

OUR DIMINISHING DEMOCRACY

Over the last 23 years I have witnessed many victories for the protection of the environment. Some of these victories, however, have been reversed by state or federal legislatures which, rather than doing the will of the people, are doing the will of wealthy and powerful corporations. These corporations do not vote, but they do buy elections and politicians. The stranglehold which corporations have on legislatures is now virtually complete.

While environmental organizations can be effective in achieving some successes, ultimately the people must take back control of the legislatures if the people's will is going to control the development of environmental policy. Until legislatures represent the interests of people rather than corporations, our environment and health will continue to suffer. Frankly, our very democracy is on a collision course with the insatiable demands of corporations.

Our founding fathers did not have the foresight to envision how detrimental corporations would become to our democratic institutions. To Thomas Jefferson and his brethren, the King of Great Britain was the evil which prompted the Declaration of Independence in 1776. His words, however still ring true - only the evil is now corporations and their influence over legislatures.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Our legislatures, acting at the behest of corporations, are abusing the people and usurping the powers granted them by the people for corporate advantage. When the people can no longer suffer these abuses and usurpations, our forefathers instruct that it is time to alter or abolish the government. Precisely when that might happen is a bit like predicting the Second Coming. But after 23 years of observations, I can say with assurance that the course has been charted.