

Stewards of Access Custodians of Choice

*A Philosophical Foundation
for Parks, Recreation, and Tourism*

Fourth Edition

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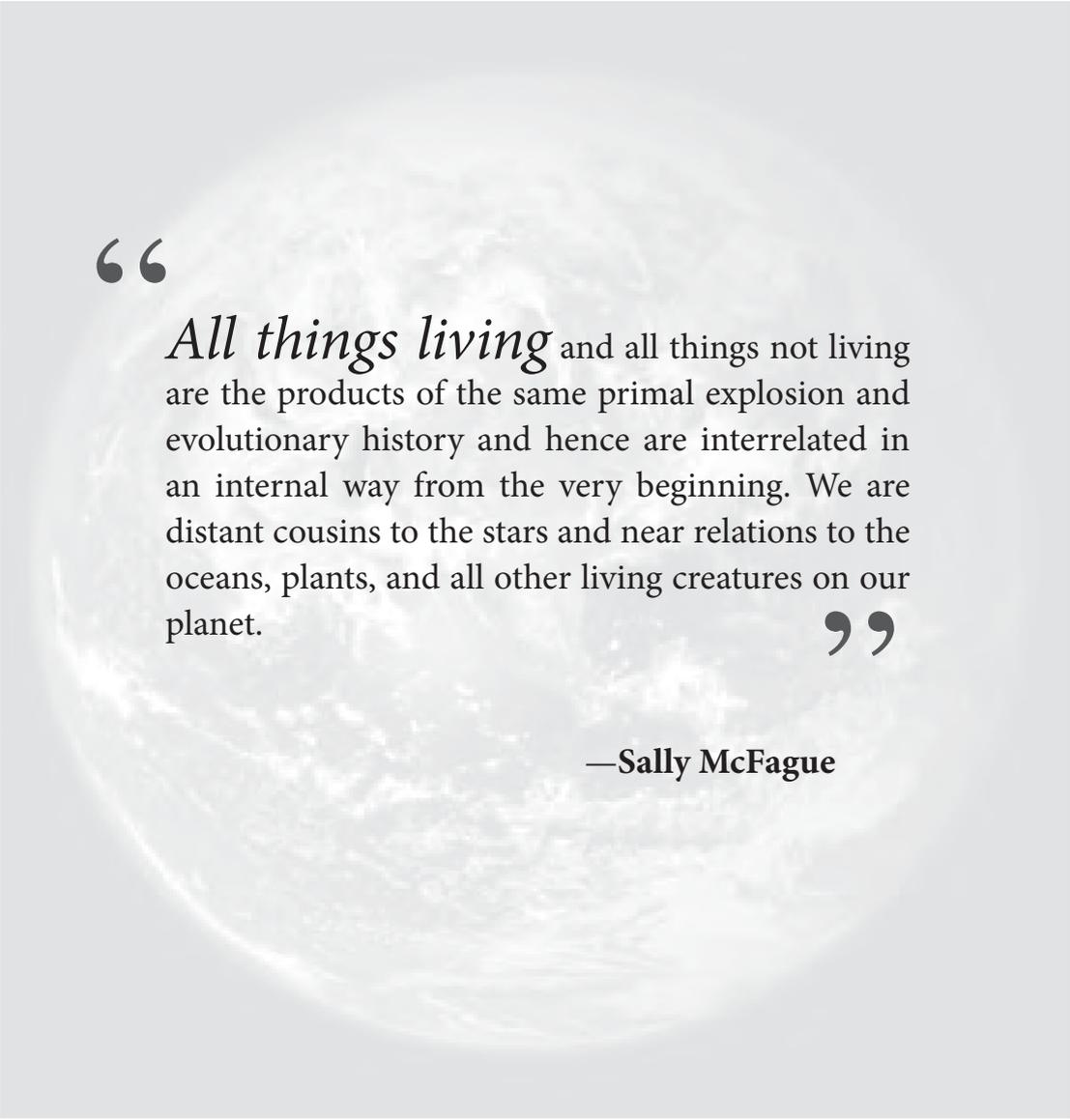
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To John Schultz
mentor, colleague, and friend



“

All things living and all things not living are the products of the same primal explosion and evolutionary history and hence are interrelated in an internal way from the very beginning. We are distant cousins to the stars and near relations to the oceans, plants, and all other living creatures on our planet.

”

—Sally McFague

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

We thank Sagamore Publishing LLC for making this fourth edition of *Stewards of Access/Custodians of Choice* possible. Almost 30 years have passed since we penned the first edition, and we are happy to report that our fundamental convictions about the importance of parks, recreation, and tourism to enhancing the quality of life remain unchanged. At the same time, we recognize that while our convictions remain unchanged, the world has changed dramatically in the last three decades. Overpopulation, resource depletion, climate change, and a host of other pressing social and environmental problems challenge us to demonstrate the relevance of parks, recreation, and tourism to their resolution. To that end, we continue to believe in the profession's instrumental value and that a healthy environment is the foundation upon which humankind's long-term welfare ultimately depends.

It is our pleasure to welcome three new co-authors to this fourth edition: Kelly Bricker, Jeff Rose, and Keri Schwab. Kelly specializes in ecotourism, biodiversity health, and sustainability. Jeff specializes in human-environment relationships and matters of social and environmental justice. Keri specializes in family leisure, mothers' leisure, and youth development. Kelly, Jeff, and Keri have expanded our understanding of the world, and this edition's closing chapters reflect that expanded understanding. It is a privilege and a joy to add our voices to the conversation about the role of parks, recreation, and tourism in contemporary life, and we look forward to hearing more of Kelly, Jeff, and Keri's voices in the future.

We added two chapters to the Epilogue, reflecting our growing belief that health promotion within the context of social and environmental justice is the profession's destiny. Chapter 13, "People and Nature: Toward an Ecological Model of Health Promotion," is reprinted with permission from *Leisure Sciences*. It illustrates the relationship between human health and biodiversity health and underscores why the health of the biosphere is critical to the health

of humankind. Chapter 14, “Ecological Democracy: Cultivating Healthy Citizens,” considers what we are obliged to do with our health as citizens in a participatory democracy. It is a call for civic engagement and a challenge to each and every one of us to employ our individual skills and abilities in service of the public good.

We also reworked some of our language from previous editions, updated references, and wrote several new discussion questions. Most notably, we added tourism to parks and recreation when referring to the profession as a whole to honor its growth and development. While we recognize the limitations of labeling (see Chapter 8), we chose not to create a “laundry list” of a title to describe the profession. We implore readers to think of parks, recreation, and tourism as broadly conceived and recognize that the profession is made up of an amalgam of specializations, all of which are united by a common interest in serving the human potential. We have tried to write in a way that respects multiple interpretations of the human experience while standing by our fundamental convictions. Finally, we acknowledge our positionality as three privileged white males who, in the twilight of our careers, remain committed to our own continuing education.

Daniel Dustin
Leo McAvoy
John Schultz

Introduction

*“The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”*

—William Butler Yeats

“. . . During the Middle Ages, cathedrals were built by [the] voluntary labor of thousands of people. There is an old story about three such workers. They were stone cutters. A fourth man asked each one, in turn, the same question, ‘What are you doing?’

The first answered, ‘I’m cutting stone.’

The second said, ‘I’m building a cathedral.’

The third smiled and answered quietly, ‘I’m glorifying God.’”¹

This book is the product of six individuals who view the park, recreation, and tourism profession from a perspective not unlike that of the third stone cutter. The purpose of the book is to share that perspective with you. If you are of the ilk of the first or second stone cutter, we hope the book will elevate you to the third perspective. If, on the other hand, you are already there, the book may still serve as your companion and comfort you with the knowledge that you are not alone in your thinking.

This work has evolved out of our concern for the future of parks, recreation, and tourism. While there is broad agreement within the profession regarding the importance of its services to the well-being of America’s citizenry, it has been difficult to rally support for those services from the citizenry itself. Efforts to gain recognition and acceptance as a vital area of human service by the profession’s subgroups have led to factionalism and frustration. As Bruno Geba noted, “different groups are pulling in many directions, and basic principles of recreation are being replaced to fit the needs of others.

The profession, as a result, is ripped into pieces, leaving its members without a unifying core.”²

The task of this book is to reconstruct that unifying core of principles and practices that collectively define the unique contribution of parks, recreation, and tourism to the quality of life. Borrowing from E. F. Schumacher, “it is not as if we had to invent anything new; at the same time, it is not good enough merely to revert to the old formulations. Our task ... is to understand the present world, the world in which we live, and make our choices.”³

To that end, the book has three objectives. First, it is a study of recreational conduct, both in terms of the individual and in terms of those responsible for planning, managing, and evaluating park, recreation, and tourism services. Second, it is a statement of philosophy, a reconciliation of the recreational needs of people with a concern for the social and natural environment in which those needs are expressed. Third, it is an excursion into the future, an application of the philosophical foundation established in the second part of the book to issues that will shape the park, recreation, and tourism profession in years to come.

In accordance with its three objectives, the book is divided into three parts. Each part is guided by a selected passage from Jacob Bronowski’s book *Science and Human Values*.⁴ Part I, “The Sacred Tree is Dead,” evolves from the following passage:

If we are to study conduct, we must follow it both directions: into the duties of [people], which alone hold a society together, and also into the freedom to act personally which the society must still allow its [people]. The problem of values arises only when [people] try to fit together their need to be social animals with their need to be free [people]. There is no problem and there are no values, until [people] want to do both.

Part II, “Emergence of a Work Ethic,” evolves from the following passage:

The concepts of value are profound and difficult exactly because they do two things at once: they join [people] into societies, and yet they preserve for them a freedom which makes them single [individuals]. A philosophy which does not acknowledge both needs cannot evolve values, and indeed cannot allow them.

Part III, "Pathways to the Future," evolves from the following passage:

[We] master nature not by force but by understanding ...we have learned that we gain our ends only with the laws of nature; we control [nature] only by understanding [its] laws ... we must be content that power is the byproduct of understanding.

In essence, this book is an application of Bronowski's thinking to the park, recreation, and tourism profession; first, as it relates to understanding recreational conduct in the United States; second, as it relates to a worth ethic as a philosophical foundation for parks, recreation, and tourism; and third, as it relates to the relevance of a worth ethic to issues of growing importance within the profession.

That application process is the stuff out of which this book is made. Such a connective or synthesizing approach to the problems confronting our field represents a departure from the more traditional academic approach described by Aldo Leopold:

There are [people] charged with the duty of examining the construction of plants, animals, and soils which are the instruments of the great orchestra. These [people] are called professors. Each selects one instrument and spends his [or her] life taking it apart and describing its strings and sounding boards. . . . [Professors] may pluck the strings of [their] own instruments, but never that of another, and if [they] listen for music [they] must never admit it to [their] fellows or to [their] students. For all are restrained by an ironbound taboo which decrees

that the construction of instruments is the domain of science, while the detection of harmony is the domain of poets.⁵

While we do not claim to be poets, throughout our writing we have been conscious of Leopold's words. Consequently, while we have undoubtedly lapsed into professorial habits from time to time, we have tried to communicate in a way that reflects one ear bent to the music.

As a final note, although it may seem presumptuous for six educators to attempt to speak for the entire park, recreation, and tourism profession, we have been compelled to do so based on the conviction that the profession urgently needs to articulate its reason for being to the American public in such a way that they will insist on its continued service. In the absence of a convincing purpose statement, it is likely that the profession will remain vulnerable to attack from both within and without its ranks. Under the circumstances, if it is to survive, even a turtle has to stick its neck out from time to time.⁶

So this book begins. It is testimony to the value of the park, recreation, and tourism profession and those who serve it—the stewards of access, the custodians of choice.



Part I

THE SACRED TREE IS DEAD

“

If we are to study conduct, we must follow it both directions: into the duties of [people], which alone hold a society together, and also into the freedom to act personally which the society must still allow its [people]. The problem of values arises only when [people] try to fit together their need to be social animals with their need to be free [people]. There is no problem and there are no values, until [people] want to do both.

”

—Jacob Bronowski



1

The Problem

*“The earth, like the sun, like the air,
belongs to everyone—and to no one.”*

—Edward Abbey

On the western slope of California’s Sierra Nevada stands the largest living thing on Earth. The General Sherman Tree, known formally as *Sequoia gigantea*, is monumental both in its size and in its effect on those who visit it. The great tree has a diameter of more than 30 feet at the base. Rising skyward to a height of 120 feet, its trunk is still 17 feet thick. Nearly 130 feet from the ground, the first large limb is almost seven feet in diameter. Finally, 272 feet above the forest floor, is the top of its crown.

Standing beneath this giant sequoia, one is struck by its seemingly impregnable nature. Other trees are taller than the General Sherman, but none matches its volume. Moreover, its 1,385 tons bear down heavily on the observer. It is, in the words of Freeman Tilden, a “prodigious club.”¹ Having withstood the test of time (more than 2,500 years), the General Sherman Tree is a symbol of strength and security, a living fortress unto the ages.

How puzzling, then, that a young National Park Service naturalist should be toting bag after bag of ground cover to the base of this monarch. She explains that the root system of a giant sequoia penetrates only six feet into the earth, and that almost two feet of that soil have been worn away by the footsteps of admiring recreationists. Wanting to be photographed by the General Sherman Tree, to

touch it, perhaps for a moment even to be fused with its greatness, well-meaning people inadvertently have removed one third of the big tree's foundation.

How has this point in American history been reached where even the most durable of the nation's recreation resources are in jeopardy from an admiring, touching, and loving public? By what right do Americans claim access to these resources? Having achieved it, what explains the nature of their recreational conduct? How have park, recreation, and tourism professionals traditionally responded to the public's recreational demands? By what logic have we carried out our responsibilities? And what, if anything, should we do differently in the future?

These questions, considered collectively, constitute the problem of this book. Through their probing and discussion in Part I, the necessary groundwork is laid down upon which to base the philosophical statement made in Part II. We encourage you to read this first section carefully. Our philosophical foundation for the park, recreation, and tourism profession rests on it.

Past as Prologue

In his book *America as a Civilization*, Max Lerner stated that "the most important fact about a people is the life force carried along from its cultural origins," which is "crossed, blended, and transmuted with others in a developing civilization."² To understand the nature of recreational conduct in the United States today, it is therefore necessary to know something of the life force that defines the American character. And to gain that knowledge, it is necessary to look backward in time.

"The people who came to the American shores felt intensely about the American experience, because for each of them America was the wall broken down, door broken open ... whether they came for land or economic opportunity or freedom, they came because of the past denials in their lives."³ As the national character unfurled, "it was free enterprise arrayed against mercantilism, laissez faire against cameralism, individualism against hierarchy, natural rights against monarchy, popular nationalism against the dynastic regimes, social mobility against caste, the pioneering spirit against the status

quo.”⁴ It was the crossing, blending, and transmuting, then, of the values embedded in free enterprise, laissez faire, individualism, natural rights, popular nationalism, social mobility, and the pioneering spirit that helped shape the contemporary American life force. But it was also more than this.

In his reflective work *Democracy in America*, nineteenth century Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville addressed the passion with which democratic people pursued “equality of condition.”⁵ Noting the particular strength of that passion following the overthrow of oppressive social systems, Tocqueville reasoned that at such times people “pounce upon equality as their booty, and they cling to it as to some precious treasure which they fear to lose.”⁶ So it was that the American people, imbued with confidence in their ability to create their own destiny, and encouraged to do so by their newly won equality of condition, blazed a trail of self-determination across the North American continent.

Fueling the drive westward was the logic contained in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*.⁷ Believing that individuals were the best judges of their own welfare, and that people who looked after their own interests would be led by an “invisible hand” to promote the public interest, America’s developers felt sanctified in their individual pursuits. Commenting on this trait, Tocqueville observed that democratic communities are constantly filled with people “who, having entered but yesterday upon their independent condition, are intoxicated with their new power. They entertain a presumptuous confidence in their own strength, and as they do not suppose that they can henceforward ever have occasion to claim the assistance of their fellow creatures, they do not scruple to show that they care for nobody but themselves.”⁸

Perhaps the clearest expression of the tenacity with which early Americans embraced the ideals of Adam Smith was in their settlement of the western frontier. The homesteading of public land for private profit was promoted for its indirect benefits to the developing nation as well as its direct rewards to the individual homesteader. In a country of inexhaustible resources, the guidance of the “invisible hand” went unquestioned. Moreover, it contributed significantly to the increasing realization of what is known to this day as the American dream—the ownership of property. “Men of small property,” Tocqueville called them, “a class that is constantly increased by the

equality of conditions.”⁹ Americans coveted property. Americans collected property. Americans championed property rights. They were indeed making up for past denials in their lives.

The picture is now painted of a democratic nation peopled with confident individualists who, having earned independence and equality of condition, exercised their pioneering spirit in the form of free enterprise and laissez faire. Mentally equipped with Adam Smith’s economic rationale for asserting their natural rights to the nation’s common stock of resources, they boldly set out to better their position through the acquisition of property. This was, and largely continues to be, the driving life force of the American people.

Parks are for People

How has this life force expressed itself in the recreational conduct of the American public? In his book *The National Park Service*, William Everhart credits Tocqueville with predicting that in America many would demand what in other lands had been reserved for the few.¹⁰ Everhart adds that “parks, whether national, state, or municipal, are one of the best expressions of this ideal.”¹¹ From Yosemite to the Boston Common, recreation resources represent the democratic principle of the public good. They belong to all Americans.

There is a symbolic significance to public recreation areas that transcends their everyday meaning. In a nation committed to equality of conditions, public parks and playgrounds serve an equalizing function. Regardless of one’s station in life, one has the right of access to these resources. They are both the poor person’s and the rich person’s property.^{12, 13}

Only in recent years, however, have significant numbers of Americans expressed their right of access to public recreation areas. Previously they had been busy with other things. As Foster Dulles notes in *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play*, prior to the twentieth century “our only pleasure was business, our only amusement making money.”¹⁴ American history had revolved around hard work and productivity. But now it was time to enjoy the fruits of those labors. An increasing equality of conditions, characterized by more time, more money, more education, and

more mobility, made it possible for millions of Americans to get acquainted with their recreational properties.

Accompanying the skyrocketing demand for recreation opportunities was a distinctive character to the recreational conduct itself. The acquisitive nature of the American people, which had been manifested historically in the collection of property, was now manifested in the collection of experiences. Recreationists were more interested in intensiveness of consumption than intensiveness of experience.¹⁵ Consequently, their conduct was marked by an indulgent quality. Again the words of Tocqueville, written so long ago, are prophetic. "He who has set his heart exclusively upon the pursuit of worldly welfare is always in a hurry, for he has but a limited time at his disposal to reach, grasp, and to enjoy it. The recollection of the shortness of life is a constant spur to him. Besides the good things that he possesses, he every instant fancies a thousand others that death will prevent him from trying if he does not try them soon."

¹⁶ Anxious to express their right of access, to claim their fair share of the nation's public recreational goods, Americans thus began to recreate in increasing numbers—while there was still time.

In their collective haste, the citizenry demanded freedom of recreational action as well. Since public recreation areas belong to all Americans, it was reasoned that everyone had a right to behave as they wished when frequenting their properties. Recreational preferences were viewed purely as matters of private taste.¹⁷ And the essence of the recreation experience itself was understood to hinge on freedom of choice. It was a line of thought quite consistent with that of Adam Smith.

The picture now emerges of a democratic nation peopled with confident recreationists who, having earned access through an expanding equality of conditions, exercise their recreational preferences in an acquisitive and individualistic manner. Bolstered yet by Adam Smith's philosophical rationale for asserting their natural rights to the nation's common pool of resources, they boldly set out to enjoy themselves. Paraphrasing Dulles, the democracy finally came into its recreational heritage.¹⁸

Problems in the Parks

While the arrival of recreation in America as a popular human pastime is certainly cause for celebration, it brings with it a new set of problems for the stewards and custodians of recreation areas and facilities—problems related to increasing demands on limited resources. Moreover, they are particularly thorny problems because they are bound up inextricably with what has been described already as the contemporary American life force.

To get at the root of these problems, it is again instructive to turn to Lerner. He argues that there is no single key to unlocking American civilization. Rather, it is necessary to focus on the interrelationships and interactions among the various elements of the American life force in the search for understanding.¹⁹ So to get at the crux of the difficulty described above—increasing demands on limited resources—it is necessary to focus on the interrelationships and interactions between, what Lerner calls, “economic man and psychological man—the materialist emphasis and the individualist emphasis.”²⁰

The American appetite for material goods has been discussed already in the context of love of property. Of interest now is the insatiable nature of that appetite. Almost 150 years ago, Tocqueville pictured Americans as “forever brooding over advantages they do not possess.”²¹ More recently, Philip Slater, upon returning to the United States from a visit to an impoverished Third World country, reflected that “it is difficult to become reaccustomed to seeing people already weighted down with possessions acting as if every object they did not own were bread withheld from a hungry mouth.”²²

Indeed it is difficult to understand a people who, by any standard other than their own, are well off behave as if they were continually starving for material goods. What is it that makes Americans always want more?

The answer, not surprisingly, is embedded in the psychology of American history. In a country of equalizing social conditions, the accumulation of material wealth was a way of distinguishing oneself, a way of elevating one’s social status. Conspicuous consumption thus became a driving force in the continuing motivation of the American consumer.²³ Coupled with a market economy that was well suited to stimulate and generate tastes and desires,²⁴ the al-

lure of conspicuous consumption created a social climate in which Americans were led to believe they never possessed quite enough of anything. It is a cultural characteristic that flourishes to this day.²⁵

As Lerner points out, however, materialism by itself does not explain the increasing demands placed on the nation's common store of resources. It is the interrelationship and interaction between materialism and individualism that accounts for such demands. While materialism provides the incentive for resource exploitation, individualism provides the license. Employing the logic of Adam Smith, Americans claim access to public resources because they are confident that private use will result ultimately in public gain. The philosophy of the "invisible hand" guarantees it.

But here's the rub. While Adam Smith's thinking provided a justifiable rationale for expansion and growth during America's formative years, its continued influence is having a dramatically different effect in an era of limits. As E. F. Schumacher argued, "an attitude to life which seeks fulfillment in the single-minded pursuit of wealth—in short, materialism—does not fit into this world, because it contains within itself no limiting principle, while the environment in which it is placed is strictly limited."²⁶

It is the resultant collision between a highly materialistic and individualistic America and a limited resource base that constitutes one of the major problems facing American civilization today. It is a problem that has been outlined vividly in its recreational context by Joseph Sax in *Mountains without Handrails*:

Recreation that is dependent on ever-increasing growth and impact for its satisfactions is insatiable. The scarcity of resources we encounter in trying to meet such recreational demand is as much a psychological as a physical problem. No matter how much land we have, more will always be demanded because the object is itself more, more of whatever there is. This is what the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called 'the psychology of the spoiled child' who is insatiable because his object is not some particular thing, but a larger share. Increase is itself the object of his desire.²⁷

Unfortunately, in a world of limits, such insatiable desires lead in but one direction.

Tragedy of the Commons

That direction has been mapped thoroughly by Garrett Hardin in "The Tragedy of the Commons."²⁸ Published in 1968, Hardin's essay traces the consequences of a philosophy of unlimited access to commonly held resources for both human beings and the environment of which they are a part. It is a path, Hardin contends, of mutual destruction.

Although Hardin makes his argument in the context of the world population problem, his logic can be extended to an entire class of problems characterized by increasing demands on limited resources. It is important, therefore, for park, recreation, and tourism professionals who are now confronted with a problem of this kind to understand the point of view expressed in that essay.

To illustrate the tragedy of the commons, Hardin asks us to imagine a pasture, fixed in size, which is accessible to all the residents of a village. Each villager, being rational, wants to maximize his or her use of the pasture by grazing as many cattle as possible. Therefore, the villagers continually expand the size of their respective herds, recognizing that the benefits from such expansion will be theirs alone, while any costs associated with the increased grazing will be shared among all the village members. Under these circumstances, expansion only seems sensible. What each villager fails to recognize, however, is that every other villager is following the same logic, and that the cumulative effect of their independently logical action is bound to be the destruction of the pasture. Blinded by self-interest, the villagers proceed in their unremitting exploitation of the commonly held resource. Therein lies the tragedy.²⁹

According to Hardin, there are no technical solutions to problems of this kind. For example, the technical solutions likely to be applied in the above situation are irrigation and fertilization of the land to increase its productivity. Such measures can provide only intermediate relief, however, if the villagers continue to add to their numbers of cattle. Without a fundamental change in their attitude toward the pasture, they will conduct business as usual, resulting in the pasture's eventual despoliation. Clearly, given increasing de-

mand for a finite resource, technical solutions will prove inadequate in the long run.

Hardin argues that the only permanent solution must stem from a basic change in human values. In the above situation, the only permanent solution to the problem of overuse of the pasture must stem from a fundamental change in the way the villagers treat it. While it is widely assumed that such value change comes through education, Hardin contends that education alone will not result in the desired change. Knowledge about the dangers of overgrazing will tend to be heeded only by the conscientious villagers, leaving those who are less conscientious even more incentive to pursue their self-interests. The only realistic solution to this problem, Hardin maintains, is that of “mutually agreed upon coercion.”³⁰ That is, those people who are affected by the use of the pasture must agree to a method of coercion that will limit its use. Such coercion might take the form of a graduated tax on the profits derived from the sale of the cattle. Or it might take the form of a law setting a limit on the number of animals each villager may graze on the pasture. Regardless of the method employed, the point is that such coercive measures require a new set of values which are based on the realization that technical solutions and educational processes by themselves are inadequate in resolving problems associated with unlimited use of a common resource. Such a value system would justify coercive methods, therefore, by the knowledge that without them “freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.”³¹

Tragedy of the Recreation Commons

The tragedy of the commons denotes a situation where a group of individuals, each acting in their own individual best interest, find that the collective effect of their independently logical action is actually negative. Consider, for example, an urban resident who wishes to escape the heat, congestion, and noise of the city on a summer weekend. She looks to the mountains (beach, lake, river, countryside) for a cool, quiet, and refreshing two-day respite. She gathers the family, packs the car, and heads for one of America’s nearby public recreation areas. It’s a logical thing to do. But consider also the implication of thousands upon thousands of similar city dwell-

ers who are making the same independently logical decision. The cumulative effect of such numbers of people seeking a cool, quiet, and refreshing recreational experience at the same time is one of destroying the very values for which they are searching. Instead of peace and relaxation in the out-of-doors, they are treated to traffic jams, congestion, and noise—the very problems from which they are trying to escape. It is a vivid example of the tragedy of the commons.

This time the commons is a recreation setting, and the tragedy is allowed to occur because park, recreation, and tourism professionals are reluctant to exclude anyone from visiting what lawfully belongs to everyone. We are fully aware, after all, of the democratic principle of the public good. But as recreational demands mount—and mount they will in Adam Smith's America—the direction toward which a philosophy of unlimited access inevitably leads is one of continually eroding quality in both recreation opportunities and environments. 32 In that respect, freedom in a recreation commons may indeed bring ruin to all—even, Hardin would hasten to add, to the largest living thing on Earth.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Max Lerner, what are the key elements that make up the American life force? How are these elements reflected in the recreational conduct of the American people?
2. How does the logic of Adam Smith's "invisible hand" reinforce independence of thought and action?
3. In a nation committed to equality of conditions, what is the symbolic significance of public recreation areas?
4. What accounts for the acquisitive nature of recreational conduct in America? Why does it create problems for the stewards and custodians of public recreation?
5. What is meant by the tragedy of the commons? Do you think Hardin's logic is applicable to public recreation settings? Compare Hardin's thinking to that of Adam Smith. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each point of view?