

There Is A Sorrow Here That Weeping Cannot Symbolize

John Steinbeck saw it in the '30s and it continues still...a rural cleansing encompassing almost every state. By J. Zane Walley

Muley Graves, a character in John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" says, "I'm right here to tell you, mister, there ain't nobody gonna push me off my land! My grandpaw took up this land 70 years ago. My paw was born here. We was all born on it. An' some of us was killed on it. An' some of us died on it. That's what makes it arrn. Bein' born on it and workin' on it and dyin', dyin' on it. An' not no piece of paper with writin' on it."

The plight of the dispossessed Joad family in that book was universalized as a microcosm of the thousands of farm families who suffered oppression imposed by the banks and big farm interests.

The family's departure from their land, and their slow disintegration, provided insight into the thousands of Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas Panhandle, and West Kansas families who were evicted and uprooted from their land, and forced to search westward in the inhospitable Eden of California for jobs and survival. "The Grapes of Wrath" laid bare the suffering and oppression of the farmers, and the hollowness of the American Dream. The telling novel questioned issues of social and economic justice and brought them to the attention of the American public.

For the past two decades, a dispossession in America, dwarfing that encountered by Steinbeck in the California labor camps, has been silently slithering across the nation. The new rural cleansing encompasses almost every state. Country people have been denied their livelihoods and effectively pushed from their soil as surely as the Joads were. Instead of these folks being driven from the land by such easily identifiable villains as "banks and big farm interests," today's dispossessed are destroyed by regulatory agencies, dubious science, special interests and obscenely rich foundations.

If Steinbeck wrote a novel on the forced relocation of farmers today, it likely would never be printed because of environmental politics. The destruction of rural America has been aided and abetted by an unwitting urban public. A society that has its views

molded by a prejudiced and convoluted media applauds the forced relocation of farmers, miners, ranchers, loggers and other resource providers in the name of "saving the planet," for spotted birds, lizards and insignificant little fish. Because of silence in the press and outright censorship, the plight of those forced to relocate has gone unnoticed.

G.K. Chesterton wrote in 1908: "So again,

es of newspaper readers are absolutely unaware that it exists."

Not only do rural Americans face the "terrible censorship of silence," but also outright attacks by a majority of the members of the media who actually seek to demonize the resource provider. Well-known writers and shapers of public opinion safe from reality and need, pen views birthed in the ivory towers of academia that support the inane agenda of environmental Luddites, thus hastening the end of the American agrarian culture. The farmer and rancher who feed the families of the journalists, the logger who provides them paper and shelter, the miner who provides steel for their automobiles, parts for their computers, and gold for their jewelry, and the oilman who fuels it all, are targets for their uninformed and shallow diatribes.



The press can condemn any "truth" to death simply by not undertaking its communications to the world—a terrible "censorship of silence." The masses are unaware that a problem exists. ABOVE: Henry Fonda stars in "The Grapes of Wrath."

we have almost up to the last instant trusted the newspapers as organs of public opinion. Just recently some of us have seen (not slowly, but with a start) that they are obviously nothing of the kind.... It will not be necessary for anyone to fight again against the censorship of the press. We have a censorship by the press."

Oswald Spengler wrote in 1939: "The press is free to take notice of what he says or not. It can condemn any 'truth' to death simply by not undertaking its communication to the world—a terrible censorship of silence, which is all the more potent in that the mass-

Steinbeck's understanding of the unconscionable defilement of rural America reaches beyond his grave. "There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation," he wrote. "There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success." ■

J. Zane Walley has written many extraordinary stories for RANGE. In November 2003, he suffered a massive stroke and now speaks and writes with difficulty. This story was written pre-stroke. Jay's still on our masthead because of his tremendous contributions to RANGE.