

EPA fields 'clean air and water' gestapo

by Marcia Merry

Picture one fine day in old Amsterdam. Rembrandt van Rijn is in his studio, windows flung open, painting the Holy Family. Comes a loud knock on the door. The Urban Environs Police have arrived. The charges? Paint fumes are wafting out the window and fouling the air. Rembrandt is put on notice to desist, and fined 50 florins.

Absurd? Equally absurd incidents are already happening in many locales across the United States. Furniture companies are fined for the smell of varnish. Food factories are fined for the aroma of cooking. Be careful of your aftershave.

Why does this insanity take place? Because, at the core, there is much worse going on. Arrangements are now being made to create a gestapo of coordinated federal and local surveillance and enforcement, to target and shut down any and every farm, business, and energy enterprise regarded as undesirable, with no scientific justification at all. The rationalization for all of this "environmental law enforcement" is to protect the air and water. The true motivation is something else. The originators of this clean air and water craze are an international political and financial faction, working through such front groups and individuals as the Conservation Foundation/World Wildlife Fund, Jeremy Rifkin, Greenpeace, and others, in order to end individual freedom and national sovereignty, and to revert to neofeudalism. For these groups, the expression of environmental concern is just an excuse to whip up public hysteria, while the national economy itself is being dismantled.

On June 19, the Environmental Protection Agency announced the initiation of a national database on the locations and other specifics of industries, cross-gridded with a survey of toxic emissions by county, and stored in a computerized grid, available to the general public. The rationale is that any citizen can access the information to know what chemicals they may be exposed to in their areas. The EPA issued a report providing an inventory of more than 300 reputedly cancer-causing chemicals, released by manufacturing facilities into the air, land, and water. States are ranked by amount of emissions of these imputed toxins.

Already, the EPA has had to state an erratum. California was originally listed as first in rank, due to the presence of sodium sulfate in its environment. The EPA has since admitted that sodium sulfate was erroneously listed as toxic. It isn't. And therefore, California sinks to ninth in the rank order of states with toxins in the environment. This kind of shoddy work characterizes the entire EPA study. But, agency

officials excuse themselves by saying that the work is not final, but presented as "raw" information for the benefit of the public. In other words, misinformation to scare people.

The new head of EPA, William K. Reilly, is an expert at doublespeak. He said that the new database is a "break-through that will facilitate citizen involvement in assessing the risks of toxic chemicals and developing community strategies to prevent pollution."

Recruiting eco-terrorists

What he means is that the EPA information system is designed to provoke "sniper" actions by any misanthrope or provocateur anywhere. For example, there is an ongoing state case against a light manufacturer in New Jersey, whose principal complainant is a local woman with a 30-year record of compulsively filing complaints against all local businesses. In the current case in question, she has, for example, mistakenly insisted that her own tree seed droppings were particulate matter from the factory's smokestack. Nevertheless, the Trenton Department of Environmental Protection, biased against industry, upheld her "citizen right" to have a multi-thousand-dollar hearing on whatever charges she chooses to file.

The new EPA database can be expected to unleash such actions on a scale that will close down thousands of business activities, farms and other enterprises, throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of work.

To hasten this process, the private agency National Resources Defense Council also got in on the act. On June 19, a 96 page study was released by the NRDC, called, "A Who's Who of American Toxic Air Polluters—A Guide to More Than 1,500 Factories Emitting Cancer-Causing Chemicals." The report states that industry "is using the atmosphere as a garbage dump to dispose of hundreds of millions of pounds of cancer-causing chemicals that are unregulated under the Clean Air Act."

The EPA and NRDC reports have been timed to come out while Congress considers reauthorization of the Clean Air Act. This coordination is no accident. It is arranged right from the top. The Bush-appointed head of EPA, William K. Reilly, was formerly chairman of the Conservation Foundation/World Wildlife Fund, which a few years ago founded the NRDC as the "shock troops" wing of the Washington, D.C. environmentalist lobby.

Parallel to the EPA/NRDC actions on air pollution, the EPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and environmentalist groups are pushing the issue of "water quality." By year's end, the EPA and USDA plan to release a report on the nationwide condition of groundwater, in order to promote federal, state and local action against such polluters as farmers, as well as Big Business.

Already, farmers are being fined and harassed because their cows are producing manure whose odor and runoff from rainfall, is claimed to foul the environment.