

AS I SEE IT...



Earth Day at the 'zoo'

I felt safe. The only leather I wore was my belt and watchband. I was sure to melt into the crowd gathered to celebrate Earth Day—that nationwide science project—at the Cleveland Zoo.

My car belched carbon monoxide, but so did other cars. Besides, this was a celebration of our collective guilt.

Cars were illegally parked on what the day before was healthy turf. Wasn't that compacted grass now crying out in pain?

The zoo skyline was dotted with helium-filled balloons, despite literature which told of the danger the tiny blimps pose to aquatic life.

A seven-foot-tall petition was riddled with signatures. The theme of the petition was "Rescue the Future." A woman borrowed my pen to sign her name. I asked her why she signed. "To rescue the future," she said. I was hoping for something a little deeper, but...

A man in black robe and death mask held a sign: "I represent failure to address population control, topsoil erosion, irresponsible consumption." ...And someone with lots of free time.

In the amphitheatre, a speaker mused plaintively: "I wonder why the squirrels in my neighborhood have bare patches of skin from lawn chemicals. Didn't they see the warning signs on the lawn?...How did a lawn come to be more valuable than a prairie?"

A woman from the Northeast Ohio Greens handed me a list of the "Ten Key Values of the Great Committees of Correspondence." Sort of like a Soviet five-year plan for agriculture. Their goals include "grassroots democracy," "decentralization," and "post-patriarchal values."

She wore a beret and sunglasses. We were indoors.

I got her started on lawn care products. "A single pellet will kill a worm in a minute-and-a-half," she rasped, insisting that worms should be left to aerate the soil. She soon became miffed enough to reveal a hidden agenda. The gloves (and glasses) were off as she intoned about companies that kill worms "and make a fat, \$fi&!-ing profit!" Nice talk, lady!

The true green industry has the information to refute this silliness. Turfgrass helps prevent soil erosion and controls dust and noise. Aerators help worms aerate the turf. Prairies are fine examples of the beauty of the American landscape, but they don't work so well in the neighborhoods. Much of the rhetoric I encountered was tinged with rancor toward corporate America. The real demon, for many Earth Day disciples, is profit.

A co-director of the event told me organic control companies were welcome. Any companies that use chemicals would most likely have been denied, but apparently, none applied! That's our fault. We're obviously on our own. Let's continue to tell our side of the story, whenever and wherever we can...or are allowed.

Terry McIver, associate editor

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