

The NPS operating expenses have risen 2.6 percent per year above inflation since 1980. During the same time, the system grew only 1 percent per year in acreage and units. The system has always gotten more money to operate. Park visits, nationally, only grew 2.3 percent per year.

BLM generated .50 cents for every \$1.00 invested and the NPS .08 cents for every \$1.00. While operating budgets for day-to-day upkeep and services have grown faster than acreage, provisions for infrastructure and major maintenance have not followed a similar pattern.

In some instances, these capital budgets that provide for long-term facility maintenance have shrunk. Between 1980 and 1995, NPS declined to an annual rate of 1.5 percent when adjusted for inflation. As a result, the NPS has a \$5.6 billion deficit for construction and maintenance and a \$2 billion deficit for resource management.

The USFS has a \$5 billion maintenance backlog. Throwing more money into the Federal trough is not getting us what we want. Eroding forest roads, deteriorating water quality, disappearing wildlife habitat, and loss of priceless artifacts are just the most obvious indicators that current policies are not providing quality management.

Buying more land only contributes to a situation that is not achieving the environmental objectives that we want.

Billions of dollars are spent each year to manage our Federal lands, and the public is not getting the benefits of multiple-use fiscal responsibility, or good resource stewardship.

A number of ecologists have also questioned the ability to fulfill its mission of resource protection. Biologist Charles Kay of Utah State University has documented the destruction of the Crown Jewel of national parks, Yellowstone. Overpopulation of elk and buffalo has taken its toll. The result is starvation of thousands of elk, and overgrazed range, the destruction of plant communities, the elimination of critical habitat, and a serious decline in biodiversity. Karl Hess reported the same in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Some 39 million acres of Federal forest land are, as we speak, at risk of catastrophic wildfire and disease according to a GAO report of last year.

BETTER TOOLS—BETTER RESULTS—SATISFIED
CONSERVATIONISTS

It is clear that merely dipping into the Federal Treasury does not ensure land conservation for the future. Under the current system of command and control, politics plays a major role in Federal land management. Some pragmatic changes in our Federal land agencies, however, could help us get the incentives right.

RECREATIONAL LAND

Lands historically used for recreation, should pay or attempt to pay their own way and not rely entirely upon congressional appropriations.

There is no doubt that park managers can better care for the land that Federal overseers in Congress who fail to allocate funds for necessary maintenance. The Fee Demonstration Program is a step in the right direction.

As land managers generate revenues and decide how the money will be spent, they are allowed to be more responsive to visitors, more expedient with maintenance, and more protective of natural resources.

COMMODITY LANDS

Not all Federal lands are equally deserving of preservation. In a world of limited resources, it makes sense to sell lands with lesser conservation values to ensure adequate protection for those worthy of conservation.

HABITAT SET-ASIDES

There are some lands under Federal management that are not likely to ever pay their own way, but have ecological or cultural value. The land might be critical wildlife habitat, watershed for large, diversified users, or the site of some historical event. These should be placed under a trust or endowment board. A portion of revenues derived from user fees at more popular sites or the sale of other lands could be used as endowment funds to manage these valuable areas. I am very supportive of this idea.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Current Federal land management permits land acquisitions without regard to operating and maintenance costs. Before adding more land to the Federal estate and obligating the American taxpayer, a detailed accounting of annual operating and maintenance costs should be prepared and, like private conservators, laws should require that funding for proper management be part of the appropriation. No O&M money, no deal. I will insist on it.

LAND EXCHANGES

There is no doubt in my mind that land exchanges are necessary. Small units of range should be either traded or sold to block up large units for management purposes. The funds derived from the sales should be placed in the trust or endowment for management of other public holdings.

PRIVATE SOLUTIONS

As an alternative to Federal land conservation, private conservation by individuals and groups is a viable option with a long history in the United States. The growing demand to protect land resources has created a new impetus for private conservation through ownership and other legal mechanisms. Whether the land is managed for profit or to fulfill a mission, these private conservators have the right incentives. They face the opportunity costs for alternative uses of the resources. The result is often better land management than that provided by our Federal land managers.

FEE SIMPLE

Private landownership is the oldest and simplest form of land conservation.

It will continue to exist as long as property rights are well-defined and owners can profit from their investment in conservation or achieve their conservation goals.

LAND TRUSTS, CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Tax benefits.

Perpetual easements.

Restructuring easements.

CONCLUSION

Changes that would improve land conservation and mitigate environmental damage without adding more land to the Federal estate include:

Lands for recreational use should pay their own way or generate some revenue to cover costs;

Land use rights on commodity producing lands should be sold for the highest value use. The winning bid could be commercial timber harvest, selective harvest to enhance wildlife habitat, wilderness, recreation, or some combination of uses;

Income from the sale of land and land use rights should be put into endowment funds to buy or manage lands with higher conservation values, such as those with critical wildlife habitat, scenic value, or historical significance; and

Barriers should be lowered to encourage private conservation and good stewardship.

At present our Federal land agencies are poor land stewards. Many times through no fault of their own, their budgets reach into the billions, yet damage to roads, sewers, buildings, forest, and rangelands remain and continue to worsen.

Only the lands that are under long-term lease arrangements with individuals or groups continue to improve.

Given the right incentives, we can protect areas like Yellowstone and Yosemite, preserve the Bob Marshall Wilderness of Montana, and the east front. But forests such as Clinch Valley, VA, are better left in private hands.

Again, I must iterate that the Conservation Reinvestment Act as written and presented this day, is ill-conceived and ill-advised. We can and must invest those dollars where the environmental objectives are clearly achievable.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3 o'clock with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the following exceptions: The Senator from

West Virginia, Mr. BYRD, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.; and the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, Alexander Hamilton spoke 6 hours at the Constitutional Convention. So I think I am in rather good company.

THE PLIGHT OF OUR NATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the great English novelist, Charles Dickens, began his epic novel, "A Tale of Two Cities," with these words, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . . ."

Well over a century later, and a continent away from the writing of Dickens' story, those words could well describe the plight of our nation in the last year of the 20th century.

That is this century—the last year of the 20th century.

The United States has never been more affluent, in terms of material wealth and creature comforts, or more impoverished in terms of spiritual well-being. It is the best of times materially. It is the worst of times spiritually. Millions are made daily on Wall Street, American consumerism fuels booming international economic and trade markets, and our Nation's living standard is the envy of the world. We have eliminated our staggering deficits at home, at least on paper, and jobs are available for our people in abundance.

Yet, America is, in many ways, a hollow nation. We are a people on the edge of a precipice. Despite all of our economic prosperity, despite all of our fascination with the glittery toys that money can buy us, despite all of the accouterments of success and prosperity, so envied by the rest of the world, all of the material comforts we so enthusiastically chase, can never pacify the hunger beginning to emerge in our collective souls, nor even start to solve the endemic problems which crowd the dark corners of our national psyche.

Our children randomly slaughter each other in our schools, clothes are torn off of innocent women in a public park, smut crowds the airwaves, the traditional family structure continues to deteriorate, advertising reflects little but sexual innuendo and the desire for a mad rush to some materialistic nirvana, song lyrics are not fit for polite company, and even the barest mention of the existence of a Creator is castigated as inappropriate or viewed as the unbalanced ravings of the lunatic fringe.

We are a people seemingly in deep denial of our own humanity—in deep denial of our own unquenched inner need for meaning and purpose and direction in our lives. We have succumbed to the glossy promise of more, and more, and more, in a vain and pointless effort to

deny the one essential element which is so glaringly missing from our aimless, restless pursuit of prosperity.

Religion has all but vanished from our national life. Worse than that, religion is discouraged; religion is frowned upon. Religion is suppressed, spurred by what I believe is a misguided attempt to ensure a completely secular society and a gross misreading of constitutional intent. Oh, what ills are born when we forget our history! What ills are born when we forget our history!

This Nation was founded, in part, so that religion could freely flourish. The Constitution was written and ratified by men who possessed a strong spiritual awareness. These were not Godless men who wrote the Constitution of the United States. They had a spiritual awareness. The universal principles espoused in the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and other early American documents reflect aspirations, which are, at their core, based on a belief in a Supreme Being and on the existence of a human soul. What are these if not religious principles? Such lofty and spiritual beliefs as the bedrock equality of all humans,—as the bedrock equality of all humans—and the endowment by a Creator of basic rights cannot be secularized out of existence in a nation so rooted in a deep spiritual consciousness as is ours. Every single value upon which this country was so painstakingly built—individual sacrifice for the greater good, fairness, charity, truthfulness, morality, personal responsibility, honesty—all of these are, at root, qualities derived from Judeo-Christian teachings. To try to separate this nation from the religious grounding which it so obviously exhibits in every aspect of its history, is like trying to bifurcate muscle from bone. Dysfunction is the result—sterile bone which cannot move, and useless tissue with no support. That is what happens when spiritual values become separated from our national life.

Nowhere are the results of such an unfortunate rending more obvious, more destructive or more heart-breaking than in the evident damage we have done to our most precious commodity, our children. Millions of our innocents are lost in a maze of drugs, cheap sex, violence, and materialism. They are starving—starving—for lessons by which to live their lives, and what do we offer them? We offer them only hedonistic baubles. Love of pleasure, greed, gratification of sex, defilement of the crude and the outrageous, and the selfish culture of Me, me, me, and More, more, more, are no guidelines on which to build a life or a character whether it be a nation or the individual. These are only empty distractions that lead down roads previously reserved for misfits and criminals. We must look hard at ourselves in the mirror each morning and ask what in the name of God we are coming to if we continue on this course? We are all at fault, all of us—the clergy for not

speaking out, the Church doesn't speak out like it used to when I was a boy.

The church took a strong stand on the great national issues. But the church, as so many of us, has been driven into a closet; so the clergy for not speaking out; the leaders of business in this country for looking only at profits; the leaders of both political parties for pandering—pandering. Most of the issues that plague us nationally—such as violence in our schools, inadequate health care for the weakest in our society, crime, greed in politics, all of these issues, all of them, are at their root—are issues of right and wrong, issues of morality.

Yet in order to avoid offending anyone—don't offend anyone; that is why so many of the colleges and schools have taken history out of the required courses, because history might offend somebody. It might offend some group—in order to avoid offending anyone or any group, we try to totally secularize our politics on the left and overly polarize our politics, with too much false piety, on the right. So both are in the wrong. The result is only endless power struggle and pandering to the various groups which keep us in power. As such, political power has become an end, not a means, and the leadership of this nation too often winds up pursuing solutions to the effects of our ills and ignoring their causes.

A prejudice against the influence of religious commitment and moral values upon political issues now characterizes almost every sector of American society from the media to law to academia. We have seen the Supreme Court rule, again and again, against allowing voluntary prayer in public school in this country. I believe that this ingrained predisposition against expressions of religious or spiritual beliefs is wrongheaded, destructive, and completely contrary to the intent of the Founders of this great nation. Instead of ensuring freedom of religion in a nation founded in part to guarantee that basic liberty, a literal suffocation of that freedom has been the result. The rights of those who do not believe in a Supreme Being have been zealously guarded, to the denigration, I repeat, denigration, of the rights of those who do so believe.

The American doctrine of separation of church and state—and you don't find that in the Constitution; it says nothing about separation of Church and State in the Constitution—forbids the establishment of any one religion by the state, but not, I repeat, not the influence of religious values in the life of the nation. Religious faith has always been an underpinning of American life.

One of the most perceptive of observers of the early American scene was Alexis de Tocqueville. Writing in the 1830's on his observations while traveling in America, de Tocqueville grasped the moral content of America. Coming from France where abuse of power by the clergy had made