

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND POLICY
PART I**

**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND POLICY REPORT**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the political and social climate that significantly influenced the enactment of the "Environmental Goals and Policy Report" by the California Legislature in 1970.

Beginning with a review of the "technology boom," and the rise of the petrochemical industry during the post war era, this report looks at the impact of Rachel Carson's popular book, *Silent Spring*, on the development of this nation's environmental movement. Quality of life issues, the unknown dangers of pesticides, increasing pollution, environmental catastrophes, and continued population growth, are seen as significant issues that stimulated an environmental awakening of all Americans in the 1960s.

The environmental movement should be understood in the context of the larger political setting which was fueled by the civil rights and anti-nuclear movements of the time. Responding to calls to end the pollution and environmental degradation, Congress passed air and water pollution control legislation beginning with the Water Pollution Control Act of 1965. The National Environmental Policy Act was passed in 1970, probably the most important environmental legislation of the time.

In California, the organization "California Tomorrow" published *California, Going, Going* in 1960, which is said to have been as significant to the development of environmentalism in this state as *Silent Spring* was on the national level. "California Tomorrow" increased Californians' awareness of the problems that the absorption of huge population growth was having on their environment. Responding to a mandate passed in 1959 which also established the Office of Planning and Research, the Reagan Administration produced the "State Development Plan" in 1968 which was criticized for lacking specific recommendations addressing the state's problems. By the late 1960s, as the environment became one of the most important political issues in the state, the legislature responded in a coordinated fashion. In 1970, a "Select Committee on Environmental Quality" was created as a means of synthesizing the large number and complex nature of environmental bills that were being introduced in the Legislature. In March 1970, the "Select Committee" published the *Environmental Bill of Rights* containing 34 recommendations to preserve and enhance the quality of California's environment. AB 2070, which established the State Office of Planning and Research and mandated the preparation of the "Statewide Environmental Goals and Policy Report," was the result of the Select Committee recommendations.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND POLICY REPORT

The "Environmental Goals and Policy Report" is one component of a complex package of environmental legislation passed in 1970 at the federal and state levels. This legislation was a response to the mounting concerns during the 1960s about the impact of technology and urban growth on the environment.

The Environmental Movement: A National Perspective

It is commonly held that the modern environmental movement in the United States began in 1962, with the publication of Rachel Carson's best-seller, *Silent Spring*. This was not the first book to focus on environmental degradation, but the timeliness of *Silent Spring* contributed to its popular acceptance. The post World War II era is notable for the innovation of petrochemicals and their unlimited use in consumer and industrial products. These modern products were celebrated undoubtedly in part because they gave us greater control over the environment and seemed to improve our material quality of life. The powerful applications of these new chemical and industrial technologies, and the general fascination with scientific knowledge, contributed to widespread public support for the use of pesticides, plastics, and other modern organic chemicals. In addition, however, this celebration was indicative of the power of industry to influence government policy. As Carson (1962: 67) put it, the rise of pesticide use occurred during "an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make money, at whatever cost to others, [was] seldom challenged."

By the late 1950s, millions of Americans had relocated to the more tranquil environs of suburbia, and had become increasingly concerned with quality of life issues such as the preservation of outdoor recreational space, wilderness and forest areas, and air and water quality. By 1962, Carson found a ready audience for her criticisms of the pesticide industry and, more generally, her urgent warnings that Nature, after all, cannot be "conquered." Further resonating with the American public were Carson's demands that government and industry publicly disclose the harmful effects of synthetic organic chemicals on the environment, and permit public debate, not just technological expertise and industry interests, to decide the risks of hazardous technologies (Gottlieb, 1993: 84). Carson's ability to educate and inform the public was instrumental in starting a new style of citizen activism.

Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) also enjoyed widespread popularity. It popularized concerns about the potential long-range consequences of continued growth, challenging long-held assumptions about the desirability of economic and population growth. It contributed to the expansion of "a new mood" in American cities and suburbs, where the repeated questioning "of what was once unquestioned - that growth is good, that growth is inevitable" seemed to signal to the Rockefeller Task Force on Land Use and Urban Growth "a remarkable change in attitude in the nation" (Reilly, 1972: 33).

This popular environmental awakening intensified as Americans witnessed an increasing number of acute environmental accidents and degradation. Heightened problems with smog and air quality in the Los Angeles basin, and advancing sewage problems in the Chesapeake Bay, for example, offered visible signs of pollution and environmental degradation due to the unrestrained implementation of human technology. A number of alarming environmental

disasters furthered the sense of urgency. As Sale (1993: 18-19) writes, "...When some eighty people died in New York City during an air 'inversion' in the summer of 1966...when the *Torrey Canyon* foundered and spilled 117,000 tons of crude oil into the English Channel in March 1967... and when the Cuyahoga River near Cleveland burst into flames and the nearby Lake Erie was declared a 'dying sinkhole' as a result of sewage and chemicals in the summer of 1969... the public outcry was loud and widespread."

In 1969, a ruptured Union Oil well resulted in a massive oil spill off the pristine coast of Santa Barbara, leading to extensive destruction of wildlife and causing beaches to be blackened with oil for months. This catastrophe brought national and international attention to the destruction of the natural environment, and was critical to the enhancement of environmental awareness. The fact that the spill occurred in an affluent community such as Santa Barbara added to its impact.

As Molotch (1973: 298) explains,

"Of [Santa Barbara's] 70,000 residents, a disproportionate number are upper class and upper middle class. They are persons who, having made a wide choice of where in the world they might live, have chosen Santa Barbara for its ideal climate, gentle beauty and sophisticated 'culture.' Thus a large number of worldly, rich, well-educated persons--individuals with resources, spare time, and contacts with national and international elites--found themselves with a commonly shared disagreeable situation: the pollution of their otherwise near-perfect environment."

The affluence of Santa Barbara was a key factor in drawing attention to the incident, and converting a wide range of people to the movement. For one thing, this spill made it clear that environmental issues cross class lines, and that affluence does not necessarily protect one from the ravages of unrestrained technology. Second, the resources and connections of Santa Barbarans were instrumental in bringing international attention to

the incident.

While the environmental movement was clearly galvanized by this series of environmental disasters, which followed quickly on the heels of Carson's best-seller *Silent Spring*, it was not an isolated movement. Rather, it must be understood within the context of the larger political setting. During this same period, civil rights demonstrations were openly challenging social policies and practices that had previously gone unquestioned. Environmentalism was part and parcel of this larger movement of protest, and the exposure and refutation of longstanding, taken-for-granted practices. This political climate facilitated the questioning not only of the effects of technology on the environment, but of the complicity of the government in environmental degradation.

Sale (1993: 12-13) writes,

"[T]he... war in Vietnam, violence in the cities, assassinations and riots, a permanent 'other America', devaluation and inflation...showed that many of the hallowed systems of the land were in disarray. For many in the environmental movement, this meant an increased awareness of government as an environmental culprit - from malfeasance on the federal level to misfeasance on the state and nonfeasance on the local levels - and as handmaiden of private business interests degrading the environment for private gain."

Not only was pollution now deemed unacceptable by the growing movement, but the federal government was being pressed to do something about it. As the demands intensified, and publicity of high-profile environmental disasters grew, Congress reacted by fortifying the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1965, the Comprehensive Air Quality Act in 1967, and the Clean Air Act Amendments in 1970. The National Environmental Policy Act was enacted in 1970, establishing the Council on Environmental Quality.

The nation celebrated its first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Twenty million Americans across the nation participated in the event, conceptualized by Wisconsin Senator Nelson Gaylord as a "National Teach-in on the Crisis of the Environment" (Gottlieb, 1993: 105).

Reminiscent of the "sit-ins" held at university campuses during the civil rights movement and anti-nuclear era, Earth Day demonstrations and environmental "teach-ins" were held across the nation, giving citizens and politicians a platform to publicly deplore the earth's polluted condition, and demand immediate action for its protection.

As a result of increased environmental awareness, the focus of conservationist organizations - such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society - expanded to include issues of pollution and environmental protection, and their membership tripled. New organizations were formed as well, such as Environmental Action and Friends of the Earth (Burgess, 1981: 86).

By the early 1970s, environmentalism had become one of the major political issues of the day. Unlike issues such as the Vietnam War and the Black Civil Rights movement which tended to polarize the American public, environmentalism--at least at the level of lip-service--was widely supported by Americans regardless of political ideology or socioeconomic status (Smith, 1995: 16).

The Environmental Movement in California: The Search for State Planning

If *Silent Spring* can be considered the bugle call for environmentalism at the national level, *California Going, Going* can be viewed as its counterpart for California. It was published in 1960 by California Tomorrow, an organization established that same year by Alfred Heller, a wealthy conservationist and Samuel E. Wood, a planner. In *California Going, Going* and *The Phantom Cities of California* (1963) - a booklet that emphasized the inadequacies of local planning - California Tomorrow dramatically increased awareness of the problems that the absorption of huge population growth was having on the California environment and how little local and state governments were doing to plan for it. The need for both regional and state planning was first emphasized with those publications and then relentlessly pursued in *Cry California*, the "highly acclaimed quarterly" (Chall, 1982: 97) first published in the winter of 1965/1966 by California Tomorrow.

The Destruction of California (1965) by Raymond Dansman brought the impact of California's growth on the environment to the attention of a national audience. As awareness of the interconnections of all forms of life increased, traditional conservationists who had formerly been concerned principally with the preservation of the wilderness were transformed into environmentalists, adding to the momentum of the new movement.

In 1968, the Reagan administration produced the "State Development Plan". This report had been mandated by Senate Bill 597, which had been introduced by Farr in 1959 (Chap. 1641, Stats. 1959), and which had also established the state Office of Planning in

the Department of Finance (Simpson, 1975: 438). The report was "to be a long-range comprehensive guide to the future physical development of California." Preparation for the plan began in 1962, and when it was finally completed in 1968, it was criticized by many for lacking any specific recommendations on how to address the problems of the state and for not having received "serious attention by either the governor or the legislature" (Simpson, 1975: 439).

Legislative History

In the November elections of 1968, the Republicans unexpectedly won a narrow majority in the Assembly with forty-one votes versus thirty-nine for the Democrats. Bob Monagan, who had been the minority leader, became Speaker of the Assembly. As he began presiding over the 1969-1970 session, he became aware that the environment had made the transition from an "emerging" issue to one that had "arrived" (Monagan, 1982: 50). This had become evident to Monagan from the success that environmentalists had had in pushing through legislation to protect the San Francisco Bay (AB 2057, Knox: Ch. 713, 1969). The environment thus was accorded special attention by Monagan in the attempt to "fashion a Republican political record to appeal to the environmental groups" in order to maintain the Republican majority in the Assembly for the upcoming 1970 elections (Willoughby, 1993: 4). On January 7, 1970, Monagan appointed a "Select Committee on Environmental Quality," composed of the chairs of key Assembly policy committees and subcommittees (see Appendix 1 for the composition of the Select Committee). In an 1982 interview, Bob Monagan gave as the major reasons for the

establishment of the Select Committee the complexity of the issue and the large number of environmental bills that were being introduced at the time that "cut across so many different legislative disciplines" (Monagan, 1982: 50).

In March, 1970, the Select Committee published an *Environmental Bill of Rights* which contained 34 recommendations to preserve and enhance the quality of the California environment. The most important recommendations included an Environmental Bill of Rights, the adoption of the Environmental Quality Act of 1970 and an improved planning process at the state, regional and local levels of government. To improve the planning process at the state level, the select Committee recommended abolishing the State Office of Planning and replacing it with a "State Policy Development Office - which was later called the "Office of Planning and Research" - reporting directly to the Governor. The newly established office was charged, among other things, with conducting continuing oversight of environmental policy and with the preparation of a biennial report to be called "State of the California Environment" that should give priority to the development of state-wide land-use policy. This report would be reviewed, approved and forwarded to the Legislature by the Governor as "his 'State of the California Environment' program" (California Assembly Select Committee, March 1970: 8). The Select Committee also provided a list of "Major Reasons for Environmental Problems" with the first one being "Lack of Environmental Goals," possibly explaining why the title of the mandated report was later changed to "Environmental Goals and Policy Report."

The bill that established the Office of Planning and Research and mandated the preparation of the "Environmental Goals and Policy Report" (AB 2070) was introduced

by the Select Committee on Environmental Quality and, as recalled by John Knox, a member of the Select Committee, was "handled by Wilson...He got that one through" (Knox, 1982: 103). It was read for the first time on April 2, 1970, and was signed by the Governor six months later on September 19 (White and Driscoll, 1970 - see Appendix II for chronology).