

Oil and Greens in Washington **CounterPunch**

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The Collapse of the Mainstream Greens

The environmental movement is in upheaval and as a consequence many of the familiar landmarks and signposts across the political landscape are beginning to disappear or to point in new directions. Some of the effects could become visible as soon as the upcoming elections in November.

The tradition of genteel conservatism in the Republican Party pretty much disappeared during the slash-and-burn years of Reagan and Bush. These days, environmentalists are mostly Democrats and indeed a very important part of the Democrats' base of support. It would not take too many defections to fracture that coalition, and as we shall see, such defections are already taking place.

The proximate cause of the overall crisis in the environmental movement is not hard to find. The big green organizations invested heavily in a Clinton-Gore victory and some of their top officials — George Frampton of the Wilderness Society, Brooks Yeager of National Audubon — took jobs in the new government. The secretary of the interior himself, Bruce Babbitt, was formerly head of the "bipartisan" League of Conservation Voters.

The investment has been worthless. Having abandoned any independent, critical posture the national green leadership found itself meekly defending one sell-out after another by Clinton, on forests, water, pesticides, and almost every other area of concern.

Meanwhile, environmental lobbyists largely dropped hill work in exchange for easy access to the lower levels of the Clinton administration, creating a vacuum which allowed the timber Democrats — led by Tom Foley — to reassert themselves.

The environmental establishment saw hope of strengthening the Endangered Species Act vanish. They saw threats even

to such totems as the Delaney Amendment banning cancer-causing additives to processed foods. And they panicked.

In July of this year the leaders of 15 major environmental groups sent out a joint Mayday call to all their members, several million in number, in such groups as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, National Audubon, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. The "call to action" quavered out the grim news: "Even during the Reagan/Watt/Gorsuch years, we have never faced such a serious threat to our environmental laws in Congress. Polluters have blocked virtually all of our efforts ... Now they are mounting an all-out effort to weaken our most important environmental laws."

By early September the SOS had elicited a sarcastic rebuke from 173 grass-roots battlers for environmental causes across the country, contacted by people including Peter Montague of *Rachel's Environmental and Health Weekly*. "We would very much like to meet with you," the answer began. "We want to talk about something your letter did not mention: the source of these problems...[are] the leaders of today's giant corporations and the powerful corporations they direct."

The bitter response nipped at the Achilles' heel of mainstream environmentalism. Much of the flabby coalition depends on corporate handouts. The others, who survive on (declining) membership dues, like the Sierra Club, feel the corporate goad indirectly, through big foundations such as Rockefeller, Pew Charitable Trusts, and W. Alton Jones.

In late September the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, aka the Wise Use movement, sworn foe of the environmentalists (see *CounterPunch*, Vol. 1, No. 6), issued a booklet called "Getting

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Would You Buy a \$545 Subscription from This Man?

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Plus:

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Back from the Future

"President-elect Nixon's appointment of Henry Kissinger...is a reassuring sign. He is an intelligent, articulate and remarkably industrious scholar. His record scarcely supports his journalistic reputation as a foreign policy hard-liner."

— James Reston,
The New York Times,
Dec. 4, 1968

Phoenix Resurgent

The Autumn of a Mass Murderer

As with fellow Vietnam-era war criminals Robert McNamara and Henry Kissinger, time has been kind to William Colby. The man who in the late Sixties directed the Phoenix Program — a secret “pacification” campaign for Vietnam in which more than 20,000 communist “suspects” were rounded up and executed — has graduated to the role of respected advisor to multinational corporations. Named director of the CIA in September of 1973, just in time to oversee the Agency-backed coup that brought Pinochet to power in Chile, Colby now gets big fees promoting “interactive spy adventures” for a computer games company.

Since resigning from the Agency in 1976, Colby has carefully fostered an image as a dove. He supported the nuclear freeze in the early Eighties and during the Bush administration called for reduction of the military budget by 50 percent. In an admiring profile several years ago, *The New York Times*' Elaine Sciolino

wondered whether Colby “is a born-again liberal atoning for past misdeeds...[or] a lifelong populist who is driven to tears by the plight of the world when he watches the nightly news.”

The Phoenix director's latest venture is *The Colby Report For International Business: Critical Intelligence for International Business Leaders to Chart A Safe, Profitable Course in a Complex, Dynamic World Economy*. For a mere \$545 per

Colby's meager analytic tools have not improved from the days of his Tet humiliation

annum, subscribers receive 26 four-page reports, a “distinctive binder” to store issues and Colby's fax number for urgent queries.

In a promo letter sent to potential subscribers, Colby said he had spent his career “predicting the impact of world events [and] at the risk of sounding immodest, my predictions are usually right on target.” This self-portrayal as a visionary is hardly supported by his past.

As head of the Agency's Far East Division, Colby failed to foresee the 1968 Tet Offensive. Under the noses of Colby and the station's 600 officers, Vietcong forces infiltrated tons of weaponry into South Vietnam and briefly occupied virtually every important city and town across the country. It was, in the words of retired agent Ralph McGehee, “one of history's most disastrous intelligence failures.”

Colby also egregiously misread the results of the April 9, 1961 South Vietnamese election — rigged with CIA assistance — in which Ngo Dinh Diem was elected with some 70 percent of the votes. In a cheery secret dispatch from Saigon on May 22, Colby informed top-level Kennedy administration officials that the “psychological uplift [the election] supplied to the regime and to public morale in general was considerable...The President won a solid majority everywhere on his own merits.” Already spying light at

the end of the tunnel, Colby proclaimed that Diem's triumph had “enhanced stability and encouraged hope for the national future.”

According to former Agency officer Paul Sakwa, Colby's rosy assessment — which Sakwa calls “totally divorced from reality” — helped convince administration planners that Diem was worth backing because he had won a legitimate election. “His reports had a great deal to do with our expanded involvement in the war,” says Sakwa. “The end result was 50,000 American dead, 1 million Vietnamese dead and huge numbers wounded on both sides.”

These minor failures behind him, Colby promises subscribers “inside — and I mean inside — business intelligence.” **CounterPunch** agents having secured the materials, we can report that, based on a review of three issues of the *Colby Report*, the former CIA director's meager analytic tools have not improved from the days of his Tet humiliation.

Bold, shocking predictions abound. Colby's readers learn that “Congress will agree to the CATT free trade agreement” and that “North Korea will not attack South Korea.”

Much of the newsletter is devoted to thumbnail country profiles which provide the same keen insight as that found more cheaply in *USA Today*:

- “After getting off to one of the best starts in post-colonial Africa, Kenya has stalled in mid-course...Stay away until Kenya's politicians and society rebuild a secure base for participation in the world community.”
- “Nigeria typifies Africa's greatest problems...Crime, corruption, con men and coups rule the day...Stay away.”
- “The [Venezuelan] army has talked coup and takeovers but has not yet acted. A coup would be received badly in Washington...and could lead to economic sanctions. Stay out.”

Colby heavily recommends investment in the country he helped ravage two decades ago. “Seventy million literate, intelligent, hard working Vietnamese are intensely focused on using their entrepreneurial skills to join the world economy,” writes Colby. “So, go for it.” This rave review is no doubt influenced by the fact — not mentioned in the newsletter — that Colby recently became the highly-paid director of a fund to raise \$100 million for new investments in Vietnam.

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