

Betrayal of Science and Reason: How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future

Paul R. Ehrlich, Anne H. Ehrlich



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Despite widespread public support for environmental protection, a backlash against environmental policies is developing. Fueled by outright distortions of fact and disregard for the methodology of science, this backlash appears as an outpouring of seemingly authoritative opinions by so-called experts in books, articles, and appearances on television and radio that greatly distort what is or is not known by environmental scientists. Through relentless repetition, the flood of anti-environmental sentiment has acquired an unfortunate aura of credibility, and is now threatening to undermine thirty years of progress in defining, understanding, and seeking solutions to global environmental problems. In this hard-hitting and timely book, world-renowned scientists and writers Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich speak out against what they call the "brownlash." Brownlash rhetoric, created by public relations spokespersons and a few dissident scientists, is a deliberate misstatement of scientific findings designed to support an anti-environmental world view and political agenda. As such, it is deeply disturbing to environmental scientists across the country. The agenda of brownlash proponents is rarely revealed, and the confusion and distraction its rhetoric creates among policymakers and the public prolong an already difficult search for realistic and equitable solutions to global environmental problems. In Betrayal of Science and Reason, the Ehrlichs explain clearly and with scientific objectivity the empirical findings behind environmental issues including population growth, desertification, food production, global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain, and biodiversity loss. They systematically debunk revisionist "truths" such as: population growth does not cause environmental damage, and may even be beneficial humanity is on the verge of abolishing hunger; food scarcity is a local or regional problem and is not indicative of overpopulation there is no extinction crisis natural resources are superabundant, if not infinite global warming and acid rain are not serious threats to humanity stratospheric ozone depletion is a hoax risks posed by toxic substances are vastly exaggerated The Ehrlichs counter the erroneous information and misrepresentation put forth by the brownlash, presenting accurate scientific information about current environmental threats that can be used to evaluate critically and respond to the commentary of the brownlash. They include important background material on how science works and provide extensive references to pertinent scientific literature. In addition, they discuss how scientists can speak out on matters of societal urgency yet retain scientific integrity and the support of the scientific community.Betrayal of Science and Reason is an eye-opening look at current environmental problems and the fundamental importance of the scientific process in solving them. It presents unique insight into the sources and implications of anti-environmental rhetoric, and provides readers with a valuable means of understanding and refuting the feel-good fables that constitute the brownlash.

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