

Green Power and Eco-Imperialism

By ROGER BATE

Despite the best efforts of historian Niall Ferguson to demonstrate the better side of the British Empire ("Empire," Basic Books) the overwhelming view of the American people to colonialism and imperialism is largely negative. So any charge made against a group, individual, or government that involves these words is bound to be resisted strongly by the recipient.

Today, in New York City, a broad charge of eco-imperialism is laid at the feet of the environmental movement. The Congress on Racial Equality blames government officials, aids agency bureaucrats, as well as sandal-wearing greens, for mass disease and death in the poorest countries of the world because they export their most vile regulatory policies.

It's time to hold environmental groups accountable for the consequences of their policies on Earth's poorest citizens.

According to the co-founder of Greenpeace, Patrick Moore, "The environmental movement has lost its objectivity, morality, and humanity." Speaking at CORE's event today, Dr. Moore is scheduled to say: "The pain and suffering it inflicts on families in developing countries can no longer be tolerated."

So far the green movement has ignored the criticism, but, after today, it will have to respond, since "eco-imperialism" is becoming a more widely heard, if not yet fully appreciated, term.

The most obvious example of eco-imperialism has been the push to restrict the use of the insecticide DDT, for controlling mosquito-borne diseases. Concerns about damage to eggshells of birds of prey (probably caused by massive agricultural DDT use), have pushed the greens to demand DDT restrictions, which have cost tens of millions of lives over the past few decades. Westerners are not immune from this effect. The resurgence of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and malaria in pockets around America and the astonishing speed with which West Nile Fever has attacked every state in the union bar Hawaii and Alaska, is caused, in part, by the reluctance to spray insecticides.

In addition to this pinnacle of eco-imperial-

ism, other attacks on pesticides cause malnutrition and death in poor countries. Unlike DDT, the pesticide Paraquat is extremely toxic, and as many wretched people have found out, it is an efficient, if appallingly painful, method of committing suicide. However, because the pesticide is dangerous when used wholly inappropriately, should it be banned for those who would use it responsibly? The greens say yes; those in favor of development say no.

First, "pesticides like Paraquat protect 40% of global food output," an independent Indian economist, Prasanna Srinivasan, said. Without Paraquat, people are likely to die from starvation.

Secondly, Paraquat is benign to the environment; it biodegrades and, unlike DDT, does not persist; it also reduces the amount of land required by farming by making food production more efficient and so gives higher yields for each acre.

Lastly, its inherent properties and the way it is sold in over a hundred countries means that the chances of accidentally drinking it are extremely low. Accidental poisonings do occur (as they do with bleach and ammonia in Western homes), but they are very rare.

Regardless of such arguments, green groups, such as the International Pesticide Elimination Network, demand its worldwide ban. Of course, the main actors for groups like IPEN do not struggle to eat every day, and banning Paraquat would not affect their purchases of expensive, organic produce from their specialist suppliers. However, most of the world's poor do not have such luxury of choice.

CORE aims to make eco-imperialism a household word. CORE's Niger Innis says he wants to stop the "callous eco-manslaughter." Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but making an important point, Mr. Innis said that the average European cow gets a \$250 a year subsidy, while over a billion people survive on less than \$200 a year. By reducing markets for their goods, Western farm subsidies cause as much hardship in poor countries as do restrictions on pesticides.

A professor of plant genetics at Tuskegee University, Dr. C. S. Prakash, explained how genetic modifications of plants could reduce the number of children blinded by vitamin A deficiency. Currently, 500,000 children go blind and "golden rice" could help this problem disappear, but the greens oppose the technology. "By orchestrating unfounded scare stories that biotech crops are unsafe or untested, they put huge road blocks on the development of plant genetic engineering that could bring economic prosperity to the

rural poor," Dr. Prakash concluded.

An organizer of the CORE event and the author of "Eco-Imperialism: Green Power Black Death," Paul Driessen hopes, like Mr. Innis, that eco-imperialism becomes a household word: "It's time to hold these groups accountable and compel organization, foundations, courts, and policy makers to understand the consequences of the policies they are imposing on our Earth's poorest citizens," Mr. Driessen said.

It has to be hoped that the efforts of Messrs. Driessen and Innis bear fruit. The moral bankruptcy of the modern environmental movement must be exposed, and their work is a good start.

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