The War Against the Greens

The "Wise-Use" Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence

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SIERRA CLUB BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO
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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Helvarg, David, 1951–
The war against the greens : the "Wise-Use" movement, the new right, and anti-environmental violence / David Helvarg.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
GE197.H45 1994
363.7'00973—dc20
94-1493
CIP

Production by Janet Vail
Jacket design by Big Fish Books, San Francisco
Book design by Amy Evans
Composition by Wilsted & Taylor

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper containing a minimum of 50% recovered waste paper, of which at least 10% of the fiber content is post-consumer waste

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
These will only increase insect nuisances and create new health threats, he asserts, unless fish and game agencies can be convinced to return to their old practice of insecticide spraying in wildlife refuges.

Henry Lamb gives his welcoming speech on behalf of ECO. He's a slim, fastidious, silver-haired gentleman in a red tie, white shirt, and blue suit. He explains how free enterprise capitalism is superior to any other form of capitalism, and then sets up a question-and-answer session for himself, Hazeltine, and Hosemann.

Hazeltine talks about a proposed ban on methyl bromide (an ozone depleter) and explains that because it is used to protect grain in transit, its absence may expose grain supplies to deadly microtoxins.

Rogelio Maduro, associate editor of *21st Century Science & Technology*, stands up to talk from the floor. Rogelio, who has a bachelor of science degree in geology, is the coauthor of *The Holes in the Ozone Scare*, a book published by the LaRouchites that has provided most of the ammunition used by Dixy Lee Ray, Rush Limbaugh, and other science critics who deny that human chemicals are causing atmospheric ozone depletion.

"How many people have died as a result of environmental policies like the banning of DDT?" the LaRouchite asks rhetorically. "I'd say millions, because it was the most effective weapon against malaria. Right now methyl bromide is supposedly being banned for ozone depletion, but I think this is really an attack on refrigeration, because that's what CFCs and methyl bromides are used for: the storage and transportation of food. If you look at the environmentalists' policies, they say they want to reduce world population to 500 million, to between 500 million and 2 billion, and the best way to do that would be to destroy the world food system. That would create mass starvation. That's the way to achieve their aim."

"I'd say about 40 million people have died as a result of this banning of DDT, and I have to agree that if there is a conspiracy attacking food production this is a way of achieving it," Hazeltine agrees. He goes on to suggest that with the reduced use of insecticides, "we're also vulnerable to AIDS, because although mosquitoes have been eliminated as carriers, the stable fly could still become a vector for spreading HIV virus."

"I don't know about any apocalyptic scenarios," says the Farm Bureau's Hosemann. "My prediction is we'll just rot. Our country will just deteriorate into a Third World situation. I know of one analyst who estimates our gross domestic product losses as $1 to $2 trillion a year because of regulations, about a third of our total production. We're down to a population that's scientifically illiterate. We'll end up like Argentina, sitting on all these resources and not doing anything with them."

The highlight of the first day's sessions is a talk by James Catron, attorney and activist from Catron County, New Mexico. In 1990 Catron County, a rural district larger than Connecticut but with a population of only 2,600, gave birth to what has come to be known as the counties movement, an offshoot of Wise Use claiming that county commissioners have the right to establish land-use plans that preempt federal authority on federal lands within their county borders. Seventy-five percent of Catron County is federally owned land. This includes the Gila National Forest, where most of the county's ranchers graze their cattle. The plans and ordinances would make it a criminal offense for federal employees to enforce environmental laws if they are in conflict with county plans.

"The ordinances scared the hell out of us," Mike Gardner, a Forest Service district ranger in Catron admitted to a reporter in 1992. "I've got small children. It would be tough to tell my kids why I'm being arrested. It was intimidating." As the counties movement grew, the departments of Agriculture, Interior, and other government agencies felt compelled to remind Catron and other county sheriffs of the felony provisions of the U.S. code relating to interference with or assault on federal agents.

As legal justification for county movement ordinances, Jim Catron, former Mountain States Legal Foundation attorney Karen Budd, and other Wise Use lawyers have cited the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which states that important cultural aspects of national heritage must be preserved in carrying
crowd in Atlanta, Georgia. Following the Republican convention in Texas, when President Bush feared that many hard-core Buchanan supporters might sit out the election, he went on Limbaugh's show, hoping, with Rush's support, to win over the party Right for a final push against Clinton and Perot. By late 1993 party conservatives, inspired by a National Review cover story, were seriously talking about "Rush in ninety-six," although Limbaugh himself continued to insist that he wasn't interested in political office, that he only wanted to continue his soliloquies on his Excellence in Broadcasting radio network and TV show.

"Right now Rush is the only voice for our commonsense point of view," says David Howard of the Alliance for America. And despite Ron Arnold's dissent that "Rush is only in it for Rush," it could easily be argued that Rush Limbaugh has done more to spread the anti-enviro message than the Alliance for America, Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, PFW, NIA, OLC, AER, ECO, and the whole alphabet-soup collection of Wise Use/Property Rights groups combined.

"Environmentalists," Rush explains, "fall into two categories, Socialists and enviro-religious fanatics. . . . With the collapse of Marxism, environmentalism has become the new refuge of socialist thinking. . . . What better way to control someone's property than to subordinate one's private property rights to environmental concerns. The second group that has latched on to the environmental movement are people who believe it is a religion. Actually, it is a form of pantheism, where nature is divine. . . . They want to roll us back, maybe not to the Stone Age, but at least to the horse-and-buggy era." Never afraid to belabor a point, Rush goes on to suggest that "these people care. They care so much that caring becomes a crutch that makes them feel special and more noble than the rest of us."28

As a political commentator, he's also unafraid to be proscriptive in his approach to environmental issues. "If a spotted owl can't adapt, does the earth really need that particular species so much that hardship to human beings is worth enduring in the process of saving it?" he wonders in The Way Things Ought to Be. "Thousands of species that roamed the earth are now extinct. Do you hear anyone making the case that the earth would be better off if dinosaurs were still roaming the planet?"26 ("Children under eight excluded," he might have added, particularly as the only contemporary media figure with a following as large and loyal as his is that of Barney, PBS's purple dinosaur.)

In the chapter of the book titled "Sorry, But the Earth Is Not Fragile," Rush argues that "Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines spewed forth more than a thousand times the amount of ozone-depleting chemicals in one eruption than all the fluorocarbons manufactured by wicked, diabolical, and insensitive corporations in history. . . . In other words Mother Nature has been attacking her own stratospheric ozone for millions of years and yet the ozone is still there, and in sufficient quantities to protect Democrats and environmentalist wackos alike from skin cancer."27 He goes on to suggest that NASA is running a "scam" in its reporting on the problem in order to increase its funding and that the "agenda-oriented scientific community" is practicing "junk science."

He tells his readers that the best way they can arm themselves against "junk scientists" is to read Dixy Lee Ray's book Trashing the Planet. "I used it for much of my source material on ozone in this chapter. . . ." he explains. "I urge all readers to get her book if you want to understand the con job the environmentalists are trying to pull on us."28

Limbaugh's counterculture arguments led to a major paper in the June 1993 issue of Science magazine, the publication of the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science. In an unusual four-page article titled "The Ozone Backlash," the magazine, which usually concerns itself with cutting-edge developments in microbiology, chemistry, physics, and other fields of science, reports that "while evidence for the role of chlorofluorocarbons in ozone depletion grows stronger, researchers have recently been subjected to vocal public criticism of their theories—and their motives."

The article traces Rush's ozone argument to Ray's book, in which she cites two sources for most of her information on ozone depletion: Fred Singer and Rogelio Maduro, the coauthor of the
LaRouchite book *Holes in the Ozone Scare*, who told the ECO conference it was all an environmental plot to depopulate the world through mass starvation.

Atmospheric chemists and other leading climate researchers interviewed for the *Science* article described Maduro's work as "based on a selective use of out-of-date scientific papers, and an equally discretionary choice of scientific results, often taken out of context." In this article, chemist Sherwood Rowland (who helped develop the theory of chlorofluorocarbon impacts in 1973) is quoted as describing the LaRouchite book as "a good job of collecting all of the bad papers [in the field] in one place."

The basic argument made by Maduro and his coauthor is that 600 million tons of chlorine enter the atmosphere annually from seawater, 36 million tons from volcanoes, 8.4 million tons from biomass burning, and 5 million tons from ocean biota. In contrast, CFCs account for a mere 750,000 tons of atmospheric chlorine a year.

Linwood Callis, of NASA's Langley Research Center, points out one crucial problem with their argument: "Chlorine from natural sources is soluble, and so it gets rained out of the lower atmosphere. CFCs, in contrast, are insoluble and inert and thus make it to the stratosphere to release their chlorine" (which destroys ozone molecules).

Surprisingly, Rush Limbaugh makes a similar argument in his book. Nine pages after discussing all the chlorine Mount Pinatubo released into the atmosphere, he attacks Carl Sagan's pre-Gulf War prediction that igniting the Kuwaiti oil wells could have catastrophic impacts on the global climate. "Smoke must rise high enough in the atmosphere and stay there so strong winds can circulate it in order for there to be any chance for global impact," he points out. "But—and I love this—the Kuwaiti smoke was not in the atmosphere long enough to rise very high. Why? It was dissipated by rain and clouds! Rain! It just came along and just cleaned it right up!"

As for questions of scientific peer review and journalistic accuracy, Rush Limbaugh's claim that Mount Pinatubo spewed out a thousand times the amount of chlorine produced by industry was shown to be a misreading of Dixo Lee's claim regarding chlorine emissions from the 1976 Mount Augustine eruption in Alaska. Dixo Lee based her estimation on a 1980 *Science* article by deceased vulcanologist David Johnston, but she also confused his figures for Mount Augustine with his much larger theoretical estimate of releases from a California eruption that occurred 700,000 years ago.

Still, counterscience, like other anti-enviro causes, continues to get wide play not only on Rush Limbaugh's show but also in the *National Review*, on the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, and on the news pages of America's newspaper of record, the *New York Times*. For anti-environmentalists perhaps the most sympathetic and certainly the most influential journalist to favor their cause is *New York Times* environmental reporter Keith Schneider. Schneider, who helped expose the Burford/Lavelle scandal at the EPA in the early eighties and mismanagement of the government's nuclear weapons plants in the late eighties, today refers to Wise Use/Property Rights as "the third wave" of environmentalism, a term first coined by his predecessor, Philip Shabecoff, in writing about mainstream environmental action groups.

In the first of a controversial five-part series on environmental regulation called "What Price Cleanup?" Schneider described "a new third wave of environmentalism that is sweeping across America. It began in the late 1980s among farmers, homeowners, and others who were upset largely by the growing cost of regulations that didn't appear to bring any measurable benefits. Corporate executives had long been making similar arguments but had gone unheeded, even during twelve years of Republican rule, because often they were seen as interested only in saving money." The article then went on to quote Monsanto chemical company CEO Richard Mahoney, who suggested that the nation was finally ready to start listening to industry.

"This is the third and most important work of my career, covering the risks and benefits of environmental regulation, who benefits and who loses," Keith Schneider explains in a phone in-