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The Greening of Conservative America, by John R.E. Bliese

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spill provoked too many unanswered questions. It is only natural to wonder how (in the physical sense) a 20 million gallon oil spill occurs over 38 years. Minimal textual descriptions and a random endnote or two left my curiosity unsatisfied. There should have been a short section in the introduction that described the physical causes of the spill.

Other than these minor imperfections, *Silent Spill* was well-worth reading. It provided a refreshing new look at "how" oil spills happen and should be required reading for anyone interested in changing the regulations that apply to oil spills. Understanding the social dynamics inherent in these systems will inform legislators, regulators, and citizens how to prevent future spills and craft more effective regulations.

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The Greening of Conservative America. By John R.E. Bliese. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002. Pp. 339. \$33.00 hardcover; \$27.00 paper.

Anyone interested in American environmental policy will feel at least a twinge of curiosity after reading the title of this book, *The Greening of Conservative America*. The greening of what? Author John R.E. Bliese, associate professor of communication studies at Texas Tech University, took on an extraordinary task with this brave publication. You don't have to be a professor or a politician to know that protection of our environment and natural resources is generally a priority for those at the left end of the political spectrum. The author challenges this generalization on every page of his book. In *The Greening of Conservative America*, Bliese, a self-declared conservative, not only calls for a conservative environmental agenda but also presents conservative programs to address environmental concerns. And, in his opinion, any principled conservative should embrace his proposals because a failure to do so would be a departure from the values most fundamental to conservative beliefs.

The structure of the book is simple and well suited to promote the author's innovative ideas and approaches to law and policy. Bliese begins with a discussion of common misconceptions about environmentalism and an explanation of fundamental conservative principles. After laying this foundation, Bliese begins his examination of current policies regarding a handful of environmental issues. And, of course, he doesn't stop after examining current policy. At the heart of this book are his strong suggestions for the agenda that conservatives

should be building, supporting, and implementing. He completes the text by exploring the role of the market in restructuring American environmental policies and suggesting limits for employing market-based policies.

Bliese is quick to address his own frustrations with the common perceptions of environmentalism in the United States. He starts by asserting that, contrary to popular belief, environmentalists are not trying to destroy capitalism, nor are they all "tree-hugging pagan nature worshipers." While some believe that environmentalism is contrary to the Christian faith, Bliese says this contention "shows the accusers' profound ignorance of both environmentalism and Christianity." According to Bliese, most of the national environmental organizations consist of predominantly white, upper-middle-class members. Further, there is no support in the Judeo-Christian tradition to support either opposition or indifference to environmentalism.

Another misconception that Bliese rejects is that environmentalists are all messengers of "gloom and doom." He acknowledges that the "gloom and doom" tactic is one used too often by environmentalists to get the public's attention, while at the same time he concedes that the media encourages these scare tactics. He also observes that although conservatives are invariably turned off by this tactic, they have commonly advanced similar tactics for policy areas other than the environment. His point in dismissing this misconception is that even if someone doesn't buy into the "gloom and doom" scenario, it is by no means grounds to write off the entire environmental political position.

How many times have we heard things, from both sides of the spectrum, about the relationship between environmentalism and the economy? Bliese devotes an entire chapter to his cursory explanation of this complex relationship. But he's not only trying to make sense of it; he states that it is a *myth* that environmental protection harms the economy. He proves this difficult assertion through a simple analysis. First, he provides summaries of studies that show that states with stricter environmental standards do not suffer economically as a result but instead can benefit economically. Second, he shows that strong environmental standards, such as pollution regulations, can actually improve business and industrial competitiveness. Third, he points out failed efforts to show that strict environmental regulations cause industrial flight to other nations. Fourth, environmental protection does not mean fewer jobs for Americans. Bliese explains that although some jobs will be lost by implementation of strict environmental standards, this loss is balanced by jobs in the newly created environmental protection industry. But the U.S. did forfeit some jobs in environmental protection technologies to other countries. Bliese doesn't hesitate to put the blame for this shift on the conservative Reagan and Bush

administrations in the 1980s, which abandoned environmental products and technologies. Put all these contentions together, as well as several others that Bliese explains in this chapter, and it becomes clear that protecting the environment does not harm our economy.

In the third chapter, Bliese identifies nine core conservative principles: conservatism is not materialistic; freedom of the individual is important; responsibility is a corollary of freedom; private property is a fundamental social institution; the free market is a fundamental social institution; piety is a virtue, especially piety toward nature; society is intergenerational; prudence is the most important political virtue; and conservatives are not ideologues. These principles reappear throughout the rest of the book as Bliese uses them in support of his proposed environmental agenda. They are the threads that enable him to hold conservatives accountable for dangerous environmental neglect and tie his proposed agenda to the right side of the political spectrum.

Bliese acknowledges that he cannot possibly address all the major environmental problems in one volume. He chooses to address pollution, public lands, global warming, endangered biodiversity, and sustainability. Dedicating a chapter to each of the problems that he targets (two for global warming), Bliese first explains the issue, including origins, causes, and effects, and then provides solutions accompanied by the conservative principles that should make his solutions attractive to conservatives.

For purposes of this review, I will consider Bliese's discussion of Forest Service practices in his chapter on public lands. A primary concern regarding Forest Service public land management is "iron triangle politics," which Bliese defines as

the cooperative coalition of business interests that want cheap access to public resources, a bureaucratic agency that provides those resources, and the politicians beholden to the special interests who appropriate the taxpayer subsidies that finance the cozy scheme and give the agency appropriate rewards. (95)

According to Bliese, both democrats and republicans have fixed public land management in this triangle.

Bliese is also particularly concerned with the practice of subsidizing public land use, the effects of which trickle down into a variety of subsequent problems. He alleges that the Forest Service permits private use of forests and grazing lands at costs far below market levels and then sells the timber from logging at below cost. These policies make the American public pay for private use and profits. Another result is that the Agency, which is already under budgeted, lacks the necessary funds to purchase additional lands and restore already damaged public

lands. Other negative impacts of these policies include severely damaged forests, including loss of old growth, desertification from overuse of grazing lands, and destruction of public recreation areas. "Hikers and campers now find cow-bombed canyons, polluted streams, dust and flies, and manure so thick that campsites have to be shoveled out." (119) Bliese lists several of his nine conservative principles that are violated by the Forest Service land management policies. Abuse of the forests is a "violation of piety toward nature and abdication of responsibility for damage caused." Unsustainable logging is a violation of the duty to act responsibly for future generations. And the loss of billions of taxpayer dollars is a violation of "the economic principle against subsidies." In identifying these violations, Bliese is calling for a response by conservatives.

He suggests that conservatives consider several forestry reforms. One small step toward reform could be made through local collaborative planning groups that join efforts to balance interests at stake in forestry planning. Regarding privatization or state control of the public lands or turning them over to the states, Bliese distinguishes between traditional conservatives, who would keep the lands under federal control, and libertarians, who would favor privatization. Bliese does not advocate privatizing public lands because this would potentially create even more problems, such as extending suburban sprawl into our national forests. Instead, he supports implementation of new incentives that will produce a shift from "maximizing timber production to ecosystem management, elimination of the subsidies for all destructive uses, and establishment of reserves for the remaining old growth sections on Forest Service lands. The Agency could offset jobs lost as a result of these changes by creating jobs for reforestation, stream restoration, and road removal. Finally, Bliese suggests a policy shift that would make recreation a priority and at the same time generate revenue for the Agency and localities. For example, there could be a charge for day-use entry and use of camping facilities, similar to methods used by the National Park Service. (He does draw a line when it comes to off-road vehicles. These should be regulated regardless of what the owners would pay.) Bliese even recommends that the money generated from recreation fees be placed in either a "biodiversity trust fund" to protect endangered species or a "wilderness trust fund" to protect wilderness.

These reform suggestions do not exhaust the author's proposals. *The Greening of Conservative America* is full of dozens of ideas to improve American environmental policy. Bliese does a remarkable job with a very complex task. He not only presents ideas but also fleshes them out and supports them with political principles. In most cases, his proposed reforms are sensible and practical, and, at the very least, a tremendous improvement over current policies.

Possibly the largest problem with this book is that it will not be read by enough people or, rather, by the people who need it most. As a "leftist, tree-hugging environmentalist," I did not expect Bliese to be persuasive. I must admit, however, that I am sincerely confident that if this book made its way around Washington, D.C., we would know it. It may not cause a complete environmental policy reform, but it could have a significant impact if it gets in the right hands.

This book's effectiveness is not only limited by the number of conservatives who would be open-minded enough to read it, but also by Bliese's emphasis on nine conservative principles. A conservative may get to the point of reading it, but if her political ideals are not attached to the principles Bliese uses to win her over, then she is much less likely to be convinced.

Nevertheless, this book serves a critical and timely purpose. Bliese creates a tremendous amount of credibility with his coverage of technical aspects, economics, science, politics, and law. Even as a conservative, he manages to remain politically neutral by being upfront and honest whether pointing fingers at the Reagan administration or a Democratic Congress. At the same time, his conservative background and beliefs allow him to be more persuasive in his address to principled conservatives.

The Greening of Conservative America gives me hope for the future of environmental regulation and protection in this country. Anyone concerned about or involved with U.S. environmental policymaking should read this book—conservatives, libertarians, liberals, and radicals alike.

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