

Freedom Matters

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We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

Sustainable Development Is Unsustainable. Part 7. Where's Justice in Welfare Equality?!

by Bob Bowman

Beckerman, in *A Poverty of Reason*, recognizes that the issue of welfare equality, in the form of intergenerational equality, is so major a part of the definition of sustainable development that he devotes the culminating chapter of his book to it. As he shows, such "equality" is humbug.

You see, wackos hijacked the Malthusian concern thrust upon the world by the Club of Rome study, *The Limits to Growth*. The Malthusian concern is the idea that human civilization will exhaust some one or another of its essential natural resources and will thus collapse into poverty.

The United Nations got hold of that idea, and their Brundtland Commission turned it into the concept of "sustainable development;" i.e., development planned so as not to exhaust any essential resources. Yet, that was not all it did. The work of that commission was an opportunity not to be missed by socialists, with their political agenda peculiar to the guilty rich on the one hand, and the chronically poor on the other. The socialists hung extra goodies on the definition, namely interpersonal and intergenerational welfare equality. Of course, environmentalists were also at the trough, with their political agenda peculiar to earth worshippers, and hung their pagan kinds of goodies on as well. The result is a creation that suffers, Beckerman says, from "a poverty of reason."

It would be nice to ignore it, but we can't. It has what is called "face validity;" i.e., it looks good and sounds good. So it fools people into thinking it is good. That's all one needs, in the world of politics, as Abe Lincoln famously noted. By fooling some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, you've got the majority vote. So, *sustainable development* got adopted by the U.N. as Agenda 21. The U.S. Senate refused to adopt it (a rare example of good sense), but it was enacted by President Clinton via his executive orders (an example of Clinton's bad sense, as if we needed another).

Sustainable development is the intellectual basis for so-called "smart growth," enacted into Wisconsin law in the form of "comprehensive planning." That's government planning. Look at paragraph 3 above. There the U.N. used the Malthusian fear of resource exhaustion to try to scare us into adopting government planning.

Now, to intergenerational welfare equality. By the Brundtland definition, and the weaker forms of that definition to which its proponents later retreated, before abandoning all

attempt at a rational definition, our generation is required to use resources to meet our own needs in a way that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. To one expert, these future needs were the **heart** of it, as quoted by Beckerman: "*Sustainability is primarily an issue of intergenerational equity.*" [Emphasis added.]

But that's illogical. That definition gives future generations **rights** to present day resources, meaning that their rights would thus trump our rights. However, future generations do not exist. **Those who do not exist cannot have rights.** As Beckerman says, we have a moral obligation to **consider** possible future needs, but such needs cannot trump our present needs, nor even be as important. He quotes Jeremy Bentham, famous English philosopher, economist and jurist, in this regard: "... *Can it be conceived that there are men so absurd as to ... torment the living under ... [the pretence] ... of promoting the happiness of those who are not born, and who may never be born.*"

(It seems that Bentham had not met a socialist.)

Beckerman then goes on to point out that standard economic theory for maximizing society's total welfare does a better job of protecting any future resource rights than would be done by giving future generations trumping rights over today's resources. He also refutes ancillary arguments. An important point he makes is this: that future generations are made richer the more we can develop in this generation. Indeed, because we make them **richer** by our development, intergenerational equality would require them to share some of their richness with us. Yet, the principles of physics do not allow it. Neither does ethics.

Beckerman's final point on this issue is telling. His opinion is that the greatest contribution we can make to the welfare of future generations is to bequeath them a free and democratic society. The best way to do that, he says, is to expand our free and democratic society in today's world.

Part 8, next issue.

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