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1987

8-16-1987

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Citation Information

Liu, Yan, "The General Policy of Controlling the Environment Comprehensively to Make the Chinese Economy and Environment Gradually Develop in Harmony" (1987). *Proceedings of the Sino-American Conference on Environmental Law (August 16)*.

<https://scholar.law.colorado.edu/proceedings-of-sino-american-conference-on-environmental-law/14>

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Yan Liu, *The General Policy of Controlling the Environment Comprehensively to Make the Chinese Economy and Environment Gradually Develop in Harmony*, in PROCEEDINGS OF THE SINO-AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (Natural Res. Law Ctr., Univ. of Colo. Sch. of Law 1987).

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THE GENERAL POLICY OF CONTROLLING THE ENVIRONMENT COMPREHENSIVELY TO MAKE THE CHINESE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT GRADUALLY DEVELOP IN HARMONY

Yan Liu*

What is the correct road for China to take in order to provide the present population with sufficient environmental resources without damaging the environment for later generations, yet maintain enough supply of resources for normal use? China started to research this important theoretical and practical question at the First Environmental Protection Conference of 1973.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

At the 1973 Conference, the environmental protection policy of "making comprehensive plans, rational distribution, comprehensive use, turning bane into boon, relying on the people, protecting the environment, and bringing benefits to the people" was the result of much theoretical study. After ten years of research and practice, environmental protection work was confirmed as one of the fundamental state policies in the Second National Environmental Protection Conference. The conference also put forth the strategic guiding principle of "Economic, urban/rural, and environmental construction, which should be planned, operated and developed at the same time", in order to realize uniform economic, social and environmental benefits. Other specific principles, guidelines, policies, and correspondent environmental protection laws were published after the conference, such as the policies of "protection as first priority, combine protection with control,

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and control comprehensively." Also, later published was the principle that "the polluters must be responsible for control, the developers must be responsible for protection", and the system of imposing fees on excess discharge.

This shows that China has made big progress on the research of Chinese style environmental theory and practice. On the basis of this theoretical point of view and according to the experiences and lessons learned during our environmental protection work, the general guiding ideology of "economic construction should develop in harmony with environmental construction" was evinced. These theoretical viewpoints played an important role in pushing the development of the environmental protection cause in China. In the previous ten or more years, the protection and control of industrial pollution has been greatly improved, the trend of city environmental degradation has been controlled, and the protection of the ecological environment has been developed.

PROBLEMS IN APPLYING ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY

Despite such progress, from an overall point of view the environmental theoretical research cannot keep up with the requirements of environmental protection practice. For example, there is a lack of theoretical proof whether the major environmental protection policies and specific measures can conform to the ecological environment and the actual conditions of China. For many years, effective measures were created in every part of China, for which there was no theoretical explanation. Special consideration now needs to be given to determine for the series of established guiding policies and laws—what is the right measure, ways and models that should be adopted to insure the complete enforcement of these environmental laws and policies, while realizing the purpose and target of these laws and policies. There is not yet a satisfactory solution.

To the contrary, the established guiding policies are often interrupted or eliminated by outside forces. The result is that the prevention and control of environmental pollution cannot be carried out satisfactorily, and environmental degradation is not under control. Some people think the primary reason for this situation is that China is very big, financially lacking in funds for pollution control and environmental protection, and holds science and technology expertise below other countries' standards. These people seldom look into the conflict and the misconduct between the existing economic and political systems. After China's reformation, people are gradually realizing that the creation and development of our environmental prob-

lems are not a single matter. Its roots come from the long-existing static economic system and the incomplete political system, as well as the mistakes made involving economic development strategy. The problems with the environment are a specific reflection of this syndrome.

Concerning the malpractice in Chinese socialist construction caused by this syndrome, Mr. Deng Xiao Ping clearly pointed out during a meeting with the Yugoslavian Communist Party Delegation that "I stand for reformation. No reformation, no way out. After a few decades of practice, the old system turned out to be unsuccessful. Foreign models used to be adopted, which, in addition to our mistakes, restricted production, restrained intellectual functioning, and prevented people and local governments from being active." Deng also said, "The reformation should cover all aspects, including the economic, political and other systems."

Considering more than ten years of experience and lessons, the datum point has been discovered which creates theoretical foundations which Chinese environmental protection should follow. The datum point as the objective law of the ecological environment should be combined with basic conditions and specific practice in China. This is the starting point and the target of basic Chinese style environmental theory, and the foundation of deciding which strategies Chinese environmental protection should pursue.

Three basic reasons why China did not make a breakthrough in this important theoretical problem are:

1) Existing environmental protection policies, laws, and the corresponding theoretical viewpoints cannot be fully enforced under the static economic system and incomplete political system. These conflicting systems cannot fit with each other, and their contradiction overwhelms fusion forces.

2) The existing economic system and the static theoretical viewpoint are the primary reasons for environmental pollution and natural resources damage, and are the reasons why these problems cannot be quickly solved. The use of such a rigid economic system to solve the major environmental problems in China not only lacks internal encouragement, but there are also external pressures not to solve these problems.

3) A general model which is suitable for an environmental science system and has a strong comprehensive motive has not yet been established.

REFORMATION AND COMPREHENSIVE CONTROL

Reformation is the only way in which Chinese style environmental protection can be accomplished. Only by reforming the static economic system and the incomplete political sys-

tem, and then establishing vigorous and near-perfect economic and political systems, can we realize the result of an economy in harmony with the environment and the uniformity of economic, social and environmental benefits. Only under such conditions can the general law of the ecological environment and the actual conditions of China be combined, and a general model full of vigorous energy be implemented for Chinese style environmental protection work.

By the time the economic system reformation began, a general model had been put forward to comprehensively control the environment. Just like the requirements set forth in the decision of economic system reformation, city governments must clearly divide administrative organizations with enterprises, simplify the governing structure and give more power to enterprises, and comprehensively control the city environment after designation of duties has been made between local governments and ministries.

Although it was put forward for the first time as the guiding policy of environmental protection reformation, the strategic ideas of comprehensively controlling the environment has an important significance and is a breakthrough in basic environment theory. It marks a new historical period of Chinese environmental protection. To formulate the ideas of comprehensively controlling the environment and to synthesize these ideas into the general model of complete environmental management took more than ten years. This is because China used to have administrative organizations and enterprises that were joined together, there was no clear dividing line between ownership and operation right, area management and trust style management existed separately, people's legal knowledge was very limited, and economic growth was the only strategic development target.

Under this situation, the thought of comprehensively controlling the environment to establish a complete environment theoretical system was not and could not be used. China's formerly raised ideas of comprehensively controlling the environment to reform its environmental protection work and to make the ideas into the general model of a complete environmental protection work has shown a strong vitality in its first few years. At present, some big and medium cities are experimenting, in accordance with these guiding ideas.

Such reformation is an important integral part of the economic system reformation. In many cities, the reformation is led by governments under the personal control of the mayors, with deputy mayors taking specific responsibilities. Each department cooperates with each other. In the past, the EPA fought without outside help from any environmental protec-

tion work and considered the environmental problems on an individual basis. This situation was changed a short time after reformation began.

The environmental protection work in the city has not progressed into a vigorous period. The primary result of reformation is that the comprehensively controlling ideas are not only the reflection of the combination between the general law of ecological environment and the actual conditions of China, but also the motive behind the combination attempting to promote a harmonious development of economy and environment.

The comprehensive control harness ideas can be gradually formed into a system which is the basic theory of our environmental protection reformation because of the following reasons:

1. **Comprehensive control ideas are a correct reflection of the general law of ecological environment.** In today's world, the creation and development of all environmental problems are caused by many elements, including the problems of environmental pollution and ecosystem damage due to internal or external reasons. Experience has indicated that the best way to clear up such man-made hazards is to comprehensively control the environment, not protecting the environment and controlling pollution as it exists.

2. **Comprehensive control ideas are necessary due to the actual conditions in China and are an inevitable result of the Chinese history.** The creation, development and solution of Chinese environmental problems have features both internationally common and unique to China. China is a developing country with a large geographical territory and a weak financial foundation. There is a lack of funds for control and construction of the environment as well as science and technology. While trying to find an environmental protection plan suitable for Chinese conditions, two developing phases were experienced, which are to simply control pollution and to comprehensively control the environment. The experiences and lessons of the two phases made people aware of the truth that there is no simple environmental, economic, or social problem since these three factors both rely and restrict each other.

A big country has both advantages and disadvantages in solving environmental problems. A weak financial foundation lessens the ability to solve environmental problems, a lack of funds is a liability, but there can be collection of funds by comprehensive control of the environment. During the sixth five-year plan, 17 billion RMB was invested in environmental protection by collection, and it expected to have in-

vested 33 billion in the seventh five-year plan, a 94 percent increase.

Studying advanced foreign technology and science can be performed to meet Chinese needs. These factors opened people's minds and led them to understand that in China, only by adopting the theory and measures of comprehensive control could we overcome the inefficiencies of our system. The conclusion is to adopt comprehensive control measures as required by the condition of the country, which is the inevitable result of China's history.

3. The idea of comprehensively controlling the environment is not only the guiding ideology in solving Chinese environmental problems, but also the general policy in solving specific issues. In this sense, comprehensive control is not an expedient measure, but is still the basic principle. It not only works for cities, but also suits rural and all other environmental protection areas.

4. The thought of comprehensively controlling the environment is not a fuzzy concept. It has five obvious features which include: 1) breaking away from the old concept and model where only the EPA took care of environmental protection; 2) completely throwing away the passive policy of simply controlling pollution and using comprehensive control policy to solve the environmental problems; 3) reforming the superstructure to fit the requirements of environmental protection by finding a new model for the country and the governments at different levels so they may lead the environmental protection work; 4) there should be both policy implementation and reviews since the environment can only be controlled as it exists; 5) its contents and specific provisions are guided by ecological theory, systematic analysis should be used to find comprehensive elements that encourage and restrict social economic development, resources usage and protection, and environmental quality. Other methods may be used to eliminate pollution and to realize harmonious development of economic, rural/urban, and environmental construction. These methods may also be used to realize the development of economic, social and environmental benefits.

5. Comprehensive control ideas are the theoretical foundation of establishing a distinctively Chinese general model for environmental protection. In more than ten years practice, methods have been found which are suitable to our conditions. All these methods have one point in common, that comprehensive control must be taken. None of them extend beyond this. For instance, what method should be used to implement the "over-all plan and rational layout" required by the environmental protection policy? What should be done to make the

"three constructions" and "three benefits" uniform? How should the policy of "polluters are responsible for control, and developers are responsible for protection" be enforced? Also, what general model should be used to harmonize development of the economy and the environment? Only by adopting the comprehensive control policy can all the problems be solved satisfactorily.

6. **Comprehensive control ideas actually adjust the benefits and losses people get from the environment, including both the recent and later generations' benefits and losses.** The complexity of environmental problems comes from three aspects: 1) environmental problems are comprehensive; 2) complicated contradictions of generations gains and losses in occupying, protecting and damaging the environment; and 3) restricting relations between environmental and economic social development. Our lessons told us that the contradiction in interests is the key point. To correctly handle this contradiction is a precondition of successful environmental protection, and the comprehensive control method is a perfect way to correctly handle people's interests in the environment.

CONCLUSION

Comprehensive control is not a perfect environmental theory. It aims at over-all environmental control, and not for any specific pollution control project or construction. It should be further developed and completed to become a complete ideological system and scientific theoretical model. This contribution to Chinese environmental protection work will put China forward on the road to scientific management.