

OVERVIEW OF RON ARNOLD AND ALAN GOTTLIEB  
AUTHORS OF *TRASHING THE ECONOMY*

Ron Arnold and Alan Gottlieb, are the unofficial founders of the Wise Use movement. They organized the first annual Wise Use Conference in Reno, NV in 1988 out of which came the *Wise Use Agenda*, a book which they edited and produced.

The *Agenda* calls for among other things, opening ANWR to oil drilling, preventing global warming by getting rid of old growth forests to be replaced by young "carbon dioxide-absorbing trees", mining in all national parks and wilderness areas, designating 10 million acres of existing Wilderness area as Commodity Use Area, allowing "all commodity industry uses on an as needed basis in times of high demand."<sup>1</sup>

By its own account, funding for the *Agenda* was provided by the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, (CDFE), a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Bellevue, WA along with other groups including the American Freedom Coalition, (AFC).<sup>2</sup>

Ron Arnold is the executive vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, Alan Gottlieb is the founder and president of CDFE. Both Arnold and Gottlieb have a longtime connection with AFC, a right wing advocacy group funded in part by the Unification Church.<sup>3</sup> Arnold was president of the AFC in Washington in 1989, 1990, and 1991 and Gottlieb served on its board in 1989 and 1990 according to documents filed with the Washington Secretary of State's office.<sup>4</sup>

In a 1989 *Washington Post* article, AFC founder and president Robert Grant said the Unification Church has donated a third of his group's \$17 million budget since its inception. Grant also told the *Seattle Times* that "Unification church members, paid by a church organization, make up more than half of the AFC's staff."<sup>5</sup>

The *Seattle Times* in 1989 described Arnold and Gottlieb as two of seven key people in the Unification Church in the Northwest. The network was reportedly headed by Matthew Morrison, a church member who is regional coordinator for AFC, who at the time rented his office space from Gottlieb in Bellevue, Wash. The same piece identified Arnold as a member of the speaker's bureau of CAUSA, Confederation of Associations for the Unification of Societies of the Americas), formerly the key political action arm of the Unification Church.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wise Use Agenda pgs 5-18

<sup>2</sup>Wise Use Agenda pg. xv.

<sup>3</sup>10/29/89 *Washington Post*, "Taking Exception" by Robert Grant.

<sup>4</sup>Washington Secretary of State, Articles of Incorporation for AFC.

<sup>5</sup>10/29/89 *Washington Post*, "Taking Exception" by Robert Grant.

<sup>6</sup>2/13/89 *Seattle Times*, "Mainstream Moon" by Walter Hatch.



According to *Sierra Magazine*, an October 1990 issue of the AFC's newsletter, *American Freedom Journal*, mentioned that the AFC sponsored wise-use conferences in four states the previous summer and had plans for 15 more in 1991.<sup>7</sup>

Arnold has authored several anti-environmental books including *Ecology Wars*; *At the Eye of the Storm*, a biography of James Watt; and *Trashing the Economy*; edits a quarterly newsletter entitled *The Wise Use Memo*; and gives speeches throughout the country to promote his anti-environmental agenda. The Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise's Free Enterprise Press publishes their books, and Gottlieb own Merril Press distributes their books.

Gottlieb is a former national director of the Young Americans for Freedom and former treasurer of the American Conservative Union. In 1974, he founded the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms in Bellevue, WA and the Second Amendment Foundation. Gottlieb has established himself as one of the most successful direct-mail fundraisers for the American right. In 1984, Gottlieb pleaded guilty to under reporting his and his wife's personal income for 1978. He was sentenced to prison for a year and a day and fined \$5,000.

Arnold and Gottlieb have much to gain by "destroying the environmental movement." They make their living by promoting right wing causes, using tactics of division, fear and hate to stir up support among rural workers who make a living in resource dependent industries. By promoting a "wise use" agenda, they attempt to close the door on dialogue and instead draw battle lines. Last year, during a speech to the Maine Conservation Rights Institute, Arnold said the Wise Use movement "tapped a wellspring of hatred, vicious, seething, visceral hatred against environmentalism in this country."<sup>8</sup>

Arnold claims that "green organizations aren't really concerned about protecting the environment; they simply 'invent the environmental threats in order to recruit members and make money.'"<sup>9</sup> "The environmental movement is a rich, powerful menace to society,' he declares 'and we intend to destroy it.'" <sup>10</sup> With this in mind, Arnold and Gottlieb have produced *Trashing* in an attempt to prove their thesis. What assertions they make that are factually correct, can be obtained from any organization's annual report. The rest of *Trashing* is pure diatribe such as calling each environmental organization a "job killer" and an "economy trasher". However, don't be surprised if you see the "users" quote extensively from *Trashing* in the next few months. The book will certainly appeal to the environmental backlash movement as they attempt to discredit the environmental movement.

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<sup>7</sup>May/June 1991 *Sierra Magazine*, "Wise Guise" by Dan Baum, page 92

<sup>8</sup>MECRI speech, 1992.

<sup>9</sup>*Outside* magazine, December 1991 pg 70. Comments from a speech at the New Mexico Wool Growers Association at the Las Cruces Hilton.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.