



White House Environmental Conference

WHITE HOUSE ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

October 11, 2001

Introduction

Mr. Rove, we four spokespersons represent an *ad hoc* working group of some 20 people who, in turn, represent the viewpoint of millions of Americans from every walk of life: business and industry, education, government, the faith community, NGO community, and the person on the street.

In preparing for this meeting, we have drafted a document *Common Ground, Common Future*, which we will leave with you. It can also serve as a basis for discussion during our time together. The primary authors were Hunter Lovins and David Orr, two of our small group here today.

Since Rachel Carson's ground-breaking work, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, a body of knowledge has been accumulating about how to bring economic and human activity into harmony with the natural world. Drawing from that body of knowledge, had we come to this meeting without the over-shadowing events of September 11, we would have made the following points as emphatically and persuasively as possible. After September 11, we are convinced our message is even more important, and relevant to the current circumstances:

1. The global biosphere - the environment - contains and nurtures all of life, perhaps 30 million other species and us, in a system that is complex, interconnected, and interdependent beyond description. That biosphere is in decline. Its living systems and life-support systems are threatened by the pressures of increasing human population, rising affluence, and extractive, abusive technologies .
2. Nature's services, e.g., the provision of air, water, energy, food, raw materials, and waste processing, are essential to everything, from sheer survival to quality of life, and certainly to economic prosperity.
3. The environment is totally apolitical. Nature does not distinguish between political parties; nature does not care about politics. Nature is there for everybody and everything . The environment should be de-politicized forever. To declare it so and mean it would, paradoxically, be politically astute, would further unite our country, and would draw the international community still closer to America.
4. Energy policy is central to the environment's safe-keeping, and energy policy is inextricably linked to national security. Therefore, we submit that environmental policy and security are also inextricably linked. Energy security, as well as food security, water and air security, and health- all are environmental issues, and critical to our future. A degraded Earth is a dangerous Earth because resource scarcity breeds instability.

5. There is a way forward that improves the environment , even restores the living and life-support systems of Earth, increases security , enhances the economy, and reduces human suffering . It is the way called “Sustainable Development,” to which this group and millions more are committed. Another term for this is “Natural Capitalism,” capitalism in its complete sense that accounts for the most valuable asset of all, without which we cannot live: natural capital- the source of those same services from nature listed in item 1., above.

We are here today to be at your disposal - to support these views with real examples, to answer your questions and engage in discussion , to propose a next step and a next and a next, and to think with you as long range as you would be willing to think. All of this is offered in support of the administration, the country , and our children’s children for centuries to come. We believe the environmental community is ready and able to be a partner with the administration in pursuing environmental security . With the proper encouragement, we believe it can become willing, too.

How, sir, can we best use our time together ?

Copyright 2001 Interface, Inc. and affiliates.
All rights reserved. Used under license.