

- with buildings. How can land be improved or developed?
4. Some people mourn the decline of the family farm. Others point to the increased production that comes from centralized agribusiness. What values, both social and personal, might be involved in a family farm that would be missing in large agribusinesses?
 5. What's the difference between land and property? Between dirt and soil?



DISCUSSION CASES

Who Owns the Moon?

Consider the following thought experiment to assess your understanding of property rights. In July 1969 astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first human being to walk on the moon. As Armstrong jumped to the surface, he offered the famous description: "One short step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Does anyone own the moon? Could anyone ever come to own the moon? What would it take to own a planet? Could the United States argue that, because it was the first country to travel to the moon, and because the United States "claimed" it, the moon belongs to the United States? Suppose that, instead of unfurling an American flag, Armstrong staked his claim with the Armstrong family flag, announcing that he was claiming this unowned land for his family. Would Neil Armstrong own the moon? How could land that is unowned first come to be owned?

John Locke argued that land comes to be owned when someone mixes their labor with it as long as there is "enough and as good" remaining for others. Whose labor was mixed with the moon? Do all taxpayers have an equal claim on moon ownership? What about citizens of other countries who did not have an opportunity to participate in the lunar landing? Is there enough and as good remaining for them? Or is the moon something that shouldn't be owned at all? What would this mean?

Already there have been discussions about mining the moon for minerals. How should we decide the proper, ethical use of the moon?

Wise Use?

Several groups have formed, especially in the American West, to fight what they see as burdensome environmental regulations that restrict private property rights and prevent wide access to public lands. The so-called Sagebrush rebellion of the late 1970s and early 1980s and, more recently, the wise-use movement represent a broad coalition of people who oppose environmental regulation of private and public lands. Gifford Pinchot coined the phrase "wise use" to describe his conservationist policies aimed at managing public lands for the benefit of all citizens.

The wise-use movement includes ranchers, cattlemen, farmers, loggers, land developers, hunters, commercial and sport fishermen, off-road vehicle users, and others. Although it has broad appeal as a grassroots movement, it has also attracted financial and political support from corporations. Some wise-use groups are directly connected to industrial, logging, mining, and development interests.

The wise-use movement has two primary goals, both related to traditional American values. This movement opposes environmental regulation because it places an unfair burden on private property owners. When regulation prevents development of natural resources, private owners are denied their property rights without full compensation. Environmental regulation of public lands is also unfair in that it seems to privilege the interests of one group—the environmentalists—over the interests

(continued)