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Preservation, the public interest and environmental reform

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PRESERVATION, THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The environmental movement is currently one of the most influential forces in political life. Despite initial successes, however, it has not yet clearly articulated its various goals. Until such an articulation is made, there is some justification to the charge that "everyone is an environmentalist." This paper will attempt to suggest how these various goals might be clarified, and why such a clarification is necessary.

The environmental movement is a subtle blend of two distinctly different impulses. One of those impulses is culturally prescriptive. Its goal is to reform those dominant cultural values requiring a highly consumptive life-style and its associated environmental impacts. A second impulse is to realize those existent cultural values which have traditionally held a natural environment in fairly high regard. The distinction just made is between promoting new values and effecting popular values which have been thwarted by unresponsive institutions.

This distinction may seem obscure when observing the day-to-day actions of environmentalists. The importance of making the distinction between reforming cultural values, and effecting existing ones becomes more apparent when one

reviews past American political movements, e.g., populism, progressivism, the New Deal, the Civil Rights and the anti-war movements. All have been characterized by the subtle blend of prescriptive and popular impulses suggested above. Past movements have generally combined a disaffected general public with activist minorities whose own cultural values were distinct from those popular. The concern binding the two elements was their mutually injured interests, not a shared sense of values. The outcome of these movements was the demise of the more visionary minority soon after the interests of the larger public were secured and general interest in the once unifying issue waned.[1] Historians have blamed the demise of the more visionary minority elements on their failure to clearly distinguish their own unique values from those of the disaffected general public. Instead of articulating those values, and clearly acting in their name, the minority elements were content to ride the coattails of the popular disaffection. When the general public's disaffection ended, the visionary elements were unable to give their values adequate public expression.

Although the environmental movement is currently one of the most influential forces in American politics, it seems indifferent to the pitfalls which ended earlier move-

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[1]Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 18.

ments. The distinction between prescriptive and popular environmentalism is neither philosophically or sociologically clear. Until it explains what its alternative "environmental values" are, and how they can be achieved, the culturally prescriptive impulse of the environmental movement seems likely to succumb to a fate similar to that of its counterparts in earlier movements.

This paper will use preservation controversies as a heuristic device for exploring the prescriptive and popular impulses in the environmental movement. It will argue that preservation controversies provide issues that, if properly perceived, prevent the prescriptive impulse of the environmental movement from being neglected.

How this is possible will be explained more fully in the following chapters. As a preview, the unique role of preservation issues within the environmental movement can be credited to their intractability. The visionary minority's hopes for preserving natural environments, and popular demands for increased consumption constitute two mutually exclusive demands within the same broad movement. Indeed, it is the only environmental issue which is divisive along prescriptive and popular lines. By forcing the distinction between the two impulses to be made, preservation controversies force the visionary element of the environmental movement to come to grips with its own distinct values.

In summary, this paper has two chief objects. It hopes to analyze the larger environmental movement, and to explain the role of preservation within that larger movement. Chapter Two will explore the ambiguous role played by preservation within the environmental movement. A review of the statements of various "environmentalists" suggests, for example, that some consider preservation a peripheral and vulnerable concern. This paper will argue that the resulting ambiguity has two causes: the failure of the environmentalists to recognize the existence of differing goals and principles within the environmental movement, and the failure of preservationists to construct a rational and consistent defense of their actions which keeps these differences in mind.

The following two chapters will explore these causes further. Chapter Three will discuss and criticize the philosophies of those who have criticized preservation, and suggest that those philosophies are themselves inadequate. Chapter Four will suggest the outlines of a rational and consistent defense of preservation. Finally, Chapter Five will reevaluate the role of preservation in the light of the discussions of Chapters Three and Four. Using historical analogies it will conclude that preservation should be seen as a central and relatively invulnerable concern of the environmental movement.

It should be cautioned that these objects are not achieved through an empirical study of the environmental movement. What follows is an attempt to construct a conceptual framework which has proved useful in understanding past movements, and an application of that framework to the environmental movement. A sociological study of the environmental movement which employs the distinctions developed here might be a promising project but is beyond the scope of this paper.

CHAPTER II

PRESERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

The chief concerns of the environmental movement have been focused on two broad sets of problems: the pollution of landscape, air, and water, and the preservation of unique natural environments. Of these two problem areas, the former has received the bulk of public and scholarly attention.[1] The latter, although occasionally provoking an emotional public debate, has, over the past several years, been shunted to the side of the larger environmental movement. On Earth Day 1970, inaugural day for the modern wave of environmentalism, the preservation of urban and nonurban natural environments was not included on the roster of issues. This peripheral role was a far cry from the early 1960's, when preservation was a prominent component of the environmental movement.[2]

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[1]John Warren Duffield, "Wilderness: A Political and Economic Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1974), p. 10.

[2]Michael McCloskey, "Wilderness Movement at the Crossroads, 1945-1970," Pacific Historical Review 41 (1972): 346-353 (hereinafter cited as "Crossroads"). McCloskey traces the post-WWII rise of preservation sentiment to today when preservation "is a remote and unreal issue . . . generally there is no hostility toward it as a goal, but it is overwhelmed in the competition for attention. It lacks novelty and tends to be considered a problem settled long ago. In short it has become an old issue to many who believe there are new dragons to slay."

Today, the preservation of natural environments continues to play an increasingly ambiguous and often controversial role in the larger environmental movement. For some environmentalists Thoreau's claim that "in wildness lies the preservation of the world" remains the first article of environmental faith. For others preservation is not merely a peripheral concern. It is a vulnerable, because unjustified, part of the broader environmental movement.[3]

This chapter's review of the controversy over the role of preservation will suggest that it stems from the existence of significant, fundamental philosophical differences within the environmental movement. The charges of anti-preservation critics and pro-preservation rejoinders suggest that if everyone is an environmentalist, environmental politics makes for strange bedfellows. The various positions environmentalists hold on the role of preservation are the most obvious manifestation of those differences.

Examining these positions enables one to make crucial yet frequently overlooked distinctions between the various principles and goals by which environmentalists justify their actions. It makes clear that how one views the role of preservationists depends upon whether one justifies environmentalism by appeals to human survival, to popular

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[3]Daniel E. Kohl, "The Environmental Movement, What Might It Be," Natural Resources Journal 15, 1339.

demands, or to environmental values. Only by critically examining these various appeals can an adequate evaluation of preservation be made.

Environmentalists who justify the movement as a last-ditch attempt at human survival have been a source of criticisms of preservationists. For these environmentalists, the time spent trying to preserve natural environments cannot be afforded. The spirit that motivates preservationists may be admirable, admits such an environmentalist, but it is badly misdirected. The gravity of the situation demands that efforts be directed at problems which are of more immediate concern. In an address to the 11th Annual Wilderness Convention, Paul Ehrlich suggested that:

> Putting aside a park here and there is laudable, but not enough. Unless we attack the worldwide problem, putting aside parks is a waste of time. There are a great many reasons to be involved in a worldwide conservation and population control program. The main reason is that we want to live.[4]

Preservationists would be hard pressed to integrate their positions with a movement which only justified itself as an attempt to stave off ecological disaster. Although the statements of several preservationists have hinted at an ecological justification, their claims would be embarrassingly meek in the face of the impending cataclysms some

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[4]Paul R. Ehrlich, "Population and Conservation: Two Sides of a Coin," Wilderness: The Edge of Knowledge, ed. by Maxine E. McCloskey (New York, 1970), 10.

environmentalists predict. A. J. Rush's argument for preservation warns that:

> When man obliterates wilderness he repudiates the evolutionary forces which put him on this planet. In a deeply terrifying sense, man will be on his own.[5]

It has also been suggested that some natural environments should be set aside as ecologically sane neutral zones, safe from man's ecocidal tendencies. Such natural environments would provide a relatively untouched gene pool.[6] A third frequently espoused claim is that a natural environment provides a laboratory in which scientists can discern the ideal operation of natural laws.[7] Some have asserted that such natural environments provide models for an ecologically viable society.[8]

While these claims have a certain validity, they are not sufficient to justify preserving natural environments in the face of imminent environmental disaster. It is doubtful, for example, that the first argument can be taken seriously as a suggestion that a new man will evolve again from a wilderness gene pool a few billion years after we

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[5]Michael McCloskey, p. 352.

[6]Robert R. Curry, "Discussion," Wilderness: The Edge of Knowledge, ed. by Maxine McCloskey (New York, 1970), 210-254.

[7]For a general discussion of the contribution of wilderness areas to the ecological sciences, see the Sierra Club's The Meaning of Wilderness to Science, ed. by David Brower (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1960).

[8]Infra, note 9.

have succumbed to environmental disasters. That scenario is not likely to rally frightened thousands to the cause of preservation. A response to the second claim might ask if preservationists are setting aside areas to which the fortunate few can emigrate after the ecocatastrophe. If that is the case the grasslands of North Dakota seem a more promising sanctuary than the Kapirowits Plateau or the Northern Rockies. While proposals for such an ecologically pure zone are worthy they do not correspond with the actual efforts of preservationists. Finally, the claim that natural areas reveal the ideal operation of ecological laws is misleading. Idealizing the operation of those laws in natural areas implies that natural laws are somehow flawed or being broken in civilized areas. Such a claim is conceptually inaccurate. Ecological laws operate as well in New York City as they do in the Adirondacks. They operate so well that they may prove to be New York City's undoing by making human life impossible there. Natural environments do provide a useful laboratory for those laws, which in turn define the biological boundaries of human survival. But suggestions that man should try to <u>simulate</u> the operation of those laws in natural environments when reshaping his culture do not follow. Cultural norms cannot be extrapolated from scientific knowledge. While knowledge of scientific laws may reveal the range of viable alternatives, it is not itself capable of pointing to any particular option as

intrinsically preferable to the others. Such preference remains dependent upon the values of those making the selection. Thus, scientific knowledge only provides an adequate model in those instances where cultural values are given.[9] Since the above claim implies that the virtues claimed for wild land research result from the absence of human culture, and since constructing a viable human culture is the survivalist's chief concern, he should look away from wholly natural areas for his models.

It is, of course, likely that a certain as yet undetermined number of natural or unmanipulated environments must be preserved if the planet's currently teetering ecological balance is to be restored. But when applied to specific areas and made in the face of imminent disasters, that argument loses most of its force and may often be self defeating. Preserving Hells Canyon, for example, can hardly be justified by a wilderness advocate who makes his appeal to survival. Hydroelectric power is much safer than coal fired or nuclear powered electrical generating plants. Similarly, the logging of forested natural environments poses no immediate threat to human survival. In fact,

> Wood is a biodegradable, naturally renewable resource and requires less energy to process than almost any major alternative building or craft materials.[10]

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[9]Albert Borgman, "The Humanities and the Environment," unpublished paper.

[10]Review of Forests for Whom and for What?, by Marion Clawson. Ecology Law Quarterly 5 (1976), 397.

It should be cautioned that the object of the above discussion is not to discredit preservationists. Its goal has been to show the difficulties of making preservation more than a peripheral concern for any movement which justifies its actions by appeals to survival.

Those who justify their environmentalism by appealing to survival are not the only critics of preservationists. Many environmentalists who are less desperate in their appeals also feel uneasy about some of the efforts of preservationists. This group will be called "popular environmentalists," a label which will be fully explained later in the paper. For present purposes they can be defined as those environmentalists whose basic philosophy is very similar to that of traditional conservationists. Three of those important similarities are an acceptance of the general public's cultural values, a reliance on scientific and technical expertise, and a belief that quickly soliciting the general public's support for the environmental movement is a primary concern.[11] In summary, a popular environmentalist accepts the demands of the public as given, and

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[11]Conservationists are defined here as advocates of "wise use" of material resources, not as advocates of preservation of natural environments. The term conservationist has recently been used interchangeably with preservationist. This paper treats conservation as a distinct outgrowth of the progressive conservation movement of the early 20th Century. See Samuel P. Hayes, Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency (New York: Harvard University Press), 1959 and J. Leonard Bates, "Fulfilling American Democracy: The Conservation Movement, 1907-1921," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44 (1957).

sees his role as determining the best means of effecting those demands. He does not see the environmental movement as a culturally prescriptive force which advances any change in popular life-styles beyond those necessary for a healthy environment.

Although acknowledging and sharing the public's desire to preserve a minimally natural environment, popular environmentalists have suggested that many recent preservationists' efforts at stopping proposed developments are excessive.[12] The development of western coal lands, the logging of "marginal" wilderness areas, and the construction of power plants, hydroelectric dams, ski areas, urban freeways and suburban subdivisions are all obviously necessary for the pursuit of dominant values. The increasing numbers of court cases and administrative review enjoined by preservationists are slowing these developments, which are seen by popular environmentalists as an inevitable and relatively unimportant form of environmental degradation.[13]

Much of the popular environmentalist's criticism of preservationists' efforts and their resulting vulnerability is based on the observation that a large proportion of the

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[12]This sentiment is a common one. A scholarly legal examination of the issue from the perspective of federal land management agencies has been made by William Siegel, "Environmental Law--Some Implications for Forest Resource Management," Environmental Law 4 (1974) 132-134.

[13]Supra, note 2, p. 353.

preservationists are members of the upper middle class who can afford to escape from the city and enjoy natural environments.[14] The case is frequently made that these upper middle class preservationists are imposing their favorite form of nature on lower and lower middle class recreationists who prefer their nature in more developed forms. Due to the preservationists' superior political clout, this imposition has had a success which is now alienating potential support for other environmental "want regarding" programs. The criticisms seem based on a liberal commitment to equal respect for the aspirations of all interests as well as a concern for political expediency.

Another telling charge stems from a concern for social justice. It questions the morality of locking up timber, energy, mineral and spatial resources that might alleviate the suffering of the nation's poor. Mark Sagoff, for example, has contended that

> If the demands of the poor were measured equally with the rich, then quicker than you can say cost benefit analysis you would have parking lots, condominiums and plastic trees.[15]

The sum of these criticisms demands a response. Preservationists appear to be a selfish interest group who,

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[14]J. Harry, R. P. Gale and J. Hendee, "Conservation: An Upper Middle Class Social Movement," Journal of Leisure Research 1 (Summer 1969), 246-254; W. N. Devall, "Conservation: An Upper Middle Class Movement: A Duplication," Journal of Leisure Research 2 (Spring 1970), 123-125.

[15]Mark Sagoff, "On Preserving the Natural Environment," Yale Law Journal 84 (1974), 210.

while claiming to act in the public interest, actually jeopardize eminently sound environmental programs by not respecting the desires of others and by exacerbating social injustice.

While these charges have been partially countered with studies showing that recreational use of natural environments is not an upper middle class monopoly,[16] and that the degree to which preservationists have "locked up" the natural resources of natural environments has been overblown,[17] charges still carry some force. It now seems quite evident, for example, that although the general public places a high value on a pastoral northern great plains it places greater value on an ample supply of electricity. The continuing and probably increasing vulnerability of natural environments which contain any material resources is suggested by a 1970 study which shows an overwhelming majority of the nation's population to be unwilling to forgo its consumptive habits for the sake of the environment.[18] There is little reason to believe the public's priorities have changed over the past several years, or that the

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[16]G. H. Stankey, "Myths in Wilderness Decision Making," Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 26, 186.

[17]David Sumner, "Where Forests Stand," Sierra Club Bulletin, May 1976, 45, a review of The Forest Killers: The Destruction of American Wilderness by Jack Shephard.

[18]James McEvoy III, "The American Concern With the Environment" in Social Behavior, Natural Resources and the Environment edited by William R. Burch, Neil H. Cheek, Jr., and Lee Taylor (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 229. (Hereinafter cited as Resources.)

public's material demands on natural environments have or will decrease. In view of the continuing consumptive imperative, preservationists will probably play an increasingly controversial role in and out of the environmental movement. The goals of preservationists and the general public will frequently be at odds.

Unfortunately the usual defense of preservationists, while not devoid of merit, generally avoids directly confronting popular environmentalists' criticisms. In the tradition of John Muir, preservationists shrug off charges that they are a selfish elite and claim that a natural environment has an intrinsic value that stands apart from human values and desires. The advocates of these environments frequently announce themselves to be the interpreters of those values.[19] As a result, the criticism and the defense view the same position from totally different perspectives, one seeing it as an ultimately selfish position, the other as an idealistic, even mystical, position which only incidentally serves the interests of the actor.

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[19]See e.g. Sierra Club v. Morton 405 U.S. 727, 741-2, 744-45 (1972) (Justice Douglas dissenting). "Contemporary public concern for protecting nature's ecological equilibrium should lead to the conferral of standing upon environmental objects to sue for their own preservation . . . . Those who hike [Mineral King Valley] fish it, hunt it, camp in it, frequent it or visit it are legitimate spokesmen for the inanimate object."

The recent popularity of the "biocentric perspective" and of seeing oneself as "a member of the biological team" are justifications out of the same mystical mold.[20] Although the claim of having expanded one's personal concerns and feelings to include a consideration of the feelings and desires of other fauna and flora does reflect a well developed environmental ethic, it has yet to be determined whether convincing arguments can be developed about exactly how nature "wants" to be treated in those specific cases where man's desires and nature's "desires" conflict.[21] Until those arguments are developed, or the nation shares a collective empathy for nature's "feelings" such an appeal is certainly problematic. Just as the suggestion that science produces cultural norms which tell

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[20]This notion seems to be an outgrowth of Aldo Leopold's plea for an environmental ethic in A Sand County Almanac (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949).

[21]Sagoff, supra note 15, discusses the flaw in claiming to speak for nature. As he suggests, the spokesman is left with a free rein to interpret nature's values as he wills. ". . . Why wouldn't Mineral King want to host a ski resort, after doing nothing for a billion years? In another few millenia it will be back to original condition just the same. The Sequoia National Forest tells the developer that it wants a ski lift by a certain declivity in its hills and snowiness during the winter . . . and that it needs a four lane highway by the appearance of certain valley passages and obvious scenic turnouts on the mountainside. The seashore, meanwhile, indicates its willingness to entertain poor people from Oakland by becoming covered with great quantities of sand. Finally, it is reasonable to think that Old Man River might do something for a change, like make electricity and not just keep rolling along."

us how we should live with nature is suspect, the proposed injunctions of self-appointed interpreters who claim to tell us what nature wants also strains credibility. They inject arbitrary dogma about nature into a controversy which is difficult enough to resolve when only avowedly human aspirations are considered.

Commitments to and defense of the values of natural environments need not be so arbitrary. They can be rooted in avowedly human desires and be made capable of a reasoned elaboration and discussion. An attempt at doing so will be made later in the paper. For now it is only necessary to suggest that the failure of the traditional preservationist response to directly confront the charges of their "want regarding" critics or explain their role in relation to the larger environmental movement stems from the fact that this and several other important dimensions of the issue have been overlooked.

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The above discussion suggests that a defense of preservation which does not question the philosophical assumptions of preservation critics is not fully convincing. Fortunately, the positions given a rather cursory treatment here do not exhaust those which can be held. This paper will support yet another perspective on preservation, that of reform environmentalism. Reform environmentalism comprises a culturally distinct, culturally prescriptive

movement whose ultimate objective is to change reigning cultural values. It attacks the excessively consumptive vision of the good life as responsible for a deteriorating quality of life and a sense of alienation from nature. Its philosophical base is a blend of a sentimentalized agrarian past,[22] a neo Marxist critique of modern industrial society,[23] and elements of progressive liberalism.[24] Although no comprehensive concept of the public interest has yet emerged from the movement, two clearly dominant themes are a rejection of many modern technologies and a loss of faith in market economies. Modern technology and market economies, claim reform environmentalists, have thwarted cultural ideals which the reform community sees as serving their as yet unclear concept of the public interest. These ideals can be broadly generalized as a discriminantly consumptive life-style and a more natural environment.

This paper will show how reform environmentalism readily accommodates and defends what was earlier criticized as the misdirected and excessive efforts of preservationists. By clarifying the reform perspective, this paper will show

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[22]Theodore Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1973).

[23]Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), also, Murray Bookchin, Post Scarcity Anarchism (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1971).

[24]E. F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

how the principles of survivalist and popular environmentalism are themselves inadequate to achieve the desired goals of a movement for environmental reform. As a result criticisms which are based on those principles lose much of their force. The weakness of those critiques will then be further demonstrated by developing a reform preservationist position and by responding to anti-preservation charges in a manner consistent with reform goals.

Finally this paper will briefly review past reform movements whose ultimate goals were cultural change and show why efforts at preserving natural environments are not vulnerable efforts but make a unique contribution to the viability of a culturally prescriptive environmentalism.

CHAPTER III

PRESERVATION AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The first task is to penetrate environmental thought and distinguish the philosophical underpinnings of reform environmentalism from the underpinnings of survivalist and popular environmentalism. As suggested earlier the environmental movement is not bound by a coherent philosophy. After an initial agreement that the mutual concern is over man's troubled relationship with nature the movement breaks down into a colloidal suspension of justifying principles.[1]

Before making a successful empirical analysis of the environmental movement, it is necessary to construct a conceptual framework that can be used to elucidate differences that are apparently overlooked by most environmentalists and lie at the heart of the controversy over preserving natural environments. To construct this framework it is necessary to step back from the environmental movement to a more philosophical level of discussion.

The underlying question in the controversy over preservation is "how does one justify one's position on environmental issues?" Some environmentalists appeal to survival. The serious failings of such an appeal will be

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[1]Denton E. Morrison, K. E. Hornbeck and W. Keith Warner, "The Environmental Movement: Some Preliminary Observations and Predictions," Resources, p. 301.

discussed later. There are only two justifying principles which need be taken seriously here. The use of one of those principles was implicit in the charges of those popular environmentalists who criticized preservationists for impeding developments such as the strip mining of the northern plains, a development which is apparently necessary for the continuing pursuit of the popular conception of the good life. The principle implicit in the charge is that one must give the public what it wants. Conversely, the brief sketch of the culturally paternalistic reform environmentalists suggested that their appeal was to principles about what the public should want, not to the public's existing wants.

The important difference between the two appeals is immediately obvious. Brian Barry has divided the spectrum of justificatory principles into two categories: "want regarding" and "ideal regarding." These principles are relevant to an analysis of the environmental movement.

> Want regarding principles . . . are principles which take as given the wants which people happen to have and concentrate attention entirely on the extent to which a certain action will alter the overall amount of want satisfaction . . .[2]

Under such a principle, a public position (and the action it implies) makes its appeal and is judged only according to its ability to bring about the state of affairs wanted by the general public.

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[2]Brian M. Barry, Political Argument (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 38.

The assumption undergirding want regarding principles is that one individual's wants are as good as the next's. "It is not possible to make moral judgments about the intrinsic value of those wants or preferences or to rank them in any way."[3] The desires of each individual who wants increased consumption of electrical energy counts for the same as those of each individual who wants a pastoral northern great plains, and each have equal claim to satisfaction.

The intellectual tradition of want regarding principles runs back to the classic liberal theories of John Locke, through Benthamite utilitarianism, and on to today's welfare economics. Want regarding principles have also been institutionalized in our democratic political structure and market economy.[4]

Examples of the want regarding principle are readily drawn. When one justifies one's position by reference to a law requiring that an area be managed according to the Multiple Use Act, one is appealing to the mandate of majority wants, as expressed through a legislative body. When an administrator refers to a cost-benefit analysis which claims that the value of increased electrical power legitimates the construction of western power plants, he accepts the value

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[3]Marc F. Plattner, "The New Political Theory," The Public Interest 50 (Summer 1975) 127.

[4]Barry, pp. 39, 41.

which the public's demands, as expressed through the marketplace, places on increased electric power. The assumption of the popular (i.e., those who appeal to a want regarding principle) environmentalist critics of preservation is that the legitimacy or value of an action or a thing is only a function of the aggregate public desire for it.[5]

An ideal regarding principle is defined by Barry as any principle which deviates from a purely want regarding position.[6] Such a principle may demand that particular desires be ignored, actively discouraged, or promoted, i.e., pastoral environments should be preserved, the desires of the public not withstanding. A public action is justified by its contribution to the realization of the favored social values or goals. One underlying assumption of an ideal regarding principle is that some wants and opinions, since motivated by superior values, are worth more than desires motivated by lesser values, and are consequently more deserving of satisfaction, i.e., the value or desirability of something is defined independently of the aggregate desire for that thing. A second underlying assumption is that, on occasion, some people might not know what is best for themselves. External guidance is required for some men to lead the "best kind of life."

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[5]Ibid., pp. 39-41.

[6]Ibid.

Depending on its nature and complexity, an ideal regarding principle can justify any kind of action. It might make an appeal to the cultural despot of Plato's Republic, or simply to a constitutional right. A constitutional right, for example by serving as a check on the wants of the public as expressed through the legislative and executive branches, rests on the belief that certain things are too important to be left to the vagaries of the majority will.[7]

The above examples have largely been drawn from institutionalized instances of want and ideal regarding principles. This paper will be more concerned with the role those principles play in the period of controversy preceding the passage of legislation, an appeal to the courts or an administrative decision. The discussions in these predecision periods are filled with references to "the public interest." The distinction between want regarding and ideal regarding principles explains at least some of the confusion which results when two different positions appeal to the "public interest." Does the public interest mean that state of affairs which maximizes satisfaction of popular wants, subject to distributive modifications? Is it the state of affairs desired by a majority frustrated by log-rolling politics, indifferent bureaucrats, big business, an

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[7]"Note: Towards A Constitutionally Protected Environment," Virginia Law Review 56, 458 (1970) 481.

unsound technology, or corrupted administrators? If either of the above examples, it is based on the want regarding principle. But if the public interest is conceived as a superior state of affairs which might be overlooked or undervalued by an unenlightened public, which is the conception those interested in reforming values employ, the public interest has a meaning quite distinct from the former cases.[8]

There are, then, as indicated by the controversy over preservation, three general concepts of the public interest appealed to by environmentaists. First a survivalist concept claims that it is in the public interest (in both a want regarding and ideal regarding sense) to take immediate, perhaps drastic, steps to ensure the public's survival. A want regarding appeal demands that the public be given the kind of environment it wants. An ideal regarding concept of the public interest appeals to the vision of the particular kind of society which best serves human needs.

Although these distinctions are not complex they seem to be "glossed over" by the environmental movement. It would be difficult to assign particular environmentalists to the categories of survivalist, popular or reform environmentalists on the basis of their public statements. It is

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[8]C. W. Cassinelli, "The Public Interest in Political Ethics," Nomos V, The Public Interest, ed. Carl. J. Friedrich (New York: Atherton Press, 1962) 44-53; also Cassinelli, "Some Reflections on the Concept of the Public Interest," Ethics 59 (1958) 48-61.

likely that at various times all three types of appeals have been implicit in the statements of most. In spite of this gloss, the controversy over preservation suggests that the movement is capable of crystalizing into the categories described here.

The failure of the movement to be more self conscious about its philosophical differences is surprising, particularly from the perspective of reform environmentalism. The differences, as followed to their logical conclusions, have very different potential outcomes. It can be shown, for example, that appeals to survival and to want regarding conceptions of the public interest are not likely to achieve the goals of reform environmentalism.

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To attack the position of the survivalists might seem rather arrogant. Without a doubt their position is in a sense the least controversial one an environmentalist might adopt. The choice between living and dying is not controversial. But paradoxically, to justify one's environmentalism on appeals to a survivalist conception of the public interest may also serve to minimize the ultimate impact of that environmentalism.

If the initial choice left to the nation is simply between living and dying, many options may arise once the decision is made for survival. An appeal to survival cannot then claim a preference for any option which can be shown to

lie within the parameters of survival. If the ecological sciences should reveal that biologically viable societies run the gamut from a spotless, stainless steel, smoothly functioning spaceship earth,[9] to a return to the agrarian past, the survivalist has eliminated his voice from some very important decisions. A more precise appeal is required before a more specific solution can be justified.[10]

In direct contrast, the reform environmentalist is very concerned with the various kinds of solutions which might be developed in response to the threats to human survival. He advances his preferences on the basis of his more specific description of the public interest. By criticizing consumptive habits, not simply because they threaten survival, but because they are contrary to what he claims to be a way of life which would better serve human needs, he preserves a voice in the discussion of possible alternatives.

The survivalist, however, remains silent in the face of misconceived ideals about the good life, ideals which the reform environmentalist sees as the central issue. It is an

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[9]Richard Buckminster Fuller, Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth (New York: Parker Books).

[10]Many environmentalists assume that physical realities will eventually dictate the environmental path chosen. See Robert Heilbronner, "Ecological Armageddon," New York Review of Books 14 (April 23, 1970) 9, review of Paul and Anne Ehrlich's Population Resources and the Environment. This paper is taking a different tack; this tack is discussed in more detail later in the paper Chapter IV).

indication of the survivalist's prescriptive impotence that his calls for change are couched in terms of retrenchment. Unlike the reform environmentalist, who offers the possibility of a better life, the survivalist reluctantly suggests that we may have to give up our consumptive habits if we are to survive. This suggests that those who make such an appeal might share the reigning vision of the good life.[11]

The controversy over the future of nuclear power illustrates the limitations of a survivalist appeal. Reform environmentalists can question such plants because they would be built to serve consumptive habits which are not in the best interests of those consumers. Claims that the plants will not endanger human life do not eliminate the reform critique. The survivalist's position would lose its force, however, because it did not confront the consumptive imperative to build the plants. The survivalist's appeal is sufficient only if one's concern extends no further than preventing the loss of human life. It seems obvious that if one's environmentalism includes any concerns which do not have clear implications for survival, it is advisable to develop a more elaborate concept of the public interest.

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[11]Although one of the general conclusions of Dennis L. Meadows et. al., The Limits to Growth (New York: Universe Books, 1972) is that growth values will have to change, no moral judgment about those values is made. The general tone of the book, however, hardly treats such a prospect as a unique and rewarding opportunity.

An environmentalism which appeals to a want regarding conception of the public interest on the other hand also fails to address consumptive life-styles. Such environmentalism sees its role as effecting the ideals of the public as given, not as the promotion of new ones. As in the case of survivalism, the epistemological problems encountered by popular environmentalism cover a relatively narrow range.[12] Popular environmentalism relies largely on scientific, economic and political information. But such objective information does not in itself confront or discredit any life-style that is consistent with a biologically viable society.[13]

An appeal to a purely want regarding conception of the public interest assumes environmental problems can be resolved through current economic and political institutions once the public is more fully scientifically, economically and politically informed about the threats posed by pollution, unplanned development, clear-cutting forests and intensive use of chemicals in agriculture. After the voting and consuming public is well informed, more rational decisions will be made. Such a diagnosis makes the duty of popular environmentalism clear. It is to do research, inform, and

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[12]See Chapter II, page 5.

[13]Albert Borgmann's "Humanities and the Environmental Movement" (unpublished paper) discusses limits of natural and social sciences vis a vis environmental values. Also see E. F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful New York: Harper and Row, 1973) 80-99.

explain the options available for resolving environmental issues.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of adequate information for the entire environmental movement. But as necessary as it is, it is not sufficient for an environmental reform movement. Daniel Kohl, a member of the scientific information movement, recently described its dissemination of scientific information as a "profoundly political act,"[14] which alerted the public to the often self-serving intentions of corporate America. Within limits, his analysis holds true. There is no doubt that there exist many significant gaps between the aspirations of corporate America and the general public. But resolving the issues raised by those gaps may not meet the requirements of reform environmentalism. Although corporate and consuming America may feel differently about the best location of power plants and oil refineries, restrictions on subdivisions, or types and costs of pollution control, rarely do the dialogues in these controversies culminate in a confrontation over the public's highly consumptive habits. That plants or refineries will be built somewhere is rarely questioned. Instead the controversies follow the patterns of interest-group politics. For example, the residents of a region protest that their interest is diminished if a

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[14]Daniel E. Kohl, "The Environmental Movement, What Might It Be," Natural Resources Journal 15, pp. 3-13.

power plant is built in their area. Opposing them, the power company claims its interests are best served by building in that region, as opposed to a less profitable spot. The controversy can be characterized as one concerning which interest group will be served in the course of pursuing an assumed conception of the public interest, increased abundance. Such interest group politics may raise important public moral questions about how the cost of industrial growth and pollution control should be distributed, but the more substantive questions about more ultimate social goals are often easily avoided. On the continuing and expanding availability of material goods of doubtful real value, the interests of corporate and consuming America appear closely allied.

Although popular environmentalism may recognize the obsessive character of America's consumptive habits, its commitment to respecting the aspirations of the public regardless of their content limits it to the traditional anti-big business rhetoric. The reluctance to address the public's desires to expand consumption is revealed in criticisms of America's technology and market economy. These criticisms do not contend that our industrial technology is misguided or overdeveloped by consumptive values. In this view, technology is simply "stupid" due to a lack of technical expertise, corporate irresponsibility, a failure to engage in long-range planning, and the absence of ecolo-

gical information.[15] The chief complaint of a want regarding perspective about our market economy is not how it aggravates an excessively consumptive vision of the good life, but sees the market's major defect as its inability to take "externalities" such as pollution into account. Proper government regulation and incentives can internalize those costs of pollution, spur a "smarter" technology, and enable a continued increase in consumption.[16]

The concept of a "popular" or purely want regarding environmentalism requires qualification. As suggested earlier, an empirical review of the environmental movement shows that it is not easily broken down into distinctly popular and prescriptive elements. The use of those categories by this paper has been justified by the interaction of those categories in the controversy over preservation, not by any conscious alignment on other issues. Environmental positions on other issues however, such as those described above, can also be described as want regarding. The solutions posed in these issues do not call dominant values into question, but simply seek to resolve commonly held

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[15]John Kenneth Gailbraith, Economics and the Public Purpose (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973). Gailbraith is strangely ambivalent in his attitudes toward consumption in his latest book. Although attacking needless consumption in much of the book, he retreats from this otherwise firm stand when discussing the environment, p. 267.

[16]Sanford Race, "The Economics of Environmental Quality," Fortune 81 (1970), 120-21.

environmental concerns. As a result it seems legitimate to distinguish want regarding environmentalism from reform environmentalism.

Although this paper is not attempting to develop an environmental sociology, a few suggestions about the kinds of roles and situations which are likely to produce "popular" or want regarding positions might prove helpful.

Obviously, want regarding positions are held by those opposed to any fundamental changes in popular values, but are nonetheless displeased with the current state of environmental affairs. This might include a city resident whose interest in the environmental movement reflects a concern about the smog he is forced to breathe every day, but whose interest diminishes when broader concerns are discussed. Similarly, the preservationist whose sole environmental concern is an uncrowded recreation area is not about to suggest any changes which alter his own life-style.[17]

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[17]It should be cautioned that the distinction being discussed is not that between acting in the public interest and out of self interest. The distinction is between promoting value change or not promoting value change. Which of those serves the public interest depends entirely upon one's conception of it. A purely want regarding conception, for example, would claim the two hypothetical individuals above to be acting in the public interest by acting "selfishly." The distinction between acting selfishly and out of obligation to an idealized concept of the public interest is not discussed until Chapter Four.

Popular or want regarding positions also dominate the political side of environmentalism. Any environmental program or politician hoping for short-term success will emphasize their compatibility with dominant values, and the minimal impact either would make on consumptive aspirations.

Finally, environmentalists who are committed to cultural change find most popular solutions compatible with their ultimate goals. This tendency of popular and reform positions to overlap is one reason that distinguishing between the two is so difficult.[18] The difference between popular and prescriptive environmentalism remains a real one, however, despite the difficulty in assigning it to particulars. For example, although the reform environmentalist agrees that objective information is necessary for voters and consumers to realize their goals more rationally, his chief concern is not only the rationality of the public, but also the substance of the ideals that rationality serves. If those ideals are the expansion of consumptive opportunities, merely providing information will not achieve the desired goal. Barring a sudden change in public tastes, the most that a purely popular environmentalism will achieve is a tidy, temporarily healthy society characterized by a congested, overdeveloped landscape, and a spiralling rate of consumption. This scenario

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[18]A more detailed discussion of the overlapping concerns of popular and reform environmentalism is found in Chapter V, pages 73-74.

does not match the reform environmentalist's conception of the public interest.

A reform oriented preservationist who accepts criticisms based on a want regarding conception of the public interest has failed to consider the limits of such an appeal. Attempts at rebutting its criticisms without attacking want regarding assumptions overlook the possibilities and requirements of appealing his actions to an ideal regarding concept of the public interest. Such a conception and the requirements of appealing to it will be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

A REFORM POSITION ON PRESERVATION

An appeal to a want regarding conception of the public interest makes very different epistemological demands than does an appeal to an ideal regarding conception. An action under a want regarding conception is predicated on a hypothetical imperative. If the public wants clean streams, then pollution control devices must be developed. Justifying one's actions by appealing to public values as given only requires empirical investigations. What, exactly, does the public want? What information does it need to serve those wants? Such problems call for opinion polls, improved public input in management decisions, holding elections, improving the techniques of technology assessment and cost benefit analysis. Once wants have been accurately determined and informed the problems encountered are, in the broadest sense, technical ones . . . what policies, procedures, technologies, and institutions are the best means to the end of satisfying public demands?

Grounding one's environmental positions in a want regarding conception of the public interest is as much of a morally controversial commitment, however, as a position grounded in an ideal regarding conception. Although an ideal regarding concept requires developing a paternalistic

position, both concepts are equally evaluative. A principle which demands that one's actions effect the demands of the public . . .

> is precisely comparable, in its status as a value judgment, to identifying the public interest with the terrestrial realization of God's will; neither can be proved to a skeptic.[1]

Appealing to an ideal regarding conception of the public interest does require investigations of a different sort. Such an appeal is predicated on an overtly moral injunction. Streams should be clean, the apathy or indifference of the public notwithstanding. Like the want regarding appeal such an appeal requires a determination of the best means to the desired end. But determining and justifying that end requires a value judgment about the desires for polluting products and the desires for a more natural environment. Any defense of such a judgment cannot rest solely on technical or scientific knowledge, but must ultimately rest on a morally controversial position claiming that a particular way of life is superior to others. It is the morality of such a claim which elevates it from the undifferentiated collection of public demand to that of a legitimate appeal to an ideal regarding concept of the public interest.

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[1]C. W. Cassinelli, "The Public Interest in Political Ethics," Nomos V, The Public Interest, edited by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Atherton Press, 1962), 48.

The concept of a moral position is crucial to reform oriented preservation and requires some explanation here.

It is not sufficient for the reform preservationists to reject the public's consumptive desires out of hand. Appealing to reform environmentalism's ideal regarding concept of the public interest requires the development of a moral position which justifies the conviction that the general public has overestimated the value of abundant electricity and that the demand for it should be discounted. It also requires a detailed description of a reform concept of the public interest, and an explanation of how increased consumption at the expense of preserving natural environments conflicts with that conception.

A moral position is not capable of the precision and confirmability of an empirically based position. One might even wholly disagree with another's position on an issue, and still acknowledge that the position he holds is a moral one. This does not mean that one desire is as good as the next, or that one desire's claim to recognition as a moral position is as good as the next. There are certain general requirements which a desire or position must meet before it can be identified as a moral position. These general requirements . . .

> enforce the difference between positions (desires) which we must respect, although we think them wrong, and positions (desires) we need not respect

because they offend some ground rule of moral reasoning.[2]

As suggested above, one of those ground rules is that a position which claims the superiority of natural environments to increased electrical power must give reasons backing such a claim. There is a distinct difference between a self evident value claim such as "good health is better than sickness" and an arbitrary claim with which one might legitimately take issue, i.e., "reading books is better than watching television." A controversial claim must explain itself through a "reasoned elaboration." To paraphrase Bentham, why is poetry better than pushpin? One possible reason that poetry might be superior is that it provides a challenging activity which promotes a reflective incisive mind. Additionally poetry may prove to be a vehicle by which a great creative genius will be developed, a genius who will make all of our lives richer.[3]

Valid reasons assume certain theories about what is good ("superior," "richer") for the individual.[4] All reasons must at least be capable of such a reference. It is not possible to explain why one's desires are better and serve the public interest without also defining what one

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[2]Ronald Dworkin, "Lord Devlin and the Enforcement of Morals," Morality and the Law, ed. Richard A. Wasserstrom (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1971) 62.

[3]Ibid., p. 62.

[4]Ibid., p. 63.

means by "better." For example, while the reasons just elaborated (poetry is superior to pushpin) square rather nicely with a value theory which sees man's goal as the production of a few brilliant supermen, they do not square so nicely with the Christian ideal of humility.

Nor is it sufficient to simply elaborate one's desires in a directionless manner. The reasons given must mitigate the arbitrary nature of the initial claim that pushpin is inferior to poetry. One cannot refer to irrelevant considerations, such as the geographic or economic backgrounds of those who prefer pushpin. The concern is with the value of pushpin, not with factors which do not touch upon the merits of the activity itself. Similarly it is not sufficient as a "reason" to simply claim that "pushpin is disgusting." The object of a reasoned elaboration is to explain one's emotions not to make reference to those emotions. To do so is simply to make another arbitrary statement.[5]

A second requirement of a moral position is consistency.[6] One's lifestyle and opinions on other matters must reflect the avowed sincerety of the belief that preserving natural environments is indeed superior to developing them and would serve the public interest. Does one's own lifestyle require unnecessarily large doses of electric power? Does one try

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 66.

to promote and make available the enjoyment of natural environments to the general public or does one attempt to horde them?

Consistency also requires that one's stands on other issues make an appeal to the same conception of the public interest. The preservationist who claims that the world is threatened by an eco-catastrophe from nuclear wastes, yet unaccountably opposes hydro-electric power projects on other grounds is guilty of a lack of consistency, either due to moral dishonesty or intellectual oversight. In either case, such inconsistent stands suggest to the observer that the appeal to the public interest is a matter of convenience, not conviction.

The following discussion is not an attempt at an exhaustive construction of a moral position on preservation. It does hope to guide reform oriented humanists and technicians in the construction of such a position. This will be done by pointing to the kinds of philosophical and technical demands which must be met before a moral position on preservation is achieved.

The following discussion will also suggest that a reform position makes an appeal to a particular concept of the public interest, one which is uniquely effective as a response to popular criticisms. The suggested concept is rooted in the same tradition of liberal political and moral philosophy which conceived democratic and free market

institutions. Appealing one's position on preservation and other environmental issues to the traditional liberal conception of the public interest suggests the desire of reform environmentalists to respect many of the values of want regarding institutions, and the individual autonomy which those institutions promote. It implies that the basic objection is not to the principle of individual autonomy but stems from a concern about how that principle requires an adjustment to meet new conditions.

One characteristic of the liberal tradition is its ambivalence about the political community's ultimate moral commitment. One strand of liberal philosophy, from Locke through Bentham to today's welfare economics, has viewed the role of the state from a purely want regarding perspective. This strand of the tradition does not deny the legitimacy of the positive state, i.e., an active role in economic affairs. It simply disclaims the state's role as the promotion of a particular kind of individual or culture. Another strand, which placed greater emphasis upon the substantive ideals of a liberal society, first appeared in the early 19th Century in the writings of Von Humbolt and were developed by such writers as Mill and Hobbhouse. Their attention to substantive ideals was a response to the imminent expansion of suffrage rights to those outside the middle class. These theorists developed generalized, yet substantive ideals about the kind of life-styles and the kind

of society that democratic and free market institutions would promote. Their claim was that these ideals were the inevitable outgrowth of such institutions. Such a substantive concept of the public interest was necessary to justify the existence of those institutions to the large numbers of economically unfortunate for whom the benefits of "freedom" were as yet unclear.[7]

One assumed outcome of want regarding economic and political institutions was that by placing upon individuals the onus of making their own decisions in the political and economic marketplaces, want regarding institutions would force men to develop their own underlying ideals. Such men would become selfconscious enough of their goals to make a reasonable elaboration of their economic and political desires. These desires would not be arbitrary, pointless, or thoughtless. They would be the desires of morally coherent, consistent individuals, desires which observed the ground rules of a moral position.

The second assumption was that want regarding institutions, by satisfying the desires of men "following their own lights," would produce a society characterized by diverse life-styles and communities, challenging experiences, and inhabited by men who held the unique aspirations of their morally coherent peers in respect.

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[7]C. B. MacPherson, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) 4-6.

In summary, the concept of the public interest used to justify want regarding institutions was composed of two basic ideals. One claimed that a good society was one which promoted the development of men who lead morally coherent lives. The other was that a good society was composed of diverse groups and individuals which in turn enabled a wide variety of individual experiences.

By justifying want regarding institutions with an appeal to substantive ideals, the ideal regarding liberal philosophers placed the validity of want regarding institutions in a special light. The implication was that the political community could legitimately assume a culturally paternal role in instances where the justifying ideals of want regarding institutions could not be achieved through these institutions. The prospect of a culturally paternal role for the state was not thoroughly explored by these philosophers, however, due to a third assumption which had allowed the original assumption of the congruence between want regarding institutions and ultimate goals to be made. This third assumption was of the existence of an inevitably reciprocal relationship between the two substantive ideals which composed the public interest. Men who experienced a culture of diverse opinions and life-styles and encountered a wide variety of experiences would be more likely to fall back on and become aware of the ideals underlying their own

aspirations. This in turn would engender an ongoing larger society of unique individuals and communities.

In the largely romantic pre-technological context of the early 19th Century, when hopes for the nobility and autonomy of each individual were high, these assumptions were not naive. It now seems open to question, however, whether the indiscriminate satisfaction of desires in the economic marketplace is promoting the kind of morally coherent life-styles or diverse society, i.e., the public interest, for which that freedom was intended.

The divergence between the traditional liberal concept of the public interest and the actual outcome of unchecked consumption also serves as a potential springboard from which the preservationist convictions about the relative values of the competing demands upon natural environments can be reasonably elaborated. The divergence is historically tracable. Its roots lie in the 17th Century English middle class, whose philosophers, particularly John Locke, expressed the emerging concept of man and the good life, a concept which was substantially different from traditional beliefs. C. B. MacPherson paraphrases the Lockean description of man as:

> Essentially an unlimited desirer of utilities, a creature whose nature is to seek satisfaction of unlimited desires, both innate and acquired. The desires could be seen as sensual or rational or

> both. What mattered was that their satisfaction required a continuous input of things from the outside . . .[8]

Under such a view, man's ideals or ends were to relieve any scarcity in that input. The essence of rational behavior was held to lie in an opportunity for extensive use of natural resources.

Previous concepts of man had stressed a moderate appetite for material goods, calculated to serve ideals about what a good life entailed. For the energetic English middle class, however, busy constructing a new productive system, unlimited desire was seen as good in itself, and a necessary impetus to ending the evils of scarcity.

The upshot of this new concept of man was a new ideal of the good life. Jeremy Bentham provided a succinct description of the new view.

> Each portion of wealth has a corresponding portion of happiness. Of two individuals with unequal fortune he who has the most wealth has the most happiness.[9]

It is unlikely that the ethos for which Locke and Bentham spoke either anticipated or was intended to serve as a mandate for the wastefulness and conspicuous consumption of modern industrial society. The political and technological context in which those ideals came to be effective, however, combined with them to contribute to the realization of these modern realities.

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[8]MacPherson, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval, p. 30.

[9]Ibid., p. 27.

This consumptive ideal became intimately bound up with the growth of liberal individualism and the want regarding state. In the want regarding state, specific ideals about the kind of life an individual should lead were no longer politically promoted. The role of the state was to satisfy, either politically or through the market economy, the desires of the public as given. Unlike older, pre-Reformation political communities, which had articulated the ideals consumption should serve, thus making consumption subject to moral review, the new view claimed that the formulation of those ideals was a private, individual matter, outside the sphere of political action. The kinds of consumption were no longer seen as actions to be politically guided or promoted. It became assumed that individual consumptive desires should be satisfied, regardless of their conformity to any ideals about what a good life entailed. The new emphasis on consumption and the demise of politically recognized ideals to which an individual's consumption need appeal combined to make satisfying consumptive desires themselves the ultimate, unreproachable end of political affairs. Treating men as infinite consumers initially served the public interest very well. It inspired and was inspired by a market system and industrial technology which seemed destined to satisfy many legitimate wants and contributed to a diverse, dynamic society which reflected the ideals of the ideal regarding liberal philosophers.

Critics of American values from DeTocqueville through today have focused on the transmission of this want regarding ethos to America, and the pervasive success it has enjoyed here. This is not a claim that all Americans express unqualified agreement with Bentham's dictum. It does seem likely, however, that most reservations would be based upon its oversimplification of the good life, not on its lack of essential truth. As a result of the success of the want regarding ethos increasing abundance has become synonymous with the public interest. How many public figures have argued that it is in the public interest to do with less or the same, when more is possible? We are, as David Potter has suggested, a "people of plenty" for whom increasing abundance serves as the unifying social goal. It has till now been the least controversial, the most frequently appealed to, and invariably the overriding principle of public life.[10]

Today, however, the flaw in automatically associating increased consumption with the public interest has become objectified as a monolithic culture of consumers, whose indiscriminantly consumptive habits are engendering a sense of alienation from nature as well as an increasingly environmentally precarious technology.

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[10]David M. Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954). Potter's thesis is that abundance is the distinguishing and unifying attribute of the American character.

In the instance of unrestrained consumption, want regarding principles have failed to live up to the standards of the ideal regarding philosophers. The assumption of a reciprocally perpetuating relationship between morally autonomous men and a diverse social environment did not anticipate the impact of powerful value-shaping forces on the social environment. By the default of a political tradition which has claimed neutrality on the question of what kind of life is the best life, those supposedly individually determined ends have been shaped by an expanding technology which readily serves a narrow range of material demands, while neglecting other needs that are equally pressing. The increasing and readily available experience of self as a consumer of those goods, and the continuing, highly refined inducements of those interests who stand to gain from that consumption have combined to create a life-style and a concept of the public interest which both see increasing consumption as an end in itself.[11]

"Cultural laissez faire" has not led to cultural diversity, but as did its economic counterpart, a monopoly

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[11]This theme is a dominant one among philosophers popular with environmentalists. Theodore Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1973); Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, 2 vols. (Harcourt Brace and World, 1967-70); Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

of highly consumptive values.[12] Some have attempted to defend the consumptive society by referring to ideals quite similar to those of the 19th Century philosophers. The claim is that expanding consumptive opportunities "maximizes individual choice."[13] J. K. Galbraith has appropriately labelled such a claim as "the supermarket theory of freedom."[14] Accepting its validity hinges on how one answers the question of whether a society which offers a wide variety of deodorants and automobile fashions objecti-

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[12]Christopher Lasch, The World of Nations (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 293-296. Lasch, in the final essay, "The Limits of Cultural Laissez Faire," asks some probing questions about the role of individual freedom in the context of a technology which appears to be "eliminating" traditional biological and social constraints. The secular state and individualism had two basic effects. The assertion of individual rights for privacy and against the traditional constraints of institutionalized hierarchy. "Individualism . . . was identified with a revolt against the constraints imposed by nature--that is, with man's increasing domination of nature through science and technology. Modern rationalism revealed itself not only in the rational state and in the vision of a social order based on universal reason but in the unprecedented advance of science; and in a culture which placed a high value on privacy, self dependence and personal fulfillment, it was perhaps inevitable that the achievements of modern science should be seen, not as a new stage in man's collective self awareness, but principally as another means to individual fulfillment and the satisfaction of personal wants."

[13]See Max Ways, "How to Think About the Environment," Fortune 81 (February 1970) 98.

[14]John Kenneth Galbraith, "How Much Should a Country Consume?" Readings in Resource Management and Conservation, ed. Ian Burton and Robert W. Kates (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) 265.

fies the kind of diversity envisioned by the ideal regarding philosophers.

Due to the longstanding congruence of unlimited consumption and the public interest the legitimacy of making increased consumption an object of political controversy is often overlooked. In a community which holds a consensus on the high value of consumption, increased material abundance is only controversial because of its contribution to pollution problems. With the recent introduction to public debate of the vision of a post-industrial society, the prospect of "having enough" has become a considered possibility. Combined with the recognition by an increasing number that many further increases in consumption might actually work against a concept of the public interest which calls for a diverse and challenging culture, it has become a legitimate political question. This is particularly true in cases where increased consumption actively destroys natural environments which can make a strong claim on that concept. A political community which ordinarily claims value neutrality is hard-pressed to maintain that stance in a case of conflicting, mutually exclusive concepts of the public interest.

The argued need to rethink the longstanding commitment to increase consumption carries additional weight when it is considered that the desires for consumption are often offensive

to the other ideal underlying want regarding institutions. Many consumptive desires have not offered the reasoned elaboration which "consumer sovreignty" was supposed to promote. Can an obsessively consumptive life-style honestly be defended as "freely chosen by individual men" following their own lights, who have had the opportunity to thoughtfully consider and experience a wide variety of alternative life-styles? The increasingly contrived desire for many "necessities" of a consumer society cannot be easily defended as instrumental to more ultimate goals. Much modern consumption seems arbitrary and pointless and the public's desire to increase consumption is not deserving of reform preservationist's respect. There is strong evidence that the public has lost sight of the value of a morally coherent desire, and a diverse, challenging society. While such charges are obviously sweeping, their refinement is necessary, however, before a preservationist can legitimately defend a claim that material demands on natural environments should be left unsatisfied.

A moral position on preservation must do more than explain its rejection of the opposing position. It must also explain the superiority of its own position and explain what it means by "superior."

The principal objection that the reform preservationist makes to the indifferent satisfaction of arbitrary consumptive

desires centers on the unnecessary development of natural environments that satisfaction requires. Developing those environments diminishes the extent to which nature can be left to pursue its own ends and results in a sense of alienation from the natural world.[15]

Reform ideals require that nature be left untouched once it has been sufficiently developed to meet genuine material needs. This does not mean that any legitimate public interests be sacrificed for the sake of the aspirations of nature. It does mean that all human interests requiring the development of natural environments be measured against an idealized concept of the public interest. Once manipulation is seen as unnecessary to that end, it becomes apparent that enlightened human aspirations and those of undeveloped nature are congruent. It is determined that it better serves the pursuit of the public interest to allow the nature in question to pursue its own ends, whatever those ends might be.

It is their uniqueness which serves to define the contribution of natural environments to the public interest in the most rigorous sense. Unlike the traditional view, the goodness or value of natural environments does not claim to stand apart from human needs. Their goodness

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[15]William Leiss, Nature, Technology and Domination (unpublished paper), p. 10.

results from the unique opportunities a natural environment provides for men to act out of a sense of obligation to nature. It is only when men recognize the rights of others, both human and nonhuman, and act out of a sense of obligation to those rights that they feel as whole moral beings. In the same sense that men are rewarded by allowing other men the freedom to pursue ends that are capable of a reasoned elaboration, we take a similar pleasure in respecting nature's pursuit of her own ends.[16] This opportunity is available in the context of a wilderness experience, in the actual attempts of preservationists to save a natural environment, in the respect and awe felt for the natural phenomena encountered in day-to-day experiences, or in a heightened awareness of the implications of one's habits on the natural environment. To the extent, for example, which men overlook the potential congruence between the aspirations of nature and morally coherent men, they lose sight of that particular virtue of discriminant consumption. The result is a sense of alienation from their natural surroundings and from their potential to act as moral beings. Conversely, to the extent that men recognize and experience the rewards of the congruence between the aspirations of nature and of morally coherent men, men strive to be less arbitrary and more discriminant in their demands on her.

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[16]Laurence Tribe, "Ways Not to Think About Plastic Trees: New Foundations for Environmental Law," The Yale Law Journal 83 (1974) 1326-1327.

The injunction is to treat nature responsibly, as a distinct entity, not to actually speak for its aspirations. Such an injunction does not require a mystical, bio-centric or teleological view of nature. It does require that men treat nature as purposeful, as a distinct entity possessing an inalienable right once the justified claims that have been made on it have been satisfied. That right is simply the right to be left alone.[17] After that point nature need not prove its material recreational or esthetic desirability to men. The onus is placed on men to prove the legitimacy of human desires which require further development.

Acting out of a sense of responsibility towards nature is an ideal which seems to summarize the hopes of many environmentalists. It explains the dismay of many preservationists when a natural area is left unprotected because of a lack of scenic or recreational desirability. It also accounts for the appreciation a preservationist feels for those natural environments he will probably never "use." Unfortunately, the tendency in a political community which appeals to popular wants and is indifferent to the ideals underlying those wants is to rationalize the preservation of natural environments by referring only to their service to popular values, such as their scenic beauty or their

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[17]Herbert Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) 63-69.

recreational and research opportunities. All of those are legitimate values in their own right. They overlook, however, the reform ideal claiming a natural environment has a value which gives the preservation of natural environments a unique claim to the idealized concept of the public interest.

The claim that a reform position on natural environments makes on the traditional liberal concept of the public interest is that natural environments possess a unique ability to foster men who search for the ideals underlying their desires. They afford the opportunity for men to develop a sense of moral responsibility, humility and accountability for their actions, a sense which purely want regarding institutions once promised to promote.

By meeting the requirements of a moral position, as elaborated here, reform preservationist demands for a more natural environment make a more legitimate claim to satisfaction than those apparently arbitrary consumptive wants which have not been similarly elaborated. Of the two competing demands, only preservationist claims successfully appeal to a concept of the public interest which demands that all men's desires be capable of grounding in a moral position.

Merely requiring that all competing demands on natural environments be capable of a reasoned elaboration is not a very substantive concept of the public interest. Obviously more substantive ideals are required for resolving conflicting

legitimate demands. The appeal of reform preservationists for a more natural environment makes a strong claim to the other basic ideal in the traditional liberal concept of the public interest as well. This ideal calls for a diverse and challenging culture.

That ideal has not been articulated in any substantive way here, nor can it be in a paper of this scope. It does seem to be a fairly sound generalization to say that the opportunities afforded by natural environments are varied and challenging enough to greatly increase the diversity and quality of American life-styles. Their contribution certainly seems greater than increased development for consumptive demands. In specific instances, however, a more detailed description of the public interest is required. Without such a description, a convincing case for preserving a particular area is only left with rhetorical references to those challenging and diverse experiences.

The earlier assertion that the further development of natural environments is unnecessary to serve the public interest demonstrates the need to go beyond merely referring to "rewards" and "challenges" when extolling natural environments. How, for example, does one isolate one particular development as unnecessary in an interdependent economy? Similarly, how does one readily distinguish legitimate consumptive desires from arbitrary consumptive desires? Consumptive habits and "necessary" developments

combine to make up a seamless web. It is impossible to question a particular habit or development without ultimately having to question a whole complex of habits and developments. It is impossible for preservationists to attack the car culture for its displacement of farmland and urban neighborhoods with freeways and parking lots without opening up a variety of related issues. What about the needlessly large size of many cars, or their wasteful use, or the urban sprawl which makes wasteful use of automobiles a necessity? Attacking the car culture also touches upon the problem of those thousands whose employment is tied up in its perpetuation.

The initial objection carries with it a series of related controversies and with them comes the obligation to make a consistent stand on issues such as mass transit, urban planning and public works projects.

This same interdependent character of the economy lends some validity to the charge that preservationists are exacerbating social injustice. It is not sufficient to respond to the charge by pointing to the needlessly high consumption of others. Like the objection to the car culture, the objection to needless consumption demands a position on a wider program of social change which includes a concern for social justice.[18]

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[18]William Bryan, "Toward a Viable Environmental Movement," Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 10 (1974) 400-1.

The above examples suggest that it is not a matter of simply sloughing arbitrary consumption off the top of the public's material requirements. The challenge facing reform preservationists and reform environmentalists is the articulation of a comprehensive vision of the public interest. This vision must distinguish between necessary and arbitrary consumption and necessary and unnecessary developments. It can only do so by developing accessible social, political and economic alternatives combined into a coherent vision of the public interest that would enable such distinctions to be readily made.

Appealing to such a non-want regarding concept of the public interest showing both why and how current consumption patterns should be shifted to those which have a much lower material requirement. Education, health services, sanitary services, good parks and playgrounds, the fine arts, effective local government and a clean countryside, for example, appear to be viable, promising alternatives which have low materials requirements. Of course, the alternatives must also show how those goals and the mechanisms employed in achieving them are consistent with traditional liberal ideals, ideals which rely heavily on the autonomy of the individual.

From a technical point of view, such a task is a major one. From the point of view of a moral position, it's an absolute necessity. Failing to develop and promote any

practical alternatives to excess consumption, development and social injustice casts doubt on the reform preservationists' claims of not acting selfishly but in the public interest. It also suggests that reform preservationist goals, even if correct in principle, are not realizable in fact.

If the preservationist position were integrated with accessible alternatives to current practices, the myopia of describing the alternatives as wilderness for the rich versus housing for the poor would be exposed. From the perspective of a reform concept of the public interest, the want regarding alternative means a more opulent abundance of needless goods, and a less natural environment. The reform alternatives would offer a more natural environment and a more equitable distribution of previously developed resources.

This brief elaboration of the preservationist position makes an appeal to a coherent moral theory, and undercuts the morality of the position of those opposed to preservation, or whose consumptive appetites preclude preservation. The discussion also gives a broad outline of the kinds of arguments and alternatives which must be developed for a legitimate liberal defense of "excess" preservation.

In addition to a reasoned elaboration which is capable of appealing to a concept of the public interest, a second requirement of a moral position on preservation is consistency. It is the preservationists' public image in this dimension

which frequently places the integrity of their position in jeopardy, and has precipitated many of the objections to their efforts.

The preservationist position only commands respect when it is grounded in a life-style which does not itself make needless demands on natural environments. It seems fair to expect that one willingly lead the kind of life he is advocating for others. It is understandable, of course, that preservationists might see such individual efforts as of little practical worth. The integrity of one's position is of little importance in a political tradition which satisfies wants indifferently. Additionally, the seamless web described above makes the pursuit of a morally consistent life, from an environmental point of view, very difficult. It is nearly impossible to function in an environmentally consistent manner in the context of a culture which is oblivious to environmental constraints. Nevertheless, it's incumbent on anyone who proposes ending needless development that he attempt to live and search for ways to live an environmentally responsible life. Not to do so belies a position asserting that an obligation to nature inspires morally coherent men.

If preservationists would become more concerted in their efforts to carve out distinctive life-styles, the charge that they were elitists who imposed their interests

upon rights of others would be more easily countered. It would be more accurate to describe preservationists as an oppressed minority. The self perpetuating, unchecked consumptive imperative develops natural environments in the process of appealing to a majoritarian concept of the public interest which the reform environmentalists do not share. If one's life-style were consistent with calls for a more natural environment, one need admit no benefit from increased development of those environments. As a result, no genuinely public interest would be promoted. Majority ideals would be promoted at the expense of minority ideals.

The above is not a direct response to the charge of cultural elitism. Reform environmentalists are avowedly paternalistic. But the ideals being appealed to are hardly exotic. They are rooted in the same liberal tradition which produced the institutions allowing unchecked consumption. If those ideals were consulted, the demand for equal respect by consumptive interests would be seen as mitigated by their increasingly arbitrary character. As such they forfeit their right to full respect. Those who accept those traditional ideals naturally find oppressive the resolution of an issue which accepts consumptive desires as equally legitimate.

The above is the usual result of preservation vs. development disputes in the context of political institutions which are essentially want regarding and do not require an

appeal to a distinct concept of the public interest. In such a context, the desires of preservatonists are seen as just another "consumptive desire" placed upon a dwindling natural resource base. The number of natural environments preserved is not based on their superior claim to an institutionalized concept of the public interest but is simply a function of the number of natural environments the public wants preserved vis a vis its consumptive desires. For example, the public's desires for preservation were expressed through the passage of the Wilderness Act, the ensuing wilderness bills, and through agencies duly authorized to administer such environments.

Since the value of protecting natural environments does not exist independently of public desires for them, the onus is on preservationists to prove to the larger public and its representatives the value of preservation in each particular instance. As a result, preservationist efforts have necessarily been piecemeal, and also, due to the constant widespread demands of expanding consumption, spread rather thin.[19]

The lack of institutionalized recognition of the values of preserving natural environments has also placed limits on the kinds of legal objections that can be made to

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[19]Michael McCloskey, "Wilderness Movement at the Crossroads, 1945-1970," Pacific Historical Review 41 (1972) 355.

the outcome of a legislative or administrative decision. In the past, these objections have been directed at the unsound decision-making procedures employed by natural resource administrators.[20] In other instances the objections have centered on the neglect of relevant information[21] and in others the neglect of a substantive statute (NEPA).[22] The principle to which the contending parties appeal in each of the above disputes is want regarding. Have logging interests been given too much influence on the legislators or the administrative agency?[23] Is the public fully and accurately informed about the impact of a proposed development?[24] Are national interests being overlooked in an effort to accommodate local pressures?[25] If every possible step has been taken to make certain that the number of natural

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[20]Charles S. Reich, "The Public and the Nation's Forests," California Law Review 50 (1962) 381, 386. Reich discusses the need for increasing public input in land management decisions to offset input of the commodity interests which are established through working relationships with those agencies, infra note 23.

[21]Sierra Club v. Butz ELR III 20, 292, 20, 293 (9th Cir Mar. 16, 1973). Plaintiff offered court information supporting alternative uses.

[22]42 USC §4321 et. seq., 83 stat. 852, Pub. L. 91-190. See note 24.

[23]Supra, note 20.

[24]The goal of NEPA is more procedural than substantive. The act simply requires that environmental factors be considered. It does not assign a weight to such factors.

[25]See Grant McConnel's "The Conservation Movement, Past and Present," Western Political Quarterly 7 (1954) 472-3.

environments preserved is an accurate reflection of existing public desires, appeals to the want regarding principle have been exhausted.

If one's valuation of a natural environment is higher than that of the general public's, it is unlikely that any of the above disputes will result in wholly satisfactory outcomes from the preservationist point of view. The apprehensions of many preservationists about relying on a highly consumptive public to adequately support their efforts is reflected in their recent attempts at conceptualizing a constitutional right to a salubrious environment, or as Christopher Stone has suggested, granting legal rights to natural objects.[26] Recognizing such a right protects an ideal that is implicitly "too important to be left to the vagaries of the majority will."[27]

Various intellectual paths have been followed towards such a conceptualization. The hypothetical position constructed here claims natural environments are protected through the projection of the private rights of preservationists onto those natural environments. The reform preservation claim is that those areas are not merely instrumental to more ultimate private ideals, such as

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[26]Christopher Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing?--Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects," Southern California Law Review 45 (1972) 450.

[27]"Notes Towards a Constitutionally Protected Environment," Virginia Law Review 41, 458 (1970) 481.

recreation or aesthetic appeal, but are the embodiment of their own obligation to nature. The claim might be that natural areas deserve protection under the due process clause of the 14th Amendment by virtue of meeting the "personal" and "fundamental" requirements established in earlier cases defining such rights.[28]

The ramification of recognizing such a right would be to shift the burden of proof from preservationists to those advocating development. Remaining natural environments could only be developed if sufficient public reasons were elaborated to justify overriding a private right to preservation.[29]

Although claiming such a right might seem rather ambitious, if preservationists met the consistency requirement of a moral position in a visible way and were more vocal about the sense of obligation underlying their efforts, i.e., made a reasoned elaboration, making such a claim would not be presumptuous. Courts have been more willing to accept

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[28]Ibid., pp. 462-3. "Under the substantive due process approach . . . a constitutional right that is solidly grounded in the Fourteenth Amendment must be both personal and fundamental. The personality requirement is designed to prevent economic rights from regaining the constitutional status they enjoyed earlier in the century. In 'Griswold,' Justice Horton averred that the fundamentality of a due process right is determined by deference to history, our basic societal values, and the doctrines of federalism and separation of powers. Similarly, Goldberg said that unenumerated constitutional rights must be so rooted in the traditions and [collective] conscience of our people . . . as to be ranked fundamental."

[29]Ibid., p. 478.

such nascent claims to rights in cases where a minority's ability to protect such a claimed right is vulnerable. As an identifiable minority preservationists could not protect their rights, i.e., natural environments, through recourse to legislative and executive channels. Yet those minority interests would obviously be suffering harm from developments which only serve majority ideals.[30]

The reform position and its concomitant actions outlined here would provide a legitimate defense of the supposedly excessive efforts of preservationists. The earlier criticisms of preservationists remain quite appropriate, however, for the traditional defenders of natural environments. There is a glaring inconsistency in leading the dominant conception of the good life and still advocating the preservation of areas which contain material resources. Preservation has historically been associated with those who combine a desire for outdoor recreation with a highly consumptive life-style. From the reform perspective, treating the desires of such advocates as mere incremental consumptive desires is justified. Unlike those of the reform environmentalists such desires cannot be coherently integrated with a life-style which is consistent with a more natural environment or linked with a program of social and economic reform. Perhaps that mystical tradition in which wilderness

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[30]Ibid., p. 482.

proponents claim to speak for nature and its desires, and not for their own, is a reflection of that inability. Such an arbitrary defense does not command respect.

CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF PRESERVATION IN A MOVEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM

It is now possible to reevaluate the role of preservation in the larger environmental movement. Environmentalists who appeal to a want regarding concept of the public interest are naturally eager to chastise and disassociate themselves from preservationists who seem to impede the implementation of the public will. A culturally prescriptive environmentalist who sees a more natural environment as a justified end independent of the public will should not be troubled by this. There is a possibility that continued efforts at preserving those environments and the dissociation from want regarding and survivalist environmentalism it brings may prove to be one key to a viable movement for environmental reform.

The conflict of the distinctly different concepts of the public interest observed when analyzing the exchanges over natural environments is less obvious when one reviews other environmental issues. At first glance, a reform oriented or prescriptive environmental community distinct from other environmentalists is not readily discernible. Except for the well known differences in emphasis between Barry Commoner and Paul Ehrlich, the environmental movement presents a remarkably united front, free of crippling dissent

and confident that the future will vindicate its actions. Yet the philosophical distinctions that preservation controversies put into relief are important and should be the object of more discussion within the movement. What kind of future does the environmentalist hope for? Does his role include advocating future goals? Is environmentalism a movement to promote a change in the way the public lives, or is it simply a problem-solving movement which hopes to minimize the degree to which the general public's life-style might have to change? Even in the exchanges over natural environments, where confronting the differences within the environmental movement and the questions those differences raise seems unavoidable, the misdirected defenses of preservationists show a lack of selfconsciousness about the various goals that are implicit. For environmentalists who are not interested in promoting new values, glossing over these internal differences is not damaging. It's hard to imagine a successful movement for cultural change, however, whose members are not cognizant of their own unique ideals.

There are assorted reasons for reform environmentalism's lack of selfconsciousness. There are, for example, obvious psychological benefits to seeing oneself as riding the crest of popular sentiment. But though the environmental movement is in part a popular movement, it contains elements which are something more than that as well. "Environmentalists" implies a group with a distinct set of values to most of the

public. However distorted an image that label might conjure up for some, its use does seem to suggest that public opinion and environmentalists' opinions are occasionally at variance.

Additionally, claiming one's displeasure with majority values is not strategically sound in a society that is democratic and equalitarian in temper. American history shows that those who have assumed paternalistic positions on controversial issues have not fared well politically.[1] The danger of admitting a paternalistic position becomes particularly evident when one considers the kinds of demands made by reform ideals. The kind of life-style one leads and the kind of goods one consumes have never been considered legitimate public concerns. Attempts at changing public life-styles are not likely to be well received. Environmentalists and the general public both tend to see such questions as matters to be resolved outside the political sphere. An avowedly paternalistic environmentalism runs the risk of provoking charges that they constitute an elitist minority interfering with private concerns.

There are other circumstances contributing to the failure of reform environmentalists to set themselves apart

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[1]For a comprehensive view of the dangers of paternalism, see Richard Hofstadder, Anti Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969); also see Brian Barry's discussion of the "anti-ideals in politics" temper of American culture in Political Argument (New York: Humanities Press, 1965) 80-1.

from less visionary elements. One is that both reform and want regarding environmentalists share short-run goals. Although the reform branch of the movement does not share the want regarding environmentalist's respect for the public's consumptive aspirations, it does collaborate with those environmentalists on most issues. The general public, the want regarding and the reform environmentalist are all convinced that a safer technology and improved pollution control devices must be developed. Population growth must remain under control. If subdivisions are going to be developed, they should be well planned. The long-term productivity of the land must not be impaired. The ecological sciences must be more thoroughly explored. None of these goals are terribly controversial, all are very important and must be achieved. They satisfy the demands of the general public and are also consistent with the ideals of the reform environmentalist. But by not pointing to the existence of divergent ultimate goals, i.e., continuing consumption and continued development v.s. more discriminant consumption and a more natural environment, these issues tend to obscure the difference between popular and prescriptive environmentalism. And when the short-range goals of environmental action are agreed upon the problems are often seen as mere technical problems, as developing the best means to the end of those shared goals. But the problems then tend to be diagnosed and solved only in want regarding

terms, i.e., lack of scientific and economic information, technical failures, administrative incompetence, none of which hint at the existence of the larger issue, which is the nature of the "wants" themselves. As a result, an awareness of the important distinction between acting in response to public demands and out of an obligation to reform ideals is blurred. Of course the general public and the want regarding environmentalist feel that resolving the above problems is the whole of environmentalism. For the reformer, as we have seen, simply giving the public what it wants does not complete his areas of concern. He is also interested in advancing more ultimate goals.

The problem of developing a more selfconscious reform community cannot be resolved by its withdrawal from those less controversial environmental problems which are shared with want regarding environmentalists and by focusing on long-range goals. The reform community also has a stake in the solution of those immediate problems, a stake which may extend to its own prospects for survival. Remaining ideologically pure may be romantically attractive, but in this instance it might also prove lethal; only advocating more ultimate ideals holds little prospect for immediate success.

This should not be construed to be a retreat to a survivalist position. In fact, one cause of reform environmentalism's weak prescriptive voice might be the

prevailing assumption within much of the environmental movement that value change will take care of itself, that the physical fact of a resource shortage or an eco-catastrophe, either imminent or unfolding, will bring the consuming masses, pernicious technologies and market economies to their knees. While an eco-disaster would no doubt be an effective way to show the superiority of reform ideals, it's hardly an event to hope for. This paper has made an opposite assumption. Its assumption has been that the environmental problems which pose immediate threats are solvable in the short run and that our first eco-catastrophe may be postponed "indefinitely" without requiring a change in consumptive values. This assumption does not reflect a cavalier disregard for the "ecological facts of life," but a fear that the public's environmental attention span will not extend far into the future, coupled with a respect for the short-run competency of the technological fix.[2]

If this assumption is legitimate, immediate environmental problems will be "solved," and the popular environmental movement will become history. What will then be the status of reform environmentalism? Reform environmentalists will have no choice but to wage the contest on less popular

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[2]The Club of Rome, for example, recently extended the time frame in which adequate response can be made to environmental threats.

grounds, on the strength of their reform ideals vis a vis dominant ideals. It is difficult to imagine the reform environmentalists succeeding in even entering such a debate, unless they become more of a community of consciously shared goals than the controversy over preservation suggests them to be.

The preservation of natural environments might play a role in crystalizing such a community. Preservation's potentially strategic role is best illustrated through a review of past political attempts at changing American values. From a reform perspective, a review of the pattern those movements have followed is not encouraging. Culturally prescriptive movements have suffered from many of the same difficulties highlighted in the above discussion. Populism, Progressivism, the New Deal, the civil rights movement, and the recent antiwar movement all contained elements which could be classified as culturally prescriptive, reform and popular. In all cases, the reform elements were frustrated and virtually disappeared.

Past movements have been very "successful" in a distributive sense. They have provided the opportunity for economically disaffected groups to enter the mainstream of America's dominant cultural values. These movements have never succeeded, however, in altering those dominant values. An environmentalist might, in fact, argue that the reform tradition has served to aggravate the environmental

problems we are now facing by extending consumptive values to the disaffected groups.[3] It is not the purpose of this paper to explain how these movements eventually extended dominant American values, however, but to understand why their more visionary elements made such feeble, short-lived efforts at preserving and extending their reform values and goals.

Nineteenth Century populism provides a particularly informative example of past failures at sustained political attempts to change values. The populist movement of the 19th Century combined the inchoate indignation of farmers and laborers at the chronic poverty of the expanding urban-industrial culture with reform elements who envisioned a future culture for farmers and laborers radically different from the one which was developing.[4] The source of much of the discontent was a farm population whose once significant cultural influence and self esteem had eroded as the nation

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[3]Hans Ezhenbergher, "Critique of Political Ecology," New Left Review (March April 1974) 10; also Richard Hoftstadder, The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 18. "It has been the function of the liberal tradition in American politics, from the time of Jefferson and Jacksonian democracy down through Populism, Progressivism and the New Deal to broaden the numbers of those who could benefit from the great American bonanza . . . without this tradition . . . the American system would probably have failed to develop into the remarkable system of production and distribution that it is."

[4]Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969) 5-7.

became urbanized. When severe economic difficulties became widespread in the last quarter of the century, this unrest developed into the grange movements, and later, the Peoples Party. The immediate targets of the generalized anger were railroads, urban banks, and nearly anything or anyone that seemed to suggest a retreat from traditional rural values or as somehow responsible for farmers' economic problems. The rapid growth of industrialism created a disaffected urban laboring class as well. Poor working conditions were an inevitable product of the fiercely competitive entrepreneurial capitalism of the period. Urban areas, growing at an incredibly rapid pace, contained immigrant labor class slums as squalid as any racial ghettos found in a twentieth century city.[5]

The disaffection of laborer and farmer occasionally extended beyond their concern with the immediate economic problems to a more detailed critique of middle class values and institutions. Henry George[6] and Edward Bellamy[7] suggested radical institutional changes and a utopian future which inspired many Populists. The Peoples Party included elements for whom feminism, socialism, and coalitions of

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[5]Ibid., pp. 5-7.

[6]Henry George, Progress and Poverty (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 75th anniv. ed., 1956).

[7]Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward 2000-1887 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1898).

poor black and poor white farmers were important concerns. In rural areas the ultimate hope of the reform element was to restore the Jeffersonian ideal of the independent, self-reliant, noncommercial yeoman farmer, while in urban areas the "Knights of Labor" leadership was:

> . . . holding out for a comprehensive rather than a piecemeal reform of society, [attacking] economic individualism . . ., the morally corrupting effects of capitalism, and [holding an] underlying vision of a cooperative society.[8]

Unfortunately for the reform elements the plans for instituting these ideals were never well developed. Although the literature of agrarian reform was replete with predictions of the inevitable failure of the decadent urban industrial society, practical steps to an alternative society were rarely developed. Elements of the labor movement were confident that the inexorable forces of history would lead to the realization of their ideals. The assumption, apparently, was that reform ideals would fill the vacuum when the dominant society collapsed.[9]

The want regarding elements of the Populist movement which grew out of the discontent were not far-sighted, nor were they apocalyptic. They focussed their efforts on effecting the public's immediate demands. The Farm Bureau

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[8]Lasch, The Agony of the American Left, 12-13, 16-17.

[9]For a general discussion of the decline of Agrarian Reform and Populism, see Richard Hoftstadter's Age of Reform, Chapter III.

cared little for reforming society in general. Its only goal was to solve farmers' economic problems. Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor was not concerned with questions of class solidarity or with establishing a a cooperative society, but with the more immediate concerns of better working conditions and wages.[10]

Reforms which increased economic opportunities for farmers and laborers were relatively uncontroversial and could be politically and economically achieved with relative ease. Concerns such as preserving a traditional rural culture or the sense of community cooperation which the Knights of Labor hoped for were not traditionally deemed political or public concerns. These goals, unlike economic concerns, were traditionally private matters and not readily accessible through political action. The want regarding elements of Populism passed those concerns over while resolving popular, less controversial issues.

In retrospect, it might be argued that the Populist movement was a great success. Farmers and laborers have become economic interest groups who claim substantial portions of the gross national product. Improved farming and marketing techniques and technological advances in industry have allowed the absorption of farmer and laborer into the economic mainstream. Such a happy conclusion

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[10]Lasch, The Agony of the American Left, 16-18.

would only be justified, however, if one accepts the analysis of a liberal historian that all the Populists wanted was "more of the good things in life--the American standard of living as it was known in [that] day."[11] But judged by the more ultimate goals of the reform elements of the Populist movement, the outcome was terribly disappointing. Modern corporate agribusiness does not bring to mind the Jeffersonian ideal of the independent family farm. Organized labor is hardly in the vanguard of social change. The purpose of this discussion is not, however, to sympathize with reform goals, or decry the eventual impact of these reform movements on the environment. The relevant question asks, what happened to the reform elements and their ideals?

Once the immediate, uncontroversial, popular goals were met, public indignation and interest ended. The potential grassroots support for reform ideals died with the end of the more immediate issues. Secondly, the reform impulse died internally as well. Although reform ideals had not been politically effected, they had not been precluded either. No actions had been taken by the political community to destroy labor's "community," or the farmer's rural cultural traditions. The ideal of selfsufficiency appeared to remain an achievable one. It could even have been argued that through enhancing the farmers' and laborers'

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[11]Richard Hoftstadter, Age of Reform, 130.

material situation, their prospect of achieving those ideals had been advanced.

The end of popular discontent had a disastrous effect on the reform elements. They had banked on a general collapse of dominant ideals rather than on developing accessible alternatives to those ideals.

The impact of these new conditions on reform elements was that their liklihood of rapidly gaining enough converts to reform ideals to make them political issues was slim. And without the impetus of impaired self interest the reform elements lacked the sense of indignation and hence the shared commitment which could survive the long period such a task required.

When the environmental movement gained national prominance on Earth Day, 1970, one of its members happily announced that, unlike past reform movements whose goals were of an economic nature and could easily be co-opted, environmentalism's noneconomic goals were not so readily twisted.[12] Such optimism is ungrounded from a reform point of view. The reform branch of the environmental movement should not only be concerned about co-option, but also accommodation. Want regarding environmentalism, by not actively questioning America's economic goals, is absorbed by default and technologically and administratively

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[12]Dennis Hayes, "Earth Day: A Beginning," The Progressive 34 (April 1970), 7.

accommodated. The public's goals for the environmental movement are within reach. There are indications that air and water pollution have both decreased over the past year.[13] The subdividing of rural land may soon by "properly planned." Population growth is no longer a national problem.

Once the public's immediate concerns are assuaged, and confrontations over consumptive life-styles avoided, the reform environmentalist will lack a potential constituency for his more ultimate ideals. Nor will he be able to claim that his own life-style is precluded by the consumption of others. Once effective pollution controls are instituted, the environment becomes "clean" and the gross national product can again safely rise, the reform environmentalist will be free to return to private life and consume as discriminantly as he sees fit. Consumptive life-styles will no longer be the object of popular concern. The EPA can then join the ICC and FDA in the ranks of self-perpetuating bureaucracies which are indifferent to the ideals that contributed to their founding.

The demise of the commitment and sense of community of reform populists, and the hypothetical demise of the reform environmentalists resulted from two key circumstances. The public's immediate, short-run demands were met, thus

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[13]The Sixth Annual Report of the Council on Environmental Quality (December 1975) 299, 350.

making more ultimate, traditionally private goals difficult to politicize. Secondly, the reform communities suffered from an inarticulateness which stemmed, in part, from the fact that their self interest had not been impaired and from the lack of a sense of shared ideals.

There are several reasons for believing that the preservation branch of the environmental movement will not allow a similar pattern. Controversies over our remaining natural environments, however, are likely to continue to be prominent issues, issues which are not buried in traditionally private spheres but are unavoidably public.

The number of conflicting demands of preservationists and consumptive interests on the remaining natural areas is constantly increasing. Unlike the demands of the Populists or the demands of those opposing pollution the competing demands on natural environments are made upon a fixed, finite resource base, which can't be technologically expanded or administratively resolved. As long as these competing, mutually exclusive demands are made and the issue is not fully resolved, the dialogue over the merits of the competing demands will continue.[14]

A mutually satisfactory solution cannot be achieved through compromise since there are simply not enough natural

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[14]Grant McConnel, "The New Politics of Conviction," Nation 206 (April 8, 1968) 475-76. McConnel discusses the physical inability of preservation disputes to be resolved through tradeoffs and compromises.

environments left. As long as the self interests of reform environmentalists in regard to preservation of natural environments cannot be satisfied, the ideals by which they justify that interest will be kept firmly in mind. The problem cannot be misdiagnosed as one of administrative incompetence, or an inefficient use of natural areas. It is obvious that no matter how competently the land is administered, or how efficiently it is used, the root of the problem, in the eyes of the reform community, will be the dominant culture's excessive material demands. Additionally, the political community will be hard-pressed to claim a neutral stance on the issue. Every government action which tends to promote increased development of resources found in natural areas will not be seen as an action that is neutral with respect to ultimate ends, but will be viewed by reform environmentalists as promoting increasingly contrived consumptive "needs" at the expense of the realization of their own concept of the public interest.

In keeping with the tradition of falling back on technological expansion to satisfy the demands of all interests, it has recently been seriously suggested that, since the public's desire for natural environments is learned, it might be possible to teach the public to appreciate artificial environments.[15] This would enable the nation

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[15]Martin H. Krieger, "What's Wrong With Plastic Trees?", Science 179, p. 446.

to continue its present pace of developing natural environments while satisfying "amenity" interests as well. What such a purely want regarding "solution" overlooks, of course, is the reform rationale for preserving natural areas out of a sense of obligation to nature itself, not simply because of their aesthetic or recreational "desirability."

It may seem odd that the key contribution preservation controversies make to reform environmentalism is their inability to be satisfactorily resolved. That assertion can be understood if one remembers that the reform environmentalist who takes his own ideals seriously sees himself as a morally prescriptive force and not a mere selfish interest who is only concerned about executing his own life plans. The purpose of a prescriptive movement is to force a confrontation, dialogue, and choice about the competing social goals. This is what controversies involving natural areas uniquely succeed in doing.

Preservation controversies are easily politicized. In the past reform elements have never been able to build the political base necessary to make their more ultimate ideals a matter of public choice. Populist ideals about ostensibly "private" concerns such as rural culture and community solidarity could only have been politicized had large numbers pressed those demands. Preservation controversies do not have to overcome that hurdle. Since many of

our remaining natural environments are under public ownership, the competing ideals are already matters of public choice. Unlike most traditional ideals, reform ideals on nature are physically, publically objectified. The public is given a choice between uninterrupted consumption and a more natural environment. As a result, both dominant and reform concepts of the public interest are held up for public review. The issue of what kind of life is the best kind of life remains a legitimate public question.

The fact that preservation has already become the object of controversy within the environmental movement seems to add weight to the above argument. It seems to serve as a potential watershed between reform and want regarding environmentalism. Unlike pollution control it is a soluble problem only in a political community in which all accept the legitimacy of other interests and all are willing to equally share "resources" with other interests. Obviously, there now exist those who have examined their vision of the future, decided they cannot respect or accept such a resolution, and are continuing to agitate for preserving the remaining natural environments. The preservation of natural environments is likely to remain such a watershed as long as there exist those who treasure such an environment.

This is not a claim that continued appeals for the preservation of natural environments insures the success of

reform environmentalism. Preservation controversies simply provide a common touchstone by which reform environmentalists might remain aware of the goals they serve, and the existence of others who share these goals. A sense of belonging to such a community of shared values and threatened interests is necessary impetus for the development and promotion of practical environmental alternatives.

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