



COMMENTARY

By Steve Baer

To irrigate we should pump our rivers over again, not pump them dry. Leave them to flow to the sea, then at their mouths, before they mix with the ocean, take water and pump it back through huge canals or pipelines to regions that flourish with irrigation.

Thus, we could leave more Nature as we found it. Land could be irrigated in the world's deserts. The Colorado could reach the sea, for the Mississippi, Columbia, or Saint Lawrence would irrigate the Southwest.

A man by himself could raise only three or four gallons per hour from water a mile below. He could hardly keep up with flushing the toilet and taking a daily shower.

When men and animals provided our power, bringing water from the Mississippi over the Continental Divide was out of the question, but today we can do this. To pump the Colorado's flow from New Orleans up a mile to New Mexico would require about 12,000,000 horse power for the lift, another 12,000,000 hp for the friction, and we have \$200 per acre-foot of electricity. Such enormous power and capital costs could add \$1,000 to your yearly food bill, but save \$10,000 on the earth's doctor bills.

We are changing our planet. We could do it with style. We need not wait for a 100-yard wide canal from British Columbia to Utah. A rivulet may grow into a vast river; start with a modest 24-inch pipeline following Interstate 10 from New Orleans to Tucson. Terribly expensive, terribly valuable; yet if the idea appeals, large lines would follow.

Signs today boast of who cleans the highway one passes through. Tomorrow sections of pipelines will say, "This mile of aqueduct courtesy of Company X."

Discuss the idea of huge pumps, pipelines and canals and listeners become uncomfortable. There is something wrong. After I explain the idea, I listen to theirs, "Conservation. We must learn to live within our budgets, do with the water we have, not increase mischief by engineering," but none cut back. Some swap one extravagance for another, as a bigger engine for a longer trip.

Those I know who plant drought-resistant natives create ever larger streambed habitats on hillsides. The water flows on. People are suspicious of engineering projects; they wish to live differently. Well, what is stopping them? Skeptics sneer at large engineering solutions for the future while they wallow in the short-term luxury provided by current engineering. It is wise to use our wealth to engineer a world for slobs like you and me. It is foolish

to waste it on fakes and their dreams.

Others will do fine on fewer calories, less water, less gasoline, fewer kilowatt-hours; not them.

Extravagant habits are fine so long as boldness, industry, generosity and daring come with them. Fix the world while the bulldozers roar. Use the welders, truck drivers and executives; they can do a lot more than "do without." We will go to the stars, spread life throughout the universe.

Stop fretting about the CO₂ we add to our atmosphere. It is the only good thing we have done for the rest of nature. It helps photosynthesis. Worry about the rivers that no longer reach the sea. Worry about ourselves and our synanthropes, replacing every other living thing while, through engineering, so many of us can live beside Nature rather than replace it. Engineering can be polite or rude. Dams are rude. We can afford good manners towards Nature. Our motto about her water could be, "After you."

Call

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CORRALES COMMENT

Bruce -

Here's my advice
about engineering for
slots (like me - like us)

Not a peep from
anyone in response.

I suppose most regard
it as offensive

Steve

and I have more on H_2O
if it interests you. In fact
a nightmare about getting it
straight out of the air,