**Raid on Resources**

The “Raid on Resources” encompassed the decimation of a variety of animal, vegetable and mineral resources. The article by Udall illustrates the point with remarkable clarity and brevity. In the span of one hundred years, humanity scarred the face of the earth as no species has before. Beginning with the acquisition of lumber on the east coast and progressing to the current day, reckless disregard has tainted our cumulative actions toward the environment. We have continuously viewed nature as a resource for consumption and have ignored the gamut of reason for resource preservation. We have wasted and continue to waste that which has been generously provided, that which may have sufficed our species to eternity, had it been held in more prudent hands.

The forests of America at the time of the colonies were expansive. So vast, covered with innumerable species of mammoth trees, that they reached mythical proportions. Indeed, the myth of Superabundance began before America even existed: “The sad truth is that when the big lumber raids got under way, our thinking on forests was fixed, and we regarded those who invaded the forest heartlands as the leaders of the westward advance.” The virgin timber of the Appalachian Mountains was annihilated with remarkable efficiency. Tulip trees, sugar maple, hemlock, tall and strong, they built the sturdy homes of the pioneers. Landsides and floods ensued as topsoil crumbled from the scalped peaks of the mighty mountains. Rivers which ran clear and supported a biodiverse population were strangled with the ensuing sludge. This process repeated itself in exponential fashion as the population exploded. Americans thought nothing amiss, as the supply was endless, provided by a benevolent creator, exclusively for their benefit and at their non-existent discretion.

This anthropocentric view of the world was entirely short sighted. It pervaded the collective cognizance entirely and few could comprehend the long term effects of such short sighted actions. The utilitarian pattern established in the lumber industry repeated itself in the acquisition of mineral, oil, and animal resources: “In the long run overgrazing and overfarming proved as disastrous as overmining and overlogging. Yet the raids on resources were not limited to soil or gold or timber. They extended to biological resources as well.” Entire species were decimated in the quest for tasty cuisine, high fashion and cheap fuel. Few noticed or cared enough to protest. When they did, met by political corruption, their voices fell on deaf ears. Gradually, the effects of the “slash and burn” policy became an unavoidable reality. The legislature was slow to catch on, but eventually laws were drafted and minds were changed. The development of the National Park System and the ensuing call for preservation occurred with little time to spare. Pristine wilderness was finally given a belated measure of protection.

Today we face another precipice, though it is largely obscured from popular view. The National Forestry Service is the largest lumber corporation in America, harvesting trees in almost every state. Strip mining for coal has leveled entire mountains in Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. Pennsylvania, Texas and Oklahoma are experiencing seismic activity and wells are pumping water that catches fire, both a result of fracking for natural gas. We have water pollution from chemicals dumped into the already compromised Colorado River and more flow in every day from the Alberta Tar Sands. How is it that so many are blind to environmental assaults? As a whole, Americans have been successful in avoiding these occurrences. We refuse to see the effects of increased consumption and continue to gorge ourselves at the expense of future generations. How long can we continue in this fashion? What catastrophe will force a national awakening? “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” (Santayana)