

Immigration Control

an attempt to subvert the ecology movement

Anne Petermann

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FE Note: Because we are so late in coming out, this article may seem to be rather belated. In fact, the population-immigration debate continues.

Dave Foreman (former proprietor and editor of the *Earth First! Journal*) plays a key role in pushing an ugly, reactionary anti-immigration politics that does not remotely address the issues of empire and capitalism that are necessary to understand and to respond humanely and sanely to the population explosion.

The following essay appeared in *The Eastern North American Resource Center Bulletin* of the Native Forest Network (PO Box 57, Burlington VT 05402), one of the most principled and hardworking radical ecology groups in the U.S. Recent activities of the NFN include a campaign against Boise Cascade Corporation's designs on Chilean forests.

The relation between population, empire and ecological destruction was a key focus of our original critique of Earth First! and Dave Foreman's reactionary-chauvinist wing of deep ecology in the U.S., when we started a series of articles on Earth First! in the late 1980s. Our engagement played a constructive role in bringing about positive change in the organization. Unfortunately, the Earth First! Journal still sells the old guard's official history, Christopher Manes' *Green Rage*, but does not carry the text that came out of our critique, David Watson's *How Deep Is Deep Ecology?* (see our book pages.).

We are not suggesting EF! censor its book service, but we urge them to sell the Watson book as well.

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Over the past few months, the immigration issue has come to the forefront of the environmental agenda. The claim: immigration into the U.S. is the primary cause of massive population increases that are in turn causing the plundering of the resources of this country in a manner that is leading to the downfall of this great nation. The assertion continues that immigrants are using up all of "our" resources by daring to come to this country to live as well as we do. Never mind the fact that in Mexico, from where the vast majority of these people are migrating, seventy percent of the inhabitants are people indigenous to the continent. The people wishing to close the borders, on the other hand, are not indigenous to the continent but are, in fact, descendants of immigrants who may even have had some part in the massacre of the original inhabitants. The colonialist mentality continues.

The immigration issue was not well known even one year ago. Suddenly it is everywhere. The Sierra Club had a major vote on it (their members opposed the hateful initiative by a three-to-two margin), NFN has received massive packets in the mail of information opposing immigration, and there were two workshops on the issue at the annual ELAW conference at the University of Oregon this year. How is it possible that this issue suddenly became so prominent? Perhaps it has something to do with the massive influx of money that was spent to promote it.

What is most disturbing about this issue is not so much that it is being pushed by neo-nazis and eugenicists, that is to be expected. They will use any means to prevent the entrance of those whom they deem to be "lesser breeds" into their precious country. What is most troubling is the steady stream of respected "leaders" of the conservation movement who have signed on in the name of intolerance (like Dave Foreman, Brock Evans, Farley Mowat, Paul

Watson, to name a few). It is my hope that this trend is not so much a sign of racist tendencies on their part, but rather an inability to look deeply and see the real source of the problem.

The roots of environmental destruction do not lie with poor campesinos who are being forced to leave their homes in search of the means to feed their families. It began with the theft of their traditional lands by the European invaders over 500 years ago and continues today with the global economic order that uses institutions like the World Bank to force so-called “Third World” countries to institute debt austerity programs. Through these programs, countries are given loans only if they agree to cut off vital human services and focus on resource export, both by emphasizing growing chemically dependent export crops, which ruin communities’ abilities to sustain themselves, and multinational logging, mining or oil ventures. This in turn forces people to leave their homes because they no longer have a means to sustain their simple subsistence lifestyle. And why does the World Bank do this? To maintain the lifestyles of the people of the “First World,” who, consuming up to seventy times the resources of the average campesino, require the import of mass quantities of resources from the countries of the south.

Before we accuse the people of Mexico and Central America of “invading” our country and stealing our resources, we should first stop invading their countries and stealing their resources. Perhaps then they won’t be forced to leave their homes in the first place.

## **Sidebar**

### **GROUP RESISTS ANTI-IMMIGRANT REPRESSION**

Immigrants and others perceived to be immigrants have recently faced intensified harassment here in Detroit from city cops and INS agents, according to the Coalition Against INS Raids. The group has held informational meetings in the Latino Barrio and protests at the INS offices. Contact the Xicano Development Center, 3570 W. Vernor, Detroit, MI 48216, Phone: (313) 841-0838.

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