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Agenda 21 is Evil

The Agenda 21 Disinformation Campaign in the United States: An Ethical Critique
of an Attack on Sustainability

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IS EVIL**



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I. Introduction

This paper examines a disinformation campaign about the United Nations program on environment and development, Agenda 21. As we will see, this campaign has been surprisingly successful in the United States in undermining land use, transportation, and energy planning, and environmental regulation at the local and regional government levels.

Citizens may have many legitimate reasons to oppose elements of land use plans about which they have a right to contest. In fact, their involvement in local government decision-making may constitute an exercise of citizen virtue. Citizens may also need to participate in land use decision-making to protect rights of various types, including, but not limited to, property rights. Yet, claims being made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are so demonstratively false, misleading, and deceitful that they fail to pass ethical scrutiny.

As we shall see, many of the claims being made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are not only without confirming evidence, they are directly contradicted by the text of Agenda 21 itself, woefully ignorant of the limited role of the United Nations in the world as a matter of international law, and deeply misleading about what Agenda 21 is and its legal effect on the United States.

The misleading claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign also have had consequences. As we shall see, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has been successful in preventing citizens at the local and regional level the United States from organizing their communities to protect open spaces, reduce traffic congestion, provide public transportation, protect water and air quality, construct bike lanes, and achieve other community benefits that can only be achieved by responsible land- use planning. The anti-Agenda 21 campaign has accomplished this by making preposterous claims including that local land-use planning is part of a plot to put the United Nations in control of local and regional planning decisions, rob individuals of their freedoms, and undermine property rights. As we shall see in a future entry in this series, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign that is making these claims has been funded, at least in part, by economic interests that profit from the absence of responsible land use planning and environmental regulation.



The assertions made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign or not only false, they are so deeply

inconsistent with the explicit language of Agenda 21 that they can only be understood as the paranoid constructions of somebody that has subscribed to conspiracy theories about the United Nations. Because the text of Agenda 21 so dramatically contradicts the claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign, it would appear someone who believed that the United Nations is an institution dedicated to undermining national sovereignty and the destruction of individual freedom around the world selectively looked for language in Agenda 21 that confirmed this conspiracy theory. They then quoted the confirming language and ignored the rest of the text of Agenda 21 that dramatically contradicts the conspiratorial conclusions, drew conclusions from the selected language without any confirming evidence, and made claims about the United Nations that are breathtakingly ignorant of the UN's limited legal authority, including its utter lack of power over national, regional, or local governments. (Only the UN Security Council has authority over governments although this authority is subject to the veto power of its permanent members, one of which is the United States, along with China, France, Great Britain, and Russia.)

As we shall see, one of the organizations connected to the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has been the John Birch Society whose website proclaims:

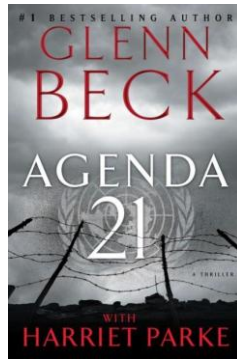
The global power elites view the UN as their main vehicle for establishing, step by step, a socialistic global government controlled by themselves. Now, more than ever, we need to get out of the UN and remove the UN from the United States. (John Birch, 2013a)

According to an ABC news report:

[T]he Birch Society has long been considered wacky and extreme by conservative leaders. William F. Buckley famously denounced the John Birch Society and its founder Robert Welch in the early 1960s as “idiotic” and “paranoid.” Buckley’s condemnation effectively banishing the group from the mainstream conservative movement. Welch had called President Dwight D. Eisenhower a “conscious, dedicated agent of the communist conspiracy” and that the U.S. government was “under operational control of the Communist party. (ABC, 2010)

The John Birch Society makes available on its web site a booklet called “Agenda 21 and You” which contains many of the claims discussed in this paper. (Birch, 2013b)

And so it appears that the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has been fed by organizations who believe that the United Nations is taking over the world.



The claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign have also been popularized in the United States by Glenn Beck in his book *Agenda 21* (Beck, 2012). In this book Beck imagines a society where human beings are trapped in concrete cells separated from the planet's natural fauna, flora, and water, and even their children (who are taken away from them at birth). They consume "nourishment cubes" in place of more recognizable food items. According to the book's plot, adopting measures to preserve the health of the planet following UN Agenda 21 will somehow lead to a world in which human beings have become more isolated from their natural environment. The novel includes an afterword that claims that Agenda 21 is "the culmination of every Marxist/progressive fantasy" and will lead to the UN control of local land use, and "move private citizens off their land into high-density urban housing." (Beck, 2012) Beck's book also claims that the purpose of Agenda 21 is to redistribute global wealth following Marxist ideas. Among many descriptions of the dystopian future described in the Beck novel is a future which leads to the government preventing citizens from openly practicing their faith.

The claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are also being spread by speakers who frequently attend Tea Party meetings and who have produced YouTube videos that make claims about the Marxist/socialist agenda of Agenda 21. One prominent speaker who has also produced YouTube videos on Agenda 21 is John Anthony. (Anthony, 2013) Mr. Anthony is a conservative businessman from New Jersey who claims to be an expert in Agenda 21 and appears frequently at Tea Party sponsored events around the United States. His lectures on Agenda 21 have been very influential in convincing Tea Party members that Agenda 21 is a UN plot to undermine national sovereignty.

The conclusions of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are so obviously inconsistent with the facts about Agenda 21 that many who are familiar with Agenda 21 have ignored this phenomenon on the basis that it is so loony, delusional, or wacky that it could not gain traction in any 21st-century democracy. Yet as we will see, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has had growing success in thwarting the implementation of local communities' preferred visions of the future that have been derived cooperatively in multi-stakeholder and citizen discussions.



In a recent article, Professor John Dernbach concluded that "a well-organized campaign against Agenda 21, spread by the Tea Party, Glenn Beck, and the John Birch Society, exists" (Dernbach, 2013) In this article Professor Dernbach explains: (a) how this campaign is becoming effective in the United States and is threatening to undermine US sustainability programs, the real target of this campaign; (b) what Agenda 21 is and is not, and (c) why many of the claims made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are demonstratively false.

This article will critically examine 13 claims of the campaign and deduce from this analysis the campaign's tactics. The article will then examine the tactics of the campaign through an ethical lens.

II. The Success of the Anti-21 Campaign

The anti-Agenda 21 campaign has rapidly grown in influence in local and regional government planning decision-making in the United States in the last few years. Anti-Agenda 21 activists making arguments propagated by a few extreme right wing organizations have appeared in greater numbers at land-use planning meetings of local and regional governments around the United States claiming that land-use planning and sustainable development policies are manifestations of a covert United Nations plot to undermine national sovereignty, destroy property rights, implement a radical environmentalism, and destroy individual freedom. Despite the obvious delusional character of many of the campaign's claims, this phenomenon has been remarkably successful in the last few years in defeating local land-use planning proposals around the United States, in passing anti-sustainability laws in several US states, and, as we shall see, even convincing the Republican party to accept its paranoid assumptions.



According to the Tampa Bay Times, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign was successful in getting the Republican National Committee to approve a resolution calling for a formal stance against Agenda 21 in the 2012 GOP platform and denouncing the U.N. accord as "a comprehensive plan of extreme environmentalism, social engineering, and global political control" that is being "covertly pushed into local communities." (Republican National Committee Resolution, 2012, Appendix)

The Republican Party platform in 2012 stated that "We strongly reject the U.N. Agenda 21 as erosive of American sovereignty." (Republican Party Platform, 2012)

And so if there is any question about the power of this campaign, it is remarkable that one of the two major American political parties has uncritically adopted the claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign despite the fact that, as we shall see, the edifice of this campaign has been constructed of delusional, inaccurate, and demonstratively falsifiable claims about Agenda 21.

In addition, several state and local governments have considered or passed motions and legislation opposing Agenda 21. The New York Times recently reported:

Across the country, activists with ties to the Tea Party are railing against all sorts of local and state efforts to control sprawl and conserve energy. They brand government action for things like expanding public transportation routes and preserving open space as part of a United Nations led conspiracy to deny property rights and herd citizens toward cities.

They are showing up at planning meetings to denounce bike lanes on public streets and smart meters on home appliances — efforts they equate to a big-government blueprint against individual rights.

In Maine, the Tea Party-backed Republican governor canceled a project to ease congestion along the Route 1 corridor after protesters complained it was part of the

United Nations plot. Similar opposition helped doom a high-speed train line in Florida. And more than a dozen cities, towns and counties, under new pressure, have cut off financing for a program that offers expertise on how to measure and cut carbon emissions. (Kaufman and Zernikie, 2012)

Alabama became the first state to prohibit government participation in Agenda 21. The Alabama law bars the state or any of its subdivisions from adopting or implementing policy actions that "deliberately or inadvertently infringe or restrict private property rights without due process, as may be required by policy recommendations originating in, or traceable to Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations." (Alter, 2012)

Although the Alabama law is pretty vague in that it bars action without "due process of law," as one observer notes, no doubt every proposal for smart growth, high density housing, heritage preservation, wetlands or forest protection, shoreline preservation, or environmental protection will now be bogged down in Alabama. (Alter, 2012)

A bill passed both houses of the Missouri legislature recently and as of this writing was awaiting the Governor's signature. The Missouri Bill provides:

Neither the state of Missouri nor any political subdivision shall adopt or implement policy recommendations that deliberately or inadvertently infringe or restrict private property rights without due process, as may be required by policy recommendations originating in, or traceable to Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations in 1992 at its Conference on Environment and Development. (Celock, 2013a)

A bill has been introduced in Kansas that provides:

No public funds may be used, either directly or indirectly, to promote, support, mandate, require, order, incentivize, advocate, plan for, participate in or implement sustainable development. (Celock, 2013)

This bill has potential remarkable future consequences, since every kind of land use plan, environmental regulation, or transportation plan could be understood to be "sustainable development."

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Agenda 21 has become:

“a touchstone of a larger theme that equates environmentalism with totalitarianism and the loss of individual freedom. For a growing cast of far-right hardliners, Agenda 21 is a sort of Trojan horse, a totalitarian scheme with a green environmental mask, lying in wait to destroy America as we know it.” (Lenz, 2013)

In many places throughout the United States, the anti-Agenda 21 has been successful in thwarting local and regional land use planning. For instance, in February, 2013 the West Cornwall Township, Pennsylvania supervisors passed a resolution opposing Agenda 21. Also Cornwall Borough pulled out of the Lebanon Regional Comprehensive Plan, a joint effort of the townships of North Lebanon, South Lebanon, North Cornwall, and West

Cornwall. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Appendix; Stump, 2013)

The West Cornwall Township resolution is attached as Appendix A.

In December of 2012, North Londonderry Township, Pennsylvania withdrew from its regional comprehensive plan that it had created with partners South Londonderry Township and Palmyra Borough on the basis that the plan had been influenced by Agenda 21. (Woman Action Group, 2013)

And so, Agenda 21 is being used by activists in the United States as the basis for opposing land use and economic development planning, environmental regulation, and transportation planning. Tea Party activists have recently changed their political focus from the federal government to a new perhaps more insidious target: local planning and zoning commissions, which activists claim are carrying out a global conspiracy to trample American liberties and force citizens into Orwellian high-density living zones. Anti-Agenda 21 activists see Agenda 21 behind everything from a septic tank inspection law in Florida, a plan in Maine to reduce traffic on Route 1, and the creation of the bike sharing programs in Colorado and as a covert attempt to create United Nations dominated communities.

The anti-Agenda 21 activists frequently make the absurd claim that any land use plan that includes some environmental protection or transportation control elements is a step in a stealth UN Agenda 21 plot even though most engaged in planning at the local level have never heard of Agenda 21, environmental goals have been included in land use planning long before Agenda 21 was created, and most citizens desire to protect local air, water, and natural resources, reduce traffic congestion, provide public transportation, and protect wetlands and fisheries to maintain the quality of life without any regard to what Agenda 21 says. Yet, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign argues that if any of these goals are embedded in local plans, they should be opposed because they are manifestations of a UN plot.

We now look at specific claims made by the Anti-Agenda 21 campaign, evaluate them to determine their veracity, and identify the tactics of the Anti-Agenda 21 campaign that can be deduced from these claims.

III. Analysis of Specific Claims of the Anti-Agenda 21 Campaign

Claim 1. Agenda 21 is a United Nations Program that implements extreme environmentalism, social engineering, and global political control. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Republican National Committee Resolution, Beck, John Birch Society)

Agenda 21 is a non-binding, voluntarily action plan agreed to by the international community in 1992 to implement the concept of sustainable development. Although the term sustainable development has no precise definition, those who attempt to define it often quote the definition from the 1987 Brundtland Commission which said that sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Many observers have commented on the fact that this is a notoriously vague definition that gives no clear guidance on how to resolve conflicts between economic development and environmental protection goals.

Agenda 21 is comprised of 40 chapters that are divided into the following sections:

1. Program of Action for Sustainable Development,
2. Social and Economic Dimensions,
3. Conservation And Management of Resources For Development,
4. Strengthening the Role of Major Groups, and,
5. Means of Implementation

Chapters relating to environmental protection are in section 3 and include separate chapters on the atmosphere, land use planning and land resources, deforestation, fragile ecosystems, sustainable agriculture and rural development, biological diversity, biotechnology, oceans and seas, freshwater, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, solid wastes and sewage, and radioactive wastes.

The contents of these chapters, for the most part, were developed by examining best practices on these issues that existed around the world in the early 1990s. Most of the substantive provisions in these chapters do not set environmental standards or precise environmental objectives but rather consist of exhortations to seriously plan to solve the environmental problems that are subject of these chapters. Many of the policies in these chapters were based on existing law and policies in the United States. The chapter on the atmosphere is an exception to this because it called for control of atmospheric greenhouse gases (ghg) to prevent climate change and the United States did not have laws and regulations on ghg emissions when Agenda 21 was agreed to in 1992. However, the call for control of ghg emissions in Agenda 21 is much less precise than the obligations to adopt policies and practices to prevent the threat of climate change that the George H.W. Bush administration had agreed to when it negotiated and Congress ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992. Agenda 21 added no substantive US obligations on climate change issues. This is so because UNFCCC is binding while Agenda 21 is not.

The environmental policies listed in the above chapters were understood to constitute simply a menu of options to be considered by nations, not binding directives. In this regard William Reilly, US EPA administrator during the George H. W. Bush administration, said during the 1992 Rio conference which adopted Agenda 21 that:

Agenda 21 is not a binding agreement, it is an action plan. It is more a menu of options than a directive. No country could simultaneously undertake all the programs set out in the document. Each country must set its own priorities among the many issues addressed in Agenda 21. (Reilly, 1992)

Because the environmental provisions of Agenda 21 contained in the above chapters were for the most part based on existing US law as of 1992 or promises that the United States had agreed to under ratified international treaties, it is absurd to conclude that Agenda 21 calls for

the implementation of extreme environmentalism. Moreover these chapters are mere recommendations for consideration by governments around the world, not rules that governments must accept. The provisions in these chapters are neither binding on governments, nor has there ever been a review by the United Nations of US law to see if it is consistent with Agenda 21. Even more tellingly Agenda 21 expressly incorporates the Rio Declaration which says in relevant part:

Nations have in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies. (Rio Declaration, 1992: Principle 2)

And so rather than undermining national sovereignty, Agenda 21 reaffirms it and acknowledges that nations should develop their own policies based upon their own interests to resolve potential conflicts between environmental protection and economic development goals.



Agenda 21 is not binding on the United States in four ways. First, it is not a treaty, the only kind of legal document that can bind nations. Unlike a treaty, the United States has never attempted to ratify it because it has been clear to the international community to be a non-binding set of recommendations that nations should consider or reject according to their own visions of appropriate environmental protection and economic development needs. Second, Agenda 21 was never intended to obligate nations to implement its recommendations comprehensively. Its contents were understood to be only a menu of options for consideration by governments, a fact that is clear from a reading of the entirety of the Agenda 21 text. Third, Agenda 21 never created an enforcement mechanism or any process for the UN to review national laws and policies to compare what has been done at the national level in response to Agenda 21. Fourth, the United Nations has no legal authority to bind nations except in the Security Council, a body, as we have noted, which is subject to the veto power of the United States.

At yearly meetings on the UN Commission of Sustainable Development (UN CSD) at the United Nations, an organization created by Agenda 21, nations self-reported on what they were doing in regard to the general subject of specific Agenda 21 chapters, not on the specific provisions of Agenda 21. And so the United States usually reported on what it was already doing under US law on matters that were relevant to the subject matter of Agenda

21s chapters. That is, the United States reported on programs and policies that the United States had independently adopted without regard to Agenda 21 obligations.

From 1995 through 1998, I held the position of Program Manager for United Nations Organizations at the US EPA Office of International Environmental Policy. In this position I had the lead staff responsibility for the US EPA Office of International Environmental Policy under the Clinton administration to compile reports on programs managed by EPA that were submitted to the UN CSD. In my tenure, no programs or policies were reported on that had been enacted by the United States to comply with Agenda 21. In fact, during my tenure at EPA there was no one in the US government that had any responsibility to review US law and policy in regard to the specific provisions of Agenda 21 to determine how US law or policy needed to be upgraded to conform to Agenda 21.

The US simply never took Agenda 21 seriously, a fact that was a big disappointment to many environmental NGOs that attended meetings of the UN CSD. After the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992, the European Union frequently tried to strengthen Agenda 21's vague language by amending several chapters to include numerical targets and timetables. The US always fought these proposals and succeeded in preventing Agenda 21 from including quantitative goals. (Even if quantitative goals had been injected into Agenda 21, they would still not be binding on the United States because Agenda 21 is not a binding document.)

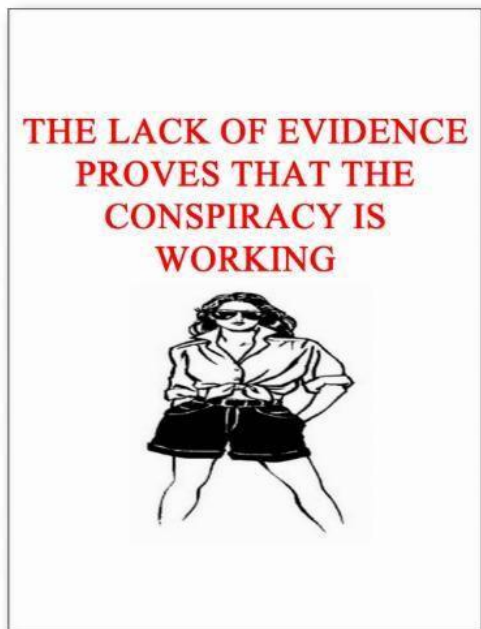
The United States understood that it had no binding obligations under Agenda 21 to develop any new programs and that the body of US law was for the most part equal to or more demanding than recommendations in the Agenda 21's environmental chapters. The Clinton administration, as the Bush administration before it, saw Agenda 21 as only a menu of best practices, not a list of obligations. The chief value of Agenda 21 for the Clinton administration was that it provided guidance for developing countries on how to upgrade clearly inadequate laws and policies relating to environmental protection and economic development controversies. In fact many mainstream US environmental NGOs were uninterested in Agenda 21 because they saw it as document mostly of importance to developing countries. As a result the large US environmental groups did not even participate in most discussions about Agenda 21 at the UN CSD. They believed that they had more important environmental issues to work on.

Of course, some US environmental NGOs were greatly disappointed that the Clinton administration took no interest in upgrading US law and policy on the subject matter of Agenda 21 chapters. To do this the US government would need to work with Congress, and the Clinton administration had no appetite for this. The Clinton administration was engaged at that time in attempting to upgrade US law and policy on climate change, but they never saw Agenda 21 relevant to this effort or of importance to any other environmental issues of interest. As we have seen, the first Bush administration had agreed to and had Congress ratify the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change under which international negotiations on climate change proceeded from 1992 to the present.

Since most of the environmental provisions in Agenda 21 were based upon preexisting United States law and policy, the United States consistently reported to the United Nations CSD on existing US law and policy that preceded Agenda 21.

The United States did create a few grant programs to assist local governments who were interested in voluntarily working on sustainable development issues. (See, for instance, the Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program; EPA, 1998) However even these grants did not require compliance with Agenda 21 in any substantive way. EPA announced in promoting the Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program that voluntary action of local governments on sustainability issues was a way of improving environmental quality as an alternative to regulation. (See EPA, 1998: 45157) These programs established no minimum regulatory requirements for local governments and so communities were completely free to develop local sustainability programs that met their needs on issues of importance to them.

The anti-Agenda 21 activists frequently claim that because US law and policy now contain provisions similar to issues covered in Agenda 21 this proves that the United States has been implementing Agenda 21. Such an argument completely ignores the fact that the United States and other developed countries have been adopting environmental law and regulations since the late 1960s, decades before Agenda 21 existed. The fact that the US has adopted environmental law and policies is absolutely no evidence of the influence of Agenda 21.



The claim that nations have a duty to comply with the provisions of Agenda 21 is flatly contradicted by the language of the 1992 Rio Declaration which is expressly incorporated into Agenda 21 and which says:

States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives, and priorities should reflect the environmental and development context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries

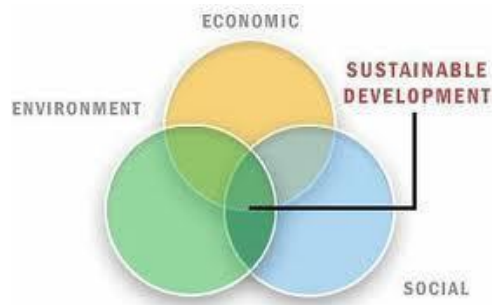
may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic cost to other countries, particularly in developing countries. (Rio Declaration, 1992: Principle 11)

And so, all nations understood that they were not bound to upgrade their laws in accordance with the provisions of Agenda 21.

What was arguably new about Agenda 21 for most governments was the call that environmental and economic development decision-making be integrated. Agenda 21 was premised on the notion that some economic development policies that fail to take into consideration impacts on the environment might harm legitimate environmental protection objectives and environmental policies that fail to consider legitimate economic development needs could frustrate the attainment of legitimate economic aspirations. It is simply not true that Agenda 21 calls for environmental considerations to take precedence over economic development needs. In fact, a large motivating factor for the adoption of Agenda 21 at the international level was the fear of developing countries, whose most important priority was getting their people out of grinding poverty, that environmental laws of most interest to developed nations would limit their ability to pursue economic development. Because Agenda 21 valued economic development on the same level as environmental protection, many developing nations saw Agenda 21 as protecting their right to pursue economic development. Conversely in the United States, many environmental activists were suspicious of Agenda 21 for putting economic development on the same level as environmental protection. These environmental organizations were afraid that Agenda 21 put too much value in economic development, a fact they feared might undermine the need for new environmental law on several issues.

Agenda 21 does encourage decision-makers at all governmental scales to consider at the same time environmental protection and economic development needs in decision-making. Because integrated decision-making allows nations to pursue both economic development aspirations and environmental protection goals, it is a way of preventing governments from unknowingly undermining these goals by focusing on only one of them. Most policy makers agree this is a good thing. If, for instance, a project is proposed to limit the use of forest resources, governments should take into consideration the legitimate economic needs of those who rely upon the forest resources for subsistence. Also, of course, economic development projects could adversely affect legitimate environmental protection goals. Therefore economic development projects should consider environmental protection impacts. And so, sustainable development is understood to be a call for the integration of environmental, economic, and social considerations into government decision making. It is simply untruthful to claim the Agenda 21 elevates environmental protection goals over economic development needs.

The following diagram captures the idea well:



Where the scope of proposed environmental, economic, or social policies conflict with legitimate environmental, economic, or social goals, the concept of sustainable development encourages decision-makers to identify these potential conflicts and work democratically with citizen groups to find solutions that achieve environmental, economic and social goals to the maximum extent possible. As this chart depicts, only when there is a potential conflict among environmental, economic, or social goals is integrated decision-making necessary. And so for the vast number of economic policies, integrated decision-making has no effect.

As we shall see when we examine ethical issues raised by these matters, this idea of integrated decision-making provides no clear guidance about how to resolve conflicts among environmental, economic, and social goals. Under Agenda 21, this is left to governments to resolve ideally working with multi-stakeholder groups democratically.

The claim that Agenda 21 is a call for international control of local government decision-making is directly contradicted by the text of Agenda 21. Section 10.6 (e) of Agenda 21 expressly calls for policy making to be accomplished at the lowest level of public authority consistent with the effective action and a locally driven approach. In addition, many other provisions of Agenda 21 specifically call for governments to make decisions at the appropriate level. (See, for example, Agenda 21, section 10.6). Most of the environmental chapters in Agenda 21 that call for action begin with the prescription that “governments at the appropriate level” should take the actions encouraged by the Agenda 21 chapter. (See, for instance, Agenda 21, Chapter 14 on Biodiversity) And so, rather than Agenda 21 establishing a "top- down" United Nations driven set of rules for imposition of radical environmental policies on nations and local governments, Agenda 21 is actually a call for a "bottom-up" stakeholder driven process that integrates environmental and economic development concerns into decision-making, a process which should take place at the lowest possible level consistent with the scale of the problem.

Many if not most environmental problems can be solved at the local level while others require cooperation at the regional or global level. For instance, wetlands protection can usually be dealt with at the local level, protection of water basins requires cooperation among all communities sharing the basin, and problems like protection of the ozone layer, acidification of oceans, and climate change require cooperation at the global scale. Agenda 21 calls for solutions of these problems at the lowest level consistent with the scale of the problem.

Rather than being opposed to economic development, Agenda 21 actually calls for the strengthening the business sector's participation in integrated environmental and economic development decisions. In fact there is an entire chapter in Agenda 21, chapter 30, which calls for the strengthening of the business sectors' participation in decision-making.

In light of the above, assertions that Agenda 21 implements Marxist/socialist theories that would abolish private ownership of property is both absurd and flatly contradicted throughout the text of Agenda 21. In fact, Agenda 21 also expressly calls for greater use of "more effective and widespread use of economic and market-oriented tools." (See, for example, Agenda 21, Sec. 8.30)

Thus it is simply either a lie or reckless disregard for the truth to claim that Agenda 21 entails a "top-down" Marxist/ socialist plan to abolish private sector involvement in the economy. In fact, in many places, as we have seen, Agenda 21 recognizes the crucial importance of the private sector in economic development. Furthermore business organizations were regularly consulted by the United States when it responded to Agenda 21 issues at the UN and the American business community consistently agreed with positions taken by the United States on Agenda 21 issues, at least in this writer's experience.

In fact the US government often agreed with positions of the US business community on matters about which environmental NGOs disagreed. One example was when US environmental NGOs and the European Union proposed that a code of conduct for international corporations be adopted by the UN CSD. This idea was strongly opposed by American corporations and the US government. As a result, the Clinton administration successfully prevented the UN from pursuing this idea. This greatly disappointed US environmental NGOs. Similarly in 1997, the US government supported the views of the US business community while refusing to support the positions of environmental NGOs when the European Union proposed that the UN CSD adopt targets to reduce unsustainable consumption by specific percentages. The United States strongly opposed this idea at the urging of the US business community and successfully prevented this idea from going forward in the UN despite strong pleas to the US government from the US NGO community to agree to quantitative consumption targets.

The idea of sustainable development also includes the idea that natural resources should be managed to preserve them for future generations. However, this is not a new idea in the United States. Sustainable management of natural resources has been the key to success of US forest and wild life management programs since the 1800s. In a recent book on the subject, Jim Sterba explains the success of wild life management regimes in the United States by noting that:

At the heart of the North American model was the idea that wild birds and animals could not be privatized. They should be held in public trust for the benefit of all citizens, not special interests, managed by governments as renewable resources or otherwise enjoyed with equal access by all on public lands. This idea evolved out of court cases, state laws, and eventually federal laws. (Sterba, 2012: 95)

Yet, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign frequently claims that preserving natural resources for future generations is a radical environmental idea, apparently completely ignorant of the fact that preservation of natural resources has been a center piece of US natural resource management policies for over 100 years.

It is true that thousands of businesses, local governments, and a few US states have initiated programs in support of sustainability. Professor John Dernbach at Widener University School has described in three books thousands of initiatives in the United States on sustainability by businesses, organizations, and local governments. (Dernbach, 2002, Dernbach, 2009, Dernbach, 2012) Most colleges and universities in the United States have also created positions to coordinate sustainable development issues across campuses. In summary, the idea of sustainable development has been widely adopted in the United States by many including members of the US business community, by Democratic and Republican State governors, and other institutions not because the US has an obligation under Agenda 21, but because proponents of these programs believe that both economic development and environmental protection are worthy goals that need to be considered in decision-making and that managing natural resources sustainably is a laudable goal of public policy. The claim that the mere existence of these programs is evidence of a United Nations plot to undermine US sovereignty and impose a Marxist/socialist collective agenda is ludicrous.

Claim 2. The United Nations has covertly pushed Agenda 21 into local communities throughout United States of America through the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives and through policies such as " Smart Growth," "Wildlands Projects", "Resilient Cities", "Regional Visioning Projects" and others with similar obscure names. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Republican National Committee Resolution)

The anti-Agenda 21 campaign frequently claims that Agenda 21 is being covertly implemented through organizations that have been created to implement Agenda 21 while disguising their intentions by changing their names to organizations with the names such as the "International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)," "Smart Growth," "Wildlands Projects," "Resilient Cities," and "Regional Visioning Projects." In making these claims the anti-Agenda 21 campaign is explicitly arguing that those engaged in these programs are doing so to implement Agenda 21. That is, these organizations are pursuing their goals because of the Agenda 21, not because they independently see benefits from such things as sound growth, responsible land-use and transportation planning, or the creation of bike lanes for reasons other than Agenda 21. It is true that thousands of corporations and hundreds of local governments have become interested in pursuing the goals of sustainable development that encourage that both environmental and economic goals be pursued in an integrated manner. It is also true that over 500 municipalities in the United States have adopted local sustainability programs. Yet, local sustainability programs under Agenda 21 are completely voluntary in three ways. First Agenda 21 is not binding on local governments. Second local governments are not required to develop any specific programs to qualify as a local sustainability program. They are completely free to select which environmental and economic development goals they chose to pursue. Third no one in the

United Nations reviews local programs to determine whether they are consistent in any way with Agenda 21.

Furthermore, the idea entailed by sustainable development is attractive to local governments on its own terms without regard to Agenda 21. Land use planning has been well under way in the United States since the 1940s, fifty years before Agenda 21 came into existence. (Kaiser and Godschalt, 1995) As we have seen above, the sustainable management of natural resources has been a goal of resource management programs in the United States for over a century. Furthermore, when local governments seek to achieve both environmental and economic development goals in planning they can organize their communities in a way that is consistent with their preferred visions of the future. Planning is a way of implementing democratically determined visions of a local governments future.

Yet the anti-Agenda 21 campaign claims every time any local government develops a plan that includes both environmental protection and economic development goals, the plan is a manifestation of a United Nations plot even in cases where those preparing the plan have never heard of Agenda 21 nor looked to it for guidance in developing the content of the local plan.

Even when the organizations named by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign have assisted local governments in developing a local sustainability plan, the local government has complete freedom to determine the goals of the local land-use plan. As ICLEI has said, when their organization helps a local government with developing a local sustainability program:

“we do not mandate, impose, or enforce any national or international policies or initiatives. All ICLEI programs and projects are voluntary, and local governments decide for themselves which programs they wish to participate in; they define their own goals depending on local circumstances, interests, and abilities” (ICLEI, 2013)

The chapter in Agenda 21 on local authorities, Chapter 28, is only slightly longer than one page. It contains no prescriptions in regard to the content of local sustainability programs. This chapter simply says that each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations, and private enterprises and adopt a local Agenda 21. There are simply no minimum conditions for what constitutes a local Agenda 21. The clear objective of this chapter is that communities determine the content of local Agenda 21s through collaborative examination of their own needs for appropriate environmental, economic, and social policies. Given this it is absurd to conclude that the contents of any local sustainability program have been determined by Agenda 21.

Those engaged in the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are unable to identify any formal link between these organizations and Agenda 21 or the United Nations other than claiming that these organizations are working on subject matters which are also covered in Agenda 21 and that these organizations have sometimes participated in international meetings on sustainable development. No one in the United Nations reviews local sustainability plans to determine if they are minimally consistent with Agenda 21. There is simply no formal institutional connection between the United Nations and local governments except for the fact that the UN keeps some track of local sustainability programs and occasionally convenes meetings to

allow local communities to learn from each other about how to construct local sustainability programs. Neither the United Nations nor the US government review or pass on the acceptability of these local programs. They are completely voluntary.

Moreover, much of the land use, transportation, and energy planning that is under attack by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has not been conducted by the named organizations. They simply are the product of local government planning processes led by staff that usually have never heard of Agenda 21 nor ever worked with organizations such as ICLEI. Yet, even in the cases where local land use plans have been produced by local planning bodies working with local stakeholder groups rather than the named organizations, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign argues that these plans are part of a UN plot. For instance, several municipalities in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania have produced a joint plan that has not been prepared by the above named organizations, yet activists have argued that the plan is a product of the UN conspiracy and have successfully convinced one community to withdraw from the joint plan on the basis that it was implementing Agenda 21. For many engaged in the anti-Agenda 21 campaign, any land use plan that contains environmental provisions should be opposed on the grounds that it is part of a UN conspiracy.

The only evidence that these named organizations are covertly pursuing the implementation of Agenda 21 proffered by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign is that these organizations are doing work similar in content to the focus of several Agenda 21 chapters. Yet such an argument completely ignores the possibility that those working for these organizations are pursuing integrated environmental and economic planning because they believe that this planning is laudable on its own terms and beneficial to the community about which the plan is being prepared. The anti-Agenda 21 campaign offers no proof that people working for these organizations have been motivated by the desire to implement Agenda 21. Given that, as we have seen, most of the environmental provisions of Agenda 21 were based upon environmental laws and policies that existed before Agenda 21 came into existence, it is preposterous to assume the people working for these organizations are motivated primarily by the provisions of Agenda 21 to impose a radical environmentalism on local governments.

There is simply no evidence that people engaged in these organizations are responding primarily to the United Nations. However, this does not stop the anti-Agenda 21 campaign activists from attacking local planning on the basis that it is part of a UN Marxist plot to destroy private property.

Claim 3. Agenda 21 and sustainable development views the American way of life of private property ownership, single-family homes, private automobile ownership, individual travel choices, privately owned farms, and human existence as all being destructive of the environment. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Republican National Committee Resolution, Beck, John Birch Society)

Embedded in this claim are two assertions about Agenda 21 that are directly contradicted by the text of Agenda 21. One is the claim that Agenda 21 encourages the destruction of property rights. The second is the claim that Agenda 21 elevates environment protection goals over the interests of people. These two claims are very frequently made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign yet are directly contradicted by Agenda 21.

Section 8.18 of Agenda 21 provides that governments and legislators should establish judicial and administrative procedures for legal redress and remedy of actions affecting environment and development that may infringe on rights. Agenda 21, section 10.5, expressly says that property rights should be taken into account in land use decisions. And so, not only is there no support for the claim that Agenda 21 encourages the destruction of property rights, as we have seen, Agenda 21 says the exact opposite.

Rather than elevating environmental protection over human interests, Agenda 21 expressly incorporates principal one of the Rio Declaration which says that human beings are at the center concern for sustainable development. (Rio Declaration, 1992: Principle One). And so, the idea that Agenda 21 makes human interests subservient to environmental protection goals is directly contradicted by the text of Agenda 21. Although it is true that Agenda 21 encourages people to live in harmony with nature, Agenda 21 does not discourage the use of natural resources to meet human needs except to the extent that it encourages decision-makers to consider how the overuse of natural resources will undermine the quality of life for present and future generations. Even in this case, human interests under Agenda 21 are the basis for concern about the environment. As we shall see in the section of this paper on ethics, the fact that Agenda 21 ties natural resources to human interests has been a concern of some environmental ethicists that hold the humans have obligations to protect nature without regard to human interests.

And as we have seen above, Agenda 21 also incorporates principle two of the Rio Declaration which expressly says that nations have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies. (Rio Declaration, 1992: Principle Two) This provision makes nations sovereign over natural resources, not the United Nations. Once again, the anti-Agenda 21 campaign is making claims that are demonstratively false.

Furthermore, Agenda 21 only encourages governments to consider alternatives to those kinds of transportation, certain agricultural practices, and land use which actually cause adverse environmental impacts. There simply is no basis in Agenda 21 for the claim that all forms of transportation, agriculture, or private use of land are environmentally objectionable.

Claim 4. Under Agenda 21, social justice is described as the right and opportunity of the people around the world to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment which would be accomplished by the socialist/communist global of redistribution of property and wealth. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Republican National Committee Resolution, Beck)

Agenda 21 expressly encourages property rights to be honored and for governments to establish civil procedures to redress the unlawful infringement of rights. The absurd notion that agenda 21 calls for the redistribution of wealth according to socialist/communist goals is nowhere to be found in Agenda 21 and, as we have seen, Agenda 21 quite to the contrary expressly calls for the strengthening of the private sector participation in decision-making in many places including in an entire chapter of Agenda 21, Chapter 30.

Agenda 21 does call for more foreign aid from developed countries to assist poor developing countries with poverty alleviation and improvement of decision-making to facilitate integrated environmental and economic decision-making. This however is simply a call for more foreign aid, not a request for redistribution of wealth pursuant to some socialist/communist theory. The goal of increasing foreign aid is based upon the fact that developing countries may not likely have the financial resources to upgrade environmental and economic policies to the degree encouraged by Agenda 21, not on some redistributive wealth theory as alleged by the anti-Agenda 21 activists. In this regard, Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 calls for developed nations to provide 0.7% of GDP for foreign aid to poor developing countries. The United States, however, made it clear when it signed Agenda 21 in 1992 by making a special statement on the issue that it did not agree with this goal and was not in any way bound by it. This disclaimer was originally made by the George H.W Bush administration and was strongly and frequently repeated during the Clinton administration in meetings of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. In fact, when I was on the US delegation in 1997, when several developing nations criticized the United States for being in last place among developed countries in percentage of GDP devoted to foreign aid, with only 0.1 % of US GDP devoted to foreign aid compared to 10 times as much in some European countries, the Clinton administration strongly repeated its position that the US rejected the 0.7% of GDP goal. The Clinton administration further frequently repeated that the best way to help developing nations economically was to assist them in attracting private sector investment.

And so, the claim that Agenda 21 will lead to a Marxist/communist redistribution of private resources is another staggering delusional claim made by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign.

Claim 5. Agenda 21 attempts to erode the local control found in our communities across the nation and turns home and regional rule over to a global agenda set by organizations authorized by the United Nations. (West Cornwall Township Resolution, Republican National Committee Resolution, John Anthony tape, John Birch Society)

The fact that this claim is a complete and utter canard can be determined by looking at the actual language of Agenda 21. Paragraph 3.5 (a) of Agenda 21, for instance, calls for the empowerment of local and community groups under the principal of delegating authority, accountability, and resources to the most appropriate level to ensure that the program will be geographically and ecologically specific.

In addition paragraph 10.6 (e) of Agenda 21, as we've seen above, calls for delegating policy making to the lowest level of public authority consistent with effective action and a locally driven approach.

Absolutely nothing in Agenda 21 calls for the divestment of local power and the substitution of United Nations authority.

Agenda 21 does acknowledge that some environmental and economic development problems cannot be solved by one community alone because some problems do not fit the boundaries of a single local community's jurisdiction. In these cases, governments need to

cooperate to have any hope of solving the problem. For instance, upstream communities and nations can degrade the water supply of downstream nations and communities. Three or more communities may degrade a common water supply. In such cases a regional solution is required to solve the problem and Agenda 21 implicitly calls for regional government cooperation in such cases. In solving these regional problems, the United Nations is not called upon to play any role in the regional decision making. In these situations, the governments are encouraged, but not required, by Agenda 21 to consider the environmental and economic impacts in an integrated in decision-making.

Some environmental problems are global in scope such as ocean acidification, ozone layer depletion, and climate change. For these problems global cooperation is necessary and the United Nations has often played a convening role in bringing national governments together to solve these problems. However, even for global problems the United Nations has no power nor attempts to dictate the elements of global solutions. The United Nation's role in global problems has been to call nations together in negotiations to arrive at treaties which have to be ratified by national governments. In the United States treaty ratification requires a 2/3 vote of the US Senate. In global treaty negotiations, the United Nations plays no negotiating role except to facilitate negotiations among nations and sometimes to act in an administrative role in regard to the implementation of treaties. Yet even when it plays this role it reports to the nations who are parties to the treaties.

Thus Agenda 21 endorses a principle which is known legally as the "subsidiarity" principle. The subsidiarity principle is an organizing principle of decentralization, stating that a matter ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralized authority capable of addressing that matter effectively.

Not only is there no basis for the claim that Agenda 21 undermines regional control by replacing it with a global control, as we have seen, Agenda 21 by incorporating principle 2 of the Rio Declaration, expressly acknowledges the sovereign right of nations to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies.



Claim 6. Agenda 21 calls for decisions affecting local property to be made in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations rather than local property law. (John Anthony tape)

This claim is simply a lie or reckless disregard for the truth. As we have seen, Agenda 21 calls for decisions to be made at the lowest practical level in accordance with the laws and policies of that level.

Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations expressly provides in Article 2, Paragraph 7 that:

Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state. (UN Charter, 1945)

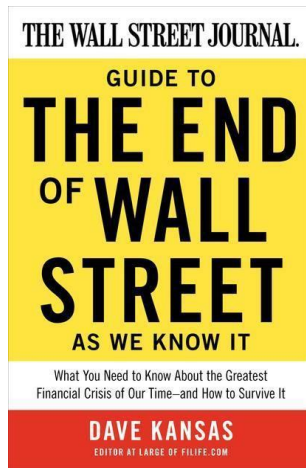
Since the planning issues under attack by the anti-Agenda 21 are matters within the jurisdiction of local, regional, state or national governments, the Charter of the United Nations actually prohibits the United Nations from usurping local or regional authority.

In addition, the UN Charter provides no authority of the United Nations to make decisions of any kind in regard to local land use planning.

Thus, the claim that Agenda 21 calls for local decisions to be determined under the authority of the United Nations Charter is so loony and inconsistent with international law that it has obviously been made by someone who does not understand international law, yet who has been convinced by conspiracy theories that the United Nations is rapidly usurping national sovereignty.

Claim 7. Agenda 21 means that individual rights must take second place to the rights of the collective. (John Anthony tape. John Birch Society)

Not only does Agenda 21 nowhere say that individual rights must take second place to the rights of the collective as we have seen above, Agenda 21 is clear that governments at the appropriate scale should make decisions according to their own laws and policies, expressly reaffirms property rights, calls for judicial processes to protect rights, and is comprised of a set of recommendations for consideration by the appropriate government, not rules that must be adopted. This claim, along with many others discussed in this series, must be understood as a lie or reckless disregard for the truth.



Claim 8. Agenda 21 calls for free enterprise to be replaced with public/private partnership. (John Anthony tape)

Nothing in Agenda 21 remotely comes close to saying that free enterprise should be replaced. As we have seen several times there is an entire chapter of Agenda 21, Chapter 30, that calls for the strengthening of free enterprise in decision-making and Agenda 21 actually recommends greater use of market mechanisms.

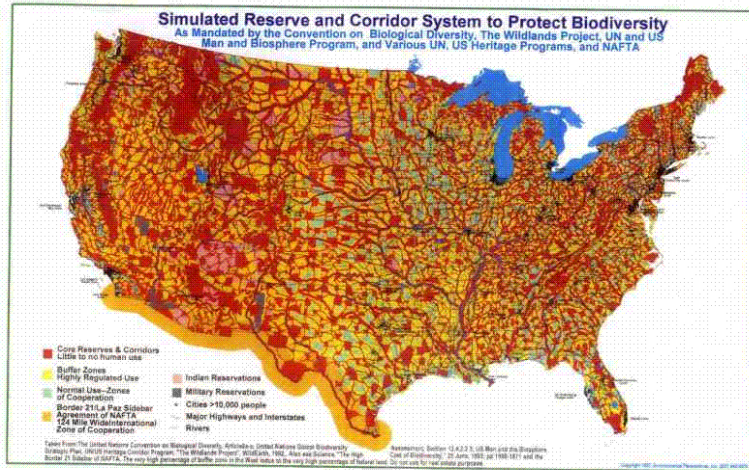
Many businesses and business organizations have enthusiastically supported the ideas of Agenda 21. For instance the World Council of Sustainable Business is an organization comprised of over 200 international corporations that have actively participated in UN meetings on sustainability. (WBCSB, 2013) Thousands of businesses around the world have made commitments to sustainable development. As we saw above the United State government consistently met with US business interests before taking positions on sustainability issues at the UN. The claim that Agenda 21 calls for replacement of the private sector is not only inaccurate; it is preposterous.

Claim 9. In decision-making at the local level, the job of the facilitator is to guide the local stakeholder groups to accept predetermined objectives consistent with Agenda 21. (John Anthony tape)

This claim apparently is made about multi-stakeholder meetings that are encouraged by Agenda 21 at the appropriate government level. Multi-stakeholder meetings are usually organized by the government unit which is considering action relating to planning. The local governments usually select which facilitators will run meetings. It is very, very unlikely that the facilitators of these meetings have known anything about Agenda 21 nor looked to it to find rules to apply to local solutions. There is no evidence at all that all or the majority of facilitators that have participated in local decision-making relevant to sustainability issues have forced the stakeholders to come up with recommendations consistent with Agenda 21.

Claim 10. Agenda 21 implementation will mean that people will only be able to live in the black areas in the following maps; living in rural areas will no longer be possible in

the United States. (John Anthony tape, Beck, John Birch Society)



This claim is obviously ludicrous and utterly disingenuous. There have been no proposals that have come close to limiting future domestic dwellings to the black spaces on the map nor to prohibiting people from locating their homes in rural areas. In the United States, land use decisions are made by state and local governments in accordance with state and local law and Agenda 21 asserts that decisions should be made by governments at the appropriate levels according to the laws of the decision-making bodies. The United Nations has zero authority over the decisions of state and local governments on these issues. Agenda 21 makes no recommendations to prohibit living in rural communities.

From time to time in the past, state and local governments have made land use decisions that restrict land uses to protect wild life and natural resources but they have not been required to do this by Agenda 21. Some governments may also choose to restrict certain land uses for ecological preservation reasons in the future. Property owners of lands that might be identified to be preserved for ecological reasons have strong property rights in the United States that prevent the government from taking their property without just compensation and due process of law. Agenda 21 not only does not undermine the rights of property owners, it reaffirms them as we have seen.

Claim 11. Agenda 21 requires that the same solutions be applied the same everywhere in the world. (John Anthony tape)

Once again, this claim is directly contradicted by the text of Agenda 21. Paragraph 8.2 of Agenda 21 says in relevant part:

National plans, goals and objectives, national rules, regulations and law, and the specific situations in which different countries are placed are the overall framework in which integration takes place. In this context, it must be borne in mind that environmental standards may pose severe economic and social costs if they are uniformly applied in developing countries. (UN Agenda 21, 1992: Para. 8.2)

As we have also explained above , Agenda 21 expressly recognizes the sovereignty and rights of nations to exploit their own resources according to their own needs. Agenda 21 is simply a menu of options for consideration, not a set of rules to be applied.

Claim12. Agenda 21 Erodes National Sovereignty. (John Birch Society, Republican National Platform)

Agenda 21 not only does not erode American sovereignty in any way, as we have seen throughout this analysis, it reaffirms national sovereignty.

First, we have seen from the quote above that Section 8.2 expressly provides that the law of nations is the basis for integrating environmental and economic issues in implementing Agenda 21.

Second, we have seen that Agenda 21 is simply a menu of options not a set of rules to be applied by nations.

Third, we have seen that the Charter of the United Nations says that the Charter does not give the United Nations the authority to interfere with matters rightly within the jurisdictions of nations.

Fourth, we saw that paragraph 10.6 (e) of Agenda 21 calls for delegating policy making to the lowest level of public authority consistent with effective action and a locally driven approach.

Fifth, we have seen that Agenda 21 expressly incorporates Principle two of the Rio Declaration which says that "Nations have in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies." (Rio Declaration, 1992: Principle 2)

Sixth, it is a well establish principle of international law that nations are not bound by international agreements unless they are treaties that have been ratified or adopted according to national law. In the United States, the US Senate must ratify a treaty by 2/3 vote of the United States Senate. The United States never ratified Agenda 21 nor even considered doing so because it was universally understood to be a non-binding document from its conception.

In summary, the United States retains full, undiluted sovereignty over matters discussed in Agenda 21.Nothing in Agenda 21 remotely undermines the sovereignty of the United States.

Claim 13. The United States implemented Agenda 21 through the President’s Council on Sustainable Development (John Anthony tape, John Birch Society)

The anti-Agenda 21 campaign continues to make the false claim that because President Clinton established the President’s Council On Sustainable Development (PCSD), an organization which met from June of 1993 to June of 1999, the United States has

implemented Agenda 21 throughout the United States. (For an in-depth review of the purpose, accomplishments, and failures of the PCSD, see Dernbach, 2002.) The PCSD was created by Executive Order of President Clinton to give advice to the US government about how to move toward sustainability.

The membership of the PCSD was made up of roughly equal numbers of individuals from industry, government, and NGOs and was chaired by Ray Anderson, Chairman and CEO of Interface, Inc., a carpet manufacturer, and Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute. Included among the PCSD members were Enron, BP Oil, Dow Chemical, and General Motors.

From 1993 to 1999, the PCSD delivered three reports to President Clinton. These reports included a broad array of policy recommendations intended to promote US domestic sustainability. Although the PCSD produced guidance on steps for achieving sustainable development at both domestic and international levels, the Clinton administration chose not to move to implement the PCSD's recommendations. (McFarlane, 2003)

Included in PCSD's recommendations was a visions statement which included the following goal:

To achieve our vision of sustainable development, some things must grow—jobs, productivity, wages, capital and savings, profits, information, knowledge, and education—and others— pollution, waste, and poverty—must not. (PCSD, 1999)

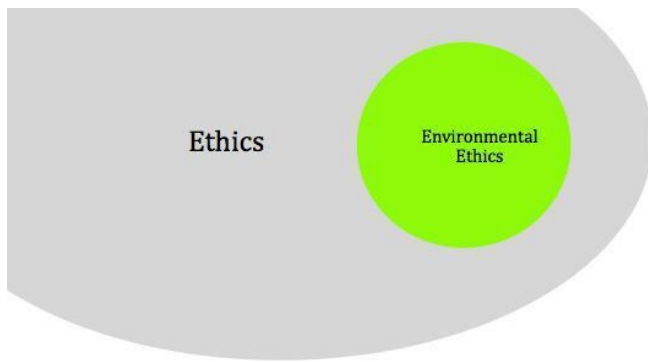
This is hardly the vision of a radical socialist agenda. In addition, the PCSD's recommendations are replete with many express acknowledgements of respect for the power the market and private decision-making. It is simply not a reasonable interpretation of the work of the PCSD to conclude that it recommended the transformation of American society to a socialist future.

Furthermore the PCSD was established as an advisory committee. It did not have any statutory authority of its own, nor was it located within an agency which had any statutory authority. If the US government chose to ignore its recommendations, nothing would come of them. In fact, that is what happened to the PCSD.

The last major event in the PCSD's life was a national town meeting in Detroit in May of 1999. After the Detroit meeting, the PCSD shut down and, as we have noted, the Clinton administration took no steps to implement the PCSD's recommendations. (McFarlane, 2003) The George W. Bush administration completely ignored the recommendations of the PCSD.

And so nothing meaningful came out of the PCSD. Therefore, there is simply no basis for concluding that the PCSD led to the implementation of a radical environmental agenda in the

United States. The claim that the PCSD's work is evidence of the continuing UN's covert implementation of Agenda 21 is not just misleading and false, it is a staggering example of reckless disregard for the truth given the unwillingness of both the Clinton and George W. Bush administration to take any steps to implement the PCSD recommendations. The evidence proffered by the anti-Agenda 21 campaign in support of the fact that the PCSDs recommendations have been implemented is the existence of environmental law and regulation at the federal, state and local level throughout United States. However there is no evidence that existing US law and regulation on environmental matters had anything to do either with Agenda 21 or the work of the PCSD.



III. Ethical Analysis of the Anti-Agenda 21 Campaign

We now look at the anti-Agenda 21 campaign phenomenon through an ethical lens. We end this ethical analysis with a reflection on the ethics of sustainable development.

1. Tactics of anti-Agenda 21 Campaign

We have seen in this series of articles that the assumptions and claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are very frequently based upon either lies or reckless disregard for the truth. Over and over again, claims of this campaign are made about the meaning or effect of Agenda 21 which are directly contradicted by the text of this document or are based upon a completely delusional understanding of the potential power of the United Nations over local or regional governments in the United States as a legal matter.

As we noted at the beginning of this series, citizens have clear rights to protect their interests by participating in and attempting to influence local and regional planning efforts. There is no doubt, some land-use decisions have occasionally infringed upon property rights. In these cases, existing US law provides legal protection for redress. Nothing in Agenda 21 can be construed to change this and in fact Agenda 21 expressly calls for

consideration of property rights.

However those seeking to influence government processes have no rights to tell utter untruths about issues in contention. For this reason, the tactics of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are ethically problematic particularly in light of the magnitude and scope of the misinformation that the anti-Agenda 21 campaign has been pushing about sustainable development.

The tactics of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign include not only include large doses of misinformation about Agenda 21, they also appear to be designed to scare uninformed citizens that their rights are being taken over by the United Nations which is in the process of undermining national sovereignty in pursuit of imposing a Marxist/socialist one world government.

And so, the tactics of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign include the spreading a huge number of false claims that are being used to scare uninformed citizens. These tactics are clearly morally reprehensible.

2. The Ethics of Sustainability

As we explained, Agenda 21 is a document that encourages but does not require governments around the world to pursue integrated decision-making about environmental, economic, and social issues at the global, national, regional, and local scales. The idea is premised on the notion that if economic, environmental, or social policies are pursued by themselves they may prevent the achievement of legitimate environmental, economic, and social goals that may be achieved in integrated decision-making.

The idea of sustainable development does not give strong guidance on how to reconcile conflicts between environmental and economic goals. As we noted above, the definition that is usually used to define this term is notoriously vague. Namely, sustainable development is development which meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition has been criticized by some because it could be understood to allow destruction of all natural resources if technology finds substitutes, makes human needs the measure of value for natural resources, fails to recognize duties to sentient animals, makes no distinctions on what human needs are, fails to clarify differences between desires and needs, etc. As a result, many environmental ethicists have criticized the idea of sustainable development for its failure to be clearer about the value of nature and animals or give clear ethical guidance.

Similarly many environmental activists have criticized the concept of sustainable development on the basis that its strong commitment to economic development will lead to undermining environmental protection.

Yet it can be argued, that the idea of sustainable development is worthwhile pursuing practically and ethically despite its ethical vagueness because it calls for decisions relating to economic development to take into consideration potential adverse environmental

impacts. It also encourages governments considering environmental protection policies to consider unwanted impacts on legitimate economic development objectives. Because environmental and economic goals can have ethical significance, sustainable development is ethically supportable despite the lack of clarity about how to resolve conflicts between environmental and economic goals. For this reason, sustainable development is what philosophers call an "orienting" concept. That is, it helps orient decision-making to consider the right thing to do, even if it is ethically incomplete in giving guidance on how to resolve environmental protection and economic development conflicts. Many other "orienting" concepts which contain no clear ethical rule yet are helpful are frequently used in public life. For instance, the very word "justice" is such an orienting concept.

The word "justice" in the abstract does not tell one what should be done when distributing societal benefits but it is useful in orienting thinking about what is a fair distribution of societal goods in human affairs or to determine when procedures should be created to provide rights of participation in decisions for those who could be affected by government decisions. For the same reason, a call for integrated decision-making as an orienting idea is ethically positive even if it does not resolve all conflicts about environmental and economic issues.

This is so because many governments have pursued economic development objectives or environment protection goals without consideration of how policies in each of these areas might affect the legitimate aspirations of the other policy goals. For instance, very frequently economic development projects that affected water quality have been approved before the project's water impacts were considered. Because people have a right to not have the water on which they depend degraded by others, it is ethically required that adverse impacts on water quality be considered in economic policy decisions that could affect water quality. There are also many examples, particularly in developing countries, where projects which proposed to restrict the use of natural resources have been approved without consideration of the adverse impacts that would follow by restricting natural resource on local indigenous people who depended on the resources for subsistence. Ethics requires that environmental decisions consider how people's subsistence needs may be affected by environmental policies.

And so the idea of sustainable development is ethically supportable despite its lack of clarity about how to resolve conflicts between environmental and economic goals. In cases of conflict between environmental and economic goals, governments need to look to other ethical principles contained in law or ethical theory to resolve conflicts. And so, the idea of sustainable development is an ethically supportable goal despite the fact that it gives incomplete ethical guidance on how to resolve conflicts between environmental, economic, and other policy goals.

It would appear that the anti-Agenda 21 disinformation campaign is always opposed to the idea of sustainable development that encourages integrated decision-making on environmental, economic, and social policies. Yet such opposition is itself ethically problematic precisely because people and governments have ethical duties to avoid certain kinds of adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts on others.

Therefore, we conclude that the anti-Agenda 21 campaign can be criticized on ethical grounds for many reasons including the fact that it appears to be opposed to integrated decision-making on projects that can have adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts.

IV. Conclusion

We have demonstrated that the claims of the anti-Agenda 21 campaign are built upon misleading and inaccurate claims about Agenda 21.

Future papers in this series will look at the organizations that have been propagating the claims that we have examined in this series.

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Appendix

West Cornwall Township Resolution.

Republican National Committee Resolution

WEST CORNWALL TOWNSHIP

RESOLUTION NUMBER 385-2013

 COPY

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, WEST CORNWALL TOWNSHIP, LEBANON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, EXPOSING THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 21 PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, citizens across the United States of America and citizens from West Cornwall Township have raised concerns that United Nations Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of extreme environmentalism, social engineering and global political control initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Agenda 21 has been and continues to be covertly pushed into local communities throughout the United States of America through the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) through local "sustainable development" policies such as "Smart Growth", "Wildlands Projects", "Resilient Cities", "Regional Visioning Projects" and others with similar obscure names; and

WHEREAS, this United Nations Agenda 21 plan of radical so-called "sustainable development" views the American way of life of private property ownership, single family homes, private automobile ownership and individual travel choices, privately owned farms, and human existence as all being destructive to the environment; and

WHEREAS, according to United Nations Agenda 21 policy, social justice is described as the right and opportunity of all people around the globe to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment which would be accomplished by socialist/communist global redistribution of property and wealth; and

WHEREAS, Agenda 21 attempts to erode the local control found in our communities across the nation, and turns home and regional rule over to a global agenda set by a body or organization authorized by the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, according to United Nations Agenda 21 policy, National Sovereignty is deemed as social injustice, and

WHEREAS, critical environmental and green energy issues should remain within the purview of the local governments of the United States of America, which have been elected by the people and have a strong knowledge of local concerns and issues, not within the confines of a bureaucratic international treaty developed by the United Nations; and

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National Committee ★ **Member**

Republican

Services ★

Resolution Exposing United Nations Agenda 21

WHEREAS, the United Nations Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of extreme environmentalism, social engineering, and global political control that was initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992; and,

WHEREAS, the United Nations Agenda 21 is being covertly pushed into local communities throughout the United States of America through the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) through local “sustainable development” policies such as Smart Growth, Wildlands Project, Resilient Cities, Regional Visioning Projects, and other “Green” or “Alternative” projects; and,

WHEREAS, this United Nations Agenda 21 plan of radical so-called “sustainable development” views the American way of life of private property ownership, single family homes, private car ownership and individual travel choices, and privately owned farms; all as destructive to the environment; and,

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations Agenda 21 policy, social justice is described as the right and opportunity of all people to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment which would be accomplished by socialist/communist redistribution of wealth; and,

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations Agenda 21 policy National sovereignty is deemed a social injustice; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Republican National Committee recognizes the destructive and insidious nature of United Nations Agenda 21 and hereby exposes to the public and public policy makers the dangerous intent of the plan; and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, that the U.S. government and no state or local government is legally bound by the United Nations Agenda 21 treaty in that it has never been endorsed by the (U.S.) Senate, and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, that the federal and state and local governments across the country be well informed of the underlying harmful implications of implementation of United Nations Agenda 21 destructive strategies for “sustainable development” and we hereby endorse rejection of its radical policies and rejection of any grant monies attached to it, and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, that upon the approval of this resolution the Republican National Committee shall deliver a copy of this resolution to each of the Republican members of Congress, all Republican candidates for Congress, all Republican candidates for President who qualify for RNC sanctioned debates, and to each Republican state and territorial party office and recommend for adoption into the Republican Party Platform at the 2012 Convention.