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Response to Memon

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Dr. Memon's paper[1] is an attempt to examine the factors that have led to environmental degradation, in general; specifically, he describes some attempts made in New Zealand to find solutions to managing these environmental problems. Since I'm not a specialist on New Zealand, I will discuss some of the more general environmental issues touched on in Dr. Memon's paper.[2]

Dr. Memon's comments indicate that he takes an antipodean position, i.e., the "other side of the world" perspective.[3] I take this as a positive contribution to examining the issues of environmental management, for it is through the sharing of many perspectives that we often develop solutions. Unfortunately, many environmentalists, politicians, economists, and industrialists similarly define environmental issues as a series of opposing dichotomies, many of which have been expressed at this Roundtable.[4] Some dichotomies are:

Capitalism vs. the Environment

European Colonialism vs. the Environment

Technology vs. the Environment

Individualism vs. the Environment

Globalization vs. the Environment

It is my impression that these binaries often arise when a paper is aimed at identifying who is responsible for environmental problems rather than focusing on solutions. Authors often imply that the environment can be viewed as a whole, that there is "The environment" with a capital *T*. This seems to imply that the environment has a single intrinsic value.

Rolson, on the other hand, argues that nature has several major values:[5]

Economic:	a resource to be used for human gain
Life support:	life is tethered to the biosphere
Recreational:	a place that gives pleasurable appreciation
Scientific:	a milieu for intellectual activity

Aesthetic:	a vehicle for non-utilitarian searching for organic beauty
Life Value:	based on evolutionary kinship; the life we value in people is advanced from the life in other organisms with which we share the earth.

Since values are culturally derived, this list would not be shared by all and, undoubtedly, the ranking of these values would vary among cultures and, likely, among individuals within cultures. There are many traditions that can be recognized in the relationships of humans to the environment.[6] Certainly, many people equate the imperialist tradition with a European or Western culture. The imperialist tradition holds that humans have dominion over nature and is most likely derived from a Judeo-Christian tradition. Others disagree with this rather simplistic view since a close reading of the Bible indicated that when humans were given "dominion" over the earth and its creatures, they were also given the responsibility of acting as stewards of the earth. The other major traditional relationship between the environment and humans holds that humans must have a reverence for nature because of its beneficence. Many Eastern religions and philosophies, as well as Native American beliefs, embody these traditions. It should be noted, however, that this view of the relationship between humans and the environment also has a Western analog termed *arcadianism.* This tradition was supported by such individuals as the English naturalist Gilbert White, the French philosopher René Descartes, and the American naturalist Henry David Thoreau. While it is true that this tradition was marginalized in Western culture for many years, the environmental movement of the 1970s brought it back to the forefront in many Western countries. Thus, the concept of "the environment" is a complex one that includes many different values interpreted differently both among and within cultures.

Despite the complexity of the term *the environment* and the simplistic nature of a dichotomous approach, I feel that this approach facilitates discussion of a very complex issue in a short paper. Mark Davis echoed similar concerns in his response to Danilo Antón's essay,[7] and, as Dr. Antón pointed out, it is difficult not to simplify in a fifteen-page paper.[8] However, I am concerned that when one goes on to examine the merits of the changes that have taken place in New Zealand, Dr. Memon's essay might tempt the reader to use this model of dichotomies to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. So I

would like to briefly explore the complexities in issues and discuss why three of these areas need particular attention.

I. Capitalism vs. the Environment

Dr. Memon suggests that while New Zealand reforms are forward looking, they are based on economic liberalization.[9] He claims that such a strategy, especially deregulation of the economy, will mean more pressure on the environment. Many environmentalists blame industrialization for the decline of the world's environment—and this is probably correct. Yosef Gottlieb, director of the Israel Center for International Environmental Studies, contends that modernization itself (which includes urbanization, industrialization, and secularization) is maladaptive working against nature.[10] He goes on to assert that socioeconomic development, even when aimed at ecological improvement, is based on modernization and, thus, is by definition doomed to failure. Many authors examining environmental issues characterize capitalism and industrialism as systems bent on degrading the environment, no matter the cost. There is an almost explicit assumption here that these tradeoffs between profit and the environment have been made intentionally. However, as former senate majority leader George Mitchell indicated in his 1991 book, at the beginning of the century, the human race had neither the population size nor the technology to radically alter planetary systems for good or evil.[11] Moreover, Victoria Chitepo from Zimbabwe told the World Commission on Environment and Development that "[t]he remarkable achievements of the celebrated Industrial Revolution are now beginning seriously to be questioned principally because the environment was not considered at the time. It was felt that the sky was so vast and clear nothing could ever change its color, our rivers so big and their water so plentiful that no amount of human activity could ever change their quality, and there were trees and natural forests so plentiful that we will never finish them. After all, they grow again. Today we should know better."[12]

Clearly, short-term economic gains have been made at the expense of the environment. This has been true not only in capitalistic societies but in many other societies where it has been assumed that resources are without limit. Gottlieb noted that even Marx failed to appreciate the role of the environment in his "need creates right" credo.[13] Whatever the economic system (tradition al, command, or market), there is little doubt that increased population size coupled with acceleratory

rates of consumption are bound to endanger the endowment of the planet.

Chris Maser notes that while the current expansionist economic system has failed to allow for the emerging ecological world-view, it appears that the emerging ecological world-view also is ignoring economics.[14] He points out that this is odd since the "eco" in both economics and ecology come from the Greek *oikos*, meaning "household." Economics is the management of the house and ecology is the study of the house. It is Maser's view that these two institutions must work together for sustainable development to be successful. Clearly there are many instances where these two disciplines have joined forces. For example, both 3M and Xerox have reported that by paying attention to their use of resources and the level of efficiency, they have been able to increase profitability.[15] Dr. Lovejoy gives us the example of how it was much cheaper to refurbish the watershed in New York City than it was to build water treatment plants.[16] He goes on to discuss at some length how biological diversity can act as an incredible resource for many industries. More notably, Hammond reaches this conclusion: "As market forces are increasingly harnessed to protect the environment, economic and environmental goals are increasingly aligned. That means getting used to some ideas that may seem strange at first; that green taxes may be good for the economy, that 'free' natural resources are often very costly if we do not put a price on them…and putting a price on things we value is one way of changing our behavior to protect them."[17] If economists can begin to accept the value of the environment, environmentalists also need to recognize how the economy can be utilized to obtain environmental goals. Dr. Lovejoy provides several examples of how such joint actions between the environment and the economy can be a win-win situation.[18]

II. European Colonialism vs. the Environment

It is certainly true that colonization has led to major environmental disruptions. As with any invading species, when humans move into a new ecosystem, they will cause significant changes. While early human migrants did have impacts, their lifestyles and small populations made the consequences less grave. With European colonization, all this changed. Much of this increased impact was due to intensive agricultural methods and the beginning of exchange with many and distant others, i.e., globalization. Also, European colonization brought

improved medical care, which led to a significant reduction in infant mortality and an increase in longevity (at least in the European sector of the population), exacerbating human pressures on the environment.

As William Ruckelshaus, former head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and member of the Brundtland Commission on the Environment, indicated,

> Preindustrial peoples lived sustainably because they had to; if they did not, if they expanded their populations beyond the available resource base, then sooner or later they starved or had to migrate. The sustainability of their way of life was maintained by a particular consciousness regarding nature: the people were spiritually connected to the animals and plants on which they subsisted; they were part of the landscape, or of nature, not set apart as masters.[19]

Ruckelshaus went on to say that we are now in a state of "transitional unsustainability" because of our reliance on mortgaging the future for today. This borrowing has led to some frivolous benefits but also to others that substantially improve the quality of life (medical care, education, and human rights). The difficulty lies in returning to an equilibrium with the environment while maintaining the real benefits. This is the challenge for any invasive species, including humans. There are certainly many examples of preindustrial civilizations that invaded new areas and were incapable of finding that equilibrium. Since human impacts are more severe in the postindustrial age, we must find creative methods to reach an equilibrium.

III. Globalization vs. the Environment

Dr. Memon expresses the concern echoed by many others that environmental degradation has been and will continue to be compounded by the process of globalization.[20] Here, economic and colonial expansion are seen as the major culprits — and this is undoubtedly true. Many scholars dealing with the issue of sustainable development as a means of overcoming environmental decline, then, often hold that if globalization is the cause of environmental degradation, stopping globalization is the cure.

To be sure, we need to realize that there are, indeed, global environmental problems that cannot be solved without global cooperation. For example, in 1987, two dozen nations signed a treaty reducing future

production of chloroflourocarbons (CFCs).[21] Unfortunately, some major developing countries, such as China, did not participate, despite the fact that the treaty's goal is to reduce CFCs and thus protect the global ozone layer. With the current growth in the ownership of refrigerators in China, if CFCs are not limited there, no matter what the rest of the world does, global CFC levels will continue to grow. Obviously, global cooperation is needed and signatories to the treaty have to fulfill their commitments while encouraging all nations to join such global accords. Other major environmental global problems that must be considered include global warming, acid rain, declining biodiversity, and population growth.[22]

The idea that environmental problems can be solved by reducing globalization, especially of the economy, may seem realistic in developed nations where there is sufficient food to feed their people and relatively stable population growth. However, in other countries, the simple task of feeding their citizens requires a connection to the global economy. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated that for 117 developing countries, low-input, subsistence farming would allow only 54 of them to feed their 1975 population—more than one billion people would not be fed. By the year 2000, 64 countries would be unable to feed their populations with low-input, subsistence agriculture.[23] These numbers are optimistic and do not tell the whole story—since most of these countries are already experiencing high levels of malnutrition or starvation. This points out the nature of the dilemma for environmentalists and developmentalists — we have already extended population levels beyond the local carrying capacity in many areas. How do we resolve this problem? Do we reduce globalization, decrease technological approaches to solutions, and let millions of people starve? Many approaches to environmental protection are based on community-level development. However, since many ecological concerns occur on larger scales, the catch phrase "Think globally, act locally" will not suffice. Rather, we must think *and* act *both* globally and locally.

IV. What Are the Solutions?

The environmental problems faced by the global community are enormous. Luckily for New Zealand, the issues are not quite as large. In many respects, New Zealand can be viewed as a laboratory in which a set of solutions is being examined. These solutions include restructur-

ing the government and developing the resource management act. These changes are based on a model of "sustainable development."

There have been many attempts to define sustainable development; I list here the ten critical elements.[24]

1. Understanding and accepting the physical principles that govern nature.
2. Understanding and accepting that we cannot manage nature.
3. Understanding and accepting that we make an ecosystem more fragile when we alter it.
4. Understanding and accepting that we must reinvest in living systems even as we reinvest in businesses.
5. Understanding and accepting that only a unified systematic world-view is a sustainable world-view.
6. Accepting our ignorance and trusting our intuition while doubting our knowledge.
7. Specifying what is to be sustained.
8. Understanding and accepting that sustainability is a continual process.
9. Understanding and accepting accountability for intergenerational equity.
10. Understanding and accepting ecological limitations to land ownership and the rights of private property.

Sustainable development is not a new idea; many people may be surprised to know that it was an underlying principle in the American National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 passed under the Nixon administration (the same administration that began the EPA).[25] Unfortunately, much of the progress made under Nixon and Carter was lost under Reagan and Bush, where economic concerns were given priority over environmental imperatives. Here, there was no mandate or incentive to develop new technologies fit for ecological soundness.

Dr. Memon appears to support the tenets of sustainable development. He suggests that by using sustainable development as an underlying philosophy in restructuring environmental legislation, the New Zealand government has taken a step in the right direction. However, he points out a number of potential shortcomings of this initiative.

First, he suggests that the government's restructuring probably would not have happened without economic justification, i.e., that these changes were forced by the economy, *not* the environment. He indicates that since resources are now in the hands of individuals rather than the state, there is the possibility that individual ownership will lead to even greater environmental degradation. Dr. Memon also says that with the removal of ownership from the government there is also the problem that there will be less of a relationship between resource owners and resource managers. Finally, he thinks that it is unclear how the government will act in resolving conflicts. This inevitably leads to the discussion of the relationship among individual rights, government rights, and community rights.

However, there is at least some evidence that New Zealand's citizens will not allow economics to fully control their role as participants in community development. A good example is how citizen concern had a good deal of influence on a proposed merger of a former publicly held power company (Waikato Electric Corporation) with Utilicorp from the United States.[26] Although the two merging corporations followed all of the proper guidelines as set up by the New Zealand government, the public was outraged by the lack of public input and the lack of a consensus-building process. The citizens had just gone through a period of intensive sacrifice to lower energy usage during a drought period and protested the idea that much of the revenue that the company would take in would go overseas. The merger was completed, but there was certainly a delay and change in the merger process; and instead of Utilicorp obtaining a controlling share of the company, it gained a 39-percent ownership of Waikato Electric, and one-third of the company was placed in a public trust. This will help to assure the long-term participation of the public in the management of this resource.

Dr. Memon also introduces us to the resource management act that provides a new decision-making process. It provides for environmental decision-making to be as close as possible to the level where impacts/benefits occur, thus following the tenets of sustainable development where action is local. This act also tries to match the levels of decision-making with different ecological scales, a goal I believe is laudable. Again, Dr. Memon suggests that there are problems with this act, especially with the interpretation of the balance between "environmental stability" and "social stability," both keystones of sustainable development.

The link between environmental and social stability is crucial if development is to be sustainable. Some see the only path to sustainability as one that accents a return to nature. However, I agree with others who stress the value of social and environmental needs combined with technological innovation. As William Ruckelshaus and former senate majority leader George Mitchell, indicate, "Although we cannot return to the sustainable economy of our distant ancestors, in principle there is no reason why we cannot create a sustainable consciousness suitable to the modern era."[27] They suggest that such a consciousness would include the following beliefs:

1. Humans are part of nature and our future is dependent upon both our ability to utilize resources and to insure that we do not damage the planet's ability to regenerate these resources.
2. Economic activity must include the cost of environmental impact.
3. The maintenance of the environment must include equitable development for all the peoples of the world.

Mitchell adds that if we are to create a sustainable world, there must be realistic policymaking.[28] This includes the acknowledgment that individuals and institutions change only when it is in their own interest, either because of benefits or sanctions. He goes on to say that to carry out policies, we must institute a clear set of values in which both individuals and institutions are stakeholders. In establishing such policies, developed nations must insure that improving the environment does not lead to the disfiguring of the environment in developing nations, a common occurrence as developing nations become part of the global economy. Ruckelshaus suggested that major policies should include:

1. Finding ways to pay for fighting environmental degradation.
2. Finding ways to more accurately monitor the health of the globe and to understand ecological processes.
3. Finding ways to regulate environmentally harmful technologies.
4. Finding ways to stabilize world population.
5. Finding ways to reduce greenhouse gases.
6. Reshaping foreign policies that depend less on military purchases and more on sustainable development.

7. Finding ways to forgive debt in developing nations, thereby allowing them to participate in sustainable development.
8. Finding ways to reforest the earth.[29]

These ideas are echoed by U.S. Vice President Al Gore.[30] He calls for the development of a global Marshall Plan. The goal of this plan should be to think strategically and remove the bottlenecks to real change that would allow for improvement in the world's environment. Gore's Marshall Plan has five strategic goals:

1. Stabilize the world population;
2. Rapidly create and develop environmentally appropriate technologies;
3. Make a comprehensive and ubiquitous change in the economic "rules of the road" by which we measure the impact of our decisions on the environment;
4. Negotiate and approve a new generation of international agreements necessary to safeguard the environment for the present and future; and
5. Establish a comprehensive plan for educating the world's citizens about the global environment.

Both Gore's and Ruckelshaus's ideas are *big* ideas and include many technological and social efforts that take place at the global level. However, there are certainly some issues that are indeed best addressed at the local level. Again, as Dr. Memon and others have reminded us, the slogan "Think globally, act locally" is often used as the mantra for development activities. It seems to me that there are indeed both local and global environmental problems and that we must think and act accordingly. New Zealand has taken a step in this direction by tying local environmental issues to local political units while maintaining a consultative and monitoring role in the central government to help insure that larger scale issues are dealt with.

Clearly, environmental degradation occurs on many different scales and requires appropriate solutions. Just as the diversity of the earth is important, a diversity of solutions is required. Sallie McFague reminds us that these solutions are based not only on technological innovations but on having the will to carry out these solutions.[31] Despite the many environmental problems ahead of us, significant progress is being

made in a number of areas. There have been many global agreements to do such things as reduce CFCs that damage the ozone, decrease greenhouse gases that lead to global warming, and to protect the earth's biodiversity. On the national level, the United States, for example, has taken a number of steps in the last two decades to improve the environment, including the Clean Water and Clean Air acts, the Endangered Species Act, the toxic waste superfund legislation, and others.[32] On the local and state levels many other environmental laws have been enacted, such as those that require the reduction of air pollution from cars, or encourage or require recycling. These laws will not solve our environmental problems, but they certainly are steps in the right direction. The United States is not alone in developing a national strategy to deal with environmental problems; Dr. Memon demonstrates how New Zealand has taken a somewhat different tack in addressing its environmental issues. The fact that the New Zealand government has adjusted its role as an owner and manager of resources to one of purely management reduces the potential for conflict of interest. The use of the concept of sustainable development in new environmental laws and in restructuring political units in New Zealand suggests to me that New Zealand has made a breakthrough in the relationship between government, citizens, and resource owners. Dr. Memon points out a number of his reservations about these new programs, but I think the conceptual approach is sound and that it is now a matter of implementation.

I believe that for any significant attitudinal change to occur, we must invest heavily in education. This is crucial in linking environmental concerns with economic activities. As Dr. Memon pointed out, most enlightened governments, such as New Zealand's, use the model of sustainable development in restructuring the state's role in resource management and in the development of various resource management laws. Earlier, I listed ten elements for sustainable development. Eight of the ten begin with "understanding." By understanding the consequences of their actions, citizens can make informed decisions. It is inevitably up to individuals to make the changes necessary to improve and care for the environment. Through continued discussion and education, including such venues as this International Roundtable, progress can be made. In the words of Vice President Al Gore, "[I]f the global environmental crisis is rooted in the dysfunctional pattern of our civilization's relationship to the natural world, confronting and fully understanding that pattern, and recognizing its destructive

impact on the environment and on us, is the first step toward mourning what we have lost, healing the damage we have done to the earth and to our civilization, and coming to terms with the new story of what it means to be a steward of the earth."[33] Education is the key to this understanding. And as Danilo Antón and Ding Zhaolin remind us, the environmental movement is growing worldwide — we don't need to lose hope.[34] We do need to accept that there are unequal responsibilities for the cause of environmental degradation and, thus, there must be an unequal accountability for making improvements. However, we must focus on solutions and lessen the rhetoric of blame. Moving forward to find solutions must be done with a sense of urgency so that we hasten the pace of improvement. The Rio Earth Summit was a historic one for the planet, providing many agreements on how to carry out environmental improvements. However, this conference occurred five years ago, and it appears that while some progress has been made toward reaching the goals set forth, the progress is not yet "significant" and time is running out.[35] Important efforts, such as the ambitious experiment taking place in New Zealand, are needed and they must be expanded throughout the world.

Notes

1. Pyar Ali Memon, "Nature, Society, and State: An Antipodean Perspective," *Macalester International* 6 (Spring 1998): 195–220.

2. I'd like to thank Dr. Ahmed Samatar for inviting me to participate in this program, Dr. Memon for his contribution, and, finally, the members of my first-year course, Biology 24: Ecology. We spent four days discussing Dr. Memon's thoughts, and many student comments have been helpful in focusing my response.

3. Memon, "Nature, Society, and State."

4. See the essays by and responses to Danilo Antón and Sallie McFague in this issue.

5. H. Rolston. "What Sorts of Values Does Nature Have?" in *Ecological Consciousness: Essays from the Earthday X Colloquium, University of Denver, April 21*–24, 1980, ed. R. C. Schultz and J. D. Hughes (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 351–69. Referenced in Edward J. Kormondy, *Concepts of Ecology*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1981).

6. L. White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–207. Referenced in Edward J. Kormondy, *Concepts of Ecology*.

7. Mark Davis, oral response to Danilo Antón, Macalester College International Roundtable (3 October 1997).

8. Danilo Antón, "Latin America: Five Centuries of Globalization," *Macalester International* 6 (Spring 1998): 25–47.

9. Memon, "Nature, Society, and State," 215–17.

10. Yosef Gottlieb, *Development, Environment and Global Dysfunction: Toward Sustainable Recovery* (Delray Beach, Fla.: St. Lucie Press, 1996).

11. George J. Mitchell, *World on Fire: Saving an Endangered Earth.* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1991).

12. Quoted in Mitchell, *World on Fire*, 52–53.

13. Gottlieb, *Development, Environment and Global Dysfunction*.

14. Chris Maser, *Sustainable Community Development: Principles and Concepts* (Delray Beach, Fla.: St. Lucie Press, 1997).

15. Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (New York: Penguin, 1993).

16. Thomas E. Lovejoy, "The Global Environment: Opportunities or Constraints?" *Macalester International* 6 (Spring 1998): 10.

17. Allen Hammond, "State of the Planet: The Environment and the Economy: Must Our Goals for Both Conflict?" *The 1994 Information Please Environmental Almanac* (Annual 1993): 1018.

18. Lovejoy, "The Global Environment," 8–12.

19. William D. Ruckelshaus, "Towards a Sustainable World," *Scientific American* 261 (September 1989): 168.

20. Memon, "Nature, Society, and State," 198–201.

21. Gore, *Earth in the Balance*, 318–19.

22. Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 1997* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.)

23. Mitchell, *World on Fire*, 87–99.

24. Maser, *Sustainable Community Development.*

25. Joseph M. Petulla, *American Environmental History*, 2d ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co., 1988).

26. Sam Dyer, "The Story of a Community Relations Fiasco: Lessons to Be Learned from the Deal between Waikato Electric Corporation (N.Z.) and Utilicorp (U.S.A.)," *Public Relations Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1993): 33–35

27. See Ruckelshaus, "Towards a Sustainable World," 168.

28. Mitchell, *World on Fire*, 175–91, 199–201, 215–18.

29. Ruckelshaus, "Towards a Sustainable World."

30. Gore, *Earth in the Balance*.

31. Sallie McFague, "The Loving Eye vs. the Arrogant Eye: A Christian Critique of the Western Gaze on Nature and the Third World," *Macalester International* 6 (Spring 1998): 79–80.

32. Petulla, *American Environmental History*, 401–32.

33. Gore, *Earth in the Balance*.

34. See Danilo Antón, "Latin America," and Ding Zhaolin, "Response," *Macalester International* 6 (Spring 1998): 25–47 and 59–66.

35. Christopher Flavin, "The Legacy of Rio," in *State of the World 1997*, 8–22.