

The Democracy Initiative

The Sierra Club and other “greens” lead an effort to fundamentally transform America

By Michael Bastasch

Summary: Many Americans think of the Sierra Club as a mainstream organization focused on conservation and outdoor life. But it has morphed into a hardcore, radical political organization dedicated to such causes as leaving two-thirds of all the world’s hydrocarbon energy “in the ground.” Now it has joined in a coalition with other left-wing groups to pursue an agenda that could change American politics, and change the country, forever. In two articles, Green Watch looks at the new coalition, known as the Democracy Initiative, and at the history and direction of the Sierra Club.

In December, in a building four blocks north of the White House, leaders of the Sierra Club and other environmentalist groups met with representatives of unions and a variety of other left-wing organizations to make big plans for the second Obama administration and beyond. On the agenda: the fundamental transformation of the United States.

The dirty little secret of radical environmentalist organizations is this: Their main goal has nothing to do with the environment. Their goal is that fundamental transformation, via the elimination of “conservative” and “free market” opposition to the policies of Washington’s ruling elite. If, along the way, the environment is cleaned up or preserved, that’s a good thing, one supposes, but that’s not the big prize they’re fighting for.

Thus, when the environmentalist groups Sierra Club and Greenpeace joined with the Communication Workers of America



During a protest of the Keystone XL pipeline, the NAACP’s Julian Bond and the Sierra Club’s Michael Brune chain themselves to the White House fence in order to get arrested. (Bond later praised the IRS for its treatment of conservative and Tea Party groups.)

union (CWA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to create a powerful new coalition, the Democracy Initiative, the new group’s focus was not on the environment or union affairs or the concerns of African-Americans. Instead, their priorities were to limit the freedom of speech, to block laws that prevent vote fraud, and to restrict debate in the U.S. Senate—all as a means to an end, the crushing of their political opposition.

In the wake of President Obama’s reelection, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and their allies are seizing the opportunity to alter the political landscape permanently to favor those who call themselves Progressives.

The big meet

About a month after the November election, heads of the four organizations—Michael Brune of the Sierra Club, Phil Radford of Greenpeace, Larry Cohen of the CWA, and Ben Jealous of the NAACP—convened a meeting at the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the National Education Association.

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That lineup brings together organizations that occupy key strategic positions in American politics—the “greens,” with their cohorts of privileged college students and wealthy urban professionals; the unions, including the unions that represent people in the broadcasting/cable and newspaper industries; the top group that purports to speak for African-Americans (giving the coalition the power to declare its adversaries “racist”); and the nation’s largest teachers’ union, which claims 16,000 offices, a payroll of \$58 million a year, and 3.2 million members, and largely controls what our kids are taught.

According to the leftist magazine *Mother Jones*, the meeting also included top officials from environmentalist groups such as the League of Conservation Voters, Friends of the Earth, and National Wildlife Federation; from unions such as the AFL-CIO, SEIU, and the United Auto Workers; and from Voto Latino, the Demos think tank, Piper Fund, Common Cause, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, People for the American Way, Public Campaign, National People’s Action, the Center for American Progress, and Color of Change (co-founded by anti-capitalism activist and former Obama “green jobs czar” Van Jones).

It was reported in December that as many as 35 groups had joined the Democracy

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Initiative, and the Sierra Club’s Brune said he expected to have 50 groups in the coalition by Spring. The *Mother Jones* writer, Andy Kroll, who first reported on the Initiative, noted that the groups at the December meeting pledged millions of dollars, but, as Matthew Continetti of the *Washington Free Beacon* commented, that “the most cursory glance at the list of groups in the *Mother Jones* story leads one to believe that there should be at least two high numerals inserted before ‘millions of dollars.’ . . . The crack researchers at the Center for American Freedom tell me that totaling the reported revenue of only a portion of the groups participating in the Democracy Initiative gives you a figure of around \$1.69 billion.”

Continetti added: “Somewhat ironic, isn’t it, that an association of organizations with combined revenue of more than a billion dollars is launching a campaign to get ‘big money out of politics’? Like all such campaigns, of course, the Democracy Initiative is less about getting money out of politics than it is about getting the wrong sort of money out of politics—in this case, the sort of money dispensed by industries and ideologues opposed to the progressive agenda.”

Writing in *FrontPage* magazine, Daniel Greenfield noted that the members of the Initiative are “groups that have little in common aside from serving as tentacles of the left. As in the unforgettable conclusion to *Animal Farm*, meetings such as these allow the bosses to take a break from the pretense that they represent a separate constituency or cause, and kick back as members of the same movement with the same agenda. And the agenda isn’t really the environment or women’s rights or workers’ rights; it’s power.

“The Democracy Initiative assembles a grab bag of the left’s biggest and richest front groups, tying together environmental, feminist, ethnic and union groups in a shotgun marriage, with the shotgun pointed in the direction of the American people. Some groups have the

membership, whether it is of the forced kind (AFL-CIO) or the imaginary kind (NAACP), while others, like the Center for American Progress, a George Soros joint, have the piles of cash.”

Three main goals, for now

Mother Jones, itself one of the organizations joining in the coalition (in a “non-editorial capacity”), reported that the Initiative’s goals are “getting big money out of politics, expanding the voting rolls while fighting voter ID laws, and rewriting Senate rules to curb the use of the filibuster to block legislation.”

► The “getting big money out of politics” goal means restricting the ability of conservative, libertarian, Tea Party, pro-taxpayer, and related individuals and groups to fund political campaigns and public-information efforts. The immediate goal in that regard is one that has been put forth by the President: overturning the *Citizens United* case, in which the government sought to censor a movie critical of Hillary Clinton. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the First Amendment. (Arguing the government’s case in *Citizens United*—arguing in favor of censorship of politics-themed movies and, theoretically, even of political pamphlets—was Solicitor General Elena Kagan, whom President Obama subsequently named to the Court.) After the decision, as some of the Justices sat before President Obama at a State of the Union address, the President rebuked them for their ruling.

► The “expanding the voting rolls while fighting voter ID laws” goal refers to filling the rolls with people who have extremely little interest in voting and little knowledge about the issues—the so-called “low information voters” who, for example, can’t name the Vice President—and to blocking anti-fraud measures involving photo IDs. Voter ID laws are favored by a wide majority of the American people, including all ethnic groups. And it should be noted that ev-

ery time a vote is cast by a non-eligible person, it cancels out the vote cast by a legitimate voter.

► The “rewriting Senate rules to curb the use of the filibuster to block legislation” goal refers to efforts to take away the most important mechanism forcing the Senate to debate major issues and to respect the rights of the Senate minority. Under current rules, this allows Senators to slow down the process so that a piece of legislation or the confirmation of a nominee can be properly considered, and, under certain circumstances, for 40 or more Senators to block a floor vote. The importance of the filibuster was illustrated recently when Senator Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) spoke for almost 13 hours on the Senate floor and forced the administration to eschew the use of drones to kill American citizens on U.S. soil in non-emergency situations.

In the view of the Democracy Initiative members, conservatives have tried to shrink government for four decades and have changed the rules so they can get like-minded individuals into positions of influence among politicians, bureaucrats, and judges. Greenpeace’s Phil Radford called it “a 40-plus-year strategy by the Scaifes, Exxons, Coors, and Kochs of the world . . . to take over the country.” (Other than the oil giant Exxon-Mobil, the references are to members of wealthy families whom left-wing conspiracy theorists blame for Americans’ failure to embrace Progressivism in full.)

The initial meeting of the Initiative “was so exciting,” the Sierra Club’s Brune said. “We weren’t just wringing our hands about the Koch brothers. We were saying, ‘I’ll put in this amount of dollars and this many organizers.’”

The issues on the Initiative’s agenda attract money from foundations, *Mother Jones* reported, and serve as a rallying point for diverse liberal interests. The magazine’s Andy Krull wrote: “The campaign, Brune says, has since [the initial meeting] been attracting other members—and also interest from foun-

dations looking to give money—because many groups on the left believe they can’t accomplish their own goals without winning reforms on the Initiative’s three issues. ‘This isn’t an optional activity for us,’ Brune tells me. ‘It is mission critical.’”

The group has decided to target specific groups, including the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Made up of conservative state legislators, ALEC works with pro-business and pro-taxpayer groups to draft model legislation and promote free-market policies and limitations on government power. It has been a special target of the Left since the shooting of Trayvon Martin last summer. Race-baiting politicians jumped to the conclusion that the shooting was unjustified and attempted to blame the shooting in part on “Stand Your Ground” laws that protect the right to self-defense—laws that ALEC supported. The Martin shooting was the pretext for a campaign by race-based leftist groups to pressure companies into dropping their support for ALEC, on the ground that—by twisted left-wing logic—it is racist to back a law that protected the self-defense right of a Latino man in an altercation with an African-American.

ALEC is also a target of the Left as a major proponent of Voter ID laws that protect people from having their votes cancelled out due to fraud.

What’s in it for the “greens”?

Given the prominence of environmentalist groups in the Democracy Initiative—as two of the four founding groups, plus three others in the initial conclave—the obvious question is: What does this have to do with environmentalism? The Sierra Club’s Brune addressed the issue. “We’re not going to have a clean-energy economy,” he said, “if the same companies that are polluting our rivers and oceans are also polluting our elections.”

At first glance, getting rid of the filibuster seems to make sense from a radical environmentalist perspective because it was the threat of a filibuster that blocked

passage of a cap-and-trade scheme early in the Obama administration when Democrats had a 60-vote Senate supermajority. But a Senate without a filibuster would be more likely to pass legislation that environmentalists don’t like, if Republicans get control of that chamber in some future election.

The Democracy Initiative’s focus on ALEC makes sense to environmentalists. ALEC has recently been targeted by environmental groups for working with states to scale back or eliminate their costly “renewable” energy mandates. Most states have so-called renewable portfolio standards (RPS)—schemes that rip off consumers to promote costly, inefficient “green” energy, usually to the benefit of wealthy special interests—and, in more than half of those states, legislators have joined with ALEC in efforts to repeal RPS, reduce taxpayers’ handouts, or otherwise ease the burden. (How big a burden? North Carolina’s renewable energy mandate alone will cost residents up to \$1.8 billion from 2008 to 2021, according to the Heartland Institute.)

“We’re opposed to these mandates, and 2013 will be the most active year ever in terms of efforts to repeal them,” Todd Wynn, energy task force director at ALEC, told Bloomberg News. Regarding changes in RPS to allow greater use of natural gas, Wynn said, “Natural gas is a clean fuel, and regulators and policy makers are seeing how it’s much more affordable than renewable energy.”

Other reported targets for the Democracy Initiative include Chevron, for often supporting Republican candidates (for example, giving \$2.5 million to a superPAC supporting GOP House candidates) and even the strongly pro-Obama company Google, for its continued membership in the pro-business U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (Google was the #3 source of funds for the 2012 Obama campaign, behind the University of California and Microsoft, according to the contribution monitor OpenSecrets.org. The company’s executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, is a longtime advisor to President Obama.)

The Democracy Initiative's top target among officeholders up for reelection in 2014 is the Senate Minority Leader, Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), whom the group characterized as "Public Enemy No. 1" for his support of the First Amendment in the debate over campaign finance restrictions ("reform," in the eyes of the Left). McConnell was recently the apparent victim of a Watergate-style bugging operation when *Mother Jones* made public a tape of a strategy session in which the Senator and his staff discussed bizarre statements by the actress Ashley Judd, who was then gearing up to run against him. McConnell's foes in the media tried to spin the story to make McConnell look bad, and were helped when CREW (Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington) filed an ethics complaint against him. As RedState blogger Mike Vespa noted, "the McConnell bugging story could've been a coordinated 'hit' by the institutional left. Both *Mother Jones* and CREW . . . attended the same conference of progressive organizations last December that specifically targeted the Kentucky Senator for the 2014 elections. It was called the Democracy Initiative."

Of course, given that McConnell represents the coal state of Kentucky and has a record of standing up to environmental extremism, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and the others can certainly rationalize their support of the Democracy Initiative's anti-McConnell efforts.

Conclusion

Environmentalists wage war on hydrocarbon fuels, shutting down coal plants and stopping fracking through litigation and regulation. They use a variety of tactics to fire up their supporters and get media attention, from storming an Arctic oil rig to getting themselves arrested at the White House. They are focusing more than ever before on "the long game"—achieving their goals by changing the nature of the country in which they live. Their immediate steps: weaken the First Amendment, cancel out people's right to vote, and make it easier to steamroll legislation through Congress.

It took conservative and pro-business groups 40 years to shape the U.S., they say, so they must be willing to put in decades to reshape society. "The game is rigged against us; the corporate right

has done such a good job taking over the Congress and the courts," Greenpeace's Radford said. "We're saying we need to step back and change the whole game."

The Sierra Club's shift to the Left

By Steven J. Allen & Michael Bastasch

The Sierra Club, the nation's oldest environment-themed organization, was founded in San Francisco in 1892 by conservationist John Muir, in order "to make the mountains glad." Muir was a wilderness explorer whose writings inspired President Theodore Roosevelt to establish the national parks system.

But Muir's Sierra Club was not the political force it is today. Back then, the Sierra Club fought for wilderness preservation. In the November 2002 issue of the Capital Research Center's *Organization Trends*, John K. Carlisle wrote that the Sierra Club changed in the 1950s and '60s when David Brower took the club from a small hiking association of 7,000 members with a \$75,000 budget in 1952 to a 70,000 member political force with a \$3 million budget by the time he left in 1969.

Carlisle wrote that the Club went beyond preservation during the Brower years "arguing that private and voluntary action to protect nature was inadequate." The Sierra Club became an environmentalist group with "a new political ideology that did not trust individual stewardship and private property but demanded laws and government regulations to command-and-control natural resources and those who use them," breaking from its earlier tradition of simply trying to preserve nature.

Today's Sierra Club is far removed from what John Muir founded. Once, members tried to convince others to voluntarily care for the environment; now the group uses government force and political activism to push its beliefs onto the public.

In the 2012 election cycle, the Sierra Club and its affiliates spent more than \$2.3 million on political campaigns and \$800,000 on lobbying for stricter environmental regulations and taxpayer handouts

to green energy companies. As Kevin Mooney wrote in the December 2012 *Green Watch*, the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund—previously called the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund—had net assets of \$822,000 and spent \$1.8 million in 2011 on political efforts such as its anti-fracking campaign.

The Sierra Club has doubled down on its political activities in the last decade and gotten increasingly involved with electing politicians, especially under the leadership of the club's executive director from 1992 to 2011, Carl Pope. (Pope, by the way, previously served as political director of Zero Population Group, a group that promoted the "population bomb" theory—a so-called scientific consensus of the 1970s and '80s that now stands revealed as a hoax.)

The *Washington Post* painted a picture of the role of the Sierra Club and associated organizations in the 2004 election, calling then-executive director Pope one of that election's most influential operatives: "As executive director of the Sierra Club, . . . Pope also controls the Sierra Club Voter Education Fund, a 527 [a group that promotes political causes and candidates indirectly, without expressly calling for a particular election result]. The Voter Education Fund 527 has raised \$3.4 million this election cycle, with \$2.4 million of that amount coming from the Sierra Club. A third group, the Sierra Club PAC, has since 1980 given \$3.9 million to Democratic candidates and \$173,602 to GOP candidates."

That was only the tip of the iceberg of Pope's political involvement, the *Post* reported. "In 2002-03, Pope helped found two major 527 groups: America Votes, which has raised \$1.9 million to coordi-

nate the election activities of 32 liberal groups, and America Coming Together (ACT), which has a goal of raising more than \$100 million to mobilize voters to cast ballots against Bush. Finally, Pope is treasurer of a new 501(c)(3) foundation, America's Families United, which reportedly has \$15 million to distribute to voter mobilization groups."

The Sierra Club targeted the George W. Bush administration, even putting out a "W Watch" that featured articles attacking Bush—not just in connection with the administration's environmental record, but on every topic related to Bush's judicial nominations, according to a 2004 report by Sen. James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma).

Earthjustice (previously the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund) regularly took legal action against the Bush administration—86 actions on different environmental issues, according to Inhofe. The Sierra Club even spent hundreds of thousands of dollars attacking the Bush administration in campaign ads during the 2000 election.

Interestingly, the Club was the target of an insurgent campaign in the mid-1980s that would have had the group come out in opposition to illegal immigration. Why? Because of the wasteful lifestyle associated, in leftists' minds, with living in the United States. The publication *Politico* noted "some members claiming it [an end to illegal immigration] was needed to overcome the effects of more people living more consumptive American life styles." However, "The effort fell apart after a pitched battle. Other environmental groups have historically helped financially support immigration reform opponents like Numbers USA and Federation for American Immigration Reform." (Today, entrenched on the Left, the Sierra Club is a proponent of the sort of immigration "reform" that, activists believe, would add to the rolls millions of voters who would dutifully support left-wing candidates.)

During the 2004 election, the Sierra Club reportedly spent at least \$350,000 on

anti-Bush campaign ads. The group's political activity wasn't solely aimed at bashing Bush. In fact, the *Daily Caller* reported, the group spent more than \$1 million during the 2010 election cycle. The *Caller* said environmentalist groups on the whole pumped more than \$125 million into "political causes, advertising campaigns and lobbying" in 2009-2010.

The Club's movement toward the Left, which pulled it away from opposing illegal immigration, has also affected its relationship with unions that support the Keystone XL pipeline. As the newspaper *The Hill* noted in April, "The Sierra Club has long worked with organized labor. Its years-long collaboration with the United Steelworkers grew in 2006 into the broader BlueGreen Alliance, which includes a number of environmental groups and unions. But the debate over the Keystone XL oil sands pipeline has largely split labor and environmentalists, as well as led the Laborers' International Union of North America to quit the BlueGreen Alliance last year."

The conflict between jobs and environmental extremism is also apparent in regard to the Left's claims of "environmental racism." Recently, the Club—which has long been seen correctly as an organization that represents the most privileged people in society—issued a report focusing on industrial facilities in Detroit that suggested that "minorities" in the city are the victims of environmental racism. Former *Detroit News* columnist Ben Johnson wrote "This attempt to link pollution with alleged civil rights violations puts Detroit in peril." Based on allegations that are "neither justified nor scientific," Johnson wrote, "The Sierra Club's minority-race-based analyses of sites limiting new permits threatens to forever kill new investment in depressed urban industrial areas."

Whatever its position on particular issues, the Sierra Club and its affiliates are strongly tied to the Democratic Party and donate overwhelmingly to Democratic candidates. According to

Influence Explorer, the group has given \$9.2 million to political campaigns since 1990. Of that, 58 percent has gone to Democrats, compared to two percent that has gone to Republicans (The other 40 percent has gone to the "other" category, efforts without an official party affiliation.) Of course, the Club's influence comes not from its direct contributions but from its ability to set the political agenda, to paint its friends as heroes and its adversaries as villains, and to organize grassroots activists in the name of saving the planet.

"As a political force, it's easily a billion-dollar-a-year enterprise," said Steve Hayward of the American Enterprise Institute.

Feeding the crocodile

Hayward added that "environmental groups have a common agenda. There is not much diversity among them. So it's sort of misleading to say it's environmental groups versus business groups because business groups are on all sides of this question."

Indeed, business plays both sides. Businesses often seek to use the government to eliminate their competition at the expense of consumers. In one case, the Sierra Club was paid \$26 million for four years by Chesapeake Energy, one of the country's largest natural gas drillers, and its subsidiaries to lobby for regulations against the coal industry.

"Back in 2007," Chesapeake Energy spokesman Jim Gipson told *Time* magazine, "Chesapeake and the Sierra Club had a shared interest in moving our nation toward a clean energy future based on the expanded use of natural gas, especially in the power sector."

The deal was made under former Sierra Club leader Carl Pope. The Club's current leader, Michael Brune, ended the deal in 2011 and refused an additional \$30 million from Chesapeake—before turning around and taking \$50 million from Michael Bloomberg (see below).

As the environmentalist movement works to rid the U.S. of affordable, ef-

efficient hydrocarbon fuels, “Beyond Coal” is the Sierra Club campaign that seeks to shut down one-third of the nation’s 500+ coal plants by 2020 and replace most of them with primitive, so-called “renewable” sources such as wind and solar.

Recently, the Club has backed a series of lawsuits aimed at shutting down coal plants. A settlement in January—between the Warren Buffett-owned MidAmerican Energy and the Sierra Club over alleged violations of the federal Clean Air Act—forced MidAmerican to phase out burning coal at seven coal-fired boilers.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg chimed in that this was “great news for the people of Iowa and another important victory for the Beyond Coal campaign.” His organization gave \$50 million to the anti-coal campaign.

The utility American Electric Power (AEP) announced in February that it would no longer be burning coal at three of its power plants as a result of a lawsuit settlement with the Sierra Club and other environmentalist groups along with the EPA and eight state governments. The AEP settlement came on the heels of an announcement that the building of a coal plant in Texas would be cancelled because of litigation costs and strict federal environmental regulations.

Overall, the anti-coal campaign has led since 2010 to 142 coal plant retirements, or announced retirements—the loss of the equivalent of more than 50,000 megawatts of coal-fired power. Jason Mark of the *Earth Island Journal* noted in 2011 that environmentalists had won a series of victories against coal-fired plants “and they have done so without having to rely on a single vote in Congress. The anti-coal battle has been won, Brune told me, because it connects so organically to home-front issues like air pollution, water pollution, and public health.”

The Sierra Club’s other anti-hydrocarbon fuel campaign, “Beyond Natural Gas,” aims to block new natural gas plants from being built and stop “fracking” across the country.

“We’re going to be preventing new gas plants from being built wherever we can,” the Club’s Michael Brune told the *National Journal*. Brune got to flex his activist muscles in February when he declared that he was willing to get arrested protesting the Keystone XL pipeline.

Greenpeace has lobbied against the pipeline, and the Sierra Club hosted a rally in February that attracted 35,000 protests aimed at getting President Obama to reject the Keystone pipeline, which is supposed to bring tar sands oil from Canada to refineries in Texas.

Sierra Club’s president Allison Chin was arrested handcuffing herself to the White House fence in protest of the pipeline—breaking the group’s 120-year tradition of no civil disobedience. Chin was arrested with other Sierra Club leaders and celebrity activists Robert Kennedy Jr. and Daryl Hannah.

The Sierra Club’s shift to the Left represents a trend in the environmentalist movement, as an older, more tradition-minded generation fades away and a more radical cadre moves to the fore.

A new, radical direction

Today’s environmentalist leaders tend to be people who entered the movement after the country’s most serious environmental problems had been solved or were well on their way to a solution. Most became activists during a period in which the movement came to rely increasingly on crying wolf—on exaggerated or nonexistent threats, often based on pseudoscientific predictions of catastrophe a few decades ahead (far enough ahead so that one can spend an entire career promoting a dubious idea such as Catastrophic Man-made Global Warming theory, then be safely retired before the idea is discredited). Many of these new, more radical leaders are less interested in making arguments than in conducting street theater.

In a 2010 article, Ray Ring of the *High Country News* noted that many environmental groups active in the West were experiencing a wave of leadership changes, blamed on the usual reasons for turnover

among heads of nonprofits (frustrations with boards of directors, constant pressure to raise money exacerbated by the Great Recession, and relatively low pay), plus the fact that Baby Boomers as a group are at or near retirement age.

Ring added: “There’s also a political dynamic: ‘Everybody was hunkered down during the Bush administration, focused on the fights at hand,’ says an environmental-group consultant in Seattle. The greener Obama presidency creates a better atmosphere for career moves: Many environmentalist leaders are now working for Obama, and others feel freer to take jobs with different groups or retire because they are less worried about abandoning the troops in the middle of a raging battle.”

Talia Buford of *Politico* wrote in February that, “After 121 years of lobbying, letter-writing campaigns and law-abiding protests, the Sierra Club is retooling itself for the flash-mob age—and showing an increasingly aggressive edge.”

Buford noted the arrest of the group’s top two leaders during that protest against the Keystone XL pipeline. “The organization called it the first time it had suspended its decades-long policy against club-sanctioned civil disobedience. . . . Sierra Club leaders and supporters say they’re not undergoing a radical makeover . . . But they also acknowledged increasing frustration with Washington’s paralysis in the face of what they call a global climate emergency. And some say new tactics are required in an era when mass protests can be organized via Twitter. ‘Civil disobedience is the response of ordinary people to extraordinary injustices,’ the group said in a statement before the protest, casting the climate debate as akin to previous struggles over ‘slavery, child labor, suffrage, segregation and inequality for gays and immigrant workers.’”

Roger Ballentine, a climate adviser to the Clinton White House who became an advisor to businesses on “green” strategies, told the *New York Times* in 2011 that the movement had (in the words of *Times* reporter Leslie Kaufman)

“grown impatient with coaxing incremental change by engaging with policy makers and corporations. The old way was the Sierra Club putting its seal on ‘green’ Clorox products; the new way is suggested by a Greenpeace Internet campaign that wrung a promise from Facebook last week to use less coal for its data centers. ‘The failure to address climate is catastrophic, and young people are justifiably outraged,’ Mr. Ballentine said, pointing to the next generation in the movement. ‘What we have now is an antagonized grass roots calling for a radicalized approach.’”

Three key personnel decisions reflect the Club’s new “radicalized approach.”

► Last year the group hired former EPA regional administrator Al Armendariz as “senior campaign representative” for its Beyond Coal campaign. Armendariz, you may recall, was caught on video suggesting Roman tyranny as a model for enforcement of environmental regulations.

“The Romans used to conquer little villages in the Mediterranean. They’d go into a little Turkish town somewhere, they’d find the first five guys they saw and they would crucify them. Find people who are not compliant with the law, and you hit them as hard as you can and you make examples out of them, and there is a deterrent effect there,” Armendariz said.

► Earlier this year, the group hired as its labor director Dean Hubbard, former senior counsel for the Transport Workers Union, which is one of the few unions to oppose the Keystone XL pipeline.

At Sarah Lawrence College, Hubbard held an endowed chair in public policy named for left-wing activist Joanne Woodward (Mrs. Paul Newman). Hubbard was described in a Sierra Club document as “the longtime Chair of the National Lawyers Guild Labor and Employment Committee, where he has organized and led solidarity work for labor and human rights worldwide.”

What is the National Lawyers Guild? It is an organization of radical attorneys that, since its founding in 1937, has had close

ties to the Communist Party and other pro-terrorism organizations. Bernardine Dohrn, who became one of the most famous terrorists of the 20th Century, had worked at NLG headquarters as the first leader of the group’s student division. NLG lawyer Lynne Stewart was convicted of aiding the terrorist activities of Al Qaeda spiritual leader Omar Abdel-Rahman (the Blind Shiekh), who once plotted a series of attacks on New York landmarks. After her conviction, NLG President David Gesspass declared, “It is a rare honor for us in the Guild to be among Lynne’s friends and colleagues.”

► Among the new, younger leaders of the environmentalist movement, Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune is the personification of the trend toward the use of direct action—of protest and the techniques of so-called “community organizers” instead of rational debate.

Brune cut his teeth in the movement working for Greenpeace, which was a radical group from the start. Before coming to the Sierra Club, he spent 2002 to 2010 as head of the Rainforest Action Network, which *Politico* described as “a group whose activists have rappelled down office buildings and trespassed at corporate headquarters to get the attention of businesses like paper manufacturers, coal mining companies and banks.”

The environmentalist publication *Grist* reported that “Brune honed RAN’s strategy of negotiating politely with corporate heavyweights such as Bank of America, Citigroup, and General Motors—and then, if they don’t clean up their acts, campaigning mercilessly against them. The two-pronged approach earned results that belie RAN’s modest size—it helped convince Home Depot to stop selling wood from endangered forests, for example.”

Upon the selection of Brune to head the Sierra Club, Ray Ring of the *High Country News* wrote: “Brune has made a career out of imaginative civil disobedience . . . He estimates that he’s been arrested about a dozen times for trespassing and other protest-related offenses, but he’s

also known for negotiating pleasantly with corporations.”

Politico noted: “Brune’s radical bona fides were almost certainly one reason why the club’s elected leadership wanted him aboard, said Christopher Bosso, professor of public policy and urban affairs at Northeastern University and author of the book *Environment, Inc.* ‘He is reflecting more than pulling the organization along,’ Bosso said. ‘I think the fact that he was hired shows the way they wanted to go.’”

How radical is Brune? In an interview on the program “Democracy Now!,” Brune declared that, if catastrophic global warming is to be prevented, mankind must forgo two-thirds of its oil, coal, and natural gas resources. “If we want to keep our temperature increases below three and a half degrees Fahrenheit, at least two-thirds of the oil, and coal, and gas that we know about all around the world has to stay in the ground,” he said. “Two-thirds of our fossil fuel [sic] reserves have to stay in the ground if we want to have a shot at keeping warming at three and a half degrees Fahrenheit, which is a reckless goal considering that we’ve only had about an increase, a degree increase so far.”

To Brune, even the abandonment of two-thirds of the world’s hydrocarbon fuels is insufficient and downright “reckless.” Given that perhaps a billion of earth’s people live on less than \$1.25 a day, the decision to simply abandon two-thirds (or more) of the world’s standard energy resources would consign hundreds of millions, perhaps billions of people to grinding poverty—and it would likely lead to armed conflict at a level never seen before in human history. Such considerations are presumably beneath the concern of the Sierra Club’s Michael Brune.

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GreenNotes

The **Internal Revenue Service** blocked or delayed tax-exempt status for groups with words like “**Tea Party**,” “patriot,” or “Bill of Rights” on their applications, but last year the agency did manage to approve the application of the environmental organization “**Air Trees Water and Animals**.” ATWA had previously lost its status in 1997, reports **Teresa Platt** of the **National Center for Public Policy Research**, because of complaints from families of the victims of ATWA’s founder—**Charles Manson**.

Think the **Obama** administration’s abuse of conservative and free-market groups stops at the IRS? Think again. The **Competitive Enterprise Institute** took a look at the way the **Environmental Protection Agency** waives fees for **Freedom of Information Act** requests; CEI found “green” groups received waivers 92% of the time, while critics of “green” policies were rejected 93% of the time. (Under FOIA rules, the fees are supposed to be waived for public-interest groups that regularly provide information to the general public.)

Meanwhile, EPA has confessed it gave out personal information on perhaps 80,000 farmers and ranchers to environmentalist groups. “The EPA has threatened the health and safety of agriculture producers and their families and has damaged the security of our food system,” said **Sen. John Thune** (R-S.D.). Confronted on the issue, the EPA announced it had asked the environmentalists to “return the information.”

Almost every day the number of ridiculous governmental restrictions and regulations rises. But what happens when a rule isn’t merely ridiculous, but downright impossible? That occurred with a 2007 requirement for the sale, in 2013, of 14 million gallons of cellulosic biofuel—fuel made from wood, grass, and other plants not edible by humans. The problem, notes the **Washington Times**, is that “this fantasy fuel exists only in a laboratory. It can’t actually be produced in any significant quantities.” The **Times** adds, “Rather than admit defeat, environmentalist bureaucrats set up a system forcing companies to buy the renewable identification numbers to meet their targets”—in effect, forcing them to pay for non-existent goods. Currently, the cellulosic fuels sector is 1/200th of the size that the federal government projected it would be back in 2007. (Close enough for government work?) Now a federal appeals court has tossed out the cellulosic requirement, saying it was based on a “wish” rather than factors that refiners could control.

Climate change will force women into prostitution, according to a congressional resolution introduced by **Rep. Barbara Lee** (D-Calif.). Lee, joined by **Rep. Carolyn Maloney** (D-N.Y.) and 11 other members of Congress, declared that “food insecure women with limited socioeconomic resources may be vulnerable to situations such as sex work, transactional sex, and early marriage that put them at risk for HIV, STIs, unplanned pregnancy, and poor reproductive health.” The resolution cites a **United Nations** claim that some three billion people—billion with a *b*—could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2050 unless “environmental disasters are averted by coordinated global action.” According to the resolution, women will be hurt disproportionately, especially such groups as refugees, the HIV-positive, the disabled, and lesbians.

Shortly before the last election, **Sen. Sherrod Brown** (D-Ohio) declared, “There is no war on coal. Period.” **Bill McKibben** would disagree. McKibben—called “probably the nation’s leading environmentalist” by the **Boston Globe**—founded the group **350.org**, which promotes a belief in Catastrophic Man-made Global Warming. In April, McKibben wrote on the left-wing **AlterNet**: “Recently, I had a long talk with an administration insider who kept telling me that, for the next decade, we should focus all our energies on ‘killing coal.’ Why? Because it was politically feasible. And indeed we should, but climate-change science makes it clear that we need to put the same sort of thought and creative energy into killing oil and natural gas, too.”

Many **Warmers** believe that, if the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is above 350 parts per million—or 1/2,857th of the atmosphere—mankind faces disaster. (The figure is currently around 391 ppm.) The Warmers’ zealotry could cause problems within the **Democratic Party**. Recently, an extreme environmentalist, **Rep. Ed Markey** (D-Mass.) ran against **Rep. Steven Lynch**, a liberal Democrat who supported the **Keystone XL pipeline**, for the Democratic nomination to replace **Sen. John Kerry**. McKibben’s organization backed Markey, who received major financial help when, as McKibben put it, “**California** hedge fund manager and big-time Democratic donor **Tom Steyer** announced that he was not only going to go after Lynch, but any politician of any party who didn’t take climate change seriously.” Steyer proclaimed that “The goal here is not to win. The goal here is to destroy these people”—destroy anyone, that is, even a liberal Democrat, who deviates from the environmentalist line. Markey won the nomination and heads into the June general election.