

SMART GROWTH

SHADOW PLAYERS IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER.

BY TIM FINDLEY

Most of the participants in the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development tried to put the best face possible on it, but in general the conferees in Johannesburg, South Africa, agreed: It was a world-class failure.

The 2002 conference was meant to find clear means of implementing the powerful aims of Agenda 21, which had been bogged down and stalled in familiar rhetoric without any new practical answers.

"I think it [the Summit] shows that we have a shared vision of how to move forward," said U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, whose participation marked unusual U.S. official recognition of such U.N. events. "It shows that the world is committed to sustainable development." The question he suggested, however, "is not just in what is said in the statement, but the actions that will take place in the months and years ahead."

Maybe hard to believe, but the results at Johannesburg marked a last minute veer from a collision with the 21st century that might have splintered the United Nations as a vehicle for world leadership. That may have been simply because the wheels came off Agenda 21. As it was, the track was left littered in a debris of parts from the burnout. "NGOs," "paradigm shift," "sustainable development," "wildlands project," "smart growth," and "earth charter" went spinning along under their own momentum with Agenda 21, unlikely to be reassembled in a U.N. shop that could never make the pieces fit.

There was something firm in the presence of Colin Powell, calmly calling for the



**NEVER BEFORE HAD THERE
BEEN PRESENTED QUITE
SUCH A CHANCE
FOR OPPORTUNISTS OF ALL
STRIPES TO IMAGINE
THEMSELVES AS HAVING
A LEGITIMATE ROLE
IN "WORLD GOVERNMENT."**

mechanics of it all to awake from the dream begun with such innocent enthusiasm in 1970.

As it begins, Walt Kelly's memorable cartoon character Pogo is standing in the bow of his raft somewhere in the slippery green, but somehow damaged, Okefenokee swamp. "We have met the enemy, and he is us," says Pogo in that landmark theme cover for the world's first Earth Day celebration. A brilliant possum, created by an ardent opponent of political repression in the Joseph McCarthy era, expresses what seems an undeniable

truth, and, ironically, pops the cork on a genie that will be all but impossible to control.

Earth Day was conceived and convened by Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.), an intensely liberal Midwesterner in the shadow of rural Progressive leader Robert La Follette, whom Nelson feared might not have left enough for him to do. But Nelson, closely allied in the early '60s with the Kennedy family, found a unique place in American history. Staunchly antiwar himself, he was greatly impressed by marathon teach-ins begun on college campuses to protest U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Nelson hoped to model his April day of national concentration on the environment along the style of those forums, and he plainly wanted to capture some of that student energy directed against the war.

His timing was apt. The first version of a National Protection Act that would evolve into the Endangered Species Act had passed Congress in 1966. President Richard Nixon, eager to find ways to soften the political divisions over the war in Vietnam, stood ready to sign a

string of powerful new laws on behalf of the environment. Past their unforeseen implications, the new laws might have been written in apple-pie ink during those times of general agreement that something had to be done.

Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," published in 1962, had already choked the use of insecticides, especially DDT, perhaps, doomsayers still warned, not even in time to head off a catastrophic worldwide cancer epidemic. Some rivers and streams were so clogged with fuel wastes it was said they would catch fire, just as the Cuyahoga River near Cleveland did



Sen. Gaylord Nelson (right) congratulates William K. Reilly, senior staff member of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, on Earth Day 1970. In 10 years, the doomsayers predicted the death rate from starvation would be 100 or 200 million people a year. Reilly later served as president of the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., the Conservation Foundation, and administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

in 1969. It was out before anybody could take a picture. And though it came at a time when some \$30 million was being spent to clean up pollutants in the stream, that most famous fire was at least the 10th time the Cuyahoga had gone ablaze since 1858 and only one of many similar floating oil fires on rivers all the way to Baltimore. The 1972 Clean Water Act was already being written at the time.

Adding to the evident abuse and indifference to nature, there were the films of baby harp seals being clubbed to death for their pelts and of the slaughter of sperm whales taken for useless oil. "Pollution" was not really a tough word, but its effects seemed obvious everywhere. People seemed to be waiting to be told what to do about it.

More than that, however, what amounted to a new subset of scientific scholars was waiting to scare the bell-bottoms off a lot of young people eager to listen. Foremost among them was Paul Ehrlich, a Stanford University biologist who made a career out of

preaching that mankind had already confirmed its own doomsday.

As of Earth Day I, Ehrlich gave the world maybe another decade before the death rate from starvation due to overpopulation alone would amount to 100 or 200 million people a year. "Most of the people who are going to die in the greatest cataclysm in the history of man have already been born," Ehrlich wrote in *Ramparts* magazine's Earth Day issue. Food shortages, he said later in sagely advising tones, might grow so desperate that in the 1980s, four billion people would perish, including 65 million Americans. He called it "The Great Die-Off."

Time and again, Ehrlich was shown to be off his bad news biologist ass, but he still got headlines, and that seemed attractive to others as well. The politically respected Washington University biologist Barry Commoner called it "an environmental crisis which threatens the survival of this nation and of the world as a survivable place of human

habitation." Harvard biologist George Wald gave civilization 30 years at best before it would be overwhelmed by its own pollution.

By all estimates, at least 20 million people participated in Sen. Nelson's Earth Day forum, April 22, 1970. Most of them came to it through nationwide media exposure that became like a field day, or a casting call, for prophets of doom and gloom who lined up one after another to present their fears over radio and television.

Ronald Bailey, in his breakaway essay for *Reason* magazine in 2000 ("Earth Day, then and now"), compared Ehrlich to a "reverse Cassandra—Cassandra made true prophecies but no one would listen to her. Ehrlich makes false prophecies and everybody listens to him."

As Ehrlich and other microphone-snatching scientists seemed to be trying to one-up each other with steadily more dire predictions, few critics could work their way in. A nation schooled at the drive-in movie seemed

eager to hear the latest frightening tale, as if the giant ants were out there, just behind the horizon somewhere.

This was in some contrast to the technological reality that had put a man on the moon and even made Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" an imaginable event. Rachel Carson was by then also known to have been tragically wrong about the cancer, but DDT did not come back, costing what some scientists say was needless loss of a million lives a year to malaria. Overpopulation was actually slowing down and food supplies were rising. If wars were not disrupting Third World nations, even relentless poverty there showed hopeful signs of recovery.

But aside from all its scary stories, Nelson's forum involving so many people for the first time discussing their shared planetary future, not just their national agendas, left a great impression on the United Nations. Despite how obvious the need now seemed, the United Nations in its first quarter century had done little beyond appointment of some committees on canned consumer research to take the initiative on the great global issues of survival. Nelson had brought together a toolbox-load of grassroots organizations, nearly all of which had been formed since World War II, and many of which were fired with enthusiasm drummed up on college campuses since the civil rights movement. They were looking for new causes, and the romance of the environment was a strong stimulus. Like Pogo, they were looking for someone to blame. U.N. leaders, concerned about an erosion of faith in the world body to stop wars and address world poverty, were looking for a new role that could establish U.N. authority in world leadership.

Little used up to then, a provision of the United Nations Charter provided for inclusion of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in matters that involved their expertise and special interests. Perhaps culling from some of Sen. Nelson's own lists, U.N. authorities led by the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Human Rights Commission

convened a meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, as the Conference on the Human Environment.

It was preceded by a report in 10 languages entitled "Only One World," vaguely stating U.N. ambitions to serve as a host for ideas. But what was most telling about where this first international conference would lead was the roster of its participants. It included two heads of state, with lesser delegations

AFTER 1972, THE PROLIFERATION OF NGOS SPREAD LIKE A LOCUST INVASION INTO VIRTUALLY EVERY FIELD OF HUMAN ENDEAVOR. SELF-APPOINTED ALTRUISTS WITHOUT ANY ACCOUNTABILITY OR EVIDENT SUPERVISION APPEARED IN ACTIVE POSITIONS ON ADVISORY BOARDS, SUBCOMMITTEES AND CLUBS ALL OVER THE WORLD, EACH WITH A FAMILIAR SELF-EFFACING STYLE THAT OFFERED "PARTNERSHIP" TO SOLVE PROBLEMS THEY OFTEN CREATED THEMSELVES. SOME OF THEM ARROGANTLY SAW THEMSELVES AS AGENTS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER. SOME OBSERVERS SAW THEM AS MERCENARIES IN A SUBTLE WAR FOR CONTROL.

from 113 countries. It was dominated, however, by representatives of 250 NGOs.

Presumably, though frequently without any real credentials to prove it, an NGO was a nonprofit organization without any government ties or funding, but with special expertise in its field of interest. NGO representatives were assumed to be motivated by their interest in humanitarian or environmental concerns. The biggest of these charitable groups, like the International Red Cross, fell into a special category recognizing its historic contribution. But others, like the American Civil Liberties Union or Amnesty International, seemed to come from a fuzzy donor base. Some, whose agendas seemed relatively clear in the active protection of the environment, like Greenpeace or The Nature Conservancy, shunned inquiries on the details of their organization. And a few, like Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, seemed obviously to present themselves as cults, with Moon himself saying he wanted

someday to become U.N. president, "for life."

Never before had there been presented quite such a chance for opportunists of all stripes to imagine themselves as having a legitimate role in "world government." That much was not really on the table in Stockholm, where the idea was to seek a definition for how the world body might serve to convene a new way of thinking about problems like pollution and overpopulation that superseded the issues of individual nations.

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union still went on as a sullen backdrop, evident when delegates of East Germany were denied participation and the Warsaw Pact nations walked out in protest. But among the young people in the American and Western European NGOs especially, such worn-out ideological issues could not skin the opportunity for a separate peace afforded by Stockholm. They knew each other in the bars and coffeehouses, in the places where ideas keep you awake, and it was in such places where the dialogue really began.

Officially, the Conference on Human Development produced the "Stockholm Declaration" saying, among other

things, that when in doubt economic development should take priority over environmental protection. If that sounds conservative, then perhaps it should be read backward. Protection of the environment had become a new priority of the United Nations, and the number of agencies assigned to that task increased tenfold. It formed the United Nations Environmental Program, based in Nairobi, Kenya, like a central terminal and clearinghouse for the traffic of environmental data coming in and the actions going out by NGOs that remained and grew in active service as consultants.

None could have been more potent and informative than "Nature's Landlord," The Nature Conservancy (*RANGE*, Spring 2003), which was rapidly consolidating its authority over millions of acres in the United States and across the world as the "Last Great Places." The budget of TNC, through foundation and federal grants, would soon exceed that of U.N. programs themselves devoted to the



At Johannesburg, Friends of the Earth protested with African-made papier maché figures expressing, in many languages, "betrayal" of the Rio summit promises to honestly address world problems rather than simply promoting the secret agendas of NGOs.

environment. Yet TNC, as an NGO, was accountable to no government and no voting membership. It was, and is, a shadowy organization run by a board comprised of some of the most powerful capitalists on earth, including active or former executive officers from Goldman Sachs Investing, ConAgra, General Motors, and McKinsey Corporation. Forget the Moonies; if any NGO is likely ever to take over the United Nations, it is The Nature Conservancy.

But, dear dreamer, why? After Stockholm, it was sort of like the college all-stars being invited to the Super Bowl, and playing to a tie. Overtime in a series of less-noted international meetings was no contest, always dominated by the NGOs. TNC alone was developing the most extensive data bank since Noah on earth species and biodiversity. Careful to avoid public exposure, the powerful nonprofit commanded quiet respect for its financial

holdings and for its growing influence over governments with marginal authority or will to direct their own environmental policy.

From Stockholm, the NGOs, and the United Nations itself, brought a sense that they had experienced the beginning of nothing less than a "paradigm shift" in world awareness.

I am writing this at Christmastime, dear dreamer, so you should forgive me when I compare their thought on the paradigm to that star that guided the Wise Men. Something that would change the world had been born, and to them it meant that all intelligent life would soon recognize their interdependence with nature. A boy is a tree is a dog. It could all be made to work together only if inequities in wealth and differences in philosophy could be eliminated.

They compared this new paradigm shift to the Copernican revolution of the 16th cen-

tury, gradually acknowledging that earth was not the center of the universe and that our planet, and all the planets in our solar system, traveled around a sun not much different than countless others like it holding unimaginable numbers of solar systems in similar orbits. The existence of mankind alone could not be the reason for it all.

Copernican thought would not be commonly acceptable for 400 years. The advocates out of Stockholm generally expected that modern technology would spread the awareness of their new paradigm much more rapidly. Beyond that, it held the basis for a fundamental restructuring of world order that they believed might be set in motion even before most of civilization realized it.

After 1972, the proliferation of NGOs spread like a locust invasion into virtually every field of human endeavor. Not just in the cause of the environment or poverty, but to

international law and neighborhood improvement. Self-appointed altruists without any accountability or evident supervision appeared in active positions on advisory boards, subcommittees and clubs all over the world, each with a familiar self-effacing style that offered "partnership" to solve problems they often created themselves. Some of them arrogantly saw themselves as agents of the new world order. Some observers saw them as mercenaries in a subtle war for control.

TNC's partnerships, for example, went as far as outright collusion with U.S. federal programs intended to buy back or peel away agricultural uses of water and other resources, under the guise of the Endangered Species Act, but with the intent of shifting more resources into urban control.

Observing other NGOs all over the world brought suggestions that they acted "like spies," or that donated commodities and other goods were directed first to NGOs operating in poor countries where they were absorbed even before they could be seen by the Red Cross. In the active network they established among themselves, what the NGOs all worked toward was a 20-year reunion under sanction of the United Nations—the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

This time, it was a world conference beyond compare to any other in history. There were representatives of 172 governments, 108 of them heads of state. There were 2,400 representatives from civic groups and local governments.

But the summit was dominated by the presence of more than 17,000 representatives of NGOs—three times the total number of all others attending. That itself seemed a paradigm shift as an *ad hoc* body with unclear foundations virtually took control of U.N. policy. The Nature Conservancy, by the way, signed for its participation leaving its country of origin blank and its headquarters as "transnational."

Among hundreds of reports and conclusions, the Summit of 1992 produced a singular, sinister-sounding document that dwarfed anything the United Nations had ever produced in the name of the environment, or for that matter in the object of international authority—Agenda 21.

"The programme areas that constitute Agenda 21 are described in terms of the basis for

all objectives, activities and means of implementation," it states in the preamble to the United Nations Agenda 21. "Agenda 21 is a dynamic programme. It will be carried out by the various actors according to the different situations, capacities and priorities of countries and regions in full respect of the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It could evolve over time in the light of changing needs and circumstances. This process marks the beginning of a new global partnership for sustainable development."

The key words here, and repeated almost



tediously through the long document, are "sustainable development."

If it seems to read like something issued from where the students are occupying the dean's office, do not be deceived. Agenda 21 contains the potential for the most stringent restructuring of social order and private property rights since the Dark Ages. It also contains the potential for the self-destruction of the United Nations itself.

"Given the United Nations current financial and political constraints," says Agenda 21, "it is only a matter of time before practical considerations, as well as the aspirations and demands of the NGOs, necessitate new mechanisms that assure them a stronger voice and role."

The United States was not a signatory to Agenda 21, but that really didn't matter. The declaration was regarded as "soft" law implied by treaty, and President Bill Clinton issued an

executive order in support.

Those times, those golden days in 1992, may perhaps be remembered as the glorious peak of the environmental movement. Certainly in the United States, with Clinton's appointment of Bruce Babbitt as Interior Secretary and the rapid ascension of radical American "greens" into policy positions, it seemed the way would clear rapidly for the paradigm shift that would present NGOs like TNC with even more power. Overconfident, even arrogant enviro groups were certain that Al Gore would be the next president. They did not plan for defeat. Internationally, the Soviet Union had collapsed, and the last Soviet dictator, Mikhail Gorbachev, had found a new role for himself as head of Green Cross, based, incredibly, at the old Army base of the Presidio in San Francisco that was now part of a U.N. biosphere study area.

Regional success all over the world raised greater confidence in a series of international meetings among the NGOs themselves that suggested more than just a slow acceptance of the paradigm shift in favor of what might seem a worldwide coup.

"The information network of global NGOs made a great impact on the climate talks," modestly stated Ukrika Ayukawa, of the World Wide Fund for Nature. In fact, it was basically the same mob from Rio, meeting in Kyoto, Japan, only five years later in 1997, that forced on the United Nations a new protocol that would demand the United States and other major powers drastically reduce use of fossil fuels. This was to combat "global warming," while at the same time trade off their capacity by encouraging greater use of fossil fuels in China and India as part of "sustainable development" to balance the world's wealth. The science of global warming was as debatable among serious scholars as the contrasting predictions of a new ice age had been at Earth Day. But the Kyoto Protocol served a greater use. To put it simply, the "rich" could be made poorer in the name of the environment, and the poor would owe their new wealth to the United Nations with oversight by the NGOs themselves.

Linked to Agenda 21 at the Rio Summit was a directive calling on the United Nations to amass the world's greatest database on the environment and progress toward sustainable development. The Nature Conservancy already claimed to have a great data bank on the world's biology, but what was implied in Agenda 21 was an even more expansive collection of information on politics and social

order. It was like pinning an international badge on already suspicious activities of the NGOs that in other auspices could be considered espionage.

Even the longest-standing NGOs (like TNC), which were by then organized into their own "conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the U.N." (CONGO), were uncomfortable with the rash of new grassroots groups pressing for greater status in the United Nations by 1993.

"So behind a rhetoric of enthusiasm for NGOs lurked profound disquiet," wrote James A. Paul, director of the Global Policy Forum. "Delegations feared changes that might weaken or even eventually sweep away nation-states monopoly of global decision making."

Even in New York, NGOs became at best an embarrassment in trying to force their way into the General Assembly or claim credentials to secure areas. CONGO tried to stand above it, but it was as if even they could not control their younger brothers and sisters. Word spread in the United Nations that NGOs needed to be controlled.

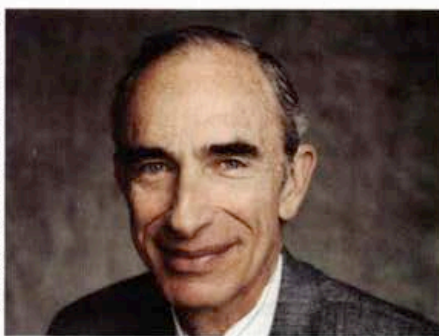
In the new paradigm, sustainable development could be taken to mean whatever the NGOs thought was acceptable. It was not so much a scientifically substantiated act as it was a socially acceptable attitude. In fact, since the 1972 summit, it had been established that resources were best managed not when held "in common" by people, but when they were controlled by private enterprise with the incentive to continue production. The United States might be the most consuming nation, but it was also the most successful nation at cleaning up its own act. Far worse pollution was, and is, produced in China and India. The protocol at Kyoto was obviously not so much anti-industry, as it was blatantly anti-American.

Yet by the time of the Johannesburg conference meant to expand Agenda 21 into a clear blueprint for sustained development, even the NGOs were divided among themselves and their array of idealists, ideologues, profiteers and pirates. Many of them had been in the front lines of violent demonstrations against the World Trade Organization, and even wore their same masks to Johannesburg.

In Africa and South America, local aid

AS EHRLICH AND OTHER MICROPHONE-SNATCHING SCIENTISTS SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO ONE-UP EACH OTHER WITH STEADILY MORE DIRE PREDICTIONS, FEW CRITICS COULD WORK THEIR WAY IN.

© LINDA A. CICERO/STANFORD NEWS SERVICE



© KY CHUNG/UNITED NATIONS



© U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT



Stanford University Professor Paul Ehrlich (top) predicted a "great die-off" that never happened. At the 2002 conference, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan (center) blamed NGOs and the advertising industry for the lack of public enthusiasm for Agenda 21. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell (bottom) told the conference that actions are more important than rhetoric.

agencies and governments complained that the intervention of NGOs in crop science, aid distribution and resource use was aggravating the greater problems of poverty and war. The United States was not alone among U.N. Security Council members who told Kofi Annan they would accept the South Africa

gathering only as the last of such conferences.

The secretary-general was the most eminent among the speakers to present his disappointment that Agenda 21 was not being implemented effectively. He blamed the NGOs in part for failing "to convince public opinion to incorporate sustainability into policies and the everyday consciousness."

He singled out the advertising industry as not being held "accountable for their aggressive promotion of unsustainable production and consumption patterns."

As the new century began, it seemed clear that the new paradigm fell just short of adding up to 21. Lingered still was a plan proposed in Rio, but set aside in Johannesburg, that would instigate real authority of the United Nations in forcing the world to accept sustainable development under a new Earth Charter on the level of the U.N. Charter itself. A new International Court of Justice would enforce the Earth Charter. Ultimately, the plan suggests the United Nations itself might evolve into a bicameral world government.

That much is gone for now and the United Nations, from ill-advised statements over aid to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami as well as dealings in Iraqi relief funds, seems even weaker in its foundations. The NGOs, however, which grew by more than tenfold after Earth Day, still seek their own role. The most successful of them seem to have learned the fundamental lesson taught by Paul Ehrlich from Earth Day I: People want to believe the monster ants are out there.

That is why the Associated Press and publications all over the world readily picked up on a news release last December announcing that "Giant Cockroaches and Micro Crabs" had been found in previously undiscovered caves deep in the jungles of Borneo. The sponsor of the exploration made the announcement with dire concern that logging in the region might doom these and "who knows what other" previously unknown species. The sponsor is The Nature Conservancy. The "giant" cockroach, by the way, is approximately four inches long. ■

Tim Findley's finely honed reportorial skills in both print and broadcast media have earned him the epithet: "The Voice of the West."

(MORE ON SMART GROWTH NEXT PAGE)

SUSTAINING WHOSE GROWTH?

TAKING PRIVATE PROPERTY FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

The momentum of the environmental engine founded at Earth Day 1970 grew with astonishing strength, apparent by the 1990s. Nonprofit organizations formed to protect species or spaces redoubled themselves like fungal growth reaching into new regions, powered with a new interpretation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that stressed preservation of entire habitats.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) alone increased its holdings worldwide to over 180 million acres—over 200,000 square miles, an area the size of Oklahoma or Cambodia. In addition, TNC claimed influence of trusts and easements covering millions more acres, at least 10 million acres in the lower 48 states alone. The TNC “nonprofit” financial holdings from trades and investments exceed \$3.5 billion.

Even among lesser NGOs claiming their devotion to the environment and the resolution of problems in civilization, annual growth among the top 10 exceeded an estimated \$1.5 million a year. It was 10 times that for TNC.

Free money and wildland seemed everywhere. By the time Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt was done with his unfinished mis-

sion to recapture the West, more than 105 million acres (10 times the amount in 1970) had been set aside as new wilderness or wilderness study areas. It was more, really, than the radical Wildlands Project proposed by David Foreman and Reed Noss needed to accomplish their once unbelievable aim of a corridor of carnivores controlling the center of the North American continent from the Yucatan to the Yukon. All it needed was some of the 30 to 90 percent of lands in the West already managed by the federal government. Realistic radicals concluded that some relatively mild convincing and a misleading amount of cash would persuade those who were still in the way to become “willing sellers.”

Ironically, even from Earth Day I, studies and forums had concluded that private ownership of land was invariably more productive and more protective of the environment than any experiments in shared or cooperative uses of a government-directed “common,” includ-

ing the Soviet Union’s brutally inflicted “Five Year Plans” of the Stalinist era in the Ukraine.

Yet Agenda 21, stressing “sustainable development,” evolved in a direction of controlling human behavior in part by limiting options in the use of private property.

Caught by *RANGE* and *The Washington Post* in a contradiction of awarding “saved” land to preferred contributors and advancing large funds to its own executives, TNC adjusted its own focus from acquisition to ultimate influence over smaller parcels through the runaway growth of land trusts, some of which were the creation of The Nature Conservancy itself.

By the end of 2004, an estimated 2,000 or more such trusts of varying sizes were prowling rural regions, culling for grants and federal aid to offer stressed farmers and ranchers cash-paid “easements” over all or portions of their land in return for limiting use of that land to agriculture or open space, “in perpetuity.” That’s forever, guaranteed by TNC.

It is, the trusts argue, a means of halting the “sprawl” of private development absorbing the West, although the more than 10 million acres placed in such trust by 2004 seemed to exaggerate the threat of sprawl.

**DON'T SMOKE.
DON'T MENTION
GOD UNLESS IT'S
IN CHURCH.
AND DON'T EVEN
ASK HOW ALL
THESE PEOPLE GOT
SO MUCH SMARTER
THAN YOU.**

FORECASTS

LISTENING TO
NATIVE AMERICANS.

Native Americans, Paiute and Shoshone of the Great Basin, noticed it first. In a fifth season of drought east of the Sierra Nevada, there were strangely more rabbits, cottontails especially, among the clutter of sage in the sprawling valleys. Coyotes and other predators that had raged among the small animals and even domestic pets the previous summer seemed to have faded back. That early autumn, as they climbed into the mountains, the Paiute found the piñon trees sagging with the weight of a bumper crop of pine nuts.

The signs seemed unmistakable. A heavy

winter was coming; one that would require a good harvest to survive. By the beginning of December, what may prove to be the “worst” eastern Sierra winter in 88 years began with relentless snowstorms and deep cold.

What is important is that the signs were there *before* the winter. There had not been abundant food for rabbits or reliable rain for piñon trees for five years, yet suddenly both produced more in the summer and fall, as if warning to prepare for a bitterly harsh and hungry season.

Sophisticated weather science had not predicted the drought-ender. Those with degrees attached to their cubicle walls took only patronizing notice of the Native American anecdotes. Some scientists were drawn away to study why wildlife seemed less affected by the tsunami of Southeast Asia.

Does nature provide warning signs that “science” cannot appreciate? Or is it perhaps

that some who call themselves scientists are unwilling to accept truth without reward.

In the 1890s, on the verge of the 20th century, American publications surveyed those thought to be the best thinkers about what to expect in the last 100 years of the millennium.

In 1900, the *Brooklyn Eagle* foresaw electricity replacing steam power and women given the right to vote. Information would be sent by electronic means. People would work from their homes. Something called “liquid air” would provide cheap power, even to the poor.

The Ladies Home Journal saw wireless telephones and cameras connecting the entire world. Controlled hot or cold air would be used like a spigot to regulate the temperature of a house.

These were reasonable guesses contained within progress already made in manned flight, communications and even warfare. In

Where sprawl of new development really is evident, in the suburban regions and exurban communities, the concept of Agenda 21 contained an answer in so-called "Smart Growth."

Significantly, it is an idea that apparently won't fly in Massachusetts, where one local official told *The Boston Globe*, "This isn't a way to cede control; it's a way to seize control." But it has a clumsily flapping impact on Kings County, outside of Seattle, Wash. Local politicians, directed by a runaway county chief executive, have initiated volumes of new regulations under an almost Soviet-sounding Critical Areas Ordinance. Sharp lines are drawn for increased urban housing density while putting in place incredible laws that would permit rural property owners to make use of only 35 percent of their own land. The rest would be left to native growth. Nothing could be built on that 65 percent. If a tree were removed, it must be replaced. Unbelievably, if part of that private land were found to be environmentally sensitive, the owner would not even be allowed to set foot on that much of his own property.

"It's stealing—out and out stealing," said Kings County resident Marshall Brednen. "Pure and simple, it's theft."

Actually, it's Agenda 21, which says in part, "current lifestyles and consumption patterns of the affluent middleclass—involving high meat intake, use of fossil fuels, appliances, home and work air conditioning, and suburban housing—are unsustainable."

A model for "sustainability," according to the Clinton-created U.S. Council on Sustainable Development, is Santa Cruz, Calif., which was given a national award for Smart Growth Achievement last year based on its Accessory Development Unit (ADU) program. ADU encourages new small houses and bungalows, once banned as "mother-in-law" additions, to be built on existing proper-



Private ownership of land is more productive and protective of the environment than any experiment in shared or cooperative use, including Stalin's brutal U.S.S.R. "Five-Year Plans."

ty such as vacant front lawns or backyards, thus increasing urban density while opening new income sources for property owners. Many property owners and residents of Santa Cruz County, just as in Kings County, Wash., were appalled at elements of the plan that denied services to rural residents outside the "urban line," and referred to automobile use as "behavior" in need of "modification" that might be determined by a county "energy master."

Science fiction stuff. Yet variations on the theme of Smart Growth have been intro-

duced and are in place in cities like Portland, Ore., Boulder, Colo., and in dozens of lesser-known communities.

It works with the charm of bicycle paths and narrow-lane shopping centers in the places where the intense cost of private property is expected to rise, in part to cover Smart Growth requirements for "affordable housing" and the repayment of state and federal bonds backing carefully planned new construction. It includes new schools designed by the planners and new standards imposed by the politically correct. Don't smoke. Don't mention God unless it's in church. And don't even ask how all these people got so much smarter than you.

Smart Growth is intended to halt the more "natural" expansion of "slow growth" by replacing sales and trades of random properties with a virtual "forced growth" contained within the parameters of planning—an urban line drawn clearly as a boundary. In every case so far, it has resulted in higher costs of housing, greater pollution and self-deceiving attitudes about its value to the environment. It is perfectly in keeping, for example, with the plan derived from the Wildlands Project to allow dense zones of human enclaves alongside the restricted wilderness.

Run a ribbon through it all and see if you like the package.—*Tim Findley*

1900, with 4,000 automobiles sold worldwide, there were already 36 traffic fatalities.

Doomsayers and doubters were led by Charles H. Duell, commissioner of U.S. Patents, who said in 1899: "Everything that can be invented has been invented."

Mankind did fly. All the way to the moon. Treatment and cures were found for diseases once beyond mention. Freedom, not slavery, became the standard of human belief. The key to genetics was discovered in DNA. With the transistor, a means of communication was open to the entire world, and its various people found ways to work together as never before. The fear of overpopulation fell away as prosperity lessened the need for more children. Even the oppression of tyranny and military force was generally and firmly erased as a threat to the earth. Mankind was on the verge of exploring the stars, and only artificial political excuses could stand in the way. Per-

haps half the population alive today witnessed it for themselves.

Forecasts on the future by an influential elitist few contend that what lies ahead is disaster, not glory; condemnation, not creation.

It is such a sad lie when mankind—or all of life if you like—stands on the verge of perhaps its greatest achievement. There is not less of the world today; there is more. More forests, more varieties of life, and more dedication to preserving the intricacies of the environment. Fewer face the drudgery of farming, but there is more food. Industry is more productive, and yet cleaner in the process where it has been most successful. Every sign of human destruction of the planet, from overpopulation to ignorant exploitation, shows far less evidence of threatening the future than it does of adjusting to a greater will for preservation.

Maybe we, too, have some instinct left.

Before we accept lies about what little was accomplished in the 20th century, perhaps it is better to remind ourselves that the last 100 years made us bright enough to know that such heavily bent bows of piñon nuts are a promise, as much as a warning, of heavy winter.

Science has achieved a great deal in our lifetime. Great global debates, such as that over planetary warming, are used to frighten some and intimidate others. Human catastrophes caused by the misuse of technology are cited as more examples.

Yet nature endures. Still far more powerful than anything mankind can create, and still far more mysterious in its wisdom that caused the birds and animals to flee inland as the seas rose, while we were driven by our curious nature to the beach.

There is still much left to learn in the 21st century.—*Tim Findley*