

Government Men and Environmentalists

My Personal Opinion

By Lona Tankersley Burkhart

At the gatherings at Elko, I heard several of the buckaroo types knock packers. I thought to myself, you have never been there. And so I wrote the poem, Packing in the Eastern High Sierra's. And when I decided to put this book together, I wanted to include some thoughts relating to the packers and the government, and the changes that have occurred. So maybe you will find some of this a sort of anti-Sierra Club discussion.

How I love the High Sierras. The East side, where they rise straight up out of the desert floor, to the mighty crest in a few short miles is a sight that is ever changing. You can be crossing forty-foot deep snow banks in the middle of August, tum you head and look down to the desert floor. I am so glad that I got to know them when you could still travel horseback through them at your leisure.

I read about these Earth First types and the anti-rancher people that are trying to tell a lot of different folks in a lot of different countries, from the cowman on the desert, to the Indian in the South American Rain forest, how to live and care for their environment. I get to thinking that my neighbor, Con Guiney, hit the nail on the head, to my way of thinking. I include his comments following this.

The Sierra Club used to go to the mountains in groups of over one hundred. They literally destroyed the area for any one else when they were in an area. We always tried to get their itinerary so we could book our parties around the areas that they were using. These are the people who claim to be the guardians of the wilderness. They really do not understand the peace and solitude of the mountains. Yet, they influence the whole struc-ture of our public lands. And the amazing thing is that their patron saint John Muir, was a shepherd. No one has fought stock harder on public lands than the Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club has of course now gotten mixed up in many of the land conservation fights, and is association with some very radical elements. It's too bad that they don't concentrate on doing some real good, instead of attempting the destruction of our whole way of life.

If these people would only look into what they are talking about. Especially those who propose doing away with meat in order to feed the grain to the

starving populations of the third world. This nation, in the state of Oregon ALONE, spends \$23,370,000 to take 513,000 acres OUT of production, YEARLY, on the ten-year program. The USDA reports that while 350 million acres were used for crops in 1982 in the US, only 218 million will be required by the year 2030. The report goes on to say, "Essentially, the projections of the intermediate sce-nario say that because of advances in agriculture technology, increased supply will outstrip increasing demand, resulting in continued downward pressure on agricultural commodity prices and land values." In other words, the American farmer, who is the most productive industry in the history of man, is producing himself into poverty. These people that are spending so much energy beating us over the head, could help the world as a whole if they would channel that energy to working WITH us instead of AGAINST us. Private ownership of land has been the basis of the most successful culture in history, and these people are doing everything in their power to destroy private control of land.

We spend, (the taxpayer) millions on increasing knowledge for production thru our agriculture programs. Then we spend millions more to take land out of production, because we are producing too much. Somehow it seems to me if we would distribute that overproduction with some of that money it would make more sense.

A good example of this is a program they have on the creek down below me. They are spending a bundle to plant willows up and down it. Now any Southwesterner knows willows drink more water than any tree except a cottonwood. They claim the willows will increase the stream flow. A few years down the line, they will find a lot less water. Then to top it off, they are paying my neighbor to clear off the junipers so they won't take all the water and the grass will grow. The particular piece I have in mind is steep and really sorry soil. Where they have dozed off the junipers going downhill, when we have a good rain, it will wash what soil is there into the creek they are planting the willows on to protect. It just seems to me that Mother nature knows a little more about what she is doing than what one bureaucrat reads from the book another wrote.

Twenty years ago we listened to the doomsayers, telling us the world would be starving in the late 70's. The farmer was told bigger was better and we overproduced ourselves into the poorhouse, and the American taxpayer picked up a lot of the bill, in buyout programs, price insurance, and storage.

When we had the food supplement programs for the needy, a lot of our surplus food was distributed and used. It served two purposes. Provided food for those in need, and disposed of the over production the taxpayer paid the farmer for. Then some-one (President Johnson) decided that it was demeaning for folks to have surplus food, so they installed the food stamp program. The

food stamp program is administered by the Agriculture Dept. (a fact that many folks don't know), and the expense of it shows in the Agriculture budget, not the welfare budget. If these surplus foods were made available to those who need them, without a lot of red tape, three major needs would be met. #1 a drastic reduction in taxpayers expenses. #2 folks who really need food would have the basics such as dairy products, the wheat-grain products, (flour, oatmeal, cornmeal,) beans, peanut butter, potatoes, and much more that would supply all basic nutrition requirements except fresh fruits and vegetables. #3 would be the relief of storing these commodities at the taxpayers expense, and the heavy loses that occur in storage.

If these folks who are so full of advice would concentrate on getting the food we produce to the people in need in the world, instead of trying to get us to produce less, it would solve some problems. The most important being starvation, our overproduction, and the money that is sent to these nations that really DOES NOT solve the food problem. Instead they come down on the farmer and rancher. Let us produce the food, let them find the ways and means to distribute it.

The same could apply to the destruction of some of the trees in the world. We have lots of trash trees the government is paying to destroy that could be processed and sent to the countries where they are destroying what little cover they have, just in order to cook their food.

