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Authors: Catanzaro, Michael J.
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Abstract: Profiles Ron Arnold, executive vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise (CDFE). Principles concerning environmental protection and preservation; Reasons for writing a book that tackles issues on dangers rooting from biocentrism; Environmental aims of the center; Measures used in promoting public awareness concerning environment.

CONSERVATIVE SPOTLIGHT

Ron Arnold

Ron Arnold discovered early on that any attempts to protect and preserve the environment must be tempered and guided by one overarching principle: "Never let the love of nature blind you to the needs of your fellow man."

As a board member of the Sierra Club in the tumultuous 1960s, Arnold, now executive vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise located in Bellevue, Wash., witnessed the transformation of a movement originally formed to enjoy the wonders of nature into one characterized by political radicalism and the exaltation, even the deification, of nature as an object to be worshipped. Arnold came to believe that "environmentalism," as the movement was first called in 1971, was no longer contributing to the American way of life, as it began to pit itself against those things that contribute to our well-being, namely individualism, private property and the free market.

Keeping pace with the radicalization of certain segments of American culture and society at the time, the Sierra Club, along with the rest of environmentalism, began to entertain certain tenets of Marxism, including the end of private property rights and business enterprise, to save the wilderness. But, interestingly enough, as Arnold explains, many in the movement did not even understand the philosophical underpinnings of Marx, such as the notions of thesis and antithesis, the labor theory of value, or the concepts of historical and dialectical materialism.

"These people were so stupid that they couldn't even read Marx," Arnold says. "These guys didn't have a clue about any of these things. Marxism was simply a handy tool to strike back at the establishment."

Using Marxist cant to drive their movement was manifestly contradictory, Arnold says. Marx wanted to conquer nature and bend it to yield technological advance and create a worker's paradise.

But, as Arnold points out, contemporary radical environmentalism seeks to rollback technological progress and undermine the dominant anthropocentric worldview, which puts man as the highest form of creation on earth. Biocentrism, or the idea that all living species are equal and that all animals have an intrinsic right to exist, is what drives the movement.

"Eventually, as time went on, you had groups that began to coalesce around the philosophy of species equality," Arnold says. "The consequences of that way of thinking are horrendous."

One of the groups that took biocentrism to its dangerous extreme was Earth First, a violent, subversive and fanatical environmental group that influenced the thought of Theodore Kaczynski, the notorious Unabomber. (Investigators uncovered copies of Earth First newsletters in Kaczynski's cabin.)

"The goals of communism were to create a human paradise. This is a much more benign philosophy than what we are facing with environmentalism" he says.

On April 24, 1995, Arnold's good friend and colleague, Gilbert Murray, was tragically killed by the Unabomber, who took biocentrism to its logical extreme. The experience left Arnold, and many conservatives who knew Murray, deeply shaken. After a good deal of reflection, Arnold decided that the general public must be informed about some of the violent acts perpetrated in the name of "saving nature."

The result was EcoTerror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature--The World of the Unabomber (Free Enterprise Press), released earlier this year. "Monkeywreching is one thing" Arnold says. "But when you start putting pipe bombs in buildings and under trucks with people in them, that is entirely different. I felt compelled to write this book."

The 336-page book, Arnold's fifth to date outlines more than a thousand crimes committed by radical environmentalists from 1970 to the present, ranging from arson, equipment sabotage and forcible obstruction, to assault, attempted murder and murder. Also, the book reports that the Animal Liberation Front, a fanatical animal rights group, has created a website that brags of over 600 crimes committed in the name of "animal rights."

Arnold, a business consultant and an award-winning journalist who has written more than 300 articles in various periodicals, spends a good deal of his time at the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, which was established in 1976 by Alan Gottlieb, head of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms.

The center, Arnold says, was designed to look out "for the needs of your fellow man." With four different areas of focus, the center provides legal defense to businesses damaged by environmental regulations and, with the Free Enterprise Press, which Arnold himself started in 1987, publishes informational and educational books on environmental policy.

The center also has the American Broadcasting Network, which is their vehicle for getting public service announcements promoting free enterprise on over 300 stations nationwide, and the American Press Syndicate, which gives conservative environmentalism a voice on op-ed pages across the country.

Arnold and the center have been influential in advancing a sober, rationalistic approach to environmental stewardship. Maintaining a safe, clean and thriving environment while respecting and promoting the basic needs of humanity is the principle that lies at the core of their work.

For more information, write the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, Liberty Park, 12500 N.E. 10th Pl., Bellevue. Wash. 98005 (206-455-5038).

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PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): CDFE Executive Vice President, Ron Arnold

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By MICHAEL J. CATANZARO

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