

# The Progressive's Stone: Sustainability

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The alchemists of old lacked knowledge of atomic structure and physical chemistry, but certainly did not lack ambitions. They postulated the existence of the Philosopher's Stone. This mythical substance was thought to be able to turn base metals into gold, and to endow its discoverer with eternal life and wisdom.

Another magical substance they hypothesized was the "universal solvent." Such a substance would be able to dissolve all other substances, including gold. Philosophical discussions over what container could hold this universal solvent must have been lively. Aqua regia, a mixture of concentrated nitric and hydrochloric acids, was eventually discovered, and it comes close to meeting this definition. This "royal water," named by the alchemist because of its ability to dissolve gold and other metals, was thought to have healing properties as well.

Far from the realm of primitive physical scientists, modern-day liberal (a.k.a. progressive) social engineers have created their own Progressive's Stone. It serves as a philosophical touchstone equivalent used to turn their base concept of mankind into their own concept of a golden age of progressivism. In doing so, it functions as a universal societal solvent. It is able to limit personal freedom, diminish private property rights, destroy the useful products of civilization and their means of production, deprive humanity of the use of natural resources, and impose hardship on the least prosperous members of humanity. Regrettably, the Progressive's Stone that can do all this and more is real and not mythical. It permeates all levels of government. It is called sustainability.

Sustainability is infinitely elastic and open-ended in its ability to justify almost any action taken in the name of social and environmental justice. It is the societal equivalent of the ancient royal water in its corrosive properties when employed against our constitutionally mandated, unalienable rights of ordinary free citizens.

The lineage of the Progressive's Stone can be dated back to the 1966 book *Spaceship Earth* by British economist Barbara Ward. It advocated for sustainable development and a new international economic order, linking the global environment and social justice. Population control was an inherent part of the message. On this side of the Atlantic, Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* laid the groundwork for a similar message that found a receptive audience in guilt-prone readers.

As formalized political doctrine, sustainability was introduced by the 1987 "Our Common Future" report<sup>1</sup> of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, authored by Gro Harlem Brundtland, M.D., vice-president of the World Socialist Party. The official UN website contains this definition for sustainability: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The UN's definition is to be distinguished from the mundane usage that indicates "lasting or continuing for a long time." The UN presupposes an all-knowing ruling class that has unique knowledge of both the present and the future. In reality, the needs of the future are subject to change, and planning now for an unknowable future is the planner's folly. Friedrich Hayek aptly described this as the "fatal conceit." A century ago, who knew that commonplace sand (silica) would become essential to our transistor and integrated-circuit world?

Sustainability as defined by the UN captured the imagination of Canadian Jeb Brugmann, who in 1990 founded the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), and served as ICLEI's secretary-general from 1991-2000. An economist and urban planning activist, he founded the worldwide "Local Agenda 21" initiative. More than 200 local governments from 43 countries met at its founding conference, the World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future at the UN in New York in September 1990. In 2003, ICLEI's local government members voted to revise the organization's mission and charter, and to rename it the "ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability."

The UN set forth its grand vision of sustainability at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Jun 3-14, 1992.<sup>2</sup> This conference is also known as the Earth Summit. Attendees were a blend of government officials from many countries and several thousand members of various non-governmental agencies. In addition to agreeing to incorporate sustainability concepts into all governmental policies worldwide, they enacted the Kyoto Protocol. Twenty years later, Rio+20, or the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, took place in Rio on Jun 20-22, 2012, where participants reaffirmed their founding goals and commitments to sustainability.

Much of the UN's vision of sustainability was eventually incorporated into official U.S. federal policy by President Clinton. He established the President's Council on Sustainable Development by Executive Order 12852, dated Jun 29, 1993. The council published the 1999 report, "Towards a Sustainable America...Advocating Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century." Perhaps well-intentioned in its utopian vision of the future, it has become a weapon of mass destruction against many of the visions of our Founding Fathers, and our basic freedoms.

Professional planners have adopted these precepts, and their official organization, the American Planning Association, has a formalized policy guide. Business has learned how to make a profit from this concept.

While most of America was slow to understand the inherent threat the UN's sustainability mandates posed to our traditional constitutional values, one man saw the dangers early on. Henry Lamb (1938-2012) founded Sovereignty International, Inc., in 1996, the Environmental Conservation Organization in 1988, and Freedom21, Inc., in 1999. His book, *The Rise of Global Governance, and Agenda 21*, published Jan 1, 2008 is just one of his many educational efforts to alert the public.<sup>3</sup>

Another stalwart in alerting the public to the UN's sustainability vision is Tom DeWeese. Following in Lamb's footsteps, DeWeese established the American Policy Center in 1988 ([www.americanpolicy.org](http://www.americanpolicy.org)). In 1989 he led the only privately-funded American election-observation team for the Panamanian elections. His American Policy Center continues the fight for the preservation of American private property rights and against intrusive environmental regulations.

Others, such as William Jasper, continue to bring to the public the facts about the loss of private property rights embodied in UN sustainability dictates.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, like a Madison Avenue-brainstormed and focus-grouped advertising mantra, sustainability now appears throughout media and in governmental policy requirements. That which is not sustainable must be stopped, altered, or mitigated, until the project has met prescribed guidelines. Sustainability has been elevated in governmental policy to a level higher than our constitutional rights.

A visit to your local governmental planning board or board of supervisors should convince you that sustainability is the universal solvent of private property rights. Want to build a home on your dream location? No. It is not sustainable for the environment. Want to add on to your home? No, it imposes non-sustainable burdens on wildlife. Similarly, golf courses, ski resorts, livestock, soil tilling, fences, industry, septic fields, roads, logging, dams and reservoirs, power lines, and fiber optic projects are not sustainable, unless so designated by local or federal

government. Property rights are an endangered species not protected by sustainability.

The concept of sustainability appears throughout medical journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Of course, we see the word repeatedly in the sustainable growth rate (SGR). It is a rationale for the international classification of diseases (ICD-10). "We can't create a more efficient and sustainable system without ICD-10," said an industry spokesman. It is linked to enhanced reporting and oversight for new value-based payment schemes.<sup>5</sup>

Global health, the theme of the May 16, 2012, issue of *JAMA*, involves justice and "multidimensional equity," which requires sustainable development. An editorial in the *Lancet* stated, "In 2012 there will be a major strategic shift in global health, away from development and towards sustainability." The major shift is to be governed by a "clear set of principles and values." The editorial notes that Millennium Development Goals, "a cross-sectorial analysis and principles for goal setting after 2015," concluded that "future goals should be built on a shared vision of development across the life course, and suggests five principles: holism, equity, sustainability, ownership, and global obligation. Their report exemplifies the positive contribution the health community can make to sustainability after 2015."<sup>6</sup>

The universal solvent of sustainability will dissolve private medicine and the patient-physician relationship along with private property rights.

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