
THE INTERNATIONAL THREAT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Private property rights continue to be under assault across America. Perhaps more alarming is the disappearance of private property altogether. This major shift away from a fundamental tenet of our nation – the right to own and use private property – is due, in part, to a plan that has been at work in the USA for the past twenty years.

That plan is called Agenda 21¹, meaning an agenda for the 21st century. Don't let this innocuous title deceive you; its success is dependent on the loss of private property ownership and control in favor of public ownership and control. This plan – “a new global partnership for sustainable development” – was officially launched in 1992.

But, its official policy on land was revealed at its predecessor conference, the United Nations (UN) Habitat 1 Conference, held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976.

The conference report preamble states, “Land... cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principal instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes... Public control of land use is therefore indispensable to its protection as an asset and the achievement of the long-term objectives of human settlement policies and strategies.”²

The implementation of this land policy became formalized at the 1992 UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21, a three-hundred page blueprint setting the stage for the elimination of private property control (among other things) in favor of public or government control, was presented to and approved by 172 governments (including the United States under President George H. W. Bush). This writer's complete reading of the plan and subsequent study produced some startling findings.

The end product of this global plan is to ensure “sustainable development,” defined as “meeting today's needs without compromising future generations to meet their own needs.” Its comprehensiveness is outlined by the three E's of sustainability: Environment, Economy and Equity (Social). According to the Agenda 21 Preamble, implementing sustainable development will require “a substantial flow of new and additional resources to developing countries”¹ leading to an eradication of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy.

The vision of implementing this in the US is described by the “Wildlands Project.”³ According to the Project, people will live in “human settlements” characterized by high density, “smart

growth” urban living planned by organizations such as the American Planning Association.⁴ It will feature multi-use green buildings which comply with LEED ratings standards developed and monitored by such organizations as the U.S. Green Building Council.⁵ Mobility will be provided mainly by mass transit or “non-motorized modes of transport.” Private property and single home dwellings will be minimal and highly controlled by government. Agenda 21 calls for “the encouragement of communally and collectively owned and managed land” and “appropriate forms of land tenure that provide security of tenure for all land-users.”⁶

Surrounding these human settlements will be buffer zones. Use of land in these transitional areas will be moderate and restricted.

The rest of our nation will be “core” (wilderness) areas “where man is only a visitor.” Corridors will connect core areas. It is planned that no more than 50 percent of the American landscape will have human presence with most land being owned or completely controlled by government.

This result of this plan sounds eerily like a place where this writer spent 14 years of his adult life – Moscow, Russia. Can you imagine 16 million people in one city all living in shoddy, high-rise buildings with no single housing? Can you imagine the vast majority of those people moving about the city using one mass transit system, much of it dilapidated due to over-crowding? Most travel between human settlements was done by train or plane due to insufficient highways and few places to purchase gasoline. When entering or exiting the city, everyone had to clear police outposts. In lieu of green technology, resources were simply rationed, thereby contributing to “sustainability.” The model of living experienced there was not pleasant and it certainly was not people friendly. Ironically, despite its backwardness, the communist theme of the country was “Forward.”

Agenda 21 moves forward using the threat of global warming to create a sense of urgency and, thereby, speeding its implementation. This plan calls for influencing public opinion through massive “green” public relations campaigns. It calls for setting up legal mechanisms and regulatory systems to write and pass green laws and ordinances and then, to monitor and enforce compliance with those regulations and laws. It calls for all personnel of public education, institutes, colleges and universities, business and industry, government administrative personnel and elected officials to be “educated” and trained in this way of thinking to expedite its implementation.⁷ (Note: due to a lack of credible scientific evidence, global warming is now referred to as “climate change”).

These plans should not be discounted as mere words. According to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, “Reports submitted annually by Governments are the main basis for monitoring progress and identifying problems faced by countries. By mid-1996, some 100 Governments had established national sustainable development councils or other coordinating bodies. More than 2,000 municipal and town governments had each formulated a local Agenda 21 of its own. Many countries were seeking legislative approval for sustainable development plans, and the level of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) involvement remained high.”⁸

Supporting this re-orientation of thinking and living is an elaborate network of systems including global governance via regional councils, global finance (World Bank and International Monetary

Fund), international trade (World Trade Organization), global jurisprudence (World Court), internationally mandated to standards through System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) and global systems of data, information and technology. This is not a theoretical re-organization of the planet; these systems are constantly gathering information through assessments and operating daily. The Agenda 21 blueprint is staggering in its comprehensive, global approach. And it has been implemented slowly but, relentlessly in the US for more than 20 years.

You might ask yourself, “How can it be that something so massive has been at work in the US and I know little to nothing about this?” There are four answers.

First, the plan was signed by President George H. W. Bush in 1992 but, it was never debated or ratified as a treaty by the US Congress.

Second, the plan was implemented by President Bill Clinton in 1993 through executive order without the approval of Congress. That executive order (#12852)⁹ established the President’s Council on Sustainable Development and authorized it to implement Agenda 21 in the US. It included most cabinet members and a cross-section of other leaders.

Third, implementation in the US has been done through a number of NGOs¹⁰ and non-profits at the most local of levels. Notable of these is the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives¹¹ (ICLEI – also known as Local Governments for Sustainability). With little to no fanfare or media attention, this NGO in particular and others (such as APA and USGBC) have initiated this strategy in thousands of local municipalities and counties simultaneously influencing education, regulation, government, business, industry, law and more. In the US alone, ICLEI claims 550 member cities and counties. Florida members include Tallahassee, Orlando, Key West, Alachua County, and Miami-Dade County. Globally it’s more than 1200.

The fourth reason can be found in the language created and used to mask the real intent of Agenda 21. To enhance public appeal an entire set of specialized jargon has been developed to sound warm, harmless and reasonable. The jargon includes expressions such as new economy, quality of life, consensus, regionalism, public-private partnership, stakeholder, and affordable housing. Who could be against such things? Individually, they can have positive impact. But, when the end purpose is considered, their collective implementation erodes our freedoms and rights.

Please listen to J. Gary Lawrence, advisor to President Clinton’s Council on Sustainable Development, as he explained how to elect public officials supporting Agenda 21. He said, “Participating in a UN advocated planning process would very likely bring out many of the conspiracy- fixated groups and individuals in our society... This segment of our society who fear ‘one-world government’ and a UN invasion of the United States through which our individual freedom would be stripped away would actively work to defeat any elected official who joined ‘the conspiracy’ by undertaking Local Agenda 21. So we call our process something else, such as comprehensive planning, growth management or smart growth.”¹²

On June 20-21, 2012, again in Brazil, the UN sponsored the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Extending Agenda 21 through its new name, The Millennium Project, the conference called for “a fundamental shift in the way we think and act.” The primary goals of the conference were to renew political commitment for sustainable development, defining a “green economy” and establishing an institutional framework for sustainable development. Proposals to be considered included “\$2.1 trillion in wealth transfers from rich countries to poorer ones in the name of fostering green infrastructure, climate adaptation, and other green economy measures.” Other issues for consideration were new carbon taxes for industrialized nations and encouraging the leveling of the playing field between brown technologies and green technologies through price increases derived from agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other kinds of land and water use incentives.

In the executive summary of a report, “Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy, A United Nations System-Wide Perspective,” the UN’s Issue Management Group on Green Economy calls for transforming the global economy by requiring action at the local level (e.g., through land use planning), at the national level (e.g., through energy-use regulations), and at the international level (e.g., through technology diffusion).¹³

Obama Administration officials are supporting the use of public funds to enable this conference to be virtually participated in via the internet. It is no secret the President favors the transition to a green economy having promoted the policy of cap and trade, by limiting our nation’s ability to drill for our own fossil fuel resources, and approving billions of dollars to be given to “green” energy companies such as Solyndra, etc. In fact, looking through the prism of compliance with Agenda 21 and the Rio+20 agenda, many of the Obama Administration’s policy decisions – even those which seem politically suicidal – begin to make sense and find some logical footing.

These disturbing policy trends in our nation reinforce and accelerate the transition underway from private to public ownership and control of land. In Florida, more than 40% is already owned or controlled by government.

Arthur Lee, an American patriot and colonist in 1775, said, “The right of property is the guardian of every other right, and to deprive people of this, is in fact to deprive them of their liberty.”

Is Agenda 21 the greatest threat to private property ownership, property rights and liberty today? It could be. For years it has flown under the radar, and now urgently needs critical investigation, public exposure and evaluation. One thing is certain; it has cost billions over the years and brought our nation under an enormous burden of regulation and restriction.

Thomas Jefferson is credited with saying, “The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance.” The continuance of liberty and the American way of life demands such vigilance. Private property is indispensable to maintaining American exceptionalism and prosperity. The erosion and elimination of private property rights only serves to weaken and reduce us to the status of “one of many.”

Despite the lofty sounding ideals of those favoring communally owned and managed property, history exposes repeatedly the fallacy of public ownership and management. Under appropriate

regulation, private owners will nearly always use land in a more husband-like manner than government. Private ownership and management lead to a broader and more equitable prosperity, higher employment, less financial deficit and greater efficiency. To abandon these foundations is to abandon America.

References:

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About the Coalition for Property Rights:

CPR is a movement of property rights advocates of more than 3,000 members. CPR's mission is to educate, advocate, and activate others to promote and protect private property rights. Founded in 2001, CPR is headquartered in Orlando, Florida.