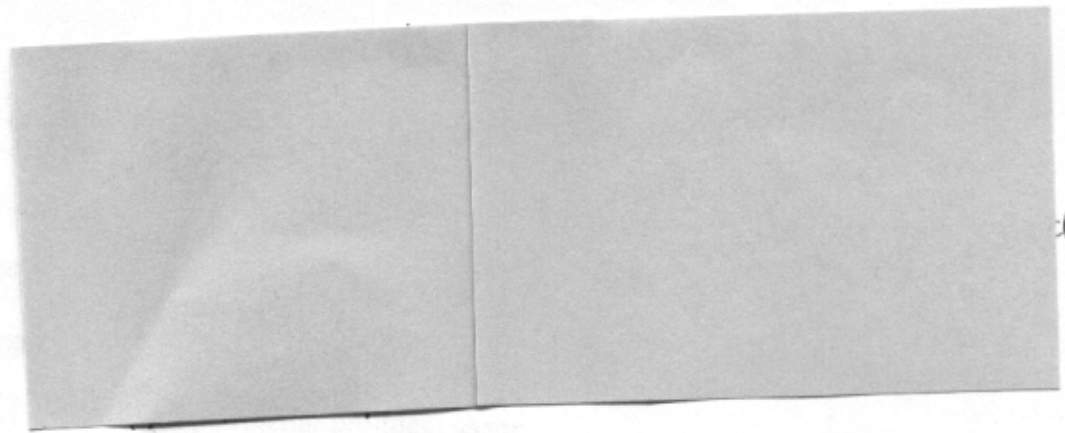


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ENVIRONMENTAL CONFUSION:
"The State of My Personal Ecological Philosophy"



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Using personal experience, some references to the provided literature, a few outside sources and current anecdotal information, this paper will discuss my personal ecological and/or environmental beliefs. As the author, I will try to provide a rationale for why I believe as I do and where I hope to end up. If I were to try to describe my personal beliefs they would go something like this:

- A Radical Conservationist ala Murray Bookchin and Barry Commoner (Fox, 1981)
 - ✓ -pro-recycling government programs and laws to encourage same.
 - ✓ -pro-population control
 - support reduction of petroleum products usage
 - anti-plastic for non-durable/ non-medical uses (I have visions of a dreadful fate for the fellow who invented such concepts as McDonald's disposable plastic toys, plastic shopping bags and plastic disposable food containers!) *I love it.*
 - believe technology has created a situation whereby mankind ignores consequences and leaps forward without the moral discussion necessary. (ie the Gore-tex byproduct, silicon chip pollution, DAARPA-DOD creations, etc.)
 - I support the usage of American wealth to aid, encourage and economically support Third World nations by-passing the problems of industrialization early stages. This would allow me to support "Sustainable Agriculture" of the type mentioned regarding Nicaragua and the progress of Amazonia. (Merchant, 1992)

- A sustainable usage supporter ala Thomas Kimball and the National Wildlife Federation, North American Hunting/Fishing Club, National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, various agricultural/Forestry groups, etc.(Fox, 1981)

-Forestry and agricultural products can be sustainable if managed for the future by properly trained people who have equipment, funding and *legal strength* (required to allow control of corporate America) needed. Although a manageable and cost efficient, therefore community/polis/public supportable, system of agriculture/forestry depends upon the usage of technologies (lumbering machines, combines, etc.) there can still be conservation of water and the land.

-Wildlife is a sustainable resource as long as habitat is protected. Therefore I do not support Greenpeace and others efforts to end traditional harvests of species who are not endangered. Nor can I support those same efforts to end hunting, for example of elephants, when it has been shown that the countries which managed the elephant as a cash crop to support locals, thus reducing poaching by providing value, still have elephants. Those countries, such as Kenya, which banned the hunting, have had elephants removed from the fauna by local poachers.

Contradictory, aren't I? I hate seeing styrofoam along the rivers. My wife is suffering the cancerous results (Thyroid & Breast Cancer) of the technology called "the bomb." I fear for the destruction of the cod and other food fishes by "factory ship" technologies. (Harris, 1999) I firmly believe that we *need* to encourage population control and end the

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use of petroleum products or we are flagrantly disregarding our future. Yet, I have seen the difference between "good farming or logging technique" and the other kind. I have visited woodlots where stewardship of the land by "experts" has provided generations of lumber, syrup, game and recreation. I believe wild game or venisons are dramatically healthier than our current factory produced meats/poulties and I prefer their taste. Odd? From the first part I should stand with Earth First. With the second part I should lean to Ted Nugent. Yet, I'm stuck in the middle. Why do I think this way? What may have caused these contradictions to develop? — no simple answers ^{me too.}

My foundation is very rural Vermont circa the 1960's. Rather "Andy of Mayberry-ish" we could translate this to anywhere else circa 1940's. We had pastures, hills, a trout filled stream and access to woodlots. Deer were regular visitors to the lawn, woodchucks were a nuisance and a laugh, the rare bobcat visited the barns and the rarer bear left "spoor" in the fields. When a car came up the road we all, often including adults, ran to see who it was! Families of neighbors, rather "Hobbit-esque" in manner, farmed, logged, hunted and worked the same lands for generations; literally prizing the soil as the foundation of a sort of psychological security. After all, they said, "the land will always be here." There was a managed co-existence between nature and rural citizens. Nature was indeed used, but, not exploited. Of paramount influence on the farm was my grandfather. Unique, perhaps a combination of the old and the futuristic, a man who loved politics and traveled widely and was well read. In the 1950's, to the amusement of his friends, he invested in waste disposal. An outdoorsman, he knew every tree and many flowers. As a hunter, he often spent more time studying the forest than hunting anything. I became immersed in the tales of the value of the land, how he had

seen the trouble over water in California in the 1930's and how resources were irreplaceable. I saw the old equipment for recycling oil that every body used during "the war" and heard his ideas how the Depression taught patriotic Americans not to waste. How the world was over-filled with impoverished, sometimes greedy but often just starving humans with little thought for ecological sustainability. How corporate America, believing in the old "there's always more frontier to expand to mentality" (My grandfather had read Muir and others) often gave no heed for the future of the land. I heard about hopeful things too. How man was saving land in Nepal. How to make power with thermal, geothermal, wind or hydropower. Or how space technology could be used to make a desert bloom. My grandfather and my parents' homes were filled with books. I had access to an out-of-date yet fairly broad local library. I read Roberts, Keith, Cooper, Corbett, Selous, Taylor, Roosevelt, Leakey, Cousteau, every "National Geo" ever made and others. I noticed a common thread. Especially in Roosevelt, Taylor, Selous and Cousteau all the heroes worried about useless destruction of wilderness and the loss of the future. Upon this foundation I developed what Frank Bryan calls a "filter" through which I pass all new information. (Bryan, 1980) I began to and still do process information through this pro-environment filter.

As I aged, I traveled. I saw New Jersey. I saw a tire dump extending for miles below me. I saw the floating miasma of city air hanging like some deathly pallor over the Empire State Building. I noticed that as McDonald's took over the amount of non-biodegradable plastic-based waste in the woods and streams increased exponentially. I watched small towns become suburbs with rows of condominiums wrapped into what had been farmer's fields. I watched the shopping malls come, stay for awhile, go bankrupt and

pull out leaving a paved lot and decrepit buildings. Entering local government, I talked with politicians running for office, "developers" and real estate people. Many didn't notice or didn't care about the loss of real estate or the pollution. One developer told me: "This is just the cost of *progress* (his emphasis) and, hell, there are plenty of more areas to go to." Another pair felt, being real estate saleswomen, that Vermonter's "had better get used to being in a suburb or sell out fast and move elsewhere because money ruled over a few farmers' fields." This is certainly a contradiction of women being portrayed as the preservers. (Merchant, 1992) — *Good point*

Nor was I impressed with my meetings with the vegans, animal rights activists or radical land warriors. They refuse to wear leather, eat meat or kill. Yet all used plastic, drove "SUV's" and had moved into "condo's" built upon old farms. The land warriors who protested a farmer trying a new fertilizer had just finished promoting the construction of a ski resort, which would have cut trails and roads through pristine wilderness. None of these people had slept outside, chopped wood, farmed, logged or otherwise lived with or depended upon the land. None of these people even conceived of a town official, myself, who would suggest computers, such as the one I'm using, which they often base their livelihood upon, represent a major environmental catastrophe!

The next chapter of this contradictory philosophy is the love of hunting. I find it impossible to be a hunter and not be pro-environment. As with Roosevelt, I believe there can be no hunting without a clean habitat and that mankind has a duty, based upon our stature in the cosmos, to safeguard our environment. (Roosevelt, 1910) As I hunted from the Green Mountains, through the Taconic Range, into the White Mountains and other places, I saw the ravages of acid rain. Pollution was killing the land. As shown by the

increase of Whitetail deer since 1960, the seeding of millions of trees nationwide and the reclamation projects resurrecting trout, forest products are sustainable; yet the habitat is irreplaceable. I have seen much of what my grandfather discussed so many years ago.

Where to from here in this contradictory arena? What do I do? As a town leader I worked to allow the private owner of eight thousand acres to transfer that land to the VT Land Conservancy and hence to the National Forest System. I also fought to keep Chittenden Reservoir free from powerboats and jet skis. Along the way we fought developers who showed up at meetings with complete plans for "luxury condo homelands" and a US senator whose family is buying land to develop. Many of these people accused me of being "un-patriotic" or "anti-jobs." Yet, as an elected or appointed official I was acting in response to surveys among my polis; responding to the wills of the majority of the town and acting to preserve the future of our area. I was also acting for the economic sense. Vermont, according to studies from UVM and state government, makes nearly a quarter of the state income, if not more, through outdoor activities. Tourism, skiing, hunting, fishing, etc, contribute millions of low maintenance dollars to all strata of Vermont citizens. These activities depend upon a Vermont-style, clean and open environment. (Gilbert, 1990 & Alexander, 2002)

Still, there are contradictions. As the town official I have had to vote in support of a plan to expand a local ski resort, even though I am skeptical the new technology septic can survive use and our winters. I also am still using this silly plastic computer, have plastic shopping bags where the store does not use paper and used disposable diapers on my sons. I also could not support Gore. My ecological philosophy is, in a sense, a process of "Radical Environmental Conservatism tempered by Realistic Thought."

Short
sighted

Carolyn Merchant may object, but, I believe we could, if all co-operated, have a clean environment and a stable, not continually increasing, level of wealth. We need only force ourselves to realize the validity of each factions data, compromise on what we need (avoiding the greed characterized by so many situations where nature is simply easily exploited for a short term gain of a few jobs or fast money-such as what the acreage we saved would have been) and protect the land, water and air from harm. I believe this is an uphill struggle.