

One worldists gear up for Earth Summit

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Over a thousand proponents of an environmentalist world order descended on Washington, D.C., Feb. 6-9 to set strategy for the Earth Summit, known officially as UNCED (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), which opens June 1 in Brazil.

Sponsored by a host of environmentalist and one-worldist NGOs (non-governmental organizations accredited by the U.N.), including the World Federalist Association, the United Nations Association of the U.S.A., and the Alliance for Our Common Future, the Second Global Structures Convocation focused primarily on what kind of supranational arrangements would have to be put in place to achieve the "sustainable development" model expected to be approved at the Earth Summit.

The meeting's immediate tactical purpose was to lay out an NGO lobbying campaign for the fourth UNCED preparatory meeting in March, where the final decisions on the Rio agenda and its ultimate results are supposed to be made. Attendees were encouraged to step up pressure on participating governments to adopt measures that would force compliance with whatever environmental goals are set at the Rio meeting, with a view toward creating a global environmental enforcement apparatus.

Global green government

Conference speakers made no bones about their intentions. Hilary French of the Worldwatch Institute declared: "We must have a vastly strong environmental government. It is essential to enforce action on global warming." That view summed up the theme of the conference.

At a Feb. 7 press conference held to discuss the meeting's goals, John Anderson, president of the World Federalist Association and former Republican presidential candidate, asserted: "We need [environmental] enforcement machinery. This must be agreed to at the global meeting in Brazil." He was seconded by Vladimir Petrovsky, first deputy foreign minister of the Russian Federation, who stated, "A code of environmental conduct is particularly important. We must establish requirements for all nations."

Similar views were also voiced by U.S. State Department representatives, including Ambassador Bob Ryan, one of the chief U.S. UNCED negotiators. "We must have in place, after UNCED, the proper institutional structures to implement Agenda 21 and other Rio results," he asserted. "There is nothing more important than that

result—the institutional framework."

Keynote speaker Russell Peterson, the former head of the Council on Environmental Equality and the National Audubon Society, told conference participants that they must "focus on how we implement the findings of the Rio conference. . . . Strengthening international laws and institutions is essential" to reversing the "escalating threat to the world environment and build[ing] a sustainable way of life."

He warned Americans not to "let the U.S.'s current economic problems distract us" from completing the "environmental enlightenment." America's economic collapse "is a minor problem, when viewed from a long-range global perspective," he said. Peterson urged his audience to "work toward the World Constitutional Convention for 1995," which would finish the work on developing supranational ecological institutions begun at UNCED.

The 'environmental revolution'

Just what kind of environmental program these supranational institutions will administer was described by Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute, who predicted that the most important outcome of the Rio conference will be the "recognition that environmental problems today are global and can only be solved" on an international level.

Posing the question, how do we create a sustainable world, Brown replied that it will be necessary to phase out fossil fuels and do away with all nuclear power, and to stabilize world population, which means "dropping to replacement level fertility [of] two children per couple."

Brown said that tax policy will be a "key policy instrument" in achieving "sustainability." "We're calling for replacing the income tax with environmental taxes," including a tax on all carbon use, he said. "We would tax such things as carbon emissions, the generation of hazardous wastes, the use of pesticides, the use of virgin raw materials, as opposed to recyclable materials."

"When we talk of the changes needed" to move toward sustainable development, it seems to me we are talking about one of the biggest economic and social transformations in human history. The environmental revolution will be comparable in scope to the industrial and agricultural revolutions. The agricultural revolution set the stage for enormous human population growth. The environmental revolution . . . will set the stage for the stabilization of world population size."

The looniest presentation at the conference came from Jeremy Rifkin, the former student radical turned Wharton School economist and environmentalist guru. Strutting through the audience, microphone in hand, like a hippie version of Jimmy Swaggart, Rifkin urged a "leap of consciousness by an entire generation, where we think of ourselves as a species housed among many other travelers in the Earth kingdom." Rifkin announced that he will soon be launching a "beyond beef" campaign, to drastically curtail the number of cattle in the world.