

Daddy, What Was Private Property Like?

By: Tricia S. Vaughan: on Apr 06, 2006

At my oldest son's fifth birthday party at a California train museum last November, I had his calendar on display so that his playmates could write good wishes. My son had different plans; he wanted no one touching his calendar: "It's my private property!" As frustrated as I was at his not wanting to follow what I saw as a good plan, I couldn't help but inwardly be quite proud of him. At five, he'd learned a most important lesson: Private property was his to do what he wanted with.

I can't help but think of how important this lesson is and how glad I am that my son, at his young age, already understands it much better than people who make zoning laws, or environmentalists, or even the Supreme Court. Then again, how much does one learn about private property when one goes to a government school and learns, via cognitive dissonance, that adults, specifically Americans, are screwing up the planet?

The only answer to how to teach us irresponsible landowners, as evidently all landowners are, is to make our private property not really ours. Some readers know that the beginnings of NASCAR came from the backroads of my home state, North Carolina, where moonshiners were trying their best to outrun a deputy sheriff. The moonshiners have given up running in North Carolina; they've acquiesced to government authority.

Their racing verve has now been transferred to the race car circuit and their private property rights, which included the right to make liquor or whatever else they desired on their own property and sell it to whomever they wanted, were taken away. Although I wasn't around during the moonshine era, I imagine that many people who called themselves Christians rejoiced at clearing the land of such supposed evildoers as moonshiners. Today, in North Carolina, one can only buy liquor at a government-approved ABC store. What was accomplished was not ridding the world of supposedly evil alcohol, but rather, placing the alcohol in the hands of the government and taking away a small part of private property and business rights.

When I was growing up near the mountains of North Carolina in the 1970s and 1980s, there were huge drug busts, some involving my schoolmates' parents. The problem, of course, was a naturally grown plant, marijuana, which the government had deemed illegal. As with alcohol, you can certainly make a good argument for not using marijuana, but in a free country, you should be the judge of what you place in your own body and on your own land; the government should not be that judge. Nonetheless, land was confiscated and parents were put in jail, often for longer than murderers or rapists. From what I saw, most Christians kept their mouths shut regarding this issue or

they praised Leviathan for punishing people who chose to grow a natural plant on their own private property.

After *Kelo v New London*, some Christians finally seem to be figuring out that private property is an integral part of a free country. While Monsanto is busy filing a patent for pigs and other agri giants are making sure that our vegetable seeds don't reproduce, the government is busy tracking down land on which non-native species may be found. Maybe Christians and other supposed private property lovers will soon wake up.

I hope it's not too late. My oldest son remembers a news story that we saw on television a couple of years ago, in which a two-year-old in Zimbabwe was killed because his family refused to move from their abode. Government earth-moving machines ran over the child; the workers, of course, were just doing their jobs. When my son mentions this story, as he does occasionally, I can't help talk with him about how people in the United States believe that we are immune from such a situation, but that we are not. Someone as strong as Suzette Kelo may die fighting for what she has rightfully bought and is her private property, although I pray that she does not have to do so. Most of us, however, would probably cower to government powers, taking our family and going to another place, someplace where we perceive the land would be our own.

Most people have no idea that private property rights are dying in the United States. And while there are small groups of protesters, there are no protests the size of those who are demonstrating against strengthening the U.S. and Mexican border. Instead, people move into planned and gated communities and give away their property rights voluntarily via homeowners' associations.

I couldn't help thinking of all these things as I read comic Bill Maher's latest Los Angeles Times editorial column. One of my favorite games with the Times is to see how many minutes it takes before some biased story makes me angry. When I open the editorial pages first, I count the time in mere seconds. Bill Maher's editorial, I had at first thought, may make the time a bit longer. He was, after all, talking about how "We're letting dying men kill our planet for cash" in a supposed war on terror. That part I agreed with.

The overall gist of the article, however, was an environmentalist's dream: Global warming is destroying our planet! In his well-written rant, he claims that "global warming is about as debatable as the theory of evolution." As everyone knows, mainstream science rules our planet, and when you try to say that maybe evolution isn't all it's cracked up to be, or that global warming gives us an excuse to take away private property rights, or that maybe AIDS isn't what the government and government-sponsored researchers have told us, you become a kook. And so who can argue with a comic who takes a politically correct mainstream view?

Rather than look at the whole picture of global warming, including the scientists who dispute it, Maher pits the liberals against the conservatives. I don't claim either camp; I am more concerned about freedom than I am concerned about liberal or conservative issues, debates that keep us from thinking about our loss of freedoms. Maher, however, paints the issue in partisan terms, condemns George Bush for being anti-environmental, says that the issue of global warming "should be driven by something conservatives are much more familiar with: utter selfishness."

As we all know, there is hardly a more selfish thing than private property, especially when there is supposedly a planet to save. How much more selfish, really, could Suzette Kelo be? This woman actually wants to let her house stand in the way of progress, real Pfizer-sponsored progress that would allow a whole planned community to flourish?

Suzette Kelo and other private property owners, well, we're really utterly selfish, aren't we? Never mind that some of us have bought property specifically to keep it from being developed, or that those of us who have private property tend to take very good care of it. Those things don't really matter, do they? If we do not fight, the government will coerce us into socialist planned communities and cohousing, all in accord with the United Nations' Agenda 21, just as it has forced us into being charitable to others via taxation.

What crisis will the government use to make us cheerfully want to give up these rights? Global warming, of course! There are other supposed environmental emergencies, but that one is my personal favorite. We can't take care of our own land so we must allow the government to take care of it for us. When comics such as Maher try to make us see how stupid we're being for not totally embracing the global warming/sustainability/sky-is-falling crowd, we know that our property rights are in trouble. When Hollywood tells us something's a crisis, the sheeple listen.

Where is the ire from private property owners? Where are the protests? Where are the letters to the editor? Where are the demands to mainstream media that Agenda 21 be addressed? Where are our rights?

We're losing those rights, you know. And we're allowing it in a hip and jazzy kind of way. As I was walking through my very cool sustainable grocery store the other day, a place where I can buy all kinds of organic vegetables while learning how important it is to sustain the supposedly fragile earth, I saw some t-shirts for children. If you want to teach the world, you must teach its children first and what the supposed environmentalists are teaching my children frightens me. While I strongly desire that my

children will one day inherit the land that their dad and I own, I worry that the government, or some environmental entity, will take it first. While we try to teach our children about the importance of private property, the hip t-shirts say such frightening quotes as, "Daddy, What Were The Forests Like?"

Who will know, of course, as the government now owns almost 40% of the land in the United States? Seeing a forest may one day require governmental permission. But when we have celebrities who tell us that global warming is real and that we should drive a Prius, despite the celebrities' jetting around on private planes, which, as we know are all environmentally wonderful and use absolutely no fuel, we must certainly listen. We must not question those supposed scientists who do not question global warming. As people gave up making moonshine in order that we may have government-controlled alcohol, and gave up growing the natural plant marijuana so that we could have government-controlled drugs, people will soon give up their private property so that we may have government-controlled land.

And where are the Christians now that land is being taken away for supposedly less moral reasons than to allow the government to control what we place in our bodies? I know where many of them are: They are busy tending their planned herb gardens, amassing their home entertainment centers, and deciding what color their new planned community house will be, all approved by consensus with their neighbors, of course.

I passed one of those gated planned communities in Southern California the other day, in the car with my sons. You are being watched! a large sign said as I drove by the entrance. I was glad that I didn't have to enter. As I drove by, with my one-year-old, three-year-old, and five-year-old in the back seat, a group of five or so almost-teen boys was walking across the street. I noticed that it was around 3 p.m., when their government school was dismissing, and the boys were walking home to their planned community, one in which all the houses were beautiful and expensive. As they crossed the street, one of them looked at me and made an obscene gesture.

I won't go into detail, but it wasn't a very nice thing to do with the male part of the anatomy. There was no concern from him for me as a female and mother, or for my children, who were watching from the back seat. The almost-teen who made the gesture was surrounded by friends who watched him without looking at me; none seemed particularly disturbed by their friend's actions. They were about to enter the land of the gated community, where they knew, of course, that they were being watched.

My children will know all about private property, but how many of their peers will even

understand the concept? I don't worry much about the forests: they are still with us; our private property rights are not.

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