

## Editorial

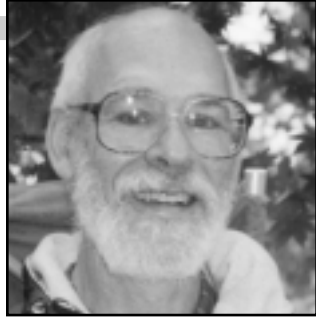
# WHY DON'T PEOPLE CARE?

by Dick Colby (dick.colby@stockton.edu)

It's depressing and demoralizing to think of all the people who don't care. Of all the people who throw cans and bottles (and worse) along the roadside. Of all the people who destroy hiking trails by riding ATVs on them. Of all the people who pollute the atmosphere and waste gasoline by driving fuel-inefficient cars for unnecessary miles. Of all the people who succumb to a society with sick values based on consumption, waste, and passive acquiescence.

Then it's rejuvenating and refreshing to think of the Sierra Club members (and many other people, of course) who devote untold hours of effort and intelligence each week to caring for our sick planet. I think of Lee Snyder speaking at meetings of the Pinelands Commission, Bonnie Tillery taking students to Washington DC to lobby for legislation that would slow World population growth, Gina Corola hanging on (bulldog fashion!) to the coattails of politicians in a position to oppose dredging of the Delaware River, Ken Johanson investing his retirement years in public service lawyering on our Legislative Committee, Bob Johnson organizing a state-wide conference on alternate transportation, Sunil Somalwar squeezing extra hours into a busy family life and a demanding intellectual life as a Rutgers scientist and teacher, and Rich Isaac preparing once more to motivate Club members to evaluate candidates for state and local public office, and to elect those willing to join the effort to save sensitive open space in New Jersey. If I had more space I'd acknowledge ALL the officers listed in this Newsletter.

What makes them different? What do these people have in common? What makes them stick their necks out when others don't? I don't know, but I'd like to armchair philosophize that they might each have experienced some pivotal stimulus at an impressionable age. In my own life I can think of three such moments: when I watched my father lead a citizens committee to improve the public schools I attended; when I ful-



filled the promise demanded by my favorite high school teacher—to read Lincoln Steffens' Autobiography (which celebrated the activists who exposed and ousted corrupt politicians during the Progressive Era - 1903-1915); and when during my graduate school years some friends cajoled me into joining a clandestine tour of Redwood Creek, in northern California, which at the time was coveted both by logging companies and by the National Park Service.

I don't think socio-economic background is important in determining who will become an activist. We have the recent Star-Ledger comparison of two successful New Jersey environmental activists (one of them our Jeff Tittel), who came from opposite ends of the spectrum of family wealth and privilege.

So back to the vast majority of Americans, and probably even of Sierra Club members, who stand aside while others become active. Are there other possible explanations? Might their inactivity be a numbing effect of mindless television and other media? Is it defeatism about fighting city hall? Are that many of us on the edge of poverty such that no time can be spared from essential life activities? Are people simply blind to the degradations all around us? Is it the inability to write proper letters to editors or to think straight in a lobbying pitch? Are Congressional offices that intimidating? Is it hedonism or narcissism? Or is it just inertia?

I don't mean to imply that most Sierra Club members don't care. Rather, do they care ENOUGH? It's not too late. Please first read *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens!* ☺

*Footnote: Carl Pope, the Club's national Executive Director, has issued - to volunteer leaders - a lengthy "Strategic Response to the Bush Administration," dated 4 April. Members may see their Group leaders to examine a copy.*

## Population Issues Report

by Cathy Kunkel, Sierra Student Coalition (Princeton University)

On March 28th, I joined about two hundred population activists converging on Washington DC for the annual "Capitol Hill Days" conference sponsored by Population Connection, the Sierra Club, and National Wildlife Federation. This conference brings activists together for a weekend to educate them on population issues, and it culminates with Congressional lobby visits. Having never been to the conference before, I was not sure what to expect. To be honest, aside from the chance to meet with my senators and representatives, I was not expecting to get much out of the weekend; after all, I have been writing letters on this issue for a while and had just finished a research paper on world population growth and U.S. population policy.

The conference far exceeded my expectations and in fact proved to be an invaluable and eye-opening experience. The most enjoyable part was meeting such a dedicated and passionate group of activists. People had come from as far as Seattle to learn about and lobby on this critical issue. It was inspiring just to meet these people and hear their stories and advice. One of the most memorable experiences was listening to Jane Roberts, an ordinary citizen-activist who co-founded the 34 Million Friends Campaign, which has now raised over one million dollars for the United Nations Population Fund.

I learned more about how to be an effective activist in this one weekend than I had managed to figure out for myself in four years. From how to work with the media to how to communicate effectively with elected officials, both the conference workshops and the other activists offered a broad range of ideas and advice. Even if population growth were not the issue of main concern to me, I still would have found the conference valuable. In addition, as a student, I benefited from the experiences of others trying to raise awareness of population concerns on their campuses.

Leaving the conference, I reflected on how I could implement the ideas and strategies I have learned. Last week, I made a lobbying visit in my home district about population issues, and I am also planning events for World Population Awareness Week in October on my campus. Despite the depressing theme of the conference and the knowledge of the difficulties involved in working on such a broad and long-term issue, I went home inspired.

*(To participate in the Club's Population Issues campaigns, please contact our Coordinator, Bonnie Tillery. Her contact information is in the Leader List on p. 8. She adds the reminder of the following actions we can take:*

*(1) Ask our Representatives to cosponsor HR1196, the "UNFPA Funding Act," which will restore funding to the United Nations Population Fund, and help provide birthing kits to refugee camps. It will also help prevent fistulae caused by difficult childbirth, educate communities about the detrimental effects of female genital mutilation, and provide family planning assistance, reducing the need for abortion. Right now, the U.S. spends less than \$2 per person on international family planning aid—less than a cup of brand-name coffee.*

*(2) Ask our legislators to support the "Global Democracy Promotion Act," which would prohibit the imposition on other countries of actions that are illegal in this country. After all, shouldn't our policies be consistent with our democratic values?*

*(3) Finally, ask legislators to repeal the Global Gag Rule—which prevents medical personnel from giving women information about family planning choices. When women have information about choosing the size and spacing of their families, they choose smaller families and space their children further apart. This is not only healthy for the mothers and the children, but healthy for the environment, putting fewer demands on our finite resources.) ☺*

## Annual Election of Chapter Officers Coming in the Fall

by Ken Johanson

Later this year members will have the opportunity to elect five members to the Chapter Executive Committee. A nominating committee, chaired by Ken Johanson, has been appointed to prepare a list of nominees. All Chapter members are invited to submit names of candidates for consideration by the nominating committee. Members also may submit candidate petitions. The name of any Chapter member proposed in writing by at least 15 Chapter members prior to the deadline for submission of candidate petitions will be included on the ballot, provided that the candidate has given his or her written consent. Names for consideration by the nominating committee, together with names of petition candidates, should be sent to Ken Johanson, chair of the nominating committee, at 72 Laurel Drive, New Providence, NJ 07974.

In order for a candidate to be considered by the nominating committee, his or her name must be received by the committee chair no later than July 21, 2003. The nominating committee will report the names of nominees to the Executive Committee on July 28, 2003. Candidate petitions must be received by the committee chair no later than August 11, 2003. It is anticipated that ballots will be mailed on or about September 13, 2003. All Chapter members of record as of the date mailing lists are prepared by Sierra Club headquarters in San Francisco will be entitled to vote. Ballots must be received at the address indicated in the notice of election no later than December 1, 2003. Ballots will be counted at a time and place yet to be determined. Members will be provided with this information in the next issue of the Sierran. ☺

### ROOM FOR RENT

Berkeley Heights \$460 + utilities

No smokers, No pets

Robert Johnson • robert.johnson@comcast.net 908-771-9676

## Social Cycles

### Unique Upscale Bicycle Weekends for Singles

It's time to start planning that Fall Foliage vacation! Join us for a wonderful all-inclusive weekend designed for single professionals from your area—featuring scenic cycling, deluxe meals & accommodations, creative excursions (kayaking to wine tasting), & fun evening social events.

#### SEAPORT VACATION

Mystic, CT (September 12-14)

#### VICTORIAN VACATION

Cape May, NJ (September 19-21)

REGISTER NOW and get the same great trip for ONLY \$399 (regular price is \$450) plus BIKE RENTAL IS FREE.

Because cycling is good for your heart!

www.socialcycles.com

215.579.1122

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## ACTION ALERTS RECEIVE TRIBUTE!

I just wanted to thank you for e-mailing Action Alerts to me. I have encouraged other students in my Environmental Club at Atlantic Cape Community College to participate in them as well. Overall, they have responded positively.

I think that that it is important for people to actively contribute to help our environment. It is something that can be easily damaged and people should not be damaging it.

I thank you for everything that you do to help our environment.

Thank you,  
Alexis A. Plotkin  
President, Student Environmental Assoc.

*Action Alerts enable members to easily use e-mail to send important lobby letters to their federal and state legislators, and other public officials. To receive them, visit <http://SierraActivist.org/join>*

*"Cynicism was okay, bitterness a pain in the neck. The hairline difference between the two was hope and humor. The cynic had both, the embittered, nothing." (Nevada Barr) - seen in a graduation brochure at Bucknell Univ.*