



Poverty, The Compassion Cartel, and Environmental Racism

Hernando de Soto had it right: Property rights underpin and and all economic development that is able to actually lift people out of poverty. Thus, the UN's universal attack on eliminating property rights can never, ever eliminate poverty like they claim. □ TN Editor

In 2006, I was surprised to find myself sitting at a formal dinner in the middle of a 200-year-old debating society at Cambridge University in England. In a few minutes I, and five others were about to engage in a debate over the usefulness of the United Nations. But here, for a few minutes longer, at the long dinner table with the crisp, white tablecloth, I was sitting next to one of my fellow debaters, Salis Shetty, the head of the UN's Millennium Project.

I had ignored him through most of the dinner, but with just a few minutes left before the debate I finally turned to him and said, "You

realize you don't have a prayer, don't you?"

He looked at me and asked, "About what?"

I replied, "Ending poverty by 2015 through the use of redistribution of wealth." (That was one of the eight listed goals of the UN's Millennium Project, accepted by world leaders in 2000.)

He said, "Yes, I know."

I began to talk with him about the need to help the poor escape from poverty on their own rather than being condemned to life-long bread lines. I talked about the need to establish private property rights as a means to build wealth. I mentioned that there was estimated to be almost \$10 trillion in "dead capital"(property in the world that no one is allowed to own or invest in). That's enough capital to help a lot of poor people break out of their dire situation.

Mr. Shetty looked at me as I made these observations and said, "Hernando de Soto."

"Yes!" That's exactly whom I was quoting. De Soto is an economist from Peru who has made it his life's work to help end poverty in the world by promoting private property ownership.

To my amazement Mr. Shetty looked at me and said, "I have associates who are looking on this (de Soto's ideas) favorably." Just as he said those words, the call came for us to head to the debating hall for our event. Of course we were on opposite sides.

As soon as the debate was over (I was outnumbered five to one, as usual) I made a beeline to Mr. Shetty and said, "You and I started a conversation and I want to finish it." A few weeks later I traveled to New York City to meet with him in his UN office. During that meeting, he told me that, in his city in India, the local government was beginning to go over property records and officially register ownership, something that had never been done before. The result was that the economy of the community was starting to improve.

That is exactly the point that Hernando de Soto is making as he travels

the world meeting with national leaders. The core reason for poverty is bad government. In most of the world, people may “own” their homes, perhaps via an underground economy, but they have no official records through the government to prove it. Without that official proof or registration, they have no means to use the property for equity loans and investment, so it is essentially dead capital, as de Soto has labeled it.

In his book, *“The Mystery of Capital, Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else,”* de Soto explains the major difference between the American system and most other nations of the world. Here, every single piece of privately held property — homes, even large equipment, is registered. In fact, the County Registrar’s office is one of the most important tools of freedom because it’s where every American can prove ownership of their property. Because of that system, average Americans can use their property as a tool to obtain loans. At least 60% of American companies have been started thorough equity loans on private property. And those privately held companies went on to employ about 60% of the American workforce. That is how private property ownership made the United States the richest nation in the world, almost over night. Lack of such a system is the reason much of the rest of the world fell into extreme poverty. In those cases the people have no way out of poverty and are forced to rely on government handouts.

De Soto’s book was called “The blueprint for a new industrial revolution,” by the *Times of London*. Today de Soto travels the world, meeting with world leaders who seek his guidance on how they can end poverty in their nations. Yet, when he tells them the secret is private ownership of property, many balk, telling him with a troubled smile, that the people in their nations “just aren’t ready for such a policy - they don’t understand the concept of private property ownership.” So the promise of a great new financial revolution that could spread wealth and freedom to every corner of the world never gets off the ground.

A few years ago I had the great privilege of a private meeting with Hernando de Soto. He told me a story of one such meeting he had with a national leader. He’s been in enough meetings with world leaders that he can now almost anticipate what they are going to say. In this particular meeting, he said he knew the leader was going to tell him that

his people just weren't ready for private property ownership. So, before the meeting, de Soto sent a team into the neighborhood around the presidential palace and knocked on doors to ask the people if they owned their homes. Every single one of them said yes, they owned their home. So de Soto's team members asked each to produce any kind of evidence they might have to show that ownership. They did. It might have been a bill of sale, a receipt or even a copy of a will. In any case, they had something to prove their ownership in a country where property ownership was not supported by the government.

De Soto took copies of these items with him to the meeting, and before the discussion could begin about how the people of his country didn't understand private property ownership, Hernando de Soto spread his evidence on the table and said to the leader, "your people understand property ownership, now let's discuss how they can legally own it and build capital from it."

There are three main reasons the world has not experienced de Soto's new financial revolution. First is bad government led by dictators who refuse to give up their power over the people by supplying them the means for ending poverty. Poverty is very helpful to dictators because poor people are powerless to rise up against them. Poverty is also convenient to rouse the rabble against political opponents and spread fear.

Those who are barely hanging on from meal to meal are easy to scare with threats from any proposal that dares to differ from the redistribution schemes, even if, in the long run, that would be the best means for them to find a way out of poverty. The Left has used this fear effectively to build hate and resistance against those who promote free enterprise.

The second reason the world is sinking into ever greater poverty is the Environmental movement- the new-style dictatorship that actually prefers people to remain poor, living in mud huts with no infrastructure, running water or electricity. That, they claim, is sustainable.

Believe it or not, there is a worldwide Sustainable Development policy to

prohibit funding of development projects in Third World countries if the projects don't fit the environmental agenda. It's called the Equator Principles. According to their own documents, the Equator Principles were established in association with the World Bank's International Finance Corporation in 2003. They have been adopted by at least 73 financial institutions around the world, covering over 70% of international projects such as dams, mines, and pipelines. At least three leading American financial institutions are associates of the Equator Principles, including Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase and Citigroup.

In short, such policy actually leads to what can only be called Environmental Racism. A few white, rich people who live in luxury in their first-world nations have made a determination that some who now live in mud huts with no indoor power and no clean running water, must stay that way because these elites have determined it is more 'sustainable' for the planet.

Stopping development for the poor has become a major drive by Sustainablists. At the Earth Summit in 1992, Chairman Maurice Strong famously said "Isn't the only hope for the planet that the industrial nations collapse? Isn't it our responsibility to bring that about?" Zero economic growth is the announced goal to assure their well-ordered sustainable society stays dormant, thereby assuring their control. Of course, the result will only be more poor people - all in the name of saving the environment.

But fear not, these same power mongers aren't satisfied to condemn just those already living in poverty. Apparently they are so determined to control every human action on the planet that they are equally happy to condemn the rest of us to such a future - for the planet, of course. Author Ted Trainer has written a book entitled "*Transition to a Sustainable and Just World*," which is really nothing more than a blueprint for establishing Marxist principles into your local community. In the book Trainer writes, "*The alternative has to be the simpler way, a society based on non-affluent lifestyles within mostly small and highly self-sufficient local economies under the local participatory control and not driven by market forces or the profit motive, and with no economic growth. There must be an enormous cultural change away from*

competitive individualistic acquisitiveness.” The call for zero economic growth was also heard at the UN’s Rio+20 Summit in 2012. Trainer’s motto for us all is that “you must live on less!” That is their definition of Sustainable Development. Of course they only mean this future for you and me, not the powerful elite.

Such ideas of destroying human civilization are, in fact, rampant throughout the Green movement. Paul Ehrlich, professor of Population Studies at Stanford University demanded that “*a massive campaign must be launched to de-develop the United States. De-development means bringing our economic system into line with the realities of ecology and the world resource situation.*” Apparently, the advocates of such a desire to make us all poor have missed a very important fact. Only in wealthy nations do people have enough money and time to worry about protecting the environment. The poor worry only about one thing - survival. It is also in the poorest areas where population numbers explode. In rich, secure nations populations are actually going down. So it would seem logical that if one wants to protect the environment and reduce populations then Capitalism would be the economic system of choice. But of course, none of this is really about helping the poor or the ecology. It’s about power.

The third reason for depressed economies and a growing number of poor is what I call the “Compassion Cartel.” Government, private charities and foundations have made poverty big business. It’s the excuse for nearly every governmental spending program. Help the poor! Tax the rich! How dare they get wealthy while others suffer? And the preferred way to eliminate poverty is redistribution of wealth. It’s easy to convince someone to donate to a cause when emotions and guilt are employed. Reason and rational thought take a backseat.

Back to my debate in Cambridge: After the debate was over, the hosts sponsored a reception. As I entered the door, I was confronted by one of the students, who asked with puzzlement - “sir, you really don’t believe in redistribution of wealth?”

I answered, “No, it’s theft.”

And she said, "But if you have more than you need, shouldn't you share it with someone who needs it?"

I said, "Why should I?"

She looked like I had slapped her. Here she was, one of the bright young students at one of the great schools in the world, and she had never heard an argument against redistribution of wealth or for a free market. As I spoke to her, giving detail after detail about how a free market and property can eliminate poverty, more than 50 other students began to gather around.

I explained that if I take money from each of them today to feed someone more unfortunate, then tomorrow they will need another meal -and again the next day, and the next. You have gained nothing in the battle to help them, other than to delay their agony another day. At best you have offered a band aid. At worse, such policy doesn't prevent poverty. Something else is causing that poverty and you haven't addressed it. So, tomorrow there will be more poor, and more the next. And each time you will be forced to provide more and more aid from your now dwindling funds, until one day you too may find yourself forced to be in the receiving line. When I finished my explanation there was a moment of silence and then the young student said, "What an interesting point of view. How can I learn more?"

I wanted to scream "Economics 101!"

Today, anyone who points out such economic facts in a failed welfare system is called heartless and probably racist. What kind of evil person calls helping the poor theft? Well, take a good look at the world we live in. According to Mr. Shetty's Millennium Project, there are currently 1.2 billion people living in poverty. Fifty thousand deaths a day occur worldwide as a result of poverty. Every year more than 10 million children die of hunger and preventable diseases. More than half the world's population lives on less than \$2 per day and 800 million people go to bed hungry every night.

To combat all of this we have the Compassion Cartel. We have thousands of charitable organizations and faith-based programs designed to feed

the children, along with education programs designed to create awareness of poverty and starvation. Their ads run on television nightly pulling at our heartstrings to “do something.” Most of these charities have built huge private organizations, with highly paid administrators working out of impressive buildings with large staffs. That doesn’t include the huge government programs operating at an even larger scale on your tax dollars. As I said, poverty is big business.

Every politician preaches the gospel of helping the poor and as a result, more than half of every American’s pay check disappears into government coffers even before it hits our own pockets. Billions of dollars of aid pour into federal and international programs to distribute to countries around the world to help feed the poor. Poverty reductions have been set. Goals have been announced, Deadlines for ending poverty have been determined and every national and international leader has signed documents to pledge that poverty must be eradicated. In 2015 it was called Agenda 2030. In 2019 it’s called the Green New Deal.

What is the result of this worldwide focus on poverty? Well, we have more poor! It’s a growth industry. Why? Because not one of these programs offers a single plan to allow the poor to help themselves. Instead, the Compassion Cartel has sentenced every single poor person in the world to a future of life-long breadlines, allowing them to be victims of demagogues, con artists and harsh, hopeless, futureless lives. There is no consideration for their goals and dreams and no real understanding of the hopelessness of their lives. And the middle class of once wealthy nations like the United States is quickly dissolving under the burden of the redistribution schemes. Result - more poor in our once proud nation.

If the self-proclaimed compassion industry had true concern for the poor, it would begin an international drive to empower the poor by allowing them to build their own wealth - thereby getting themselves off of the breadlines.

Hernando de Soto has offered that way. He has called for the establishment of private property rights that would allow people around the world to build personal wealth and the ability to invest in new

enterprises that would, in return, employ more, help build infrastructure to allow still more to have electricity, heat, cooling and clean water in their homes, improving health and the quality of their lives. Step by step these improvements would lead to creating more wealth worldwide, reducing the burden on the rest of us, and in turn, help all of us build even more wealth, strengthening quality of life. Help the poor help themselves and it will also help you. That is a winning compassion for all.

But to take such a step would require a rejection of socialism and an embracing of capitalism. And that, says the Compassion Cartel, can never be allowed, because that would lead to empowering individuals to control their own lives. Instead, in the name of compassion, sustainable oppression in a well-ordered society is so much more efficient.

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Agenda 21 Zoning Is Political Lightning Rod In Des Moines

Densification, mixed-use, transit corridors, street redesign, regional planning, restricted building codes, all combine to rile both citizens and builders. City Planner says, “Criticism of the Des Moines 2040 zoning proposal ‘does a disservice’ to what the code change intends to fix.” □
TN Editor

It’s a zoning change that’ll restrict density. It’s a city plan that’ll make it harder for Habitat for Humanity to build homes, and for homebuilders to make a profit. Des Moines, Iowa’s new proposed zoning code has been pilloried by critics as “[backward](#)” and unfair to poor renters, an example of the city “saying no thanks to 21st-century living.”

“It’ll be a tidal wave that’ll swamp many boats, especially Des Moines residents who are making less than \$90,000 per year,” Lance Henning, executive director of the Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, [told the city’s Planning and Zoning commission](#), arguing that the new rules will make new homes too expensive for certain income levels.

But speak to Michael Ludwig, the planning administrator for the city of Des Moines who helped draft the proposal, and you’ll hear a different side of the story. The changes proposed and recently updated—including a more strict set of materials and building requirements, streamlining code requirements, and minimum size requirements such as 1,150 square feet for a one-story home with a basement, among others—has been unfairly criticized, in his opinion. The [Des Moines 2040 zoning proposal](#) that’s gotten so much national attention—in the wake of the [nation’s affordable housing crisis](#) and efforts like [Minneapolis’s citywide upzoning](#)—has a much different intention.

At the end of a three-year process that he says included numerous stakeholders, including some of those discussing size requirements, he feels the current controversy is misinformed.

“Contrary to articles about the plan, the idea is to streamline

construction, create a more sustainable city, and allow for more missing middle and affordable housing,” says Ludwig. “The amount of attention the square footage requirement is getting is doing a disservice to what this code does and encourages.”

Last week, the city’s planning and zoning commission approved the ordinance unanimously, 14-0, recommending the code as proposed, as well as an addendum asking for changes to the minimum square footage requirements for homes. Much of the backlash over the plan, and articles criticizing its potential impact, came about over the initial requirements for minimum home sizes.

But, after an addendum in the same planning and zoning commission meeting that approved that plan recommended lower required square footage for homes, based on feedback from developers and housing advocates, even some of the most ardent critics changed their take on the new rules.

Ted Grob, who’s owned and operated local homebuilder Savannah Homes for decades, told the *Des Moines Register* late last month that he simply “[wouldn’t build in Des Moines](#)” if the new rules went into effect. But in a conversation with Curbed on Monday, after changes to minimum house sizes had been included in the commission’s recommendations, he said that if the new changes carry through, “they’re on a good path.”

“If they follow the recommendations, which are unanimous, I think we’re in good shape,” he says.

How Des Moines’s zoning proposal came to be

The new zoning recommendations grew out of larger regional plans, [Plan DSM](#), a set of regional goals and guidelines that has won planning awards ([Silver Level Sustainability award from the American Planning Association](#) and a [Daniel Burnham Award](#) from the state of Iowa). Ludwig says the city, which is [one of the fastest-growing in the midwest](#), wanted to connect land use with transportation and overall

budget.

The city's zoning code hasn't been updated since 1965. Instead, it's been amended over 300 times in the preceding decades. Ludwig's vision is to replace a disjointed, conflicting set of regulations with something that encourages the kind of development Des Moines needs: denser, closer to transit, and ideally more affordable. By eliminating code contradictions, the city could raise the quality and predictability of the development process.

"We are trying to steer the market to be more creative, and provide a product that's different than what's been provided historically," he says. "We've heard there's no market for mixed-use, but we've seen those really work when we targeted to transit corridors."

The new code proposal is set up with what Ludwig calls a fast lane, what's known as by-right development. This allows property owners to build as long as plans meet a strict set of requirements, opting out of a 90-day approval process.

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‘Unsustainable’ Single-Family Housing Declared ‘Racist’

The UNs’ Agenda 21, 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda policies intend to end private property rights altogether to flip capitalism and Free Enterprise into Sustainable Development. This attack is intensifying throughout America. □ TN Editor

One of the main indicators used by economists to measure the health of the nation’s economy is housing starts - the number of private homes being built around the nation. In 2018 housing starts fell in all four regions of the nation, representing the biggest drop since 2016.

While many economists point to issues such as higher material costs as a reason for the drop in housing starts, a much more ominous reason may be emerging. Across the nation, city councils and state legislatures are beginning to remove zoning protections for single-family neighborhoods, claiming they are racist discrimination designed to keep certain

minorities out of such neighborhoods. In response to these charges some government officials are calling for the end of single-family homes in favor of multiple family apartments.

- Minneapolis, Minnesota: the city council is moving to remove zoning that protects single-family neighborhoods, instead planning to add apartment buildings in the mix. The mayor actually said such zoning was “devised as a legal way to keep black Americans and other minorities from moving into certain neighborhoods”. Racist, social injustice are the charges
- Chicago, Illinois: So-called “affordable housing” advocates have filed a federal complaint against the longtime tradition of allowing City Aldermen veto power over most development proposals in their wards, charging that it promotes discrimination by keeping low-income minorities from moving into affluent white neighborhoods. Essentially the complaint seeks to remove the Aldermen’s ability to represent their own constituents.
- Baltimore, Maryland: The NAACP filed a suit against the city charging that Section 8 public housing causes ghettos because they are all put into the same areas of town. They won the suit and now the city must spend millions of dollars to move such housing into more affluent neighborhoods. In addition, landlords are no longer permitted to ask potential tenants if they can afford the rent on their properties.
- Oregon: Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives Tina Kotek (D-Portland) is drafting legislation that would end single-family zoning in cities of 10,000 or more. She claims there is a housing shortage crisis and that economic and racial segregation are caused by zoning restrictions.

Such identical policies don’t just simultaneously spring up across the country by accident. There is a force behind it. The root of these actions are found in “fair housing” policies dictated by the federal Housing and Urban Development Agency (HUD). The affected communities have all taken HUD grants. There is very specific language in those grants that suggest single family homes are a cause of discrimination. Specifically,

through the HUD program called Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), the agency is taking legal action against communities that use “discriminating zoning ordinances that discourage the development of affordable, multifamily housing...”. The suits are becoming a widely used enforcement tool for the agency.

To enforce its social engineering policies HUD demands the following from communities that have applied for or taken HUD grants:

- First, HUD forces the community to complete an “Assessment of Fair Housing” to identify all “contributing factors” to discrimination. These include a complete breakdown of race, income levels, religion, and national origin of every single person living there. They use this information to determine if the neighborhood meets a preset “balance,” determined by HUD.
- Second, HUD demands a detailed plan showing how the community intends to eliminate the “contributing factors” to this “imbalance.”
- Once the plan is prepared, then the community is required to sign an agreement to take no actions that are “materially inconsistent with its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.”

Americans who have grown up experiencing private home ownership as the root to personal prosperity must quickly learn of the threat of the HUD/AFFH program. They must fully understand why cities like Chicago, Minneapolis and Baltimore and states like Oregon have suddenly announced actions to eliminate single-family home zoning. These cities have already taken the grant poison and must now comply. The ultimate government game is to reorganize our cities into massive urban areas where single-family neighborhoods are replaced by the Sustainable/Smart Growth model of “Stack and Pack,” wall-to-wall apartment buildings.

To the frustration of those Sustainablists determined to change our entire economic system, the legal protection of private property rights and ownership have proven to be a roadblock for implementation. New

York Mayor William DeBlasio best expressed the frustration of those driving to control community development when he was quoted in New York Magazine saying, “What’s been hardest is the way our legal system is structured to favor private property. I think people all over this city, of every background, would like to have the city government be able to determine which building goes where, how high it will be, who gets to live in it and what the rent will be.”

Most importantly, HUD and its social engineering advocates have sold these so-called sustainable policies using the well-worn excuse that such programs are simply to help lower income families to succeed. In fact, these programs are actually at the very root of why many of them are NOT succeeding.

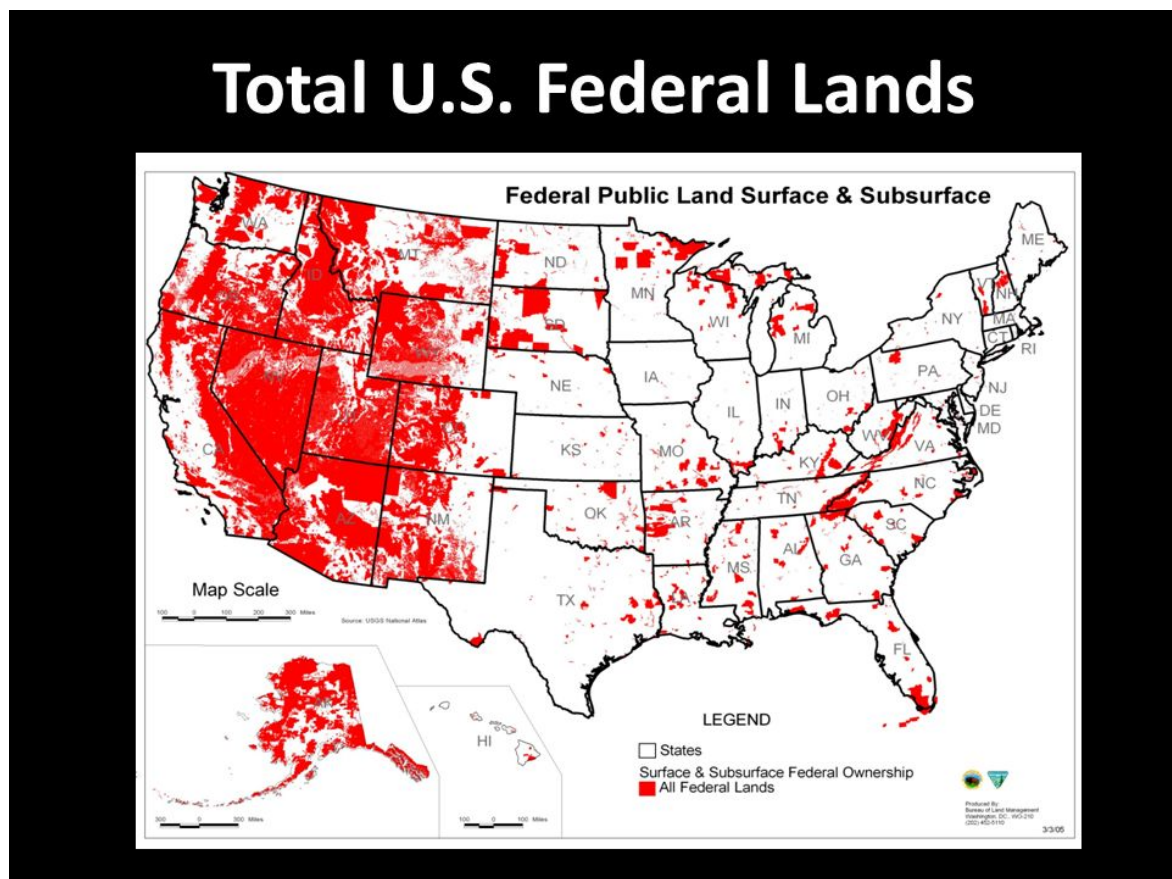
Tom DeWeese, President of the American Policy Center, an internationally recognized private property advocacy groups says, “The immediate result of eliminating single-family homes and in turn, destroying private property rights, is to degrade the property values of the homes so many have worked to build. It used to be called the American dream. Now it’s labeled racism, discrimination, and social injustice.”

DeWeese continues, “Eradicating poverty is the most popular excuse for the expansion of government power. Yet, it’s interesting to note that not a single government program, from the federal to the local level, offers any plan for eradicating poverty except the well-worn and unworkable scheme of wealth redistribution. After decades of following such a failed policy the only result is that we have more poor.”

Today, as demonstrated in Oregon, Minneapolis, Baltimore and Chicago, we hear the claims that there is a “housing crisis” and so government must take a dramatic step to solve the very crisis it has created. As economist Thomas Sowell has said, “The first lesson of economics is scarcity: There is never enough of anything to fully satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics.”

Concludes DeWeese, “It is interesting to note that, as private property

ownership shrinks under these misguided policies, so too does the nation's wealth. Sustainable policies are at the root of nearly every local, state, and federal program. Each step diminishes individual freedom, personal and national prosperity, and the destruction of the hopes and dream of every American. The American Policy Center is determined to lead the fight to end this misnamed and disastrous 'Sustainable' course for our country."



We're All Trespassers Now In The Face Of Government Land Grabs

TN has long claimed that the real end-game of Technocracy is the global elite capturing the major resources of the planet, all of which is

represented by land: mining, forestry, agriculture, coal, oil, natural gas, etc. Sustainable Development, aka Technocracy, is 100% anti-property rights and would have all people owning nothing. □ TN Editor

Think about it.

That house you live in, the car you drive, the small (or not so small) acreage of land that has been passed down through your family or that you scrimped and saved to acquire, whatever money you manage to keep in your bank account after the government and its cronies have taken their first and second and third cut...none of it is safe from the government's greedy grasp.

At no point do you ever have any real ownership in anything other than the clothes on your back.

Everything else can be seized by the government under one pretext or another (civil asset forfeiture, unpaid taxes, eminent domain, public interest, etc.).

The American Dream has been reduced to a lease arrangement in which we are granted the privilege of endlessly paying out the nose for assets that are only ours so long as it suits the government's purposes.

And when it doesn't suit the government's purposes? Watch out.

This is not a government that respects the rights of its citizenry or the law. Rather, this is a government that sells its citizens to the highest bidder and speaks to them in a language of force.

Under such a fascist regime, the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declares that no person shall "be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation," has become yet another broken shield, incapable of rendering any protection against corporate greed while allowing the government to justify all manner of "takings" in the name of the public good.

Practically anything goes now.

Relying on the U.S. Supreme Court's 2005 ruling in *Kelo v. City of New*

London, [entire neighborhoods have been seized and bulldozed to make way for shopping malls, sports complexes and corporate offices.](#)

Indeed, little has prevented the government from bulldozing its way through the Fifth Amendment in an effort to take from the middle and lower classes and fatten the coffers of the corporate elite.

For instance, consider the government's pipeline projects.

All across the country, [power companies have been given the green light to build massive gas and oil pipelines that crisscross the country](#), cutting through private and public lands, as well as unspoiled wilderness.

"Yet despite oft-repeated claims by politicians and oil executives about the danger of relying on foreign oil, this U.S. petroleum renaissance never was designed to make America energy self-sufficient," points out journalist Sandy Tolan. "[A growing amount of that oil will end up in China, Japan, the Netherlands, even Venezuela.](#)"

So much for the public use, huh?

These pipeline projects which are getting underway in a dozen states have stirred up a hornet's nest of protests. Not all of the protests that have arisen in response to these pipeline projects hinge on environmental concerns.

Some of the [protesters are landowners, simple farmers and homeowners](#) who merely want the government and its corporate partners-in-crime to keep their grubby paws off their personal property.

In Virginia, for instance, [activists have taken to tree sitting](#)—living for weeks on end in platforms suspended above the ground in trees—as a form of protest over the devastation that is being wrought by these pipelines.

These acts of civil disobedience come at a costly price.

Pipeline and forestry officials have been [working hard to make life as difficult as possible for the protesters](#), allegedly blocking their access to food and water and medical supplies, shining floodlights into the trees at

all hours of the night, creating ground disturbances to dislodge their nests, and urging the courts to levy heavy fines for each day that the work to clear the forests for the pipeline is delayed.

Here's what one resident of Roanoke, Va., wrote to me about the manner in which the Mountain Valley Pipeline is being inflicted on his community:

Our small community has been invaded by private security and a fully militarized local police department. Mountain Valley Pipeline has begun cutting trees and has brought in private military contractors similar to what was used in North Dakota. They are basically using the power of government to steal this land for private profit. The residents and land owners of Bent Mountain now find themselves subject to arrest for walking in their own driveway, taking pictures of the pipeline companies ever-changing survey lines and path of destruction, or in more than one case, for confronting MASKED ARMED MEN ON THEIR PROPERTY IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. One of my neighbors was accosted on his own back porch by police for photographing the MVP surveyors continually moving the corridor of their easement. I have even had armed private security trespassing on my property miles away in neighboring Floyd County.

It takes a lot of gall to trespass onto someone's private property, tear up their land, cut down their trees, pollute their air and water, prevent them from moving freely on their own property, threaten them with fines and arrests for challenging the intrusion, and then force them to pay (by way of taxes) to retain ownership of the property or sell it cheaply or at a loss so it can be torn down and used for some purpose that the government deems more beneficial to its bottom line.

That's how little respect the government has for our rights.

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