

**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**

humans increased as rain became more acidic. A junior colleague of Rossby and Eriksson, soil scientist Svante Odén, combined all of these findings, and more, in 1967 and 1968. Somewhat flamboyantly, Odén described for the Swedish press a foul "chemical war" among the nations of Europe, in which pollutants of a single country could travel over 1,200 miles in the atmosphere. His reports finally aroused scores of European and North American scientists and politicians.

As of late 1981, 93 stations across the United States and 50 in Canada had been set up to monitor precipitation. The findings so far: Two-thirds of the two countries' land area regularly receive acid rain.

*Private Resources*

"Privatizing the Environment" by Robert J. Smith, in *Policy Review* (Spring 1982), The Heritage Foundation, 513 C St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Environmentalists often blame businessmen—and the capitalist system itself—for air and water pollution. The entrepreneurs make their profits, and the public pays the "costs," they argue. However, Smith, a Washington consultant, contends that much pollution and other environmental abuse in the United States has been fostered by government failure to appreciate the advantages of private ownership.

Environmental pollution, Smith notes, seems to be worse in communist countries than in the West. A 1981 study found the populace of the heavily industrial Katowice region of Poland suffering 47 percent more respiratory disease than other Poles. The Soviets, meanwhile, have so polluted and overexploited their waterways that rivers leading to the major inland seas, the Caspian and the Aral, are now "little more than open sewers." And the Chinese under Mao Zedong let pollution, waterworks, and landfill projects ravage the freshwater fish population; fish has almost disappeared from the Chinese diet. State regulation of natural resources, Smith concludes, does not necessarily eliminate environmental abuse.

The problem with public ownership, says Smith, is that it fails to hold out an incentive to any individual to protect a natural resource. In America, backpackers, hunters, wildlife lovers, campers, cattlemen, and others all press public managers to allocate resources in often conflicting ways. Hence, the government sometimes permits the overharvesting of trees in national forests, excessive grazing on leased Western lands, and congestion of national parks. Private property owners, by contrast, can carefully tend their forests and grazing lands.

The federal government owns or manages one-third of America's 2.27 billion acres of land; when state and local government lands are added, about 40 percent of the country is in the public domain. Smith calls for putting some of the most abused wildlife refuges and parks under the control of the Audubon Society and other suitable private owners. Such an experiment would raise difficult questions about procedure and fairness. But America's resources, he writes, are worth the effort.