

## **The Latest Attack on Immigrants from the News-Press**

It is hardly news that the Santa Barbara News-Press has consistently favored anti-immigrant views in its editorials and op-ed pieces. I use the term “anti-immigrant” because many of the pieces published by the News Press go well beyond arguments for tightening immigrant policy; they embrace ethnic and racial stereotyping which borders on incitement to hate crimes. Thus the News-Press’s director of operations Randy Alcorn, in his masthead column, has compared immigrants to “termites,” “trespassers” and international criminals, calling them “surplus population,” dumped upon us by the corrupt Mexican government.

The latest example of this kind is a long op-ed piece (5/18/06) by Diana Hull, head of an organization calling itself “Californians for Population Stabilization.” I am sure that the majority of those supporting immigrant’s rights and immigrant justice also favor efforts to control the growth of population, especially in the Third World. Current population growth in many parts of the world is associated with famine, ethnic warfare, pandemics, deforestation, air pollution, and natural disasters such as occurred during the tsunami of 2004. Moreover, population growth is loosely associated with increased burning of fossil fuel responsible for global warming. However, it is a bit hard to connect what can only be described as an anti-immigrant hate piece by Hull with these serious issues.

Hull’s argument, such as it is, is roughly this: immigrants are exploiters, who deplete resources. They are “wretched excess” who era is over. Immigrants are responsible for a “demographic tsunami.” Immigration to the U.S. is “immoral.” Immigrants who demonstrate for their rights “call up bad images” (for Hull?), “contain the unspoken threat of anarchy” (for Hull?) “and the breakdown of safety and security.” Hull is clearly frightened by immigrants who demonstrate--or else is cynically attempting to frighten others with her inflammatory imagery. She evokes images of “frightening mobs” reminiscent (to her) of “car-burnings in France, train bombs in Spain, and the screaming and continuing cult-like fury of the Arab streets.” (She thus uses one form widespread form of ethnic hatred—against Arabs—to fuel hatred against peacefully demonstrating Hispanics.)

She then adds fuel to her rhetoric by accusing Hispanic immigrants of a movement of “reconquista” to take over “California and the Southwestern United States;” Hull claims that conspiracy theories about this takeover can “no longer be brushed off as alarmist;” “such plans were clearly advanced”. According to Hull, U.S. sovereignty is at stake. As if that wasn’t bad enough, Hull goes on to attack unions supporting immigrants. They are continuing “their unfortunate history of coziness with Communists and unsavory characters with bad reputations.” (She incidentally claims that the decline in union membership resulted from “tactics for which they are famous,” i.e. demonstrations and coziness with Communists, a patently absurd explanation for the decline in union decline.)

What does all this have to do with the issue of population control? The United States is not a separate planet. Problems associated with global population increases know no national bounds. Fair-minded persons concerned with population growth support efforts at family planning and at raising educational levels and living standards, since it has been demonstrated that educated women with access to family planning have fewer children. And the issue of resource depletion and the environmental effects of burning fossil fuels is only indirectly related to population levels. Fair-minded persons concerned with these issues support laws to reduce of our profligate use of fossil-fuels through changes in technology and life styles. "Immorality" is not related to immigration but to our per capita burning of 30 times as much fossil fuel as inhabitants of the Third-World. The biggest threat to accelerated global warming comes from economic development of China, a country which through draconian methods has stabilized population.

Most of Hull's screed is devoted to inflammatory (and silly) accusations that are little more than incitements to hate crime. Four administrations have chosen to tolerate, even encourage, immigration through nearly total neglect of laws governing employers of immigrants. Our local employers have in effect invited immigrants without legal documentation to come here to take jobs no one else wants, and we have all enjoyed the blessings of this cheap labor while turning a blind eye towards an invisible underclass who enjoy few of the protections of American workers, who are not even permitted driver's licenses, who receive no social security benefits despite paying into the system, and who work without unemployment or workers' compensations insurance. A paramount issue in the immigration debate is justice and respect for our immigrant community. What to do about *future* immigration is another issue altogether. But addressing these questions intelligently is clouded by the injection of racism under the guise of high-minded concerns about resource conservation and global population levels. What a shame that our reputedly liberal community is served by a newspaper that so willingly provides a mouthpiece for ethnic hatred.

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