concern that it would be controversial and lose support for their programs."²¹⁸

The farther the environmental groups got from Earth Day 1970, the less business sense it may have made to spend organizational resources on stabilization efforts.

The 1998 edition of the catalogue *Environmental Grant-Making Foundations* (Rochester, NY: Resources for Global Sustainability, Inc.) lists 180 foundations that specify population as an area of environmental gift-giving. In recent years, billionaires Ted Turner, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffett in addition to well-endowed foundations like Hewlett and Packard have all identified overpopulation as a major concern and focus of gift-giving. Yet these and most other foundations interested in underwriting population programs have a distinctly global perspective and are focused on family planning, women's empowerment and reproductive health issues, not population policy, especially a U.S. population stabilization policy.

The experience of the 1990s has shown that there are fewer than 10 foundations in the entire country willing and able to significantly fund non-profit groups with a clear U.S. population stabilization agenda. Most of these are relatively small in size, and thus limited in the size of their grants.

Even a respected, well-established group like the National Audubon Society has had to struggle to obtain support for its wildlife habitat-related population program. For at least the last three decades of the 20th century, Audubon has had the most active population education program of any major environmental group, encouraged by the early support of its former president Russell Peterson. It included widely respected research and education about the effects of population growth on natural habitats throughout the United States and the world. But when it came to advocating policies to stop or slow the growth, Audubon pled the fifth. U.S. population stabilization depends on reductions in immigration, and few foundations want to be associated with that. Audubon members asking about the issue were told in 1998 that, "Audubon does not

²¹⁷ John Bermingham. 1998. Personal communication.

²¹⁸ Supra, note 61.

now, nor never has, taken a position on immigration reform.” Yet in one of the many ironies surrounding the immigration/population question, famed ornithologist and bird artist Roger Tory Peterson, a major conservation figure who inaugurated the popular field guide series and certainly had the admiration of many in the Audubon Society, was himself on the board of advisors of the Federation of American Immigration Reform for many years before his death.

Question:

How significant was the threat of foundations and major individual donors to withdraw funding if an environmental or population group tackled immigration?

In his book *Living Within Limits*, Garrett Hardin asserted that the corporate and philanthropic foundations who funded the 20th anniversary Earth Day in 1990 let it be known that they would not look kindly on the event having a population emphasis.²¹⁹ So in contrast to Earth Day 1970, there was none.

By 1998, the situation was no better, prompting one Oregon population activist to decry “McEarth Day 98” as a “Corporate Snowjob.” According to a flier of the grassroots group “Too Many People...Too Little Earth!”: “You’d think [overpopulation] would be number one in the environmental community. Tragically, it’s hardly on the back burner!... Why the head in the sand approach? The reasons are many; I’ll list a few. Fund raising becomes very difficult when population enters the picture. What corporation really wants to solve this problem? They thrive on unsustainable growth.”²²⁰

During the Sierra Club battle over population policy in 1998, Sierra leaders warned that foundations and major individual donors had said that they would withdraw hundreds of thousands of dollars in previously pledged grants if the members of the Club took a stand in favor of reducing immigration.²²¹

Historians should investigate rumors that other organizations were subjected to similar overt or implicit pressures.²²² For example, according to one ZPG member, in 1998 ZPG’s executive director indicated privately to her that ZPG had received a major grant from a large foundation, which specified, “Don’t get involved in the immigration issue.” When contacted at a later date by a different population activist, that foundation denied that it attached any such conditions to its grants. ZPG’s executive director also denied that any strings were attached to grants received. And yet, according to another ZPG official at the time, the executive director indicated that at ZPG’s gala event in 1997 honoring Ted Turner and Jane Fonda, both major ZPG supporters, Fonda had informed him how happy she was that ZPG had not taken a stand on immigration.²²³ Perhaps this explains why two letters sent to Turner and Fonda as well as Peter Bahouth, executive director of the Turner Foundation, by Joyce Tarnow, president of Floridians for

²¹⁹ Garrett Hardin. 1993. *Living Within Limits*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²²⁰ Supra, note 200.

²²¹ Alan Kuper. 1998. Personal communication based on meeting with Sierra Club executive director.

²²² Private correspondence.

²²³ Ibid.

Sustainable Population, asking them to urge ZPG to address immigration, were never answered.²²⁴

To what extent did large funders help keep population/immigration issues off the agendas of environmental organizations? There are certainly enough clues and circumstantial evidence to indicate that they played an important role.

Question:

How was the desire of many corporate and business interests for continued U.S. population growth reflected in their grants to environmental groups and through the foundations they set up or the foundations on the boards of which their leaders served?

It may be that the greatest fear that corporations had of environmental groups was not the ostensible environmental regulations they advocated but a cutoff of U.S. population growth to fuel ever-expanding consumer markets, land development and construction. In addition, those same forces had an intense self-interest in a growing labor pool to keep the cost of labor down.

One Californian observed that to remain so large, environmental groups “depend on huge transfers of money from foundations. These foundations have lots of connections with the national corporate community, which remains unconvinced that U.S. population stabilization is a good thing. Never-ending growth remains a goal of the national corporate community.”²²⁵

For more than a quarter-century the total fertility rate of native-born Americans has been below the replacement level of 2.1. The inevitable demographic consequence of this reproductive behavior is a native population stock whose growth has been tapering off, and is well on the way to stabilization and even gradual shrinkage in the coming century – without infusions of foreign workers and their families. Organized business and corporate interests in the United States fear that a tighter labor supply and a “stagnant” number of consumers will choke off America’s miracle of perpetual economic growth and prosperity.

“As baby boomers age and domestic birthrates stagnate, only foreign-born workers will keep the labor pool growing....Economic dynamism, in other words, will depend on a continuing stream of foreign-born workers,” opined an article in *Business Week*.²²⁶ At a “dull” meeting between the chairman of the Republican National Committee and a group of trade association executives in December 1997, “suddenly the room jumped to life” when Bruce Josten of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce predicted a severe labor shortage within the next decade. “...we’re going to have to bring in more people simply to maintain the economy’s growth rate. I’m talking about more legal

²²⁴ Joyce Tarnow. 1997. August 9 letter to Ted Turner and Jane Fonda. October 13 letter to Peter Bahouth.

²²⁵ William E. Murray. 1998. E-mail to Roy Beck. December 8.

²²⁶ Howard Gleckman. 1998. “A Rich Stew in the Melting Pot.” *Business Week*, August 31.

immigrants at all skill levels,” said Josten.²²⁷ The Chamber’s Vice President and Chief Economist echoed this view in a letter published under the headline “Immigrants Wanted” in *The New York Times*: “Rather than worrying about the welfare costs of our current rate of immigration, we should be concerned about the lost opportunity owing to the worker shortage of the future.”²²⁸

The concern of some economists and business interests over an alleged emerging worker shortage is matched by the concern of many analysts, politicians, and rank-and-file Americans that early in the next century the Social Security system will be strained to the breaking point as too many retiring Baby Boomers burden too few workers. Dell Erickson and others have used the metaphor of a large lump of food passing through a snake to depict the pronounced, but temporary, demographic distortions caused by the Boomers.²²⁹ (As a population gradually stops growing, its age structure will indeed change, with the median age shifting upward for a time to a new, higher point.) This issue was addressed on the Sierra Club’s on-line Population Forum, with forum manager Nan Hildreth asking participants: “Someone mentioned that US population growth is good for the continued solvency of Social Security. Comments?”²³⁰ Dell Erickson commented that, “Over the years, the legislation to open a floodgate of immigration became an unseen and little known Congressional attempt to remedy the approaching funding dilemma by rapidly increasing numbers at the bottom of the worker pyramid.”²³¹ Demographer David Simcox also delivered a scathing critique of this rationale for increasing immigration: “Relying on Ponzi-like schemes to populate our way out of the dilemma through increased immigration and pronatalist incentives would be destructive and self-defeating. The consequence would be disruptive and environmentally devastating population growth, which would merely delay, not solve, the problem of too few workers supporting too many retirees.”²³² It should be obvious that reliance upon a pyramid scheme of an ever-expanding base of workers to keep our economy healthy and our retirees robust is an environmentally unsustainable strategy, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t powerful forces pushing precisely for this.

Whatever the unspoken basis for its unwillingness to confront population growth, the Sierra Club national board found itself in the previously unheard-of position of being endorsed by the Home Builders Association of Northern California during the 1998 referendum campaign. The development group applauded the position of the Sierra Club board to accept the current immigration level, which is projected to force California’s home-needing population to 50 million by 2025. But the developers criticized the Sierra

²²⁷ Supra, note 181; Miller article.

²²⁸ Martin Regalia. 1999. “Immigrants Wanted” (Letter to the Editor). *The New York Times*, April 8.

²²⁹ Dell Erickson. 1999. E-mail to the authors, June 1. Excerpts from a 1995 paper entitled “Social Security: The American Tragedy.”

²³⁰ Nan Hildreth. 1998. Post to Sierra Club Population Forum <CONS-SPST-POPULATION@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG> June 17.

²³¹ Dell Erickson. 1998. Post to Sierra Club Population Forum <CONS-SPST-POPULATION@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG> July 3.

²³² David Simcox. 1998. “Social Security: The Ponzi Path to Dystopia.” *NPG Forum Series*, October. Washington, D.C.: Negative Population Growth.

Club for helping prevent the use of urban and near-urban open spaces to build houses for the population growth brought about by immigration.²³³

Many foundations have a mix of directors that include politically left-leaning globalists and right-leaning representatives of multi-national corporations. As discussed earlier, for separate (even disparate) reasons, both types are strongly inclined toward high immigration levels. Historians will be able to quantify some of the ideological leanings of the foundations by looking at the modest level of funding for U.S. population stabilization efforts compared to the millions of dollars a year funneled to organizations working for policies that force massive U.S. population growth.

Of particular interest may be determining the role of foundations during the mid-1990s when Congress almost approved immigration reductions that would have started the United States on the path toward a stable population. That was a time when the American public was clamoring for immigration reductions; liberal labor advocates pressed for cuts that were endorsed by President Clinton; the Republican chairmen of the House and Senate immigration subcommittees presented bills to bring about the cuts recommended by former Democratic congresswoman Barbara Jordan's bi-partisan national commission. But the reductions did not occur. News accounts credit a massive mobilization and lobbying effort by corporate America for defeating all immigration cuts. Corporate, ethnic, and human rights leaders worked in a diverse coalition to begin undercutting the residual interest for making cuts in upcoming sessions of Congress.

Of special concern to growth advocates was the possibility that environmental groups might join forces with those desiring cuts for the sake of low-skill workers. Several Democratic pro-cut House floor leaders (most prominently Anthony Beilenson of California and John Bryant of Texas) had especially emphasized the need to slow U.S. population growth and relieve pressures on the environment. Around that time, certain foundations supported programs to bring human rights and environmental groups together to discuss population issues. To many observers, it appeared that foundations were pressing environmental groups (which they funded) to compromise with immigrant rights groups (which they also funded) by agreeing to step away from any advocacy for reductions in immigrant-driven U.S. population growth. Did those programs influence the decisions of ZPG and the Sierra Club to change their U.S. population stabilization policies and of groups like Audubon firming up their policies to refrain from discussing immigration issues?

Three well-endowed foundations – Pew, Turner, and Rockefeller – gave grants in support of a book whose very title – *Beyond the Numbers: A Reader on Population, Consumption, and the Environment*²³⁴ revealed a shift away from sheer numbers of people as the primary concern. And in November, 1995, in Washington, D.C., the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative co-sponsored a one-day “Roundtable Discussion on Global Migration, Population, and the Environment.” Pew’s partner in the event was the

²³³ Supra, note 207.

²³⁴ Laurie Ann Mazur (ed.). 1994. *Beyond the Numbers: A Reader on Population, Consumption, and the Environment*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

National Immigration Forum, the nation's main coalition lobbying for continued high immigration. According to Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies, who was present, this meeting was "clearly an attempt to keep environmental groups from going off the reservation and supporting immigration cuts then being debated in Congress."²³⁵

To whatever extent foundations and corporations did or did not attempt to neutralize environmental groups in their population policies, historians are likely to find that the policy changes also came as a result of the many other factors listed in this monograph.

By the end of the 1990s, after three decades of spiraling immigration numbers, seemingly perpetual population growth, and defeat after political defeat, many long-suffering environmental and population activists despaired about ever reversing environmentalists' paralysis on immigration: "After working on the 'sustainable numbers' problem for years, Judith Kunofsky is convinced that reducing immigration has become increasingly impossible politically – that we may have already reached the point where we can't do anything about it," wrote behavioral scientist Diana Hull.²³⁶

Perhaps nothing was more symbolic of organized environmentalism's virtual abandonment of U.S. population stabilization from 1970 to the present than its disregard of the oft-stated message of the venerated "father" of Earth Day 1970 himself, Senator Gaylord Nelson. Even as environmental groups increasingly distanced themselves from the population issue, Nelson's concern with U.S. overpopulation through the years never wavered, and his speeches around the country on environmental sustainability spotlighted the U.S. population problem.²³⁷ A newspaper article describing an Earth Day 1998 speech began: "Senator Gaylord Nelson spoke to a standing-room only audience at Beloit College's Richardson Auditorium [in his home state of Wisconsin], advocating the U.S. limit immigration before U.S. resources are depleted."²³⁸ Later that year, in a Washington, D.C. press conference, Nelson bristled at the idea that what really motivates attempts to limit immigration is racism. He said that such accusations only served to silence a debate that was long overdue: "We ought to discuss it in a rational way. We have to decide if we're going to be comfortable with half a billion people or more."²³⁹ Yet not even the Father of Earth Day's irreproachable reputation, peerless stature and acute concern swayed environmental group leaders.

Historians need to explain how an environmental issue as fundamental as U.S. population growth could have moved from center-stage within the American environmental movement to virtual obscurity in just 20 years. For the American

²³⁵ Mark Krikorian. 1999. Personal communication.

²³⁶ Supra, note 202.

²³⁷ Gaylord Nelson. 1997. "Environment – Population – Sustainable Development: Where Do We Go From Here?" *Focus*, Vol. 7, No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Carrying Capacity Network. Text of speech delivered to Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 15, 1997.

²³⁸ Pat Carome. 1998. "Environment Humanity's No. 1 Challenge." *Beloit Daily News*, April 23.

²³⁹ Bob Vitale. 1998. "Gaylord Nelson says population growth injures environment." *Oshkosh Northwestern*. December 14.

environment itself, the ever-growing demographic pressures ignored by the environmental establishment showed no signs of abating on their own as the nation prepared to enter the 21st century.

Yet a ray of hope remains. “If the people lead, the leaders will follow” says an aphorism. The growing grassroots concern of numerous rank-and-file environmentalists and ordinary Americans with the multiple problems unavoidably aggravated by overpopulation and overimmigration may yet overturn their leaders’ stubborn denial of demographic and ecological realities. In the face of unremitting hostility, demagoguery and dirty tricks on the part of the Sierra Club bureaucracy, Sierrans who refused to accept their leaders’ acquiescence to rapid, unending U.S. population growth attained a respectable 40% showing. This may yet be a harbinger of the return to a realistic, comprehensive population policy within the mainstream environmental movement.