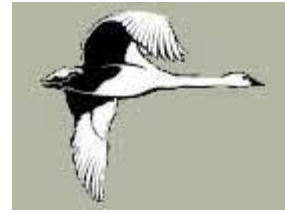


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## Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Resourcism: An Ideological Analysis of the Wise Use Movement

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### Introduction

The American wise use movement is a "populist"<sup>1</sup> conglomeration of individuals and groups who argue that natural resources should not be protected by the United States federal government but be available for use by private commodity interests.<sup>2</sup> According to Grumbine (1994), the movement has grown quickly from a handful of individuals to a coalition of more than two-hundred loose-knit groups with a common agenda.<sup>3</sup> It rose from the ashes of the 1970's Sagebrush Rebellion in which "western agricultural and business interests clamoured for transfer of federal lands to state or private control in order to elude the growing pressures for environmental responsibility."<sup>4</sup>

The start of the wise use movement is commonly dated to the 1988 Multiple Use Strategy Conference that brought Sagebrush "rebels" together with representatives from natural resource corporations and leaders of right-wing organizations - some two-hundred-fifty persons in all.<sup>5</sup> This essay provides an ideological analysis of the "wise use" movement. Specifically, it attempts to answer the following general questions: What is the wise use belief system? What images and symbols are adopted by the wise use movement? What are the tactics and techniques used by wise users? What are the dominant financial and sociopolitical connections of the wise use movement? Finally, it also investigates whether the movement presents a coherent ideological position.

### The Wise Use Belief System

Wise use groups share a dislike for central government authority particularly as it pertains to the federal government's control over land use management. They cherish individual rights, liberties and responsibilities, and are resentful of what they see as extensive government intrusion into their lives.<sup>6</sup> In response to such "government intrusion" and "state power," these organizations have advocated limited government, less bureaucracy, greater personal freedoms and private property rights. Moreover, they have argued for this autonomy. They believed that the restriction or abandonment of private property, or an increase in government powers for decisions respecting land and resource use among a variety of government levels and agencies, would subvert individual freedom and lead to arbitrary and authoritarian control of the individual by the state.<sup>7</sup>

Wise users contend that proper land use planning rests on the assumption that the state should not redefine and reallocate property rights, but should enforce the property rights that come about from the choices and transactions of individual Americans.<sup>8</sup> Human

beings (and more specifically the American people) are seen to be naturally free, sovereign and self-governing. Effectively, the notion of private property as land and the liberty to use it as owners see fit is as important as, and indistinguishable from, personal liberty.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these liberties are not perceived as theoretical objects, but are interpreted as *the* law of the land. Wise users maintain that the right of the individual American citizen or corporation to pursue economic self-interest in the use of land, free from the arbitrary exercise of power by the state, is a constitutionally protected right of the American people that the courts should protect from abuse by local, state and federal governments.<sup>10</sup>

Such statements about the protection of the American people should not be taken lightly: Americanism, or American exceptionalism, is perceived to be one of the highest pinnacles in life.<sup>11</sup> Wise use groups express an American social identity that is not only profoundly individualistic, private property-oriented and anti-federal government, but is also intensely linked to the notion that being American means, or ought to mean, everything.<sup>12</sup> The groups insist that a citizen of the United States should be willing to protect zealously America's freedoms and rights against the tyranny of the state and any other "outsiders."<sup>13</sup> They also assert that America and Americans are, or should aim to be, virtuous and that both have worthy ideals that should be defended at any cost.

Furthermore, wise use groups openly and forcefully express anti-environmentalist sentiments. They argue that current environmental policy and activism is illegitimately and directly fostering an anti-private property and anti-people focus.<sup>14</sup> The wise use movement characterizes environmentalism (and more specifically the "ecoestablishment"<sup>15</sup>) as seeking to create a new set of institutional relations where the individual will hold little freehold property,<sup>16</sup> and instead be dependent on a central government authority to dispense use rights as it sees fit.<sup>17</sup>

While a number of wise users appear to be militantly opposed to environmentalism, there are some who also insist that it is possible to "balance" economic growth with environmental protection.<sup>18</sup> Wise users suggest that an expansionist economic perspective is quite compatible with the conservation of natural resources. They also emphasize that private ownership and free market forces (as well as limited government regulations) offer the best hope for responsible, sustainable resource utilization.<sup>19</sup>

Wise users argue that because humans, like all organisms, must use natural resources to survive,<sup>20</sup> unavoidable environmental damage is the price of human survival.<sup>21</sup> They contend that human beings, due to their ability to reason, have the power and right to improve, change and utilize the environment.<sup>22</sup> Wise use groups see the natural environment as valuable, and in need of exploitation, management and control for "multiple uses." They assert that there should be abundant mining, oil and gas production, commercial forestry, large-scale agriculture, water development, livestock grazing, hunting and motorized recreation.<sup>23</sup> In fact, they perceive any wilderness area that is not exploited as a wasteland.

Wise use groups view humanity's reworking of the earth as revolutionary and ultimately benevolent.<sup>24</sup> They consider the natural world to be tough and resilient, not fragile and delicate.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, they assert that individuals can and should control the extremes of nature for the supreme benefit of humanity. Wise use groups maintain that human life has the highest value in the universe, surpassing all ecological values.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, they argue that people's limitless imaginations can break through natural limits to make earthly goods and carrying capacity virtually infinite.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, they contend that just as settled agriculture increased earthly goods and carrying capacity vastly beyond hunting and gathering, our imaginations can find ways to increase total productivity by superseding one level of technology after another.<sup>28</sup>

## **Images of Rural Resource Life**

The wise use movement advertises itself as a rustic, Christian movement that cherishes family, community and rural resource life.<sup>29</sup> It also tries to appeal to the world of the worker, the industrious work ethic, brotherhood and the great American patriot. According to one observer, it utilizes rugged images of "the hardworking yeoman - loggers in jackboots (sic), leather-faced family ranchers, sunburned farmers bouncing behind the wheel of the antique combine, hardscrabble miners with clear eyes and dirty faces."<sup>30</sup> Its images paint a romantic picture of small town America - an America with local fairs, country stores and modern pioneer living.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, they also use symbols of concern, fear and resentment towards the "imperial" federal state and its alleged partner in crime, the "ecoestablishment."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in order to make their voices heard, wise users interweave military metaphors, symbols and language into their seemingly grassroots arguments against the ecoestablishment (some wise users are more explicit than others).<sup>33</sup> They have produced documents, pamphlets and promotional information that embody a defence, attack and counterattack disposition. Environmentalists are seen as the "enemy," while Bruce Babbitt (head of the Environmental Protection Agency), President Clinton and the federal government are said to be their ultimate aristocratic "adversaries."<sup>34</sup> Many wise use handouts and fliers contain military vocabulary, phrases and expressions such as *combat*, *fight*, *weapon* and *foot soldier on the front lines* that not only legitimize but also reinforce oppositional politics.

Moreover, wise users depict an image of a bipolar world. For example, an "us" versus "them" adversarial approach can be found in the following Alliance for America statement:

We will return common sense to Environmental Policy. We will *win the Battles* and then the *War* - and at that point all of us... the reluctant *warriors*, will go back home - none of us will ever be the same, but we will never forget those who have become friends, and yes, family, and "stood shoulder to shoulder" and risked it all for nothing more, but certainly nothing less than principle. This nation and our individual way of life is too important not to *stand in defense* of it. United we will be successful, divided *we will be picked off one by one* (emphasis mine).<sup>35</sup>

Another example of bipolarization can be found in a Blue Ribbon Coalition leaflet:

For eight years now, the Blue Ribbon Coalition has successfully *stood up to the demands* of the extremists [environmentalists, federal officials, etc.], *waging battle after battle in "turf wars"* and right of access. Networking with others in the "wise use" community, the coalition has built its reputation as a "team player" and a "*worthy foe*" in this "*David vs. Goliath*" battle. This *land control battle* over America's resources is one that we, the people of these United States, cannot afford *to lose*. It's OUR wealth, OUR resources, OUR livelihoods, OUR freedom, indeed, OUR very lives and future that are at stake (emphasis mine).<sup>36</sup>

It appears that the wise use movement is ready to fight the "bad" guys, and enter into battle against the "darker" forces of society. Indeed, a number of wise users see themselves as being under siege from a host of outsiders, including government regulators, academic critics, environmental extremists and a liberal news media; environmentalists are often categorized as the most unholy villain.<sup>37</sup> Effectively, there are wise users who see themselves as citizen-warriors or soldiers of the American tradition fighting in a war of words against the federal state, environmentalists and any others who challenge their lasting right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

## Wise Use Techniques

A number of wise users exploit grassroots populism in order to further their cause.<sup>38</sup> They lobby federal and state governments, and create alternative public policy proposals such as the Private Rights in Federal Lands Act; the *Truth in Regulation Act*; the *Public Rangeland Improvement Act*; *Economic and Community Impact Statements*; *Obstructionism Liability*; and *Standing to Sue in Defense of Industry*.<sup>39</sup> In the name of the American dream, land access and property rights, they also build coalitions, raise funds, involve themselves in letter, phone and fax campaigns, plan events, organize demonstrations, prepare posters and produce pamphlets.<sup>40</sup> In addition, they set goals, develop strategies and network with local communities. Intergroup cooperation, alliance building and empowerment exercises are also seen as necessary building blocks for reform.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, wise use groups call for participatory decision-making including "informed environmental decision-making."<sup>42</sup> Essentially, they are mimicking the concepts and actions of what has traditionally been at the heart of leftist social progressivism. David Helvarg points out: "In trying to organize among loggers, resource workers, small independent businesspeople, and frustrated middle managers, they have incorporated a thinly veiled anti-capitalist message, using class resentment as a cudgel by [stereotyping] environmentalists as wealthy elitists [who are] part of a green establishment with links to transnational corporations, the Rockefellers, and Mellon money."<sup>43</sup>

One of the movement's most outspoken leaders is Ron Arnold, former board member of the Sierra Club, and head of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise. He has made some antagonistic statements against environmentalism, and argues that alarm, animosity and vengeance are proven effective techniques. He states that "fear, hate and revenge are the oldest tricks in the direct-mail book."<sup>44</sup> In his book, *Ecology Wars*, Arnold writes:

Our goal is to destroy, to eradicate the environmental movement. We're mad as hell. We're not going to take it anymore. We're dead serious - we're going to destroy them. Environmentalism is the new paganism. Trees are worshiped and humans sacrificed at its alter. It is evil. And we intend to destroy it. No one was aware that environmentalism was a problem until we came along.<sup>45</sup>

Such comments are not to be taken lightly. While not all wise users are hostile, there are some individuals who not only strongly question environmental perspectives but use the threat of violence as a means to intimidate and "defeat" environmentalists.<sup>46</sup> As Dowie (1995) states:

The wise use movement has attracted some roughnecks and weapon enthusiasts of the ultra right. A few have physically attacked environmentalists, torched their houses, and left life-threatening messages on answering machines and in mail boxes. One wise use group, the Sahara Club, maintains a bulletin board listing the names, addresses and license registrations of environmentalists, offering them to members with this message: "Now you know who they are. Just do the right thing; and let your conscience be your guide." Former Interior Secretary James Watt joined the scorn against environmentalism in June, 1990 by musing aloud to a gathering of cattlemen that "if the troubles from environmentalists cannot be solved in the jury box or at the ballot box, perhaps the cartridge box should be used."<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, wise use activist Jess Quinn is quoted as saying: "when the hour strikes, there will be public [environmental] officials dead in the streets."<sup>48</sup> In Burns, Oregon, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Manager Forrest Cameron was told he was going to be killed; in addition, his wife and children received threatening calls at their home.<sup>49</sup> David Helvarg received threatening letters and telephone calls from wise use activists while doing research for his book. He writes:

If I've failed to acknowledge about four hundred and eighty other people (wise users) who were essential to the writing of this book, I hope their contributions are well reflected in the following pages. I salute the courage of some and remind others that it is a crime to use the United States postal system or telephonic communications for purposes of making a terrorist threat.<sup>50</sup>

Dowie argues that despite the rhetoric, there have been few incidents of direct violence against environmentalists in the United States, although threats and vigilante actions are on the increase, particularly in the West.<sup>51</sup>

## Wise Use Connections

According to O'Keefe & Daley (1993), the wise use movement is an association of disgruntled ranchers, miners, loggers, hunters, off-road vehicle owners, oil workers and farmers who agreed to put aside their differences to fight a common enemy, so-called eco- freaks.<sup>52</sup> However, it is quite critical to draw a distinction between these wise use workers and the wise use management. There are workers in the movement who fill out membership forms and attend rallies in support of a group of their choosing, and then there are wise users who in large measure design, manage and finance the movement.<sup>53</sup> For example, Dowie (1993) argues that "although the National Coalition for Public Lands and Natural Resources (NCPLNR),<sup>54</sup> a pro-mining group with a subsidiary called People for the West!, has some grassroots financial support, over ninety-five percent of its 1990 budget was covered by corporate donations."<sup>55</sup> He also writes that "all but one of the coalition's thirteen board members in 1993 were mining executives."<sup>56</sup> Watkins (1995) states that "the plethora of wise use organizations are being funded almost entirely by the industries whose philosophies they parrot and whose needs they serve."<sup>57</sup> Without plainly making the distinction between wise use workers and management, one can be led to believe that the preparation of wise use information and the formulation of the wise use agenda is being controlled by all wise users, when it is being almost totally set by a few powerful wise users. Generally speaking, the wise use movement largely consists, on one hand, of those who possess capital, influence and power, and on the other, those who own relatively few resources. There is also another group of leaders (e.g, Ron Arnold and Robert Gottlieb) who serve as indirect or direct intermediaries between the above two groups and serve as the spokespeople for the movement. Such individuals may form an indirect union between elite managers and workers usually in favour of protecting and promoting elite, economic interests at the public level.<sup>58</sup> Like the elite managers, they may also seek to persuade workers to act in support of elite interests, and endeavour to convince key officials and legislators of the appropriateness of their cause through direct contacts and briefings.<sup>59</sup> In fact, as Tokar (1995) writes:

The wise use movement [or more specifically key wise users are] closely allied with Republicans in Congress, several of whom were elected in 1994 - when Congress became Republican - dominated for the first time in forty years on an overtly anti-environmental platform. As a result, renewal of many of the landmark environmental laws passed in the 1970s, such as the *Clean Air and Clean Water Acts*, the *Endangered Species Act* and *Superfund*, is being held up by unexpected obstacles, delays and consistent efforts to weaken them.<sup>60</sup>

Despite their influential financial and sociopolitical interconnections, wise use leaders like to celebrate their emergence as a true social movement, a widespread grassroots response to economic and cultural tyranny.<sup>61</sup> The current movement does have a populist image and a grassroots following, but it is largely supported and overseen by resource-extracting industries (including some of the large timber, mining and oil corporations),<sup>62</sup> industry associations, key Republicans, and influential spokespersons of the far-right.<sup>63</sup> In short, the wise use movement is united across cleverly concealed class lines and

embodies social inequality insofar as the dominant wise use elite possess more power than the wise use workers.

## **Brief Overview of the Ideological Position of the Wise Use Movement**

This essay has demonstrated the ideological position of the wise use movement. In brief, wise users are opposed to federal government control of land use management. They also express resentment toward environmental regulatory programs which, they maintain, place nature above individual rights and the preservation of private property. They advocate limited government, private property rights, and the right to expropriate natural resources for individual gain. They also have a strong American social identity, and express explicit anti-environmentalist sentiments. In addition, wise use groups argue that natural resources should be exploited, managed and controlled for multiple uses and socioeconomic gain. They generate images of family, community, industriousness and modern pioneer life. They also adopt images and symbols of mistrust, fear and resentment toward the federal state and the environmental movement. In order to further their interests, wise users lobby federal and state governments, formulate alternative policy proposals and network with local communities. They also raise funds, initiate campaigns, organize demonstrations and distribute literature. Moreover, in organizing amongst workers, they have utilized the notion of a class struggle in order to illustrate the nature of the "green aristocracy." A few wise users are even willing to use the threat of violence as a means to intimidate and "defeat" environmentalists. Moreover, the wise use movement is not a homogeneous entity. It consists of influential wise use leaders, and wise use workers or members who attend rallies in support of their chosen group. There is also another group of key wise users; they serve as indirect or direct intermediaries between the above two groups, and act as the spokespersons for the movement.

## **Critical Analysis**

A number of flaws can be identified within the demonstrated ideological position of the wise use movement. These flaws do not constitute simple variations on a theme, but rather demonstrate ideological discrepancies, differences, incongruities, gaps, explicit contradictions and inconsistencies on wise users' expressed position. This section provides a critical analysis of the beliefs and values, images and symbols, techniques and tactics, and the financial and sociopolitical connections of the wise use movement. In particular, this section identifies the flaws within and between the components of wise use ideology.

There are inconsistencies within the wise use belief system. Wise users argue against "state power and intervention,"<sup>64</sup> yet use the U.S. constitution as a rationale for protecting their expansionist, economic interests against federal regulatory intervention. Moreover, they draw on the U.S. constitution to underscore their belief that Americans have the right to pursue expansionist, economic development. However, they fail to mention that the constitution also speaks of intergenerational welfare, domestic tranquillity, and the regulation of the land.<sup>65</sup> The wise use movement claims to be devoted to the U.S. Constitution, while supporting policies that conflict with key elements of the constitution. Not only does this mean that federal regulations and policies are being used in a selective manner, it implies that the expansionist aspect of the U.S. Constitution is being used out of context to further wise use interests.

Moreover, wise users "appear to be militantly opposed to environmentalism,"<sup>66</sup> but there is no evidence or specification of the particular branch of environmental ideology that is under analysis. While wise users argue that environmentalists embrace an "anti-people" perspective<sup>67</sup> (which may plausibly be a reinterpretation of ecocentric environmentalism), there is a significant absence of the broader view of environmental ideology comprising,



for example, social ecology, ecological economics, political ecology, resource conservation and deep ecology. In effect, wise users homogenize environmental ideology, and ignore elements of environmentalism that are compatible with (or not so different from) their own belief system. With respect to the latter, there are branches of environmentalism, such as ecological economics and resource conservation, that advocate private property, self-interest, multiple use management or free market regulatory approaches to environmental change.

Wise users also claim that "unavoidable environmental damage is the price of human survival,"<sup>68</sup> and that "the natural world [is] tough and resilient, not fragile and delicate,"<sup>69</sup> yet they offer no corroborated evidence, scientific proof, or cross-cultural studies to confirm that humanity has little choice but to live with environmental degradation, or that ecosystems can withstand (and have withstood) human industrial, expansionist activities. This suggests that wise users advocate the exploitation and degradation of the natural world.

Wise users argue that "the restriction or abandonment of private property... would subvert individual freedom,"<sup>70</sup> yet they do not offer information on how "individual freedom" will exist if the freedom to own property is to be restricted to those who can afford to pay for private property. This means that wise users have a selective and elite conception of individual freedom.

Wise users also argue that landowners have the "personal liberty"<sup>71</sup> to use the land as they see fit, yet they do not ask whether such personal liberties will be lost through the unfettered use of the natural environment. This suggests that the movement is selective in its interpretation of personal liberties.

Additionally, wise users claim that America is the world's exceptional country, and that "being American means or ought to mean everything."<sup>72</sup> However, they offer no evidence to support their claims. This implies that the wise use movement is a nationalistic, parochial and ethnocentric movement. To argue that America stands as the greatest nation is to position America (and by logical extension, Americans including wise users) at the top of a hierarchy of nations and cultures.

There are also inconsistencies between the wise use movements' belief system and its images. Wise users argue for "individual rights and freedoms,"<sup>73</sup> yet they generate images (photographs, illustrations, and drawings) of "rural, social community life."<sup>74</sup> Wise users speak of self-interest despite advertising themselves as the embodiment of communal concerns and responsibilities. They do not reconcile their individualist position with their communitarian images of togetherness, solidarity and social obligation. Similarly, there is also a discrepancy between their individualist beliefs in limited government, private property rights and personal freedom, and their collectivist imagery depicting solidarity, brotherhood and an industrious work ethic. In other words, wise users generate advertising that does not truly reflect their intentions. Specifically, the public is being led to believe that the wise use movement is a rustic, community-based social movement that supports and is concerned about workers' rights, social welfare and the common good, when it actually advocates self-interest, private freedoms and limited government or reduced civil/public services.

Wise users try to appeal to "the world of the worker."<sup>75</sup> However, they also wish to keep public and private land open to industrial logging, mining, oil drilling, motorized recreation and many other forms of commercial enterprise. On the one hand, they generate images that show concern for ordinary people, while on the other hand, they believe that land should be set aside for large scale corporate gain. This means that wise users are not entirely dedicated to the day to day needs of ordinary people, but more specifically to the interests of large scale corporations. It also implies that wise users pose and advertise themselves as grassroots public interest organizations in order to secure

greater support for their extractive, multinational interests. Moreover, it suggests that wise users are not advertising their elite, private management interests.

There are also inconsistencies between the beliefs and techniques of the wise use movement. On the one hand, wise users engage in "oppositional politics,"<sup>76</sup> and exclude outsiders from the decision making process, while on the other, they call for participatory decision-making including "informed environmental decision-making."<sup>77</sup> By failing to negotiate with federal officials and environmentalists, there is the implication that they are advocating a system based on unilateral imposition, rather than a network of freely reciprocal, cooperative relationships.

Moreover, wise users claim to defend individual rights and freedoms, yet use tactics aimed toward the suppression of the environmental movement and the repression of environmental free speech by using techniques such as "alarm, animosity and vengeance."<sup>78</sup> Wise users repress the very rights which they seek to uphold. They restrict individual rights to a selected body of people, and possess an exclusive and prejudiced conception of freedom. Specifically, individual rights and freedoms are to be granted only to those individuals who are not environmentalists or so-called outsiders. This suggests that implementation of their techniques could result in repression of democratic freedoms.

Wise users also "oppose environmental regulations,"<sup>79</sup> yet they utilize policy proposals such as the *Truth in Regulation Act*.<sup>80</sup> They maintain that any wilderness area that is not exploited is a "wasteland,"<sup>81</sup> and call for the unfettered exploitation of natural resources, yet they also rely on proposals such as the *Public Rangeland Improvement Act*<sup>82</sup> (which, on the surface, suggests an appreciation for the rangeland environment). Thus, they are misleading the public by claiming that they formulate environmental policy proposals, when the organized message is against environmental policy.

There are wise users who argue for citizens' rights, "the protection of the American people,"<sup>83</sup> and the "conservation of natural resources,"<sup>84</sup> while also supporting proposals such as *Standing to Sue in Defense of Industry*,<sup>85</sup> or the *Private Rights in Federal Lands Act*<sup>86</sup> (which support the protection of private, elite establishments, and the large scale use of natural resources). This suggests that there are wise users who do not always seek to conserve natural resources for the American public.

There are similar patterns of discrepancy between wise use beliefs and wise use connections. Wise users oppose state power, while displaying an explicit power structure within their own ranks. Evidently, wise users are willing to question the state's power structure, but are unwilling to reflect upon (or are unaware of) their own stratified and hierarchical system of organization. This also implies that wise use leaders are vulnerable to the same criticisms that they direct toward state officials. They can be criticized for establishing an authoritative, powerful hierarchy.

Moreover, wise users call for the rights of the "individual, ordinary American citizen to pursue self-interest in the use of land,"<sup>87</sup> yet they are "largely supported and overseen by resource-extracting industries (including some of the large timber, mining and oil corporations), industry associations, key Republicans, and influential spokespersons of the far-right."<sup>88</sup> This implies that the wise use movement is a top-down organization that uses grassroots initiatives to further elite interests. It also suggests that the movement does not speak for all Americans' rights, but rather serves selected segments of the U.S. population such as the corporate elite.

Additionally, there are inconsistencies within the body of images illustrated by the wise use movement. The movement embraces images of Christian life, yet it contradicts Christian teachings. For example, one of the central tenants of Christian thought is the notion of loving thy enemy as oneself (see Matthew Chapter 5). However, wise users utilize adversarial, violent and militant images against their "enemy." This implies that



they are selective in their application of Christian teachings.

The wise use movement also paints "a romantic picture of small town America - an America with country stores, local fairs and modern pioneer living."<sup>89</sup> It advertises that it supports mainstreet America. However, it fails to provide evidence that mainstreet America would support its adversarial position against environmentalism, and its war of words against the federal state, environmentalists and other related parties. This implies that the wise use movement tries to lead the public to imagine that mainstreet America supports its cause, when in reality, it may not.

Furthermore, there are inconsistencies between the images and techniques of the wise use movement. On the one hand, wise users express symbols of "concern, fear and resentment which are directed toward the so-called imperial federal state and the ecoestablishment,"<sup>90</sup> yet on the other, they create industry policy proposals including one that "*Stand[s] to Sue in Defense of Industry*."<sup>91</sup> In short, they criticize the powerful nature of the state and environmental organizations, yet they develop policy proposals in support of powerful, corporate interests. This means that wise users can be criticized for being just as influential as their opponents.

Wise users also convey images of family, grassroots interests and local, community life, yet their techniques operate on a grand scale to elicit the support of federal and state governments. This implies that the wise use movement's images omit, and in practice obscure, its grand scale industrial interests, and therefore function to deceive the ordinary citizen.

Moreover, the wise use movement constructs an "image of a bipolar world,"<sup>92</sup> and draws battle lines between an "us" (motorized recreationists and resource workers), and a "them" (environmentalists and the federal government). On the other side, it promotes *multiple use* or *cooperation* among users. This means that the movement does not perceive its opponents as *users*. It also implies that wise users have a selective conception of multiple use.

There are also inconsistencies between the images and connections of the wise use movement. Wise users produce many images of "family, worker and community resource life,"<sup>93</sup> and yet few (if any) images of elite and middle management. Its imagery is not in proportion with its strong connections with elite and middle management. This implies that the wise use movement is being manipulated from above by its leaders. The leaders do not advertise about their elite, corporate connections, and therefore restrict the workers' sphere of authority. At the same time, they ensure the development of the movement by projecting abundant images of support for the workers. Images of disgruntled workers (or disadvantaged workers) ensure support for the cause, encourage their cooperation, draw them into the cause, and ultimately maintain their presence in the movement.

Additionally, the wise use movement advertises environmentalists as "wealthy elitists who are part of a green establishment with links to transnational corporations, the Rockefellers, and Mellon money."<sup>94</sup> However, the movement is largely supported and overseen by a number of the most powerful, moneyed resource-extracting industries in the world. This suggests that the wise use movement is just as wealthy (if not more moneyed) than the environmental movement.

Additionally, there are inconsistencies within the body of techniques utilized by the wise use movement. On the one hand, it claims to create alternative "public policy proposals,"<sup>95</sup> while on the other, it also formulates industry policy proposals including one that "*Stand[s] to Sue in Defense of Industry*."<sup>96</sup> This implies that the movement seeks to further the interests of industry, and may not be fully committed to a public policy agenda.

Moreover, wise users exploit "grassroots populism"<sup>97</sup> in order to further their anti-environmental cause, yet they offer no evidence that the majority of the population is opposed to environmental perspectives, policies and actions. This means that wise users' claims of anti-environmental, populist support are not necessarily born out in reality.

There are also inconsistencies between the techniques and connections of the wise use movement. Internally, wise users call for participatory decision-making including "informed environmental decision-making,"<sup>98</sup> yet they possess an organizational structure that is largely elite, hierarchical and non-participatory in nature (for instance, it is largely supported and overseen by some of the "large timber, mining and oil corporations [as well as] industry associations, key U.S. Republicans, and influential spokespersons of the far-right"<sup>99</sup>). This implies that they do not fully utilize a participatory approach, and that by using a piecemeal participatory approach as a technique, wise users will guarantee at least a selective presence of cooperation and collaboration.

Wise users also utilize a participatory approach to problem-solving (suggesting a desire for egalitarian relations), yet they have an organizational structure that is explicitly elitist, hierarchical and non-participatory in nature. This suggests that wise users are selective in regard to their participatory approach, and that this approach is not always used as a technique.

Furthermore, there is an incongruity within the network of wise use connections. Wise use workers are connected with grassroots, community interests, yet they have an association with wise use management who are in turn aligned with multinational interests. These interests do not speak to regional, local community concerns, but reflect the demands of a global international market (for example, Chevron USA's interests vs. the local family village market). One body of connections involves workers such as ranchers, miners and loggers, and another involves international establishments that do not represent the interests of these workers. The wise use movement aims, in part, to satisfy global market interests. Wise use priorities are not necessarily in line with the interests of the wise use worker. Workers and their communities dominated by multinational corporations and the global market have little or no local financial autonomy.

Finally, the wise use elite "like to celebrate their emergence as a true social movement, a widespread grassroots response to economic and cultural tyranny,"<sup>100</sup> yet they are closely allied with Republicans in the U.S. Congress, and seek to persuade workers to act in support of elite interests. This implies that the wise use movement is not a true cause designed to further the interests of the common person. It also suggests that the movement conceals its larger industrial agenda from the public.

## **Broad Implications and Discussion**

On the basis of the findings of this essay, wise users do not possess a well-knit, flawlessly coherent ideology. There are serious broad consequences implied by the ideological flaws.

The flaws can give wise users more power and influence. Specifically, wise users obscure the implications of environmental issues, problems and solutions. They advocate individual and private freedoms leading the public to believe that they have individual liberty when in fact the dominant corporate interests in the private enterprise system play significant roles in determining their future. Moreover, the wise use movement imposes a great loss of freedom, and restricts personal, informed choice from the public at large. The public is led to believe that they will be liberated from hierarchical government regulations, yet wise users actually promote restrictive decision-making by concealing their true practices, and engaging in the exploitation of the natural environment. There are

also ethical questions resulting from the ideological flaws of the wise use movement. Wise users' concealed promotion of industrial interests obscures people's options to believe in something that stretches beyond immediate material gratification achieved through private means. The public is encouraged to believe that material wealth, consumption and financial gain have greater value than the conservation and preservation of natural areas. They learn that exploitive activities are not only normal, everyday habits, but are actions to be zealously defended and protected for "America's" interest. In effect, the public is driven to compete in the exploitation of nature for private interest. People become propelled into centering their lives around market interests that in the long run may be destructive to environmental and thus social well-being. The wise use position undermines and undervalues the contribution of environmental knowledge which advocates concern for future generations. The possibility of protecting a natural environment that would serve human and nonhuman future generations is replaced by the zealous protection of elite, corporate interest and a market-driven economy.

The flaws also make wise users more vulnerable to attack. Wise users do not base their ideological position on empirical evidence, and as a result they stand the risk of being discredited by the scientific community. They also claim to be concerned about workers' rights, social welfare and the common good, while the substance of their actual campaigns suggests otherwise. Consequently, they risk a backlash if members of the public begin to recognize that wise use groups place the interests of elite, industrial powers before the needs of the greater public, or the interests of resource-based communities. Moreover, wise use groups argue against state power and regulation, particularly in areas that are shown to serve the public good, e.g., environmental regulations, and as a result they run the risk of losing their credibility as public interest organizations. The wise use movement has consistently supported expansionist, economic prosperity, and discredited environmental initiatives. Consequently, critics could argue that the costs of environmental destruction (over time) far outweigh the short-term benefits of industrial gain. This would call into question the credibility of wise users' economic position.

## Endnotes

1. According to Heywood (1992) populism rests on the idea that popular instincts and wishes are the legitimate guide to political action. It is the attempt to mobilize or respond to the instincts of the masses, often reflecting distrust of or hostility towards, traditional political elites. From Heywood, A. *Political Ideologies*. Quotation marks are used to suggest that key wise users may not subscribe to populism as much as utilize it as a tool to secure the hegemony of private commodity interests.

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14. Jacobs, H.M. (1993). "Wise Use" versus "The New Feudalism": Social Conflict over Property Rights. Philadelphia, PA: Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. Also see, for example, AWSNA. (1997). "Abundant Wildlife Society of North America Home Page," Abundant Wildlife Society of North America. <http://www.vcn.com/business/AWS/default.html> (1997, November 12).

15. The ecoestablishment is composed of the largest and most stable environmental groups in the United States e.g., the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund and the National Wildlife Federation.

16. The argument made by wise users is that freehold property is inextricably linked to the existence of a modern democratic state, and that actions which increase the power of the state over the individual decrease the institution of democracy. From Jacobs, H.M. "Wise Use" versus "The New Feudalism."

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