RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

by Peter Hannaford
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America's "mainstream" media missed it, but April 17 was a red-letter day for its Deep Ecologists. Red letter because it was the day the Obama Administration declared that carbon dioxide and five other gases emitted by industry threaten "the health and welfare of current and future generations." This opens the door to regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency to "cap" emissions. The Deep Ecologists see this as the path to their cherished dream of a less populous nation with greatly reduced industrial production. It will also lead to a poorer (they would call it "simpler") standard of living.

The Deep Ecologists' philosophy came together in 1973 with a treatise by a Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess. He and his followers disdained the "utilitarian" environmentalists who, up to that time, had been working on clean air or water and saving this or that species. The facts of science and logic were not enough, he believed. They lacked an ethical framework that required deep questioning and commitment. Naess said that humans didn't rank above other creatures. That is, "the right of all forms [of life] to live is a universal right which cannot be quantified. No single species of living being has more of this particular right to live and unfold than any other species."

In this, Naess and his followers resembled the mid-19th century pantheists who believed that all species were interrelated. For example, they called fish, "the finny tribe."

The Deep Ecologists went well beyond this romantic view. In a 1985 book, two of them, W. Devall and G. Sessions, spelled out eight principles the world should live by. Here is Number Four: "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population." Number Five reads, "Present human interference with the non-human world (flora and fauna) is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening." It leads to Number Six: "Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present."
Whether they admit it or not, most active environmentalists believe in the Deep Ecology thesis that mankind has despoiled the land, misused natural resources, and is greedy and wasteful. (A friend once said of the Sierra Club, "It believes that mankind is but a passing disaster on this planet.")

Deep Ecology has been the underlying drive of Green Parties and the rush to declare Global Warming a coming disaster. This, despite the fact, as Steve Milloy puts it in a new book, "the fatal flaw of global warming alarmism is that there is no scientific evidence indicating that carbon dioxide, much less man-made carbon dioxide emissions, control or even measurably impact global climate." (Green Hell: How Environmentalists Plan to Control Your Life and What You Can Do to Stop Them. Regnery Publishing.)

Global Warming hysteria is based on hypothetical computer models that have never been validated against real world experience. The fact that many scientists accept the hypotheses does not make them true. For that matter, many scientists actively dispute those same hypotheses.

The EPA's license to cap emissions may take some time to play out through such things as a carbon tax ("cap and trade"). Once it does, this would serve another of Obama's objectives, income redistribution. As the carbon tax is imposed on industry, the cost to consumers of most goods and services will go up. The administration would use the tax receipts to provide "rebates" to lower income households to soften the effect.

In time, the coming regimen will decide what kind of car you will drive, what kind of house you live in and what kind of products you'll buy. Congress, in response to pleas from various affected interests, may soften the plan around the edges, but will not stop it in its tracks.

The Deep Ecologists have worked for nearly four decades silently but persistently through many environmental organizations to reach what they consider to be Utopia. You and your neighbors may decide it is more like Hell.
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