

ECO-IMPERIALISM: Green Power - Black Death

Introduction

This book should have been written years ago. It reveals a dark secret of the ideological environmental movement. The movement imposes the views of mostly wealthy, comfortable Americans and Europeans on mostly poor, desperate Africans, Asians and Latin Americans. It violates these people's most basic human rights, denying them economic opportunities, the chance for better lives, the right to rid their countries of diseases that were vanquished long ago in Europe and the United States.

Worst of all, in league with the European Union, United Nations and other bureaucracies, the movement stifles vigorous, responsible debate over energy, pesticides and biotechnology. It prevents needy nations from using the very technologies that developed countries employed to become rich, comfortable and free of disease. And it sends millions of infants, children, men and women to early graves every year.

The ideological environmental movement is a powerful \$4 billion-a-year US industry, an \$8 billion-a-year international gorilla. Many of its members are intensely eco-centric, and place much higher value on wildlife and ecological values than on human progress or even human life. They have a deep fear and loathing of big business, technology, chemicals, plastics, fossil fuels and biotechnology – and they insist that the rest of world should acknowledge and live according to their fears and ideologies. They are masters at using junk science, scare tactics, intimidation, and bogus economic and health claims to gain even greater power

As this book forcefully points out, these radical activists have now wrapped their ideologies up in several elastic principles that focus on perceived environmental threats and largely ignore human needs: corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, the precautionary principle and socially responsible investing. What makes *Eco-Imperialism* unique, though, is not just its insightful analysis of corporate and environmental “ethics,” but its reliance on personal, sometimes angry observations by people from less developed countries, who bear the brunt of these misguided environmental policies.

The ideological environmentalists are helped every step of the way by people who ought to know better, and ought to be the first to challenge their assumptions, claims and demands: corporate executives, US civil rights leaders, politicians, journalists and even clergy. They should be paying intense attention to the issues raised in this book. Instead, they typically ignore them, preferring to focus on Republican misdeeds, perceived slights and other contrived problems. By their silence, they accept and encourage the human rights violations, and the brutalizing of entire nations and continents.

During the recent World Trade Organization meetings in Cancun, Mexico, the Congress of Racial Equality confronted a number of extremist environmental groups with these facts. We discovered that they were very uncomfortable with having to defend the indefensible – as well they should be.

CORE concluded that the time has come to hold these radicals to civilized standards of behavior, end the tolerance for their lethal policies, and demand that they be held accountable for their excesses, and the poverty, disease and death they have perpetrated on the poor and powerless. *Eco-Imperialism* is an excellent start.

Driessen does a masterful job of stripping away the radicals' mantle of virtue, dissecting their bogus claims and holding them to the moral and ethical standards they have long demanded for everyone except themselves. And he does so with humor, outrage and passion – and always without pulling any punches.

Every concerned citizen and policy maker should read this book. The environmentalists will hate it. The world's destitute masses will love it. And everyone will be challenged by it to reexamine their beliefs and the environmental establishment's claims.

Niger Innis
Congress of Racial Equality
New York City

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Excerpts from Chapters

(Note: All endnotes and citations in original text have been deleted; asterisks denote missing text.)

1. Corporate Social Irresponsibility

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Meanwhile, at the international level, a lengthy series of conferences and reports ... resulted in the formulation of far-reaching policy pronouncements, on what today are inextricably linked doctrines of corporate social responsibility, sustainable development and the precautionary principle. The process continues today, with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan taking a keen personal interest in the doctrines and actively promoting their widespread implementation, thereby expanding the power and influence of the UN.

To confront the growing dilemma, regain a measure of control over their core mission, and reach out more effectively to the growing array of stakeholders, a number of multinational companies from 30 countries organized the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The Council's membership includes AT&T, BP, Ford, General Motors, Mitsubishi, Monsanto, Nestle, Procter and Gamble, Rio Tinto, Shell, Sony and Toyota. By developing mission statements and articulating corporate goals and a commitment to various CSR benchmarks, the companies say, they will be able to meet societal expectations more consistently.

Of course, most modern companies now accept these principles as basic components of their corporate philosophy, whether or not they are members of the WBCSD. They understand that, today, everyone expects to be treated fairly, and enjoy a better world for themselves, their children and their communities. Employees, executives, shareholders, customers and other stakeholders expect companies to safeguard environmental values and human health, root out corruption, conserve energy and mineral resources, minimize pollution, provide jobs, and aid the world's poor. And they expect companies to do all this while simultaneously advancing science, developing new products and technologies, bolstering their competitive positions and profit margins, and meeting the unique needs of the customers, cultures and communities they serve.

But despite the companies' best efforts, the corporate dilemma has only worsened. Activists frequently allege that many companies sign CSR pledges only to garner favorable press, enhance their reputations, deflect criticism or appease their critics. Other businesses, they say, merely hope to delay or forestall new regulatory initiatives, get accolades from "socially responsible investor" groups, gain an advantage over competitors, or generate material for slick advertising campaigns. They give lip service to social responsibility, sustainable development and precautionary principles, activists say, "but otherwise it's just business as usual."

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However, the real root of the problem is far different from what activists allege. The awkward truth is that corporate social responsibility doctrines – as currently defined, interpreted and applied by activist stakeholders, regulators, courts, foundations and international bodies – create significant problems. And not just for corporations. Families, communities and nations, especially in the Third World, are particularly hard-hit.

In too many instances, it is the activists who insist on defining “society’s expectations,” the “well-being of society,” and what it is that must be “given back” to society. Year after year, the demands ratchet upward. And year after year, instead of challenging the activists and their doctrines, many companies attempt to “go along to get along,” assuming they can simply pass on to consumers and taxpayers the costs of kowtowing to radicals.

As *The Economist* has put it, they neglect to take issue even with the “nonsensical claims” made against them. They “fall all over themselves to compete for an ethical Oscar.” They lumber into the trap of implicitly agreeing with their critics “that companies are inherently immoral unless they demonstrate that they are the opposite – in effect, guilty until proven innocent.”

In short they attempt to play the CSR game so as to placate their implacable foes, forgetting Winston Churchill’s famous admonition: “An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.”

Competing for top honors on various social responsibility honor rolls, continues *The Economist*, “may keep activists off a company’s back,” at least for a time. “But although sucking up to politically correct lobbyists might seem a small price to pay to keep them quiet, in reality it can reinforce the conviction that companies have a case to answer – escalating criticism, and perhaps helping to create a climate in which heavy regulation becomes politically acceptable.”

Other corporations, and many developing countries, take a different tack. They try to redefine the term to fit their own particular circumstances or promote elements of the public interest that they believe are especially important. While some of these efforts have succeeded, many have failed. CSR proponents bristle at such dissent, while continuing their pursuit of increasingly complex and inflexible rules and standards.

In some instances, corporate CEOs and executives cave in to pressure for a totally different reason: to shield themselves and their families from repeated intimidation, and even physical assaults. The militants’ repertoire of “persuasive” methods now includes fire-bombings, beatings with pick-axe handles and other methods that a mafia don would certainly appreciate.

Some companies, however, seek less salutary ends, succumbing to the Dark Side of the CSR Force. Indeed, BP’s actions may be merely among the more highly visible examples of a propensity increasingly shared by for- and not-for-profit corporations alike:

to stretch the truth ... reinvent reality ... substitute hype, spin and clever advertising for honesty ... and play fast and loose with ethics, the law and the numbers – in order to promote products and programs, attract investors (or donors), and convince journalists, politicians, judges and regulators to turn corporate and activist agendas into coercive public policies.

Certain activist groups in particular have become amazingly ingenious in promoting their agendas, by cloaking them in the mantle of “the public interest” or “social responsibility.” In doing so, many take advantage of the fact that they are not held to the same ethical standards, or covered by the same laws and regulations, that apply to for-profit companies. They behave as though they should not be held accountable for breaches of trust or for the consequences of their actions, because they are “guardians of the public interest,” or are too vital to their local (or even the world) community to be “restricted” by rules that govern for-profit organizations.

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What all this reveals is a profound and disturbing convergence of ideology, activism, marketing, politics and financial gain, to further radical political agendas. Indeed, a strong case can be made that this is now the *modus operandi* for the huge multinational “ethical” investment groups, foundations and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) that increasingly dominate the global

political scene. Many of these pressure groups frequently work hand-in-glove with companies – condemning and shaking them down one day, then accepting secretive contributions or devising joint legislative, regulatory and public relations strategies with them the next.

Charles Schwab argues that trust in business will be restored only when companies accept three fundamental principles: transparency, disclosure and accountability. There is no reason that these same expectations should not be applied to unelected activist power brokers, like The Nature Conservancy, NRDC, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International, or even US, EU and UN bureaucrats, whose taxpayer-funded grants further support the activist organizations.

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However, it is now becoming clear that the demand for integrity must also be extended to radical pressure groups, socially responsible investor firms and other activists that seek to use public resources and regulatory regimes to impose their worldview and agendas. They too need to be scrutinized much more closely – and compelled to operate in accord with the same rules that govern the rest of our society.

The time is long overdue for NGOs, activist “stakeholders” and government bureaucrats to do what they demand of business: Adopt internal ethical standards and penalties, and support legislation and regulations that would apply the same ethical rules and standards to them, as now apply to Wall Street, business and professional associations, and for-profit corporations.

In short, the activist groups need to do what the WBCSD suggests all corporations must do: demonstrate that they can “behave ethically and responsibly, in return for the freedoms and opportunities that society bestows” upon them.

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2. Roots of Eco-Imperialism

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At their root, these intertwined CSR doctrines [of stakeholder participation, sustainable development, the precautionary principle and socially responsible investing] primarily reflect the concerns, preferences and gloomy worldview of a small cadre of politicians, bureaucrats, academics, multinational NGOs and wealthy foundations in affluent developed countries. These self-appointed guardians of the public weal have little understanding of (and often harbor a deep distaste for) business, capitalism, market economies, technology, global trade, and the vital role of profits in generating innovation and progress.

Yet, it is they who proclaim and implement the criteria by which businesses are to be judged, decide which of society's goals are important, determine whether those goals are being met, and insist that countervailing needs, viewpoints and concerns be relegated to minor status. In so doing, they seek to impose their worldview and change society in ways, and to degrees, that they have not been able to achieve through popular votes, legislation or judicial decisions.

Inherent in the doctrines are several false, pessimistic premises that are at the core of ideological environmentalism. Eco activists erroneously believe, for example, that energy and mineral resources are finite, and are rapidly being exhausted. That activities conducted by corporations, especially large multinational companies, inevitably result in resource depletion, environmental degradation, impaired human and societal health, social harm and imminent planetary disaster. And that it is primarily profits, not societal or consumer needs and desires – and certainly not a desire to serve humanity – that drive corporate decision-making.

In a nutshell, CSR doctrines are rooted too much in animosity toward business and profits, too much in conjectural problems and theoretical needs of future generations – and too little in real, immediate, life-and-death needs of present generations, especially billions of poor rural people in developing countries. The mutant doctrines give radical activists unprecedented leverage to impose the loftiest of developed world standards on companies, communities and nations, while ignoring the needs, priorities and aspirations of people who struggle daily just to survive.

Actually implementing the doctrines requires significant centralized control of land and energy use, economic production and consumption, corporate innovation and initiative, markets, transportation, labor, trade, housing, policy making processes and people's daily lives. Under the activists' agenda, control would be monitored and enforced through United Nations, European Union, US and other government agencies. All this is the antithesis of the private property rights, capitalism, and freedom of nations, communities, companies and individuals to make their own decisions, in accord with their own cultural preferences and personal or societal needs – and thereby generate prosperity, human health and environmental quality.

The ideological version of corporate social responsibility thus stands in direct opposition to the systems that have generated the greatest wealth, opportunities, technological advancements, and health and environmental improvements in history. Its real effect is to cede decision-making to a few; reduce competition, innovation, trade, investment and economic vitality; and thereby impair future social, health and environmental improvements.

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[In short,] corporate social responsibility – as currently defined and applied – ignores the legitimate aspirations and needs of people who have not yet shared the dreams and successes of even lower and middle income people in the developed world. It should come as no surprise that the poor people in developing countries increasingly view CSR, not as a mechanism to improve their lives, but as a virulent kind of neo-colonialism that many call eco-imperialism.

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3. Cow Dung Forever

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The Third World's poor increasingly want to trade their huts for modern homes, and enjoy running water, refrigeration, electrical lighting and other basic necessities taken for granted by westerners (and by intellectual and government elites in their own countries). They want to see their children live past the age of five, and look forward to even better lives for their grand kids. They recognize that electricity and energy are *power* – economic and political power to:

- determine their own destinies;
- build modern schools and industries, to foster better educational and employment opportunities;
- provide sufficient food to make malnutrition and famine a distant memory; and
- improve their health and environmental quality, by powering modern hospitals, water purification and sewage treatment plants, manufacturing centers, and other facilities that are commonplace in the developed world.

They resent having their choices dictated by First World environmental activists, under the guise of sustainable development, the precautionary principle and corporate social responsibility. As one Gujarati Indian woman told a television news crew, “We don’t want to be encased like a museum,” in primitive lifestyles so romanticized by Hollywood and radical greens – and so rife with desperate poverty, disease, malnutrition and premature death.

They bristle at comments like those Friends of the Earth president Brent Blackwelder piously offered in the same television documentary:

“It’s not possible for people to have the material lifestyle of the average American citizen. And that’s not necessarily a healthy lifestyle to aspire to. In fact, there are many ways in which we find Americans very unhappy, because they can’t spend any time with their families, or with their friends. There’s no sense of community anymore. It’s a hectic pace. Who would want to wish that on the rest of the world?”

For Blackwelder and other environmental ideologues even to suggest that a “hectic pace” or supposed “lost sense of community” is on par with the ravages endured by impoverished people in India or Africa is incredible. As Kenya’s James Shikwati tersely put it: “What gives the developed nations the right to make choices for the poor?”

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Citing the precautionary principle and sustainable development, environmentalists worry about air pollution caused by the “unsustainable” burning of fossil fuels, and about “hypothetical, long-run risks of climate change,” Mitra notes. But they “conspicuously ignore the real risks that poor people face today,” including indoor air pollution caused by burning “renewable biomass fuel.”

The World Health Organization says nearly a billion people, primarily women and children, are exposed to severe indoor air pollution every year. WHO links indoor air pollution to some 4 million deaths worldwide each year among infants and children – primarily from

respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia. Biomass fuels also contribute to rampant asthma among women, and lung cancer in women “lucky” enough to survive long enough to get cancer.

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“The unsustainable cutting of firewood on marginal lands also leads to erosion and environmental degradation,” Mitra points out. “Reduced economic productivity, increased human suffering and loss of life, and negative environmental consequences all result from the current reliance on ‘renewable’ energy.” And yet, “European governments, third-world bureaucrats, businesses such as The Body Shop and the European Wind Energy Association, and NGOs such as Greenpeace, have decided that ‘renewable energy’ and ‘clean development’ are the future for third world countries.”

Wind and solar power will certainly play a role, especially for isolated villages. However, unless fossil fuel and hydroelectric facilities also figure more prominently, affordable, efficient, reliable energy, economic growth, improved quality of life and increasing environmental quality “will remain a dream rather than a reality” for poor people all over the Third World, he stresses.

As Mitra and Shikwati see it, what the developing world really needs is not sustainable development but “sustained development,” and an end to the “sustainable poverty” that has plagued these nations for centuries. Environmental pressure groups see matters very differently.

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4. Playing Games with Starving People

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Nearly 2.5 million people were on the verge of starvation in Zambia alone, where President Levy Mwanawasa bowed to NGO pressure and EU import policies, and refused to accept food aid from the United States.

The US had shipped 26,000 tons of corn to Zambia, where many people were down to one small meal per day, only to have the grain sit in storage. Parroting the EU/Greenpeace line, Mwanawasa decreed it was unsafe for consumption, because some of the corn (maize) had been genetically modified, to make it resistant to insect pests, reduce the need for pesticides, and increase crop yields without having to put more land under cultivation.

“We would rather starve than get something toxic,” Mwanawasa cavalierly remarked. Anonymous European Commission officials went so far as to accuse the US of using Africans as guinea pigs, to prove biotech foods are safe to eat. Rumors circulated among the locals that women would become sterile and people would get AIDS, if they ate the corn.

The fact that Americans have been consuming this corn for years did not change Mwanawasa’s position. (Over 34 percent of all US corn and 78 percent of its soybeans are genetically modified, as are many other crops.) Nor was he swayed by repeated scientific studies concluding that biotech foods are safe to eat – or by the demands of his own starving people, who on several occasions attempted to break into the warehouses.

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As for President Mwanawasa and his ruling elites, they are not going hungry, either. Nor are Mr. Mugabe and his cronies in Zimbabwe, who live lavishly on imported European food and luxury goods. They will, however, profit mightily from any agricultural and other trade with EU nations that threaten their countries with sanctions, if the Africans dare to import, export or grow biotech crops. The elites’ real fear, in other words, is not “tainted” food – but concern that Euro food fanatics will decree that African crops have been tainted by American GM pollen. Meanwhile, the desperate masses continue to starve.

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Biotech experts Gregory Conko and Dr. Henry Miller, MD are blunt in their denunciation of the EU, UN and radical green actions. This “self-serving involvement in excessive, unscientific biotechnology regulation,” they argue, “will slow agricultural research and development, promote environmental damage, and bring famine to millions in developing countries.” The UN-sponsored “biosafety protocol,” regulating the international movement of gene-spliced organisms, is based on a “bogus precautionary principle,” which falsely assumes there are risk-free alternatives, and imposes an impossible standard on innovation: guilty until proven innocent beyond a shadow of a doubt.

No longer must regulators demonstrate that a new technology is likely to cause harm. Instead, the innovator must now prove the technology will *not* cause any harm. Worse, “regulatory bodies are free to arbitrarily require any amount and kind of testing they wish.... [T]he biosafety protocol establishes an ill-defined global regulatory process that permits overly

risk-averse, incompetent, and corrupt regulators to hide behind the precautionary principle in delaying or deferring approvals,” they charge, as in the case of a years-long moratorium on EU approvals of gene-spliced plants.

The principle imposes the ideologies and unfounded phobias of affluent First World activists, to justify severe restrictions on the use of chemicals, pesticides, fossil fuels and biotechnology by Third World people who can least afford them. Opposition to biotechnology is “a northern luxury,” says Kenyan agronomist Dr. Florence Wambugu. “I appreciate ethical concerns, but anything that doesn’t help feed our children is unethical.”

Greenpeace co-founder and ecologist Dr. Patrick Moore echoes her sentiments. Now an outspoken critic of the group he once led, he underscores the “huge and realistically potential benefits” that GM crops could bring “for the environment and human health and nutrition.” He calls the war on biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) “perhaps the most classic case of misguided environmentalism” in memory.

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“If today’s rich nations decide to stop or turn back the clock, they will still be rich,” notes Wellesley College political scientist Robert Paarlberg. “But if we stop the clock for developing countries, they will still be poor and hungry.” And thousands, perhaps millions, of their children will die.

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Africa missed out on the first “Green Revolution.” Pioneered by Iowa farmer and agricultural researcher Dr. Norman Borlaug, this revolution brought new corn varieties to Mexico, new wheat strains to India and new rice to China, saving the lives of perhaps a billion people. Africans can hardly afford to miss out on the biotech green revolution.

As Dr. Borlaug has put it, “There are 6.6 billion people on the planet today. With organic farming we could only feed 4 billion of them. Which 2 billion would volunteer to die?” Or which 2 billion would Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund and the Earth Liberation Front “volunteer” to die?

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Economist Indur Goklany has calculated that, if the world tried to feed just today’s six billion people using the primarily organic technologies and yields of 1961 (pre-Green Revolution), it would have to cultivate 82 percent of its total land area, instead of the current 38 percent. That would require plowing the Amazon rainforest, irrigating the Sahara Desert and draining Angola’s Okavango river basin. The only thing organic farming sustains, says Tuskegee University plant genetics professor and AgBioWorld Foundation president CS Prakash, is “poverty and malnutrition.”

None of this is to suggest that biotechnology is a magic bullet that will transform Third World agriculture. It isn’t. However, it is a vital weapon in the war against malnutrition, starvation and disease. In conjunction with modern equipment, fertilizers and pesticides, improved transportation infrastructures, integrated crop protection programs, better training in handling chemicals and running farms as businesses, and stronger organizations that give farmers a greater voice in policy decisions – biotechnology and GM crops could play a crucial role in developing countries.

In short, even if the absurd worst-case anti-biotech (or anti-pesticide) scenarios propagated by activists are accepted as valid – and even if a case can somehow be made that these technologies should not be used in the United States or Europe – developing nations should still be permitted to use them. In fact, they should be encouraged to do so. The lives of their people, and their wildlife, hang in the balance.

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5. Sustainable Mosquitoes – Expendable People

Fiona “Fifi” Kobusingye is a 34-year-old designer and businesswoman from Kampala, Uganda. In early November 2002, saw her doctor because she felt fatigued – and discovered she had malaria. Her year-old niece shivered and cried all night, and suffers from impending kidney failure, because of malaria. Her sister was critically ill and hospitalized with malaria, and her mother came to Kampala to help tend everyone – but ended up in the hospital herself with malaria.

“Our family and community are suffering and dying from this disease, and too many Europeans and environmentalists only talk about protecting the environment,” Kobusingye says. “But what about the people? The mosquitoes are everywhere. You think you’re safe, and you’re not. Europeans and Americans can afford to deceive themselves about malaria and pesticides. But we can’t.”

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“My friend’s four-year-old child hasn’t been able to walk for months, because of malaria,” she out like a chameleon, her hair is dried up, and her stomach is all swollen because the parasites have taken over her liver. Her family doesn’t have the money to help her, and neither does the Ugandan government. All they can do is take care of her the best they can, and wait for her to die.”

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In 2000, say World Health Organization and other studies, malaria infected over 300 million people. It killed nearly 2,000,000 – most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Over half of the victims are children, who die at the rate of two per minute or 3,000 per day – the equivalent of 80 fully loaded school buses plunging over a cliff every day of the year. Since 1972, over 50 million people have died from this dreaded disease. Many are weakened by AIDS or dysentery, but actually die of malaria.

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These are real deaths and real impacts – not just theoretical deaths, based on extrapolations from rodent studies (as in the case of Alar, the growth-regulating chemical that was the subject of a vitriolic attack and fund-raising campaign by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Fenton Communications in 1989), or hypothetical catastrophes (like flood and drought scenarios generated by certain climate change computer models).

They are due in large part to near-global restrictions on the production, export and use of DDT. Originally imposed in the United States by EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus in 1972, the DDT prohibitions have been expanded and enforced by NGO pressure, coercive treaties, and threats of economic sanctions by foundations, nations and international aid agencies.

Where DDT is used, malaria deaths plummet. Where it is not used, they skyrocket. For example, in South Africa, the most developed nation on the continent, the incidence of malaria had been kept very low (below 10,000 cases annually) by the careful use of DDT. But in 1996

environmentalist pressure convinced program directors to cease using DDT. One of the worst epidemics in the country's history ensued, with almost 62,000 cases in 2000.

Shortly after this peak, South Africa reintroduced DDT. In one year, malaria cases plummeted by 80 percent; in two years they were almost back to the 10,000 cases per annum level. Next door, in Mozambique, which doesn't use DDT, malaria rates remain stratospheric. Similar experiences have been recorded in Zambia, other African countries, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and elsewhere.

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No other chemical comes close to DDT as an affordable, effective way to *repel* mosquitoes from homes, *exterminate* any that land on walls, and *disorient* any that are not killed or repelled, largely eliminating their urge to bite in homes that are treated once or twice a year with tiny amounts of this miracle insecticide. For impoverished countries, many of which are struggling to rebuild economies wracked by decades of disease and civil war, cost and effectiveness are critical considerations.

Substitute pesticides are rarely appropriate. While carbamates work well, they are four to six times more expensive than DDT and must be sprayed much more often. Organophosphates are dangerous and thus not appropriate in homes. And mosquitoes have built up a huge resistance to synthetic pyrethroids, because they are used so extensively in agriculture.

For poor African, Asian and Latin American countries, cost alone can be determinative. Not only do they need their limited funds for other public health priorities, like safe drinking water, but they have minimal health and medical infrastructures. Every dollar spent trying to control malaria is a dollar that's unavailable for other public health needs. "DDT is long-acting; the alternatives are not," says Professor Roberts. "DDT is cheap; the alternatives are not. End of story."

DDT is not a panacea, nor a "super weapon" that can replace all others. Nor is it suitable in all situations. However, it is a vital weapon – often the "best available technology" – in a war that must be fought against a number of mosquito species (vectors) and constantly changing malaria parasites, in different terrains and cultures, and under a wide variety of housing and other conditions. Like any army, healthcare workers need to have access to every available weapon. To saddle them with one-size-fits-all solutions (tanks and pistols, bed nets and drug therapies) is unconscionable.

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New insecticides, chemicals and drugs are clearly needed. However their development and use are hampered by insufficient funding (in Africa), excessive reliance on the precautionary principle (particularly in Europe), and drug approval delays and the ever-present threat of multi-billion-dollar liability judgments (especially in the United States). Even if they might someday be a reliable substitute for DDT, tens of millions are likely to die in the meantime.

Simply put, the suggestion that alternatives to DDT exist now or will in the near future is little more than wishful thinking in its deadliest form – promoted by people who have staked out an ideological position against DDT anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances, and cling to their position like limpets to a rock.

Even the *New York Times* (which usually sides with radical environmental groups) now says the developed world "has been unconscionably stingy in financing the fight against malaria or research into alternatives to DDT. Until one is found, wealthy nations should be helping poor countries with all available means – including DDT."

And still anti-pesticide activists like Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund and the Pesticide Action Network are unmoved.

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7. Renewable Energy Mirages

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The notion that we are running out of energy (and metal) resources also reflects an abysmal grasp of basic mineral economic principles. “Proven reserves” is not a static number. It reflects what we can expect to extract from known deposits at a particular commodity price and with existing technology. As more deposits are discovered, prices increase, and technologies improve, proven reserve numbers also rise, often dramatically.

In May 2003, to cite just one example, Canada increased its proven oil reserve figures from 4 billion barrels to 180 billion barrels! Literally overnight, with the stroke of a pen, it became a global petroleum powerhouse, behind only Saudi Arabia and Iraq in total reserves. Canada was able to do this simply by recognizing that, at just \$15 per barrel, its vast tar sand reserves were commercially and technologically producible.

Moreover, societal needs and scientific breakthroughs constantly change the kinds and amounts of energy, metallic and non-metallic resources we need. Because of incremental improvements in extrusion technology, aluminum beverage cans are now 30 percent lighter than they were in the 1960s, dramatically reducing the amount of metal needed to make a billion cans. Improvements in tensile strength and architectural design mean modern high-rise buildings require 35 percent less steel than did their counterparts a mere 20 years ago. And today, a single fiber-optic cable made from 60 pounds of silica sand (the most abundant element on earth) carries hundreds of times more information than did an “old-fashioned” cable made from 2,000 pounds of copper.ⁱ

Third and most important, for Northern Hemisphere NGOs and policy makers to tell Third World nations that they must rely on wind and solar power – and forego hydroelectric or fossil fuel projects – is to deprive the world’s poorest citizens of reliable, affordable energy. It condemns billions of people to continued poverty and misery. And it does so for no valid reason – but only to promote the ideologies of vocal activists whose indifference to this abject poverty will eventually prove their undoing.

ⁱ Lynn Scarlett and Jane Shaw, *Environmental Progress: What every executive should know*, Bozeman, MT: Political Economy Research Center (1999); Lynn Scarlett, “Doing More with Less: Dematerialization – unsung environmental triumph?” in Ronald Bailey (editor), *Earth Report 2000: Revisiting the True State of the Planet*, New York: McGraw-Hill (2000).

