

Editorial

PERMIT ME TO CONSIDER SOME BIG ISSUES IN AMERICAN HISTORY

by Dick Colby

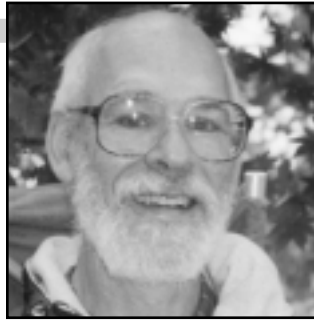
I was reminded, in a recent PBS program on the life of Thomas Jefferson, of how the SINGLE ISSUE OF SLAVERY dominated American politics for the first 80 years of our country's history. Then, after the Civil War, there were two new dominant issues: INDUSTRIALIZATION (and the growth of Corporations), and WESTWARD EXPANSION. These two issues combined to produce a new political axis separating the interests of RURAL citizens from URBAN citizens, although both groups accepted increasing numbers of immigrants.

In the first half of the 20th Century, the United States became a WORLD POWER, with resources devoted to two World Wars, and to international corporate expansion. To now be more controversial, I suggest that the dominant political issue in the second half of the 20th Century, even more than the Cold War, has been domestic SUB-URBANIZATION. Enormous quantities of natural resources, both domestic and foreign, have been consumed to make the American suburban lifestyle possible: the per capita use of petroleum, wood, metal, water, even oxygen — is dramatically higher for a suburban resident compared to the attached-house resident of the "streetcar era." Emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants have also risen dramatically. The contrast between American and European consumption-levels of gasoline and home-heating fuels is particularly striking, since both areas claim similarly high standards of living and qualities of life.

Now those resources are running out. I suggest that the defining American

political issue of the new century will be SUSTAINABILITY. It will become as disruptive as slavery once was! We are already seeing increasing opposition to immigration. In New Jersey there are already three critical areas for Water Supply. Global Warming (and other Climate Change) are undesirable side effects of unsustainable combustion of fossil fuels. Smart Growth is a euphemism for an antidote to suburbanization. There will be battle over the freedom to drive cars everywhere, and the right to water lawns. Some of our most precious American images will be punctured, such as the freedom to roam over wide open spaces. Our biggest corporations (General Motors, Ford, Daimler-Chrysler) will be challenged to find new existences. Every square inch of parkland will be needed for housing or offices, and fought for. Population control will be advocated by mainstream politicians. Thomas Malthus will be honored for having seen the future first.

No real society has ever dealt rationally with the Tragedy of the Commons, even when the handwriting was (IS!) on the wall. (Individual politicians have occasionally been prophetic, but mainstream politics has always been dominated by the here-and-now.) I wish there were more that I (and we) could do to convince both our leaders and our followers to anticipate—and PREVENT—the consequences of continued sprawl (i.e. suburban growth). My New Year's prediction is that America, and American politics, will soon be consumed by it. ☞



Chair's Message

STEPPING DOWN AS CHAPTER CHAIR

by Tina Schvejda, Departing Chapter Chair



All good things must come to an end! One of them, that is near and dear to me, is my time as NJ Chapter Chair. I would like to speak to you for one last time as NJ Chapter Chair, if you will indulge me.

I appreciate all that you have given me these past four years. Your strength and focus on environmental issues has been my inspiration. I have led by example. I have brought people together. I have given you my visions and dreams for the NJ Chapter. I have put the NJ Chapter of Sierra Club as one of my top priorities. I believe completely in the NJ Chapter.

To briefly recap my past four years as NJ Chapter Chair, the following have occurred:

- Membership has gone up from 13,500 to over 22,000.
- Staff has increased from two to hopefully four people in the near future.
- Our annual fundraising campaign proceeds have gone from \$8,000 to \$32,000.
- Three new committees have started up: financial, litigation oversight and office.
- NJ Chapter has added a new (eleventh) Group—in Hunterdon County, and reorganized two: the Hudson-Meadowlands and Raritan Valley Groups.
- Weekly conference calls between staff and (volunteer) officers are now held.
- E-mail has come a long way and we now utilize it to its fullest capacity. When I first got e-mail in 1994 there were only 3 other people who had it. Now the Executive Committee (ExCom) uses it on an hourly basis!
- We now have an annual Appreciation Day event to honor life members, donors and outstanding volunteers

I joined the Sierra Club to meet and be around like-minded environmental conservation people. I started attending Central Jersey Group meetings. In the *Jersey Sierran* I perused the hikes/ outings list and noticed one about a raptors watch up in northern part of the state. Dennis Schvejda was the leader of the raptor watch that day. We met and enjoyed discussing similar topics of interest.

After dating Dennis for a few months, he invited me to a monthly Chapter ExCom meeting held at our headquarters

in Princeton. I was very impressed with the Chapter Chairperson, Mary Penney. She handled the meeting with such a professional yet caring way. Vice Chair was Bill Green, who became Chapter Chair during that meeting. I remember that there were many people attending. Everyone was so knowledgeable about environmental issues and concerns. The meeting went on for a marathon length of time till 9pm. Dinner was provided in the way of pizza. Believe me when I say that I have never had a date quite like that one.

For the next four years I attended every monthly ExCom meeting as an "at large person" with no voting power.

Bill Green was Chapter Chair for the next two years. Dick Colby was Vice Chair. During that time Dennis and I got married and had our reception at the Club's Princeton headquarters. Then Dick became Chapter chair, with Bart Semcer as Vice Chair and "heir apparent." I ran for ExCom that year but wasn't elected. Unfortunately for Dick and the Club, Bart moved away and Dick had to scramble to find another person to replace him. (There is a long tradition in the Sierra Club for volunteer officers taking responsibility for finding their successors!)

Dick approached me in the summer of 1998. Thinking quickly I realized that it only left me a few months' time to learn the ropes. I realized that we already had one NJSC leader in the Schvejda household. The time that I would have to commit would be tremendous, yet I knew the rewards would be as great. The other problem was that I was not on the ExCom. "Not a problem," I was reassured by several supporters.

Sure enough, I was elected, and in the January meeting of 1999 I was approved by the ExCom as NJ Chapter Chair.

The next big and final step for me to accomplish is to move our headquarters to Trenton. Trenton is the capital of our state and that is where all the action is. The NJ Chapter needs to be there.

In closing I'm not saying good-bye just saying adieu. Thank you for your confidence, collaboration, and cooperation. I could NEVER have done it without your help. Thank you! ☞

Our Office is moving, an opportunity for you too!

by Tina Schvejda, Departing Chapter Chair

There is one last task that I want to complete before stepping down as Chapter Chair. We've outgrown our present Princeton headquarters location and need to find a better place — a place that is closer to mass transit, and environmentally friendly to those who use it. A safe place. A place we can be proud of and that's located closer to where the action is. The action is in Trenton. The Legislature is in Trenton. All major press offices are located in Trenton. Other environmental organizations are in Trenton. Our Chapter should have its office in Trenton!

My vision is that the office should serve many purposes. It should have space for current staff and room for future staffers too. Our staff of two has now become a staff of three with the expectation of adding another fulltime staff person and possibly a part time one. There should be a place for Jeff Tittel, Chapter Director, and Dennis Schvejda, Conservation Director, to hold press conferences. We should be able to hold our Executive, Legislative, Conservation, Litigation Oversight, Personnel, Financial and Political Committee meetings there. It should be a place where volunteers and student interns can come to participate in projects (or simply answer the phone and sort mail). It should be a place where Lori Herpen, our office assistant, can be utilized to the fullest. It might be a place that other environmental groups can visit and use when they're doing business in Trenton.

So we're moving, hopefully by the time you read this article. There are several ways in which you might help us out. We'd like the new office to look professional and be more current in office and computer equipment.

In the last issue of the Jersey Sierran I requested a copier, fax machine and printer

for our Conservation Director. Within 24 hours a very generous member donated a brand new combination unit to us. Another couple gave us a computer right away. So here is the "wish-list" of what the NJ Chapter will need in its new office:

1. Conference table that can seat 10-12 people comfortably - at least 12 ft long
2. Matching upholstered chairs for the conference table
3. Computer terminals: 4-6 needed
4. Fast copier (28-50 copies a minute), auto doc. feeder, 10-bin sorter
5. Book shelves-preferably wooden, 8 feet high. Need 4-6 of them
6. Filing cabinets both lateral and high style. Need 6 of each
8. Four credenza office desks
9. Four desk chairs, upholstered adjustable, swivel type
10. 4 large comfortable upholstered chairs, matching sets
11. 3-foot round table
12. Folding chairs: at least a dozen
13. High quality digital Camera
14. Portable podium w/ sound system
15. Oriental rugs: three 9 x 12 feet and two hall runners
16. Small refrigerator
17. Microwave oven
18. Floor lamps: need 4
19. Desk lamps: need 4
20. Brass coat racks and umbrella stands: need 2 each
21. Folding machine
22. Chalk board, large, movable
23. Large peg/cork boards 3x5 feet. Need 5

Even if you can't personally donate these items, a monetary donation would help towards the purchase of much needed office supplies. This might also be a way for corporations who are downsizing to find a "good home" for their used office equipment. If you have furniture that you would like to donate to the Chapter, please call Tina Schvejda (973-427-6863) or Lori Herpen (609-924-3141). ☞



PAST CHAPTER CHAIRS: (L to R) Dennis & Tina Schvejda, Mary Penney 1993-4, Bill Green 1995-6, Dick Colby 1997-8.

SierraActivist.org offers Headline News

Care about the environment? Need to know what's happening? Don't have the time to search dozens of newspapers and websites each day? Subscribe to SierraActivist.org Headline News. Your **Daily** guide to dozens of important stories, each summarized and linked to the original article. Other features include Quote of the Day, Announcements and Events, New Links, Green Living, and Reader's Comments!

Subscribe via the web: <http://sierraactivist.org/cgi-bin/sa/mojo/mojo.cgi>

Over 15,000 items summarized and posted last year!