

## Clearing Our Fiscal Consciences

**FIRST TO DO:** Establish strong federal government spending controls and greater fiscal responsibility. Federal, state and local government spending, as a percent of national income, has increased from 25% to 45% in the last 50 years. Let us begin shrinking it back down! At the same time that we are allowing the size of government spending to grow by leaps and bounds, we are indulging in record deficit spending; we have growing unfunded obligations and hidden "off budget" deficits; we are running enormous trade deficits; we have extremely low national savings rates; and we have been inflating our currency (the dollar's value has been devalued by 85% since 1950), which has reduced the real wages of the vast majority of workers. We need to address these problems --- or we risk economic calamity and possible international bankruptcy!

**SECOND TO DO:** A new mechanism must be established to effectively alter our country's weak-willed impulse towards operating within our means by balancing the budget each year. We cannot let either the Republicans or the Democrats promote deficit spending as a way to circumvent the difficult budgetary decisions involved in Paying As You Go. Once it is clear that all spending must be supported only to the extent that current levels of taxation can be found to pay for it, our priorities will be forced into greater focus --- and we will be forced to make the government more fiscally responsible!

These following actions are necessary to be fair to our children, in order that we do not continue to foist our fiscal irresponsibility on them. To create an effective means of guaranteeing that we move quickly towards balancing the budget every year, let us implement The Social Justice Taxation Act. It has two primary provisions:

- (1) Everyone who earns over \$300,000 per year in taxable income will pay a marginal federal tax rate of 48%, twelve times greater than the 4% marginal tax rate to be established for everyone on their first \$15,000 per year in taxable income. The wisdom of Solon lives on!
- (2) No annual budget deficit will be allowed to exceed \$100 billion. Any shortfall exceeding this shall be assessed to the Wealthy and Big Businesses in the Quarter following the close of the Fiscal Year. For instance, individuals with a taxable income exceeding \$300,000 and Businesses earning more than \$2 million in net income will be required to contribute funds to cover such shortfalls, on a progressive scale favoring the lesser incomes. This law will create a powerful incentive for the rich and for influential corporations to demand fiscal responsibility --- and we will almost certainly see irresponsible deficit spending come to an abrupt end! The Wealthy and Big Business will demand it!!

"In the Eisenhower era, corporations paid an average of 25% of the federal tax bill. In 2000, they paid only 10 percent, and by 2001, only 7 percent. In 1960 corporations paid an effective tax rate on corporate income of 47 percent. Today it is 35%."

--- Bushwhacked, Molly Ivins and Lou Dubose

Business sometimes asserts its power quite unfairly, and contrary to the best interests of society. Higher taxes should be levied on businesses, which will naturally pass them on to consumers --- another example of a means whereby we can establish full product pricing, in this instance incorporating fiscal responsibility into the free-market economy. This is just one part of the redesign of our economic system that needs to be done to ensure sustainability.

## Seamless Synthesis

Consider this. The federal Office of Management and Budget reported in October 2003, after an extensive analysis, that the cost to business and government of health and environmental regulations in the 1992-2002 period was about \$40 billion, while the social benefits of these regulations were in excess of \$200 billion.

In other words, in society's Big Picture it is far preferable to require businesses to minimize and mitigate air and water pollution, rather than to allow them greater freedom to pollute the commons. The OMB survey proved that it is cost beneficial and effective for our society and businesses to invest in pollution-control equipment, rather than allowing pollution to adversely affect people's health and the environment. It appears unquestionably advantageous to require corporate America to limit pollution, rather than allowing companies to externalize costs onto society that are significantly greater. It seems clear and simple that sensible regulations are valuable and important to our society.

Yet the government has been aggressively striving to roll back and undermine environmental regulations for the past three years, in order to benefit Big Business. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of political campaign contributions have been extremely well rewarded with billions of dollars of wrong-headed subsidies, tax breaks, and inadequate waste disposal and pollution control policies. Big profits are being made at a high cost to the public! **This is a perverse corruption of our democratic system, shortsightedly allowing contributions by businesses to unduly influence legislation, resulting in higher healthcare costs, lost productivity, greater suffering, harmful environmental impacts, unfair loopholes, bureaucratic absurdities, and intensified social injustice.**

Relaxing pollution-control requirements for power plants ... emasculating the enforcement powers of the Environmental Protection Agency ... siding with oil companies and auto manufacturers in opposing fuel efficiency measures and greenhouse emissions initiatives ... opposing the creation of an International Court of the Environment and the true environmental justice which that represents ... and formulating a wasteful, non-renewable-resource exploiting National Energy Policy are just a few examples of the extreme foolishness of current-day politicians in pandering to Vested Interests, in direct opposition to the best interests of the people, the planet and the future.

**Instead of designing intelligent Incentives and Disincentives to encourage the inclusion of all real costs in each product, our current policymakers run in exactly the opposite direction, readily capitulating to Vested Interests in allowing them to externalize even greater costs onto society. This is ridiculous --- And not acceptable!**

This must change. First, we apparently must have "regime change" in Washington, D.C.!! Second, the public must demand progressive change, and insist on the redesign of our economic system, the reform and simplification of the tax code, the reduction of unfair and unwise influence that Vested Interests have in our government, the adoption of farsighted policies that are more fair, balanced and broadminded --- and the embrace of all-encompassing ecological values. We need these things SOONER rather than LATER!

## Earth Manifesto : Read My Lips --- NOT!

**“The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.”**

**Theodore Roosevelt**

Theodore Roosevelt advocated the preservation of wild spaces, and the sustainable use of natural resources. During his Presidency, he created 5 National Parks, 4 game refuges, 51 National Bird Reserves, and the National Forest Service.

**“Our prosperity as a nation will mean little if we leave a world of polluted air, toxic waste, and vanished forests to future generations.”**

**June 11, 2001 Letter to Constituent, George W. Bush**

President Bush’s record has been environmentally abysmal so far. His Administration has been the most antagonistic executive branch of U.S. government to an intelligent environmental ethic since the inception of Earth Day in 1971. It has been very aggressive in supporting special favors for Big Business and the Wealthy, and very passive in demonstrating true concern for public health and welfare, workers rights, women’s rights, wild places, protected lands, and a healthy environment. Just a few of the regressive actions that President Bush has accomplished during his Presidency:

He reinstated the Global Gag Rule to impede family planning efforts worldwide.

He reversed his campaign pledge to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions.

He rescinded “right to know” rules regarding chemical plants.

He cut funding for renewable energy research.

He is fighting vigorously to fund oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Western Arctic Reserve, and many other public lands.

He pushes to weaken the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and other important environmental laws.

He withdrew the United States from the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty process.

He cut funding for the Wetlands Reserve Program.

He rolled back efficiency standards for air conditioners.

He works to undermine rules on Roadless Areas in National Forests.

He strives to allow the snowmobile industry to run roughshod over Yellowstone National Park, the “Serengeti of America’s Lower 48 States”, with noisy, polluting vehicles.

He fights for increased subsidies for oil, natural gas, coal and nuclear industries, giving lip service but not significant funding to Alternatives, Efficiency and Conservation.

He opposes the reauthorization of the polluter-pays-program for Superfund toxic waste cleanup, shifting the expensive burden from those causing the pollution to taxpayers.

**Citizens of the United States --- and Republicans in particular --- Come to your Senses!!  
Do not accept folksy reassurances from President Bush; forget reading his lips --- instead,  
recognize the true undesirability of his anti-environmental actions, and help work to  
implement intelligent planning and positive change!!!**

## Regime Change Rationale ✓

Strategists of the Republican Party realized in the late 1970's that they would remain a minority party unless they augmented their base constituencies --- those favoring economic policies benefiting the Wealthy, and foreign policies that are essentially militaristic. They identified the Christian Right as the best way to increase Party support. They have since then achieved much greater political power and success by mobilizing rightist religious leaders, and by adopting very conservative positions on highly charged social issues such as women's rights, abortion, family planning, contraception, sex education, and homosexuality. Through such organizations as the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition, they have promoted a right-wing political agenda using the media, neoconservative think tanks, and the pulpit. They have recast political thinking into a Manichean duality of absolute Good and absolute Evil, a dangerous doctrine today that dictates the self-righteousness aggressiveness of U.S. dominance in the world. Today, the "War on Terrorism" has supplanted the Cold War with the Soviet Union as the quintessential battle between good and evil, lightness and dark, right and wrong.

Profound new dilemmas have arisen. Fundamentalist thinking, beliefs, and propaganda are contrary to our centuries-old tradition of separating the Church and the State. They have allowed the political Establishment to roll back key social advances of the New Deal, as well as much of the environmental and social progress of the 1960's and 1970's. They have subverted American democracy into an ever narrower and less representative government of Big Money, Big Corporations, a powerful Military, and the Christian Right. They are twisting American politics into a movement that is in many ways socially reactionary, moralistic, anti-choice, regressive, repressive, intolerant, and increasingly unfair and unjust. They are creating a society that is suspiciously eager to borrow money and resources from the future, and to jeopardize the quality of life of future generations. **And they are arrogantly self-righteous in proclaiming that God is on our side in advancing the doctrines of preemptive warfare.**

Strength arguably ought to be tempered by self-restraint. Intolerance should be tempered by social dictates that embrace tolerance, fairness, empathy, compassion, the common good, and the Golden Rule. Government and education should be independent of the influence of fixed orthodox religious dogmas. We should not allow fear and insecurity to be used to channel our foreign policy into dangerous unilateral military aggressiveness, or into the perpetration of greater economic, social, environmental, and military injustices around the world.

In the November 2000 Presidential election, 56 million eligible voters were not registered, and 19 million registered voters did not vote. Al Gore got 51.0 million votes, George W. Bush got 50.5 million votes, and Ralph Nader got 2.9 million votes. Despite getting 540,000 fewer votes than Al Gore, George Bush won the election, due to the way that the Electoral College is set up, with help from a Supreme Court decision relating to election improprieties in the state of Florida. A margin this small argues for moderate leadership --- yet the neoconservatives have given us extremely different social and environmental policy outcomes than would have been likely with an Al Gore Presidency.

**America requires a regime change in November 2004 in order to offset the negative changes affected by Republican leadership during this Administration. Please vote for Progressive candidates, not conservative Republicans!**

## Improvvidence Institutionalized

**“There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer ever niche on the whole Earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness.”**

--- Robert Marshall, Wilderness Society founder

The League of Conservation Voters gave the Bush Administration an “F” grade on its environmental policies in its expansive June 2003 Presidential Report Card. It called the recent Republican record the worst assault on environmental laws in American history. Standards are being rolled back on public health and environmental safety. Enforcement of environmental laws is being circumvented. Outrageous and misleading legislation is being advance to favor Corporate interests over the best interests of American citizens, allowing more air and water pollution and more aggressive exploitation of public lands.

The Bush Administration combines this retrograde record with (1) socially regressive tax policy that seeks to establish the privileged wealthy as a permanent class; (2) misguided subsidies and political patronage favors for Vested Interests; (3) politically-expedient, fiscally irresponsible deficit spending; (4) aggressive military policies; and (5) bureaucratic and judicial appointments that are driven by extreme Conservatism, antagonism to the goals of healthy environmental regulation, and religious fundamentalism. The result of this political pandering, in conjunction with ultraconservative ideologies, is that the government is taking advantage of the average American. They have used swagger and the certitude of right-wing ideological convictions to increase and consolidate their power, manipulating and dividing the public using fear mongering, righteousness, and deceptive, disingenuous and specious rhetoric to distort its record and strengthen its stranglehold on our diminished democracy.

The nonpartisan organization, The National Parks and Conservation Association, also gave the Bush Administration a Report Card in the summer of 2003, with an overall grade of a “D minus”. The Bush Administration was cited as (1) failing to preserve park resources by attempting to weaken clean air laws, and by opening 13 national park units to oil and gas drilling; (2) failing to protect wildlife and the quality of park visitors’ experiences by reversing the snowmobile ban in Yellowstone (the world’s first National Park), by encouraging the use of noisy and polluting Jet Skis in more than a dozen parks, and by taking no action on curbing low-flying commercial flights over the Grand Canyon; (3) opposing any additions at all to the National Parks System; and (4) failing to fulfill the President’s pledge to provide adequate funding to restore and renew our national parks.

In addition, millions of acres of unspoiled public lands and potential wilderness areas are threatened, due to the powerful influence of Corporate interests on our Federal government. These attacks on our public wild lands are not acceptable. The widely supported Roadless Rule that protected 58 million acres of public lands is being reversed in August 2004.

A groundswell of public support is once again needed to overturn the entire spectrum of exploitative, retrogressive, shortsighted policies being implemented by Neoconservatives. Please Vote! --- and only for Progressive candidates, in November 2004!! Public trust in our leaders is being betrayed.

**Let not the government fail the people!!!**

## Constructive Change – Shifting Priorities

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

The American Society of Civil Engineers rates the infrastructure of the U.S. a “D+”. We are practically failing to maintain the very basis of healthy growth and functioning of our society, allowing the infrastructure to crumble without adequate investments in maintaining it. Simultaneously, we are squandering our national heritage of resources and public lands, we are dramatically increasing social inequities, and we are being fiscally irresponsible to the future in subsidizing, stimulating, and defending the Status Quo. Tiffany Twain maintains that we must revise our priorities soon!

**Rather than giving tax breaks to the wealthy and hyper aggressively pursuing military goals, we should be investing in revitalizing urban areas, improving our public schools, better maintaining roads and bridges, supporting safer and more convenient public transportation, and improving pollution control and wastewater and solid waste facilities.**

Our Federal government in 2004 seems to be effectively opposed to energy and resource conservation, sustainable development, strong environmental laws, the Kyoto Accords on greenhouse emissions, the environmental responsibility of the military, protection of public lands and wilderness areas, an International Court of the Environment, incentives for good-mileage vehicles, balanced budgets, progressive taxes on the highest income brackets, levying estate taxes on the richest 1% of Americans, closing offshore tax loopholes, giving the United Nations adequate authority, respecting the sovereignty of other countries, voluntary family planning, contraception, and health insurance for 40 million American who cannot afford it. How can we have arrived at such a juncture, and how can we now start to alter our foolish course?

The U.S. represents ideals of freedom, opportunity, self-determination and strong human rights protections to the world. There are, however, stunning contradictions between our Words and our Deeds, as identified in the book, Rogue Nation. Our ideals and the avowed goodness of our intentions are betrayed by human rights violations by the U.S. “Authority Juggernaut”, coupled with myriad abuses of power and influence, support of collaborative dictatorships, foreign interventions, and illegal covert activities. Perhaps hypocrisy, arrogance, deception, and chicanery like this are not so surprising, given the fact that greed and selfishness form the official and the ideological basis of our capitalist economic system. Nonetheless, we must oppose it!

**It is imperative that we understand the Big Picture, believing in both the urgency and importance of tackling social and environmental problems, addressing infrastructure improvements, and helping create communities and institutions that act fairly, intelligently, and sustainably.**

## Economic Exigencies on Earth

**The first condition of freedom in society is its limitation. This is necessary to prevent the chaos of a free-for-all that has no rules, order, or justice. Likewise, the free market must operate under some basic rules to ensure fairness, justice, decency, wholesome values, and reasonable social and environmental protections.**

### Free Market Ground Rules

1. Fairness of competition and unfair practices must be regulated.
2. Abuses of the system must be prevented. Tax evasion, corporate malfeasance, corrupt political influence, and socially irresponsible exploitation of workers and resources must be reduced.
3. Businesses must not be allowed to externalize costs of producing goods and services onto society. Full product pricing must be effected, so that all products include the costs of preventing or remedying negative Impacts that accompany production, such as air and water pollution, toxic wastes, adverse impacts on public health, and other harmful spillover effects on society.
4. Our current day activities must be modified by establishing new Incentives and Disincentives that are designed to encourage innovation, conservation, and the use of renewable resources. This will help ensure that future generations are not harmed by our propensity as a society to pursue shortsighted, selfish purposes.

Conservative doctrine holds that free market capitalism is the optimum way for countries and the world to develop and manage their economies. **Well, let's try it!** Instead, our current system is Crony Capitalism, which is clearly a form of institutionalized corruption. Every spending bill that passes Congress contains "pork" --- political patronage favors that reward special constituencies in order to gain enough support for the legislation to be passed. This system results in enormous subsidies to giant corporations, Big Agriculture, road building, National Forest harvesting, and the Oil, Coal, Nuclear and Military industries. These subsidies seriously distort the operation of the free market.

Additionally, there is an even more insidious problem with the capitalism of today: to wit, the constituencies that advocate sound and sustainable policy are very poorly represented. Conservation, fiscal responsibility, and environmental health have very dim voices in the clamor for narrow concessions to today's Vested Interests. Even worse, principled voices are even more feeble in representation of the interests of future generations, or of ecological sanity in the form of protecting our environment and biodiversity.

The current Administration in the year 2004 is the first since the 1950's in which one political party controls both Congress and the White House. It is therefore little wonder that federal discretionary spending has increased an astonishing total of 27% in the last two fiscal years, and that we have record budget shortfalls. The President is also raising more money than any politician in history, as Big Money gleefully eyes FOUR MORE YEARS of wild and irresponsible profiteering. We could well bankrupt the U.S. and the world in our binge.

**Voters, rise up and say, ENOUGH! Demand spending restraint, a pay-as-we-go balanced budget, fiscal responsibility, less waste, a smaller federal government, less military interventionism, more fairness of opportunity, truer social justice, and principled leaders who are committed to work for the good of the whole of society.**

## Equivocation, Prevarication and Tergiversation

The late Senator Paul Wellstone from Minnesota believed that politics should not solely be about power, money, and winning at any cost. He said, "Politics is about the improvement of people's lives. It's about advancing the cause of peace and justice in our country and in the world."

"Let me make one thing perfectly clear, I am not a crook."

Dissembling by Richard Nixon

Honest differences of opinion and conviction in the face of uncertainties are understandable, but it seems certainly undeniable that politicians today make deceptive arguments, and are increasingly frequently disingenuous, duplicitous, and downright deceitful. This would not be so bad if we were merely playing a game of Liar's Dice, but unfortunately such dishonesties are having a terrible impact on the peaceful coexistence of nations, and on Planet Earth and its denizens.

Decision-making and policy-formulation should be based on a good understanding of facts and issues and alternate points of view, NOT on exaggeration, half-truths, hidden agendas, misrepresentations, misleading information, inflexible doctrine, or the distortions of clever "perception management."

Politicians in power always seem to twist the truth with frightening consistency. It is profoundly dishonest to do things like:

- (1) Attack other countries using an evolving variety of false pretenses and rhetorical deceptions;
- (2) Reduce environmental protections and more aggressively allow the exploitation of public lands, while pretending to care mainly about jobs and Clear Skies and Healthy Forests and national security, rather than just Special Interest favors;
- (3) Hide the truth involved in giving giant tax breaks to the extremely privileged, while shifting to more regressive taxation and borrowing from the future to further enrich the wealthy today;
- (4) Leave children behind with under funded education and stringent rules, while purporting to Leave No Child Behind; and,
- (5) Use dirty tricks, ruthless tactics, character assassination, and underhanded campaign strategies to win elections.

President Bush says that we must "take justice to our enemies". This is a perversion of the English language, and changing the meaning of words is an Orwellian tactic designed to reframe dialogue and disguise true intentions and motivations. Justice means an equitable fairness, not what appears to be arrogant perpetration of injustices through the generalized violence of warfare. "Operation Infinite Justice" was the code name for attacking Afghanistan in 2002, until the Pentagon realized that the preemptive attack on an entire country could actually be seen as something different than even relative justice!

"Wrong not, and you will not be wronged."

--- The Koran



## Unity and Discord

The United States needs a leader who is "a Uniter, not a Divider" --- in deed, not just in deceptive, disingenuous rhetorical word.

- ~ Aggressively pursuing doctrines of social conservatism, fiscal irresponsibility, unfairness, militarism, and environmental destructiveness does not inspire confidence that we are uniting behind the best policies for people today, or for posterity.
- ~ Making the most divisive Conservative judicial nominees in modern times is not a good means of uniting the American people. It is extremely divisive for U.S. leadership to be antagonistic to bipartisanship, and to consistently side with right-wing political extremists in opposition to democratic, fair, progressive policies.
- ~ Advocating a Constitutional Amendment to write discrimination against gays and lesbians into the U.S. Constitution is provocative of discord, not designed to unite. It is an irrational bigotry to imply that gay people are a moral threat to social order. Inflaming "culture wars" with righteous rhetoric, instead of demonstrating common-sense flexibility and fair-mindedness in allowing civil rights to gay people, is to endorse fundamentalist religious intolerance in our government.
- ~ Fooling the people and manipulating the public are not the ideal means for seeking consensus in our diminished democracy --- yet it seems that the current Administration indulges in far too much of such things as half-truths, secrecy, misleading assertions, neoconservative dogma, fear mongering, dissent suppression, negative campaign advertising, and arrogant political maneuvering.
- ~ Pushing policies that benefit giant Corporations at the expense of a healthy environment and of people's physical health is wrongful and socially unjust.
- ~ Advocating and implementing tax breaks that overwhelmingly benefit the top 2% of Americans, and making taxation more regressive --- and creating enormous budget shortfalls --- are not responsible acts aimed at fairness and unity.
- ~ Declaring that other countries are evil, and using the military aggressively and unilaterally, is not unifying. George W. Bush has helped polarize the world by asserting that all other nations of the world must be "either with us, or against us."

Preemptive warfare based on misinformation and deception strikes a chord contrary to representative democracy, dividing Americans and ostracizing us from the international community. **CONCLUSION: Regime change in the Presidential and Congressional elections of November 2004 must be effected!!!** Please do not vote for incumbent Conservatives.

## The Apex of a Pyramid of Paradoxes

**"You've seen one redwood, you've seen 'em all."**

--- Ronald Reagan, as Governor of California (trying to justify the logging of ancient forests)

The assaults on public lands in favor of extractive mining, timber harvesting, oil drilling and coal mining have been ferocious in the past 25 years.

**The Wilderness Act of 1964, passed by a Republican-controlled Congress, states: "In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."**

**Please support wilderness and public land protections!**

The Bush Administration is opposed to any additions to wilderness areas nationwide, and has further been working vigorously and insidiously to undermine protections of public lands, roadless areas, and existing wilderness areas. We must urge the government to alter its destructive policies! **If not now, when? If not us, who?**

A clarion call for sanity sounds, a shrill and clear cry summoning us from afar --- or does it come from deep within?

We each hear the distant clarion, its notes familiar, yet indistinct, obscured by the competing clamor of ambient noise in our civilization, and by a confusing plethora of anxieties and distractions. **What does it mean?**

It is hard to unambiguously apprehend, to see clearly, unclouded by beliefs; to interpret our perceptions without harboring distorting biases, to transform immediate perception into a fair clarity of understanding, or even to think for ourselves; it is especially hard to conquer our fears, to transcend our compulsions, and to overcome the background Babel of uncertainties in our lives.

So we rely on others to help interpret the disturbing clarion's call. What does this compelling clarion call signify? Our business leaders disingenuously assert that the call is to consume more. Our political leaders say, "Listen to business, and heed its urgings --- have faith and trust us!" The military says the clarion call is actually a bugle call for recruitment and mobilization, to rally around the flag, to commit ourselves to hundreds of billions of dollars in spending for weapons and war readiness. Fundamental religious leaders say the call is for certitude, for believing in their Absolute Truths, for obedience, and for faith in their self-interested doctrines. Environmentalists say, "Yikes!" The natural world says, "Ouch!"

For Whom Does the Bell Toll? --- The bell tolls for us all, and we ignore it at our own peril.

**To the extent that we do have choices, we must begin to choose more responsibly and more wisely.**