

Accelerating Population Pressure or Overpopulation?

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It was for a long time my hypothesis that nearly everybody who supports the deep ecology movement would accept point 4 of the 8 points. Many were enthusiastic that such a dangerous point of view was stated explicitly. Others said that the 8 points should not contain an opinion about the main cause of the ecological crisis, or the main process to get the crisis reduced as soon as possible. They said that to mention the population issue as it is done in Point 4 inevitably makes people think that overpopulation is sorted out both to specify main cause and main remedy. To specify this was not my intention in 1973, when I pointed to unsustainable ways of production and consumption. The ecofeminist and social ecologist movements specialize in definite causes and remedies. (Mostly too narrowly, I feel. History is very complex and realistic remedies will be complex, the frontier is long.)

In Europe something extremely unfortunate happened. People who looked upon activists in the ecological movements as members of a self-seeking pressure group or a group of sheer terrorists, unfortunately found quotations, and alleged quotations, from Dave Foreman that easily could be used to blackpaint the movement. The movement was widely declared to be *compatible* with fascism: Dave Foreman is a prominent supporter and could be perceived to entertain fascist opinions. To *actively* decrease the human population is easily interpreted as a fascist undertaking.

When the French writer Luc Ferry made that point in a book on the deep ecology movement, it was widely read and was immediately translated into other languages. Even the Norwegian edition was occasionally taken seriously as a fair description of the movement.

Unfortunately I have not succeeded in pointing to forceful quotations from recent publications by Dave Foreman that might once and for all

undermine the suspicion of latent fascism. The *suspicion* of fascism is very much alive today. However, nobody should accuse *me* of being a fascist.

Instead of using the expression “overpopulation” I use expressions like “accelerating population pressure,” referring to pressures among groups of people and pressures against animals, vegetation, and landscapes. Very few seem to relate such pressures to fascism.

In the USA, we may rejoice that Dave Foreman will gleefully light his campfire beneath the varied crowd that refuses to recognize the overpopulation crisis (*Wild Earth*, population issue memo 3-97), but those who try to protect the dwindling patches of free nature in Europe and in the Third World (for example Vandana Shiva) seem to have to avoid the overpopulation terminology in favour of a rather complex vocabulary which includes the expression “population pressures,” but not overpopulation. And I am sorry to say, to invoke the help of Dave Foreman would be counterproductive. I hope this situation will change.