

War on Immigrants Extends to Trees



By Maxina Ventura

Love of trees comes naturally to many of us. Over the past quarter century, many of us have been in the forests and streets defending redwoods, eucalyptus, and other tree friends.

During this time, a movement called the “nativist” movement has grown to panic-stricken heights and has otherwise-rational people sweating buckets believing that we are under fatal attack by invaders, whether insects or vegetation. I’m sad to report that many people seem to have fallen under a spell concocted by chemical companies.

Monsanto, Wilbur-Ellis, Dow-Elanco, and others have whipped up a frenzy of fear and uncertainty in people’s minds, and have succeeded in getting ecology groups to call for increased use of pesticides all around us.

How has this been playing out? Recently, the University of California at Berkeley has led the charge to remove eucalyptus and other “non-native” trees from the East Bay Hills and from Mount Sutro in San Francisco. Some of us just fought off UCSF’s attempts to get FEMA grants for a “native restoration” project masquerading as a wildfire prevention project (a common ploy), and groups have banded together to support the Hills Conservation Network’s recent lawsuit to stop the East Bay Regional Park District from moving ahead to fell around 900,000 trees and use toxic herbicides thereafter.

Let’s turn some of our magic toward healing the Earth, not further threatening it. “Native Restoration” sounds lovely, but too often is referred to without thinking through what is supposedly “native,” and with no consideration of acclimation of species, a normal part of evolution. Nature is not static, but is constantly adapting. Of all people, why are we, as a larger community of thinkers and nature defenders, afraid of change?

Monsanto, Wilbur-Ellis and Dow-

Elanco sponsor “Exotic Plant” symposia. Their job is to make us fear what they want us to fear. Unfortunately, some groups thought of as anti-pesticide lobbied for an assembly bill in 2008 which passed with lots of chemical industry support, a bill about looking for “invasive pests” and getting funding to do more programs just like the infamous Light Brown Apple Moth pesticides program.

Let’s not fall into parroting the corporations which tell us insects or plants are “pests,” despite the fact that biodynamic and organic farmers don’t fear them.

Who do we want making these decisions? Pesticide pushers, or those who are tending the soil and helping us have access to healthy food?

You can get details by visiting www.dontspraycalifornia.org and milliontrees.wordpress.com, a great blog with photos to drive home the reality of what would happen to us in the Bay Area if the “nativists” get their way of felling over a million non-native trees, decimating acclimated habitats, releasing sequestered carbon in this time of global warming, and releasing yet more toxic pesticides in California (a state which uses more than 25% of the pesticides used in the US, sickening millions, though most have no idea what has caused their myriad illnesses).

MALDIVES PRESIDENT: DIRECT ACTION OVER CLIMATE CHANGE

A 1960s-style campaign of direct action must ignite on the streets as a catalyst for decisive action to combat climate change, according to President Mohamed Nasheed of the imperilled Maldives.

Nasheed, who held an underwater meeting of his cabinet last autumn and is presiding over the relocation of people from some islands because of the effects of warming oceans and rising sea

levels, put his hopes in the emergence of “huge” grassroots action after the failure of talks in Copenhagen in December.

“What we really need is a huge social 60s-style catalytic, dynamic street action,” he said. “If the people in the US wish to change, it can happen. In the 60s and 70s, they’ve done that.”

Nasheed said that it was the United States, not China, that was the biggest obstacle to a global agreement to check carbon emissions, and that the US was where the focus of pressure had to be.

Interviewed by Ed Miliband, the former British energy and climate change secretary, Nasheed spoke of the devastating effect that changes in sea levels are having on the islands, which are on average just 1.5 metres above sea level.

People living on 16 islands of the Maldives archipelago are already being relocated but Nasheed, who became president at the first multi-party elections in 2008 after spells as a political prisoner, said moving the people of the Maldives somewhere else was not a solution. “Even if we go, I always think where would the butterflies go? Where would the sounds go?”

“We cannot wait for the lowest common denominator where everyone agrees to doing almost nothing,” he said.

Adapted from Patrick Barkham/UK Guardian

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