



Environmental Imperialism: A Growing Threat to the Environment and Our National Economy

by David F. Briggs

Environmental imperialism is an elitist policy supported by an increasing number of citizens of this nation, who consume products derived from industry, but uncompromisingly oppose development of certain industrial projects in their communities. This opposition is driven by fear of real and/or perceived negative impacts that may result from such activities. Proponents of environmental imperialism avoid all responsibility of dealing with these issues by demanding these projects be located elsewhere. This discriminatory practice ultimately shifts the burden of resolving these issues to poorer communities of this nation or third world countries. Consequently, environmental imperialism commonly results in significantly greater damage to the environment being concentrated in poorer regions of the world, since wealthier and more technologically advanced nations like the United States are more environmentally sensitive and capable of dealing with these issues. In summary, advocates of environmental imperialism want to enjoy the benefits of living in a modern society, but refuse to assume any of the responsibilities of doing so.

Environmental imperialism affects many different types of industrial activity, including petroleum, natural gas, mining, timber, electrical power and waste management as well as other forms of heavy industry such as chemical, steel, smelting, refining and manufacturing. In Arizona, the Resolution and Rosemont copper projects as well as recent efforts to explore and develop uranium resources near the Grand Canyon have been condemned by proponents of environmental imperialism.

Growing opposition to certain industrial projects not only involves just local issues, but is also becoming a major factor resulting in our nation's increasing dependence on foreign sources for the goods and services we require to maintain our high standard of living. Ignored for decades, our negative trade balance, federal budget deficits and reliance on credit have accelerated to dangerous levels since the turn of the century, making their cumulative impact on our economy unsustainable. These problems are of our own making. Failure to apply the lessons of history will doom us to repeat it. Long term solutions will not be solely resolved by the massive

investment of capital into our nation's economy. Any successful resolution must also require substantial changes in how America conducts its business at home and abroad.

The United States is an affluent nation with innovative, industrious citizens and abundant natural resources. Elimination of artificial barriers that impede our ability to be more self-sufficient will help America honor its obligation to assume the true costs of maintaining our comfortable lifestyle. Any significant decline in our trade deficit will greatly facilitate our economic recovery through the injection of hundreds of billions of dollars into our nation's economy that would otherwise be diverted overseas. Likewise, all Americans, both rich and poor must share the benefits and responsibilities of living in a modern society. We must resist the temptation of environmental imperialism, which only divides our nation, pitting the interests of one community against another. Time has come for all Americans to put aside their differences and work together to resolve our most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. Our children's future prosperity depends on the decisions we make today.

Disclaimer: David F. Briggs is a geologist, who has worked in the mining industry for more than thirty years.

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Originally published by the Arizona Daily Star on February 16, 2009.