



“Patience is also a form of action.”

Auguste Rodin

March 2012

Next **SAGE** meeting at 7 p.m., March 1st at the Fish & Game Hut.

SAGE Annual General Meeting at 7 p.m., April 5th at the Fish & Game Hut.

(Don't forget to renew your membership)

TEDxLethbridge, March 15, 2012. See www.sayee.ca for more information.

Home & Garden Show March 14-17, 2012
To volunteer contact leta@oldmanbasin.org

Our Home is Our Castle

Despite a sustained effort to protect the Castle forest and headwaters of the Oldman River, the Alberta Government stubbornly continues to support the exploitation of this area.

The government recently issued a court order and removed the people who have been resolutely protecting the Castle at the staging site. This allows Spray Lakes Sawmill to begin clear-cutting the forest from Beaver Mines Lake to the South Castle Falls. Mike Judd, Tim Grier, Diane

Calder, Gordon Petersen, and Sid Marty were issued a ban from using public lands in the Province of Alberta—an enforcement order that has since been repealed.

The immediate damage to clear-cutting will be the disruption of denning animals, many at risk of being killed or orphaned by winter logging operations.

The longer term damage includes the destruction of the recreational core of the

Castle, habitat loss and the environmental services of water purification, flood protection, and carbon sequestration.

Efforts continue to encourage government to designate the Castle as a Wildland Park, and move the logging site to an area with fewer social and environmental impacts (something they are contractually able to do). Phone your MLA and the Premier at 310-000 if you care.

Our Water is Our Cattle

A recent report on CBC's *The Homestretch* raised the issue of E.coli 0157 and salmonella in our local irrigation canals and surface water.

Chris Bolton from Benchmark Labs was asked to test a herd of cattle in Alberta for E.coli 0157 and found that 48% were infected. The monitoring program was swiftly cancelled after these results were presented. Mr. Bolton was then told by government agencies (including the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, Alber-

ta Health Services, Alberta Agriculture and the NRCB) that there was no obligation to report these results beyond the client.

The concern is that manure runoff to irrigation canals, groundwater, and surface water will increase the risk of infection from food produce irrigated with this water, or from direct contact.

The program interviewed Glen Armstrong from the U of C, who explained that infection

from E.coli 0157 is a serious illness that can lead to renal failure and neurological complications, particularly to the young and the elderly.

Alberta Health Services data suggests that Alberta leads Canada in 'infections of the intestines', and that reports are concentrated in the south. The province boasts the highest incidences of salmonella, and is double the national average for E. coli 0157.

Mr. Bolton took the initiative to

test irrigation canals around Lethbridge and found that half tested positive for salmonella and half tested positive for E.coli (two samples with E.coli 0157). A 2007 U of L study showed E.coli 0157 and salmonella in the Oldman River.

The NRCB is ultimately responsible for ensuring that water systems are not contaminated from manure. The most recent Auditor General's report has suggested that the process of monitoring is not as rigorous as it should be.

The Recipe For Global Warming

(Hattie is SAGE's youth voice, and will expand on her topic in future newsletters)

Ingredients:

- 5,916.7 Million Metric tons of Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide
- 699.9 Million Metric Tons of Methane
- 383.9 Million Metric Tons of Nitrous Oxide
- 176.9 Million Metric Tons of High-GWP Gases
- 105.1 Million Metric Tons of Other Sources of Carbon Dioxide

One serving will provide a warm carbon dioxide enriched environment, representing one year's emissions in the early 21st century.

Slowly mix the ingredients into a stable oxygen enriched atmosphere surrounding any habitable planet. (Repeat over a span of eighty Earth years).

Caution: Releasing all the ingredients at once can cause many poisonous symptoms to the inhabitants, so a slow release is recommended to allow more time to adapt to the changes.

After all gases are mixed together, place the habitable planet in front of a yellow-

class star to heat up the atmosphere. The temperature will rise as the heat is trapped inside the thick layer of gases. Keep your product in front of the star to get your desired finished product. To maximize the effect of the temperature increase across all the Earth's continents, and to bake each part equally, remove all excess trees. To do so, rapid deforestation is encouraged.

* * *

In our modern developed culture, we seem to be living by this recipe as if our lives depended on it.

To illustrate this, we pump millions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, in the rawest of forms, thinking that they will never affect us as long as we build those smoke stacks taller to carry the poisonous gases elsewhere. On top of that, we burn millions of liters of fossil fuels per day in cars designed fifty years ago - these are known as "gas guzzlers". The same amount of fuel could be used to travel dozens of miles farther if we all used the engine technology we have today. The sacrifice of some luxuries will benefit our later generations' environment. So let us diminish the "ingredients" that the industrial boom has caused; let us turn the table and make tomorrow a greener place. Let us fight global warming and improve our modern culture.

Environmentalists Make the Short-List

Public Safety Minister Vic Toews, as a representative in the Government of Canada, has **revealed** his short-list of threats to the public good.

In addition to foreign threats (I don't think he means foreign business interests), the government has vowed to be vigilant against domestic threats "based on grievances – real or perceived – revolving around the promo-

tion of various causes such as animal rights, white supremacy, environmentalism and anti-capitalism."

This echoes voices south of the border decrying eco-terrorism in an effort to marginalize environmental concerns and silence dissent. As Wendell Berry has said, and it appears to remain true, 'a dissenter must speak without privilege.'

Interesting Links:

Government of Alberta "**Solar PV Equipment Pilot Program**" is looking for rural applicants to test the operation and performance of solar photovoltaic technologies to generate electricity. Phone Kelly Lund at (780) 644-1197 with any questions.

Thomas Homer-Dixon Op-eds. on fossil energy and nuclear power. <http://www.homerdixon.com/>

[There's No Tomorrow](#) (video) on You Tube

The Water Footprint of Humanity (2011). <http://www.pnas.org/>

Congratulations, Kelsey Prenevost!

Past SAGE president, Kelsey Prenevost, will receive an honorary degree from Lethbridge College recognizing his commitment to education and for exemplifying the College values of 'green, global and socially responsible'.

Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

sage-communications@sage-environment.org

Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community (1993) Voluntary Simplicity (1993)

(Book Review)



It seems that many contemporary books about the environment focus on relating the facts about our many challenges, 'as though a fact could change the world' (somebody said that, I think). It seems that one has to return to some of the philosophers of environmentalism to find thoughts on what we want. Wendell Berry is just such a philosopher, and his *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* offers a series of thoughtful essays spanning the complex web that is our western civilization.

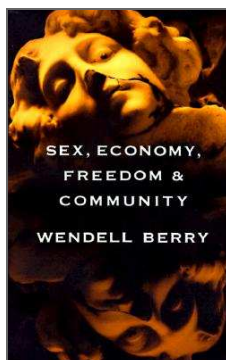
The book is not without some critical perspectives, and it certainly does not lack wit. He lampoons the neo-liberal mantra of small government, the free market, and unlimited economic growth. Berry says: "The government should only be big enough to annihilate any country and (if necessary) every country, to spy on its citizens and on other governments, to keep big secrets, and to see to the health and happiness of large corporations." And, further, "That unlimited economic growth can be accomplished within limited space, with limited materials and limited intelligence, only shows the unlimited courage and self-confidence of these Great Minds. That unlimited economic growth implies unlimited consumption, which in turn implies unlimited pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth, only makes the prospect even more unlimited."

Wendell Berry is a strong advocate for the power of small changes within a community of practice, just as the larger abuses to our environment "exist within and because of a pattern

of smaller abuses."

He likens the environmental effort to an ant crawling up the buttocks of an elephant with love on his mind ... and that it will be at this scale that change will occur: "The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and ... pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich or famous."

Berry also reminds us that we currently live in an 'absentee economy' in which people cannot see the things they are destroying, and he argues that though the "world is being destroyed, no doubt about it, by the



greed of the rich and powerful. It is also being destroyed by popular demand." It is easy to dispense blame, it is more difficult to see our own complicity.

Duane Elgin also wrote his well-known book, *Voluntary Simplicity*, in 1993. He defines volun-

tary simplicity not as "an 'ascetic simplicity' (of strict austerity); rather it is an 'aesthetic simplicity' where each person considers whether his or her level and pattern of consumption fits with grace and integrity into the practical art of daily living on this planet." He follows Toynbee's model of 'true growth' as the "ability of a society to transfer increasing amounts of energy and attention from the material side of life to the nonmaterial side and thereby to advance culture, capacity for compassion, sense of community,

and strength to democracy."

The barriers are many: "debt-burdened and stagnating economies, the loss of a compelling sense of social purpose, special-interest groups that override the public interest and create political gridlock, overwhelming bureaucratic complexity, the inability to respond to critical problems in the local to global ecology."

The solution proffered is an ecological ethics (a state of mind) in which to "live more simply is to live in harmony with the vast ecology of all life. It is to live with balance – taking no more than we require and, at the same time, giving fully of ourselves."

Like Berry, Elgin says: "There is nothing lacking. Nothing more is needed than what we already have. We require no remarkable, undiscovered technologies. We do not need heroic, larger-than-life leadership. The only requirement is that we, as individuals, choose a revitalizing future and then work in community with others to bring it to fruition. By our conscious choices we can move from alienation to community, from despair to creativity, from passivity to participation, from stagnation to learning, from cynicism to caring."

These books seem to have stood the test of time, though they do seem to reveal how little has changed in two decades. Maybe we need more facts.

