

The essay by John Wirth offers an account of the CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), on which Wirth served from 1994 until his death in 2003. Among other things, Wirth explains the JPAC's steadfast efforts to preserve the integrity of the Article 14 citizen submission-factual record process from encroachment and interference by the national representatives that sit on the CEC Council. JPAC's actions here appear to be an instance where North American environmental policymakers were truly able to look beyond national interests. As Wirth (p. 211) notes: "While we come from three different nations, and have different institutional connections, we serve on the JPAC as individual citizens of the North American continent . . ."

Collectively, *Greening NAFTA* tends to present a distinctly United States' perspective on the CEC, which is to be expected since 13 of the 17 contributing essayists are from the United States. Given the historical circumstances of the CEC's creation, where to a certain extent the United States imposed the NAAEC on Mexico (and to a lesser degree Canada) as the price of NAFTA, the scant presence of Mexican and Canadian voices is one of the book's shortcomings. In this regard, the book does not achieve the diversity of viewpoints found in another recent collection of essays on NAFTA's environmental record, *Greening the America's: NAFTA's Lessons for Hemispheric Trade* (edited by Carolyn Deere and Daniel Esty, MIT Press, 2002).

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, the essays in *Greening NAFTA* provide an intellectually rigorous assessment of the CEC's performance. Taken on the whole, this assessment does not necessarily suggest that the CEC is performing all that well. For those whose expectations of the CEC were modest to begin with, the CEC may be doing fine. For those with greater expectations, however, who looked to the CEC to provide an effective environmental counterpoint to NAFTA, it remains an institution that has so far failed to deliver.

Boyce, James K. 2002. *The Political Economy of the Environment*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar

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James Boyce's compelling book combines economics, the study of allocation of scarce resources, with equity analysis. Boyce articulates a definite point of view: "If our willingness to abuse the environment is founded on our ability to abuse each other, then we can strengthen the social foundation for environmental protection by acting to reduce the disparities of power and wealth that foster such abuses." Too much wealth in too few hands, he argues, is a bad way to manage the world. We need to respect each other and the environment. "Whether we succeed . . . will depend, in the end, on each of us" (p. 135). Whether you agree with his world view or not—and I agree with it strongly—this is a book you need to understand.

Boyce's framework is that people and the environment are inextricably

bound together. If people are to thrive, nature must too. His introductory essay lays out the framework and describes the succeeding chapters, each of which either explains a line of reasoning or offers a case study. At the theoretical level, he argues that environmental degradation comes about to large degree because society's winners are able to impose costs on the losers. They can do so for three kinds of reason: the losers don't exist because they belong to future generations; the losers exist but don't have the information to know the costs they're bearing; or they exist and know the costs, but lack the power to take remedial action.

This third explanation—that the losers lack the power to act—is the major concern of the book. Each Chapter explores a different aspect. Chapter 2 examines wealth-based allocation of risk versus an alternative “rights-based” approach. Chapter 3 examines investment approaches to expand the stock of natural capital, especially in developing countries. Chapter 4 is a theoretical discussion of the argument that inequity exacts large environmental costs leading to the policy conclusion that actions to decrease inequity will protect the environment. Chapter 5 applies the theoretical framework to the “environmental Kuznets curve”—the idea that environmental degradation decreases at low and high economic well-being. The Chapter concludes that multiple factors are important, including income distribution, literacy, and civil liberties. Chapter 6 applies these ideas to the US, leading to a similar conclusion. Chapter 7 explores globalization, using case studies to buttress the central point that the way globalization is being approached is environmentally damaging. Chapter 8 is a case study of forestry in the Philippines under the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Concentration of power, Boyce concludes, was the proximate cause of massive deforestation. Chapter 9 draws the strands together in a plea for democratization and more equal distribution of wealth and power.

While most of the book is accessible to general readers, Chapter 5 (on the environmental Kuznets curve) and Chapter 6 (on power inequality in the US) discuss econometric studies. These chapters would have been more useful had the regressions either been dropped or relegated to an appendix and more time spent on discussion.

One place where equations prove useful is in Chapter 2, which shows how social welfare can be calculated in very different ways using various welfare weighting functions. The custom of assigning weights based on income is arbitrary, though popular. (I've run into all too many economics students, and even some professionals, who appear to believe that income-based weighting is value-neutral. It isn't). Alternative approaches reflect differing values. Boyce shows how changing weighting factors leads to changes in computed social welfare, with alternative policy implications.

The theme of the book is that excessive equity disparity is bad for the environment. The message is delivered powerfully and compellingly. Every student of environmental policy should understand how hidden assumptions can drive policy conclusions, and how different assumptions could lead to better policies and a better world.