

# **The Federal Government Owns Too Much US Land**

**By Samuel Blumenfeld**

One of the ways the Federal Government can significantly cut its 13 trillion-dollar debt is by selling some of 635 million acres of land it owns in the United States. Believe it or not, Washington owns 3 out of every 10 acres of land in the country. Yet, the Obama administration wants to buy more. It wants Congress to allocate \$900 million in new spending in 2012 to increase its ownership of U.S. land.

Indeed, when a nation is severely in debit, it ought to sell off some of its assets to balance its books. There are many Americans, and foreigners too, who would gladly buy up some of that government land which could then become productive property. According to the Treasury's Financial Management Service, the U.S. government at present owns about \$233 billion worth of highly saleable non-defense "property, plant, and equipment," which it ought to be selling instead of maintaining.

Niall Ferguson, the brilliant libertarian economist, writes in Newsweek (2/29/11): "Washington could also sell its stakes in the Southeastern Power Administration and related assets as well as the Tennessee Valley Authority's electric-power assets. There's Amtrak (which runs at a loss) and the extensive hydroelectric empire of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

Besides, there is a huge backlog of projects on public lands which the Land and Water Conservation Fund can't pay for. Also, there is a multibillion-dollar maintenance backlog which requires funding. So why is the government going to borrow money to buy more property? It doesn't make sense. But it only makes sense to socialists who want the government to own everything, including its citizens. The aim of the socialists is to abolish private property.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created in 1965, is funded by fees charged to oil and gas companies for extracting resources from public lands. Since then the fund has been used to buy more than 4.5 million acres, costing \$6.1 billion. The last thing the Federal Government should be doing is borrowing more money to buy more land, which it can't maintain.

George Washington, our first President, was deeply concerned with government debt. He said: "No pecuniary consideration is more urgent, than the regular redemption and discharge of the public debt." But we have a government in Washington that has accumulated 14 trillion-dollars in debt, and thinks nothing of adding to it without the blink of an eye. Obama seems to delight in the fact that the nation is near bankruptcy and has offered no real plan to avoid a financial collapse.

And the reason for his lack of interest is that he is an Alinsky-trained radical

revolutionary who sees the bankruptcy of America as the surest way to destroy our capitalist system. His behavior during the recent crisis which would have led to a shutdown of the government is quite revealing. This fight over cuts in the 2011 budget would have never taken place had the Democrats actually issued a budget when they controlled both houses of Congress and the White House. The Wall Street Journal commented a day before the settlement:

"Democrats were supposed to pass this budget last year but failed to do so. House Republicans proceeded to cut \$61 billion after two years of record spending, but Mr. Obama says he'll accept only \$33 billion and most of that must come not from specific programs but from 'unobligated balances' that might not be spent anyway. Republicans now want \$40 billion and cuts that are real. Inviting a shutdown sooner or later has looked to be the White House strategy since Mr. Obama unveiled his own budget in February that increased spending and dodged any serious budget reform. Our guess is that Mr. Obama's political advisers have concluded that the lesson from Bill Clinton's 1995 shutdown is that presidents win such showdowns. If they don't believe this, why risk a shutdown over \$7 billion and a few policy differences like funding for Planned Parenthood?"

But Obama, in his magnanimity, came before the cameras a few hours before the shutdown deadline and announced that an agreement had been reached and that the government would continue to be open so that Americans could visit the Smithsonian, the National Parks and museums, and that federal employees, including the military, would continue to receive their checks without interruption. What a great president! Only in America!

But what became clear during this crisis was that the liberals consider funding Planned Parenthood more important than paying our soldiers. Why? Because abortion-on-demand is the sacred cow of the Democratic Party.

Which means that any true defunding of such entities as Planned Parenthood will have to wait until the conservatives capture both the Senate and the White House in the election of 2012. And incidentally, Obama's budget for 2012 is \$3.7 trillion, with a \$1.5 trillion *deficit!*