

THIS AUGUST ISSUE has been long in the works. Supported by a generous grant from the William H. Donner Foundation, which has underwritten this entire issue, we were able to hold a little meeting at the Drake Hotel in Chicago in January. To discuss the question of environmental ethics, we assembled a diverse group of people, almost none of them known to each other. In addition to the *Chronicles* editors (Katherine Dalton, Theodore Pappas, Chilton Williamson, and myself), we brought together John Baden, one of the foremost free-market environmentalists, Andrew Kimbrell, a partner of Jeremy Rifkin's at The Foundation on Economic Trends, William Jordan of the Wisconsin Arboretum and a founder of the ecological restoration movement, novelist and outdoor writer William Mills, Frederick Turner, whose poetry and essays have appeared frequently in this magazine, and Michael Warder, executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

The conversation was always lively and often pointed, and there were gaping fissures—never to be bridged—between Andy Kimbrell and John Baden, but the group did basically come to something like agreement on a number of points. The first and most important point was, more or less, metaphysical: radical environmentalism had gone sour on humanity, which it saw as an evil force lying outside nature. A proper environmentalist ethic would have to be grounded in a recognition of man's place in (as well as outside of) nature. A part of being human, we agreed, was our interest in other forms of life, and I think we were all impressed by E.O. Wilson's *Bio-philia*, in which he argues that man is by nature a naturalist. Although Professor Wilson was unable to attend the meeting, his work formed one of the basic premises of the discussion.

If man is and must be an important consideration for any environmentalism, schemes that go against the grain of human nature are doomed, not just to fail but to do enormous harm. The

most obvious antihuman policies have been based on a contempt for property rights. In work done by Garret Hardin and John Baden on "the tragedy of the commons," it had been shown that property held in common (especially by large groups) was far more likely to be abused than privately held land. It was essential, we agreed, to restore the sense of land ownership both in the literal sense and in the broader sense of local (as opposed to national) control. "Think globally, act locally," was the watchword, although I have reservations about even thinking globally.

We talked about a great many things, particularly the need to appeal to the imagination and to the aesthetic sense. As important as economic and legal arguments were, no human-centered environmentalism could succeed if its arguments were confined to cost/benefit calculations. Above all, what emerged was an appreciation for what man could do, if he put his mind to it, to undo much of the harm he had done. While so much environmentalism today would tell human beings to get out and stay out of the woods and grasslands, confining our activities to the strictly negative function of doing no harm, Bill Jordan and the restorationists are offering us an opportunity to use science and technology in restoring degraded land and cutover forests. As tempting as it is to turn our backs on the science and technology that have helped to pollute the world, it is vitally important to press them into service. As Fred Turner pointed out, part of being human (and Western) is our enthusiasm for challenges and the conviction that there is little we cannot do. Restoration efforts will not only draw out what is best in the American character, they will also reinvolve us actively as a partner in nature. What is needed, argued both Turner and Jordan, was the modern equivalent of the great landscape gardeners of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Although the purpose of the meeting (and of this issue) was to lay the foundations for a conservative ethic of

environmentalism, only half the participants could really be described as "conservatives." This was partly out of a desire to have a lively debate—and no one is livelier in debate than Mr. Kimbrell—but partly because of the dearth of serious thought on the right. The knee-jerk conservative response is to make light of the dangers and make fun of the Greens. While this skepticism has occasionally thrown a healthy bucket of cold water on the hysterical prognosticators, it has generally revealed a mentality that can see no good beyond this year's balance sheet. A "bottom-line" conservatism is simply unable to grapple with most of the serious problems that confront us: environmental crises, Third World overpopulation, crime, immigration, and the general deterioration of standards—cultural and moral—in American life.

Years ago, back in 1976, I began a long letter to a leading conservative journalist. What I wanted to know then, and I still want to know now, is why conservation is not a primary conservative cause. Answering that and related questions took me farther and farther away from the rhythms and forms of Greek poetry and drama and more and more into the realms of philosophy, social theory, and political issues, the themes that occupy so much space in this magazine.

I had always hoped that some conservative group would make environmentalism their issue, but the only good work I could discover was being done by the free-marketeers/libertarians at FREE (John Baden) and PERC (Richard Stroup and Jane Shaw). And while there are other, noneconomic dimensions to this question, these people are pioneers who braved both the anger of the left and the contempt of the right. It was not until this year that I returned seriously to the question posed in the letter that I never sent, and I offer you this issue as a first, fumbling attempt to wrestle with the question.

—Thomas Fleming

FREE-MARKET ENVIRONMENTALISTS, that small band of economists, didn't talk much about the National Park Service in the early 1980's. In their effort to convince the public that the government is often a poor steward, they concentrated on commodity-producing agencies that are supposed to be efficient, agencies such as the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Their recommendation to put even these agencies into private hands met such fierce resistance that it seemed futile to discuss the National Park Service, which has an almost sanctified image as a protector of pristine nature.

That situation changed in 1986 when Alston Chase published *Playing God in Yellowstone*. His book provided a case study of mismanagement that supported nearly every point that the free-marketers wanted to make. Chase argued persuasively that the park's wildlife habitat had deteriorated to the point where its ecological balance was seriously askew. He contended that the cause was the "hands-off" or "natural regulation" approach adopted in 1972, which was designed to let nature regulate Yellowstone's wildlife as if white men had never arrived.

When Yellowstone burst into flames in 1988, Chase's criticisms received new attention. As the fires burned out of control, critics inside and outside government blamed the Park Service's "hands-off" policy (which quickly became known as the "let burn" policy). This policy, which allowed lightning-caused or "natural" fires to burn out of control, ignored the fact that fires had been suppressed for nearly a hundred years; the buildup of fuel contributed to the severity of the 1988 fires.

Chase had identified other problems with the "hands-off" approach, too. For example, predators such as the wolf and the mountain lion were eliminated long ago, so Yellowstone's habitat is hardly "natural" today. Without predators and without any regulation of herd size by the Park Service, elk numbers have grown rapidly. Several biologists and range scientists argue that elk overgrazing has halted regrowth of vegetation such as willow and aspen and contributed to the near-extinction of beaver on the park's northern range. The "hands-off" approach also meant that the elk's popu-

lation was headed for a crash when a severe winter came and food became scarce. That day came during the winter following the fires; one-quarter to one-third of the elk are believed to have died, mostly from starvation.

So it turns out that, just like the "commodity" agencies, the National Park Service is subject to political pressures—not just occasionally but inherently. "So long as the parks are owned and operated by government, the managers must be politically responsive to the various interest groups and constituent pressures within the stated mission of each park," writes Richard Stroup in a new multi-authored book, *The Yellowstone Primer* (edited by John A. Baden and Donald R. Leal, Pacific Institute for Policy Research), which picks up where *Playing God in Yellowstone* leaves off. "Yet the very existence of different interest groups with conflicting goals, each quite legitimate . . . means that achieving the public good is a difficult task."

Until the 1988 fires the "hands-off" approach was a politically successful strategy. It was championed by leaders of the top activist environmental groups, strong political allies of the Park Service, and for the most part it avoided conflict with the general public. Indeed, Park Service rangers had tried killing elk in the 1960's to cull the growing herd, but the public outcry was so great that they had to stop—and "hands off" or "natural" regulation justified future decisions not to intervene. (A park official contends that a similar public outcry would have been heard if the Park Service had intervened to gradually burn off the accumulating tinder that worsened the fires of 1988.)

Nonintervention policy may have worked politically, but it hasn't enhanced or protected the environment. If Yellowstone is going to preserve its wildlife, managers need greater freedom from special interest groups but also more accountability for their actions. (The National Park Service public relations machine often takes the place of accountability.)

Private nonprofit organizations are more effective in protecting the environment, partly because they have the freedom to intervene when doing so is consistent with their mission. For example, The Nature Conservancy pro-

jects grizzly bears on its preserve at Pine Butte, Montana, by setting and controlling fires that stimulate plant growth and by planting native vegetation such as chokecherries that grizzlies eat. And Ducks Unlimited actively creates wetlands to protect waterfowl.

Since private ownership of any national park is not politically feasible, free-market environmentalists have tried to come up with approaches that mimic private ownership. One of those is Richard Stroup's proposal for quasi-private park endowment boards that would manage segments of national parks.

Stroup's idea is to dedicate each park unit (a large, diverse park would have more than one unit) to a narrow purpose, create a board of environmentalists committed to that purpose, and give them freedom to act as long as they remain true to the narrowly specified goal. Rather than obtain support from congressional appropriations (the avenue for political control), the endowment would be financed the way private organizations finance their activities—by means such as entrance fees, voluntary donations, and even, when an endowment board deems it appropriate, oil or mineral rights. The purpose of a park endowment board would be to find a way to let managers concentrate on carrying out their mission, something that Park Service managers are hampered from doing now.

—Jane S. Shaw

CHILDREN ARE DYING in an increasing number of ingenious ways, and the only thing more disturbing than this trend is the even more ingenious way in which society is rationalizing and legally justifying their deaths.

Two-year-old Robyn Twitchell died at his parents' home in Massachusetts on April 8, 1986, after suffering for five days with constipation caused by a birth defect. The parents are currently on trial for manslaughter because they denied their son all medical treatment and attempted to cure him solely with prayer, in accordance with their Christian Science faith. Lawyers for the Twitchells, however, claim that the trial is nothing less than a case of religious persecution, for a 1971 Massachusetts child abuse and neglect law recognizes spiritual healing as a legitimate alterna-

tive to medical treatment. Medical testimony presented by the prosecution revealed not only that Robyn's ailment could have been detected by an X-ray and corrected by surgery, but that he could also have been resuscitated up to thirty minutes after he fell into cardiac arrest. According to the prosecution, Robyn had been dead for at least thirty minutes and possibly for as long as several hours by the time he was brought to Boston's Carney Hospital.

A similar scene is being played out in Hamilton County, Indiana, where last April 15 six-month-old Sean Woodrum died of untreated bronchial pneumonia. His parents are members of a religious sect called Faith Assembly, which shuns any use of medicine and requires physical healing by prayer alone. As of this writing, the parents are awaiting trial on charges of reckless homicide. The parents' defense? Freedom of religion.

Such cases are not uncommon. In fact, the organization CHILD—Children's Healthcare Is a Legal Duty—has identified 140 cases of religiously based medical neglect in which children died. Started in 1983 by ex-Christian Scientist Rita Swan, whose own 16-month-old son died in 1977 when she and her husband and Christian Science practitioners attempted to cure his meningitis solely with prayer, the organization has been at the forefront of the movement to repeal the state immunity laws that condone medical neglect in the name of freedom of religion. (Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have laws that shield medical neglect cases from child abuse charges and six states have exemptions allowing for "nonmedical remedial treatment." Only one state, South Dakota, has repealed all such exemptions and immunity laws.) Her organization's philosophy is simple: that the First Amendment is not without its limits and responsibilities, that freedom of religion does not allow individuals to deprive their children of necessary medical care. (More information about this organization can be obtained by writing CHILD, Inc., P.O. Box 2604, Sioux City, Iowa, 51106.)

Freedom of religion, however, is but one of many specious arguments currently in vogue to explain and justify the death of children. The successful

insanity defense of 18-year-old Claire Hilary Moritt of Hollywood is as offensive in its absurdity as it is gruesome in its detail. A college student at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida, Ms. Moritt was charged with first-degree murder in October 1989 for drowning in a dormitory bathroom the six-pound, nine-ounce boy she had just given birth to moments before. Roommates found the dead newborn stuffed headfirst in a toilet. Although it is clear that Ms. Moritt committed the act, she was acquitted of all charges last April. Her successful defense? A "dissociative disorder" had caused her to forget that she was pregnant and that she had given birth and to kill the baby during a bout of temporary insanity. Ms. Moritt's sanity miraculously reappeared with news of the acquittal. She told the press that she planned to continue her college education so that she could "study law and be able to help other people"—other wrongly accused "victims," no doubt.

The deaths of these children expose many paradoxes. Just as we forbid as insensitive the public display of Nativity scenes while funding a crucifix submerged in urine, we encourage social service agencies to intervene in families that spank their children while deeming the life of a newborn to be no more important than that of the unborn. Fathers are allowed no say in abortion decisions, but they are given a tax break for making decisions that lead to the death of their children (federal tax law considers faith healing a deductible medical expense). And with many of the children who are dying from medical neglect dying amid great suffering and pain (Robyn Twitchell was reportedly vomiting, dehydrated, and in a near comatose state before he died), we can only wonder about the meaning and worth of our laws against cruel and unusual punishment.

In other words, responsibility for the deaths of these children should of course be laid at their parents' door, but some of the blame must also fall on the kinder and gentler and more sensitive society we have fashioned and fussed over for decades—one that measures the virtue of its culture by the degree to which rights and newfangled interpretations of rights can be furthered at the expense of such old-

fashioned principles as moral responsibility and individual accountability. Freedom of religion once meant the right to worship in public, until the government began telling us where and how we can worship. Now it means the right to kill children. Perhaps it's time to give the continent back to the Aztecs.

—Theodore Pappas

THE SIMPSONS is both the hottest and the most controversial program on television. At first sight, a cartoon show for children and adults is not promising material for "equality" TV (remember *The Flintstones*? *The Jetsons*?). Worse, the graphic style of the show is as disturbing as any drawing we have ever printed in *Chronicles*: the Simpsons themselves are only grotesque, but other characters, like the bartender, have sinister, bestial faces.

The most controversial aspect of the show is not the graphics, but the portrayal of a family of chronic under-achievers. There are Simpsons T-shirts that bear the slogan: "I'M AN UNDERACHIEVER AND PROUD OF IT." Drug Czar William Bennett takes this seriously enough to lash out at patients in a Pittsburgh drug-treatment center. According to the AP story, when Bennett spied a poster of Bart Simpson, he exclaimed: "You guys aren't watching the Simpsons, are you? That's not going to help you any." A spokesman for the show confined himself to a dry rejoinder: "I am not aware of any one TV program that will help teenagers kick the drug habit." But, considering the impact of television on its young viewers, Mr. Bennett had raised a legitimate question.

The trouble is, *The Simpsons* may be among the most moral TV programs ever offered to family audiences. By "moral," I mean concerned with questions of right and wrong. One episode found Bart asking his father if popularity was really important. Informed that it was the most important thing in the world, the boy goes out and decapitates the statue of the town's founder, as his friends had pressured him to do. When the town goes into shock and mourning, the boy eventually confesses to his parents. His father willingly assumes responsibility and

helps the boy take the head back, but not before the two of them are captured by an angry mob. What are these immoral themes? Family loyalty, local patriotism, the willingness to accept blame.

What really upsets America's ruling class is the notion that average Americans don't want or need them or their false values. Bart, the underachiever, is in one episode sufficiently tempted that he cheats on an intelligence test and gets sent to a school for gifted children, all of whom turn out to be cruel snobs. But the most populist episode finds Bart sticking up for his

hero, a TV clown accused of committing an armed robbery to which Bart's father was a key witness. At first the boy trusts the evidence but later comes to believe in his hero's character. As it turns out, the real villain is the clown's sidekick, who always wanted to improve the tone of the program. He reads improving books (obviously from a list prepared by the Department of Education) to the kiddies. And whose voice is that of the cultivated poseur? Kelsey Grammer, otherwise known as Dr. Frasier Crane on *Cheers*.

Illusion and reality. We want our kids to grow up reading the right books

and thinking the right thoughts, speaking in a Harvard-professor accent, but when (as in the case of Mr. Grammer) they do, they get arrested on a DUI charge and violate their probation. Perhaps it is better to be an underachiever, if that means working a steady job, taking care of the kids, and muddling through like the Simpsons. If the success of their show is any indication, it means that the 80's—the decade of Yuppies, networking, LBO's, power breakfasts, designer tennis shoes, and the high-priced watery vinegar they call New Beaujolais—are finally over.

—Thomas Fleming

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

One of the unmistakable signs that a new civilization is about to leap forth from the crumbling cocoon of an old is the transformation in the meaning of traditional holidays. When a rising Christian elite seized political and cultural power in the late Roman Empire, it lost no time in turning the old Roman Saturnalia of late December into Christmas. The word "Easter" derives from the name of a pre-Christian dawn goddess, and the Christian observance of the Resurrection is closely linked with the rites of earlier religions that marked the vernal equinox and the annual rebirth of natural life. The elite that forms the core of a civilization understands that it's usually easier to build its power on the wreckage that lies to hand than to start all over from a blank slate.

So it is with the emerging global civilization that now twitches in the neurons of the planet's transnational elites. Today in the United States, the real year begins not with the midnight debauchery of New Year's Eve but with the far more pious festivals of Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month, which offer occasions for exposing the evils of the old regime and proclaiming the universalist, cosmopolitan, and egalitarian vision that makes the eyes of the new elite flutter and drip. But these celebrations are not nearly as useful in binding the planet's human cattle to the chariots of the

coming Caesars as this year's orgy of health, safety, and sunshine known as "Earth Day."

No doubt for the several hundred thousand greenies who descended on the nation's metropolitan centers on April 22 to prostrate themselves in homage to the earth, the festival really was a chance to spit in the face of what they think is a capitalist oligarchy that insists on making people work in factories, eat cholesterol, and get suntans. But the truth is that the celebration, so far from being a revolt against the powers that rule the earth, was actually a proclamation from their headquarters.

Regulation of the "environment" involves much more than the solar panels and tree-planting beloved of schoolchildren and grown-ups whose mental age is no higher than that of 12-year-olds. Since the environment includes everywhere and everything, "preserving," "protecting," and "taking care" of it is little more than a formula for a new species of totalitarianism far more profound than even *la famille* Ceausescu could have imagined. As currently understood, it encompasses not only the labor you perform but also what and how much you eat, where and how you travel, what you do with your leisure time, how you maintain your health, how you raise your children, and indeed whether you may have children.

Unknown to most of those who swoon in adoration of the earth are the bottomless opportunities this understanding of the environment offers to

those who would like to control all these ordinary activities. Nor do most earth-worshippers seem to suspect the sacrifices their new goddess and her high priests will demand of them. Anti-tobacco zealots who rejoice in the illegalization of smoking may not be so merry once they realize they are creating precedents for the banning of meat and potatoes. Mawkish maidens who weep over the fate of youngsters molested by their parents and demand federal action to save the children may one day regret that the state will tell them whom they may or may not marry. Citizens who vow to study war no more may recoil when potentates halfway around the globe are drafting the rules that govern their lives. So far, the "right," immersed in its economic determinism and obsessions, has whimpered only about the jobs that will be lost and the taxes that will have to be paid as a result of environmentalist laws and policies; but it has largely ignored or failed to recognize the far more serious danger that the Cult of the Earth presents—the technocratic manipulation of the daily lives of individuals and societies by the elites that have created and made use of environmentalism.

The environmentalist movement is an odd bag that contains, besides the innocent calves who provided the cannon fodder for Earth Day, at least two main components. On the one hand, there is the part represented by the professional, well-funded, highly-skilled, and well-connected environ-