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International Environmental Policy: Emergence and Dimensions, by Lynton K. Caldwell

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INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: EMERGENCE AND DIMENSIONS

LYNTON K. CALDWELL. Durham: Duke University Press. 1984. Pp. 367.

Roughly halfway through *International Environmental Policy,* Lynton Keith Caldwell reduced to a paragraph the essential theme of the entire volume.

> This book assumes the apparent paradox of a political world deeply divided on a planet that is a complex ecological unity. The well-being and survival of life on this planet now depends upon human behavior that will prevent the disruption or destruction of this ecological unity. We now know that ordinary human activities expanding exponentially can destroy the earth as surely as can violence. And because no evidence suggests that the differences which divide people politically will be transcended in the foreseeable future, one practical strategy for survival will be to seek ways to protect the biosphere regardless of national exclusiveness and international incompatibility (p. 109).

Caldwell surveys the origins, aims, and activities of scores of organizations, programs, and commissions that to one degree or another are implementing that strategy for survival, from the relatively obscure (the International African Migratory Locust Organization) to the well-known (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) and the acronymically clever—Biological Investigations of Marine and Antarctic Systems and Stocks (BIOMASS). If the author's approach sometimes is tedious—indeed, much of the book may be thought of (and used) as an encyclopedia—the overall impact is impressive as he points to the thousands of organized efforts underway around the world to protect and improve the quality of the environment. The last dozen years in particular have seen heady growth in these efforts.

Consider that at the 1972 Stockholm Conference—the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment—only 11 developing countries had agencies dealing with environmental quality and suspicion pervaded the Third World that environmentalism was another form of colonialism in disguise. Now, reports the recently published *World Environmental Handbook,* 110 developing countries maintain environment and natural resource management agencies and there is growing political commitment to deal with environmental problems.

Similarly, the Environment Liaison Centre in Nairobi found, on the tenth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference, 2,230 nongovernmental

environmental organizations in developing countries (60 percent of them less than ten years old) and some 13,000 in developed countries (30 percent post-Stockholm).

In short, by focusing on a variety of representative national, regional, and international efforts, the author documents the development of a worldwide trend that gives every evidence of enduring, despite a host of political obstacles. From whence did it spring?

Those familiar with Caldwell's earlier work, especially *In Defense of Earth: International Protection of the Environment* (1972), some of which finds its way into the present volume, know that he lays great store by the concept of the biosphere—the planet's air, water, and soil (to a depth of perhaps one meter) that permit life to exist. Especially since the 1968 Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere, he writes, "the concept of the biosphere as an evolved, integrated, planetary, life-supporting system was implicit even when not explicitly stated in declarations of international environmental policy. . . . (p. 25)." The result, he says, "may be likened to a second Copernican revolution. The first revolution removed the earth from the center of the universe; the second removes man from the center of the biosphere (p. 4)."

The concept of the biosphere provides the philosophical underpinning for what Caldwell sees as a global environmental movement, and he identifies the 1972 Stockholm Conference as its organizational watershed. Both perceptions seem wholly accurate, even if one discounts the substance of Stockholm. Regardless of the form and fate of the Conference's 109 Recommendations for Action, for example, Stockholm, in fact, made a difference in that it raised awareness of the environment to a new level in a large number of countries and set the stage for the considerable progress of the years to follow.

Caldwell has his professional biases. For example, he cites without criticism *The Limits to Growth* and sprinkles his pages with such down-in-the-mouth observations as "Barring unforeseen events, the ecological quality of the environment for all living things seems almost certain to suffer a net decline in the decades ahead (p. 274)." Moreover, he seems to harbor real animosity toward resource economists, referring repeatedly and disparagingly to "economistic" approaches and policies. He apparently is unaware—or does not believe—that economics offers some uniquely useful tools for maintaining and improving environmental quality.

Caldwell has written an otherwise admirably balanced book, and one that will occupy a valuable slot on the shelf of even resource economists. As suggested above, the encyclopedic nature of much of the material requires particular attention to the index and the book comes through twice over; not only is there an index to the topics and institutions covered

but also one to authors and citations—a nice touch. And the notes section alone is worth the price of the volume. Its 56 pages contain 656 explanatory and supporting references, many of them including extensive bibliographies. Incidentally, both the author and his publisher, Duke University Press, deserve high marks for a product gratifyingly free of typographical and other error.

In September 1984, the general assembly of the International Council of Scientific Unions concluded its biennial meeting by unanimously endorsing a resolution calling for a worldwide project to study the powerful interaction of the earth's physical, chemical, and biological processes. The International Geosphere-Biosphere Program would be launched in 1986 to "take a look at what happens to the future of the human race on this planet," said ICSU President Sir John Kendrew. Such an undertaking, of course, does not arise full-blown. It has antecedents, parallels, and historical context, and is launched out of a shared perception of the environmental predicament, all of which Caldwell lays out clearly and comprehensively. His book provides for the serious student of international cooperation on environmental issues its basic reference.

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