



The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise

Jim L. Bowyer

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In a new book *The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise*, author Jim Bowyer delves into the ethically bankrupt position that underlies much of environmental policy of the U.S. and other wealthy countries. He notes that aggressive resistance to local extraction of raw materials in the face of high per capita consumption, and heavy reliance on imported raw materials adds up to what has been aptly described as environmental imperialism. Bowyer observes that "... contrary to common practice today, high consuming nations need to be asking, 'Why not in my back yard?'"

The book begins with a quest to discover the secrets of Paraíso, an imaginary kingdom that is a paradise in both name and appearance. However, this book mostly dwells in the land of pure non-fiction, being an investigation of the actions of the residents of a present-day, real-life paradise as they strive to keep what they have. It is a story of unawareness, denial, hypocrisy, and a great deal of wishful thinking. And, finally, it is a story of needs for change.

In one part of the book, Bowyer assesses actions of a number of U.S. Presidents often considered the best environmentalists. He observes that they often mandated actions to protect the domestic environment with little or no consideration of high levels of domestic consumption, or the massive importation of raw materials that support that consumption. There is similarly seldom evidence of thinking about how domestic materials demand might be reduced, or how environments of other nations might be impacted as a result of increasing raw material importation. Bowyer notes that this kind of provincial positioning is not limited to the U.S., but characterizes pervasive thinking and actions that take place at all levels of government in economically developed countries all over the world.

The volume delves into such controversial matters as population dynamics and what that might mean for consumption-oriented economic systems, environmental impacts of consumption and of outsourcing of raw materials procurement, shortcomings of environmental education, considerations of global equity, and strategies for addressing consumption. Several chapters are dedicated to what might be done to change course.

Though not written specifically for use as a textbook, the volume delves into current critical issues related to environment and environmental policy, and includes for each chapter questions for further thought and discussion.

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