“Je Suis le Lorax”

A Negative Case by Chris Ostertag

# Introduction

I woke up this morning to the sound of the alarm on my iPhone. I walked downstairs, turned on the coffee maker, and put a bagel in the toaster. As I ate breakfast, I checked the news on my iPad. Those kind of modern amenities seem almost necessary for life. Without them, the world would be a very different place. However, the common denominator for virtually all the modern conveniences we enjoy is that they're possible only because of development. It's because unrestrained economic freedom is shelving that dream for millions, and jeopardizing it for the rest of us, that I'm proud to negate the resolution.

# Value

Let's kick things off with a Value, or a measure by which you can decide if the resolution is true or false. I propose the standard of **Sustainable Development**, defined operationally as the capacity of a developing nation to maintain economic growth over an extended period of time.

The first **Reason to Prefer** this value over the affirmative value is: **Topic Context**. The resolution is essentially asking us which of two economic policies is preferable for developing countries. Hence, the most logical means of weighing the resolution is the standard of development. This value asks us whether economic freedom or environmental protection better enables long-term economic growth and developmental success.

My second **Reason to Prefer** is: **Precursor to Everything**. It's absolutely legitimate for a developing country to strive to defend values like justice and human rights. However, a quick look at the world's roster of developing countries reveals a pretty grim record on issues like human rights. There are two reasons for that. One, they lack the will. Mass starvation tends to attract a priori status; if people are struggling just to find food, they likely don't care very much about anything else. Two, developing countries lack the necessary infrastructure to uphold and defend other values. For justice, we need effective police and an efficient court system. For human rights, we need watchdog organizations and carefully-designed limits on government. But developing countries lack those, because they're likely just looking for a way to not starve. Sustainable Development is a better value than [insert aff value here] because it's impossible to actually value [their value] until we've attained a certain developmental plateau.

# Contention 1: Economic Freedom is Unsustainable

Freedom says you get to do what you want. Economic freedom says you get to do what you want with your money and resources. Give people economic freedom, and in their natural haste to self-aggrandize, they'll likely avoid long-term planning, especially with regards to natural resources. It's a classic example of the tragedy of the commons: let people make their own economic choices about how their business treats the environment, and they'll likely abuse it, because they have little immediate incentive to value something they don't own.

I want to show you exactly how this works in the real world with an **Application: Special Economic Zones**. Special economic zones (often abbreviated as SEZs) are regions of certain countries in which the government - in order to create economic growth - allows nearly total economic freedom. The result is generally rapid development; it looks on the surface like a clean victory for economic freedom. Here's the catch: a briefing in support of SEZs from SSMRAE, a multidisciplinary research journal based in India, had this to say:

“Shenzhen in China, a highly-polluted trade area where the sky is gray most of the day from the polluting industries, is a perfect example of the environmental impacts that rapid SEZ growth can have on an area. In certain areas within an SEZ in Mumbai, the creeks are so polluted that no one can fish. Many attribute the pollution there to the fact that no environmental laws apply to the SEZs. In Tijuana, Mexico, the Rio Grande is so polluted from maquiladora waste that it has caused an increased risk of Hepatitis A.”\_

The benefits of economic freedom, in this case, came at the cost of thousands of people's rights, and ultimately hindered development by making resources like water unusable.

# Contention 2: Sustainability Requires Environmental Protection

Natural resources are finite. Economic freedom says businesses should be able to use them however they like. However, we're facing a tangible, immediate threat from resource shortages. BP estimated that our oil reserves will only last for around 50 more years, and other power sources are similarly at-risk. A study published in the Guardian by the World Wildlife Fund - the world's largest conservation organization - estimated that by 2050 our natural resources will be all but exhausted, meaning development will grind to a halt and the world as we know it will cease to exist.\_

I know this sounds bleak, but the science is clear: the relentless consumption driven by total economic freedom needs to end. Continued development requires conservation, and research into alternative power. That's not something freedom will incentivize. But it's not okay for freedom to destroy our civilization. It isn't morally or pragmatically acceptable to allow the irresponsible choices of a few unscrupulous companies to ruin the world for future generations. Protecting that world requires common-sense limitations on freedom.

# Conclusion

If we run out of resources, millions of people living in developing countries will never be able to do something as simple as use an alarm clock or make instant coffee. Affirming the resolution means that grim possibility will become our reality. That can't be allowed to happen.

After all, I prefer my bagels toasted.

Notes for the Affirmative

Don't make the mistake of letting the second reason to prefer kill you. Suppose you have a value like human rights. Try this in the cross-ex:

Is Namibia developed? (no)

Do humans live there? (yes)

Do those humans have rights, just like we do? (yes)

Sure, development makes defending those rights easier, but if that's the case, development is at best a means to an end; developing countries are working to create infrastructure so that they can achieve your value, which is actually the most important thing. But those rights exist before development happens, and still matter more.

Once you've taken down the value, the rest is easy. Respond to all of their contention advocacy with *no impact*, arguing that their evidence only matters if development is the value. Their evidence sounds frightening, but take a closer look at the problem: we're running out of resources. And you can’t deny that economic freedom is at least partially to blame. However, even if we were to limit freedom's ability to consume resources, that wouldn't just make the problem go away. We would also need to locate an alternative to the status quo. Ask in the cross-examination exactly what policies they have in mind, then in the next speech explain why the policies fail. Acknowledge that the problem is real, but argue that removing freedom isn't the solution.

Notes for the Negative

The second reason to prefer is highly contingent on the affirmative value. Whatever their value is, your point is that we can't possibly attain/defend/value it without being developed. You might need to tweak the rhetoric a little on the fly to accommodate their specific value, but the basic logic that development is prerequisite to pretty much everything is nearly universally-applicable.

Expect them to attack your value. They might say it leads to immoral things, they might say it's circular because it's in the resolution, (although it actually isn't circular because it's not one of the terms that are actually juxtaposed by the res) or they might argue that it can't possibly have the moral impetus of something like human rights. Lean on your reasons to prefer. The topic at hand makes this value uniquely qualified, and the second reason to prefer easily defeats most other values by arguing that they can't be protected without development. Fight in the hedgerows, fight on the beaches. If you win the value, your evidence should win the round for you. It's inescapable that freedom is making sustained development much harder due to environmental privations. Fight for the value, and then focus on impacting your evidence

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