

Is Sanctuary the Answer? * * * * *

by Dave Foreman

Borders between 20th Century nation states present something of a sociological "edge effect" much like the boundary between a meadow and a forest. The border between the United States and the Republic of Mexico is no exception, and many of us are familiar with the hustle and bustle, the frenetic air of international money changing, and the squalid abundance of life in the border cities: San Diego-Tijuana, Nogales-Nogales, Douglas-Agua Prieta, El Paso-Juarez, Laredo-Laredo, Brownsville-Matamoros. (It was in one of these vibrant border towns, San Luis, that Earth First! was formed in 1980.)

Nevertheless, the border towns, often representing both the best and the worst of the human condition, are islands of urbanity in a border marked more frequently by empty distance, great silences, and surprising peace — the largely uninhabited, desolate Sonoran

and Chihuahuan Deserts. Two of the wildest and most remote temperate North American wildernesses are along the border — Cabeza Prieta-Pinacate in Arizona and Sonora, and the Lower Canyons of the Rio Grande in Texas and Coahuila. Even these forbidding landscapes present a geography of hope, an escape route to a better life, for the many fleeing political persecution from the south or merely seeking an economically better life to the north. Every summer in Arizona, we read in the newspapers about another dozen or so poor devils who perished in the waterless sands of the Cabeza Prieta when abandoned by the unscrupulous "coyotes" who guide them across the wilderness for all of their money.

And once, in the heart of the Lower Canyons of the Rio Grande, as we were some five days in on a ten day float trip, a young family appeared early one morning at our campsite on the Mexican

continued on page 22

Page 21 Earth First! November 1, 1987

Sanctuary . . .

Continued from page 21

side. We invited them to breakfast and then ferried them across the *Rio Bravo del Norte* to continue their journey north to where they had a job lined up with a rancher. Rowing to the other side of the river, I was impressed with the quiet courage of the couple, barely out of their teens, and the exuberance of their six-month-old daughter. We gave them water and some extra food; they said *gracias* and we bid each other *adios* and *vaya con dios*. They headed up a side canyon and we down the river.

Sitting on a rock outcropping in New Mexico's Black Range, I once spied a half dozen men below me walking north. They were unmistakable with their cowboy hats, boots, cigarettes, gallon plastic jugs of water, and little plastic bags with their possessions. Wetbacks. *Majados*. The toughest cowboys and workers in the Southwest. Even chain-smoking they can outwalk me. I know. I trailed behind a couple of them once coming out of Barranca del Cobre in the Sierra Madre.

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Southwest was Spanish (or Mexican), that is, it was except for those huge spaces known as *Apacheria* or *Comancheria* — the lands controlled by the Apache, or Navajo, or Ute, or Comanche, where no sensible Mexican would venture if he wished to retain his hair. Then the United States took Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona from Mexico in the kind of deal that has been going on between emerging states for ten thousand years.

English is the language officially spoken here today, and the stores and suburbs are full of Texans and New Yorkers. Beneath this gringo veneer, however, there is still a Spanish, or Mexican, or Indian soul. The middle-class neighborhood in which I live in Tucson is predominantly Chicano; my nephew and nieces in New Mexico carry the names *Pacheco* and *Montoya*; my sister-in-law's father speaks only the litting Spanish of northern New Mexico — and his roots in America north of the Rio Grande go back further than do mine (my ancestors settled the eastern shore of Maryland in 1616).

I am an Anglo in a landscape with Spanish names and I am home.

I am torn, nonetheless, with the human drama being played out in these borderlands which I love, with the sanctuary movement, with the granting of refuge, and with the flood of "illegal aliens" from Latin America. I admire the strong, hopeful men and women with dark eyes coming from far to the south, seeking justice, security and an opportunity to work in the United States. I respect their courage; I sympathize with their journey — which covers far more than mere miles. But I fear that little will be accomplished by their long walk, that the United States opening its doors to the dispossessed, hungry and fearful from Latin America will help neither Latin America nor the United States.

Two broad groups of people come north — those fleeing political persecution from the right-wing juntas of Central America, and those seeking a better economic future in Los Angeles or Denver or Chicago. It is easy to apply simplistic slogans and blame multinational corporations largely from the United States for the woes they flee. This ignores the *caballero* oligarchies which rule El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and south. It is easy to pin Ronald Reagan and Ollie North with the sole rap, but the death squads of Central America dance to their own tunes and not just to the CIA's.

The same class of *ricos*, of *caballeros*, the same oligarchy rules Mexico. The Revolution failed. The memory of *Villa* and *Zapata* may ride on moonlit nights, but the *feirs* of Carranza sit in the real saddle.

With sanctuary, with amnesty, with refuge for the poor of Mexico or the fearful of Central America, the good liberals of America are treating only the symptoms and not the disease. By allowing the United States to be an overflow valve for the pent-up pressure of the boiling cauldrons of unrest to the south, we do a favor to the imperious brutes astride the horse. Times will not get better in Latin America, there will not be land reform, democracy or an end to repression and the death squads

until the tyrants are dehornd in revolutions such as that which toppled *Caballero Somoza* in Nicaragua, or by the middle class and campesinos and urban intellectuals uniting in disgust and effecting true reform in Mexico and Central America.

The longer we allow the unruly, the angry, the politically active, the economically dispossessed to seek refuge in the United States, the longer we postpone these revolutions or effective democratic reform movements.

It is not pretty, it is not the way any one would choose, but conditions will not get better in Central America and Mexico until they get worse.

Let us also consider the environmental impacts of continued immigration to the United States. The economic and political refugees seeking a better life in Los Angeles or Phoenix are not going to remain *campesinos*. They, quite sensibly, want to be middle-class, they want to be successful. Many of them will be, at least by the standards of the land they left. And in acquiring a higher standard of living in Los Angeles, they will have a greater impact on the natural world. More water from Mono Lake. More carbon monoxide in the LA Basin. More need for more freeways. More extraction of minerals, timber, and life from the wild lands of North America and the world. The same holds true for Denver, Chicago, or Miami.

Thanks to the reform environmental movement, the United States has one of the best opportunities in the world to preserve a select representation of its native and wild ecosystems. It is far

from adequate, but it is better than nothing. It is a start. Population growth either from more births or more immigrants threatens those preserves over the long run.

Additionally, the United States exploits the "resources" of nearly every nation in the world to fuel our excessive standard of living. More Americans — from whatever source — add to that insatiable demand and cause more destruction in the Third World.

The solution?

It's not a pretty one, it's not an easy one, it may not even work, but it deals with reality.

- 1) Continue to do our damndest to preserve more of the native diversity in the United States;
- 2) Work for additional lowering of the birth rate in the United States among all ethnic and class groups;
- 3) Oppose efforts by American (or Japanese or European or...) corporations to exploit the lands and peoples of the Third World (and demand that those who have, like Burger King, invest in preservation and restoration of natural areas in the countries they have abused);
- 4) Oppose efforts by the Reagan democracy to support the *caballero juntas* to the south and to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, which offers hope to the oppressed people of the other nations of the region;
- 5) Offer aid and encouragement to the home-grown reform and revolutionary movements of Mexico and Central America;
- 6) Disband the CIA and prohibit the

other agencies of our government from covert interference in the internal affairs of other nations;

7) Halt — as humanely as possible — the continued immigration into the United States. The would-be immigrants will go back to unfortunate and, in some cases, bloody fates, but the pressure and the anger and the rage will build until the *caballeros* are thrown off their horses. In the long run the most humane solution is the one advanced by Edward Abbey: send every illegal alien home with a rifle and a thousand rounds.

Too often, I fear, good-hearted liberal solutions only perpetuate the evils they seek to overcome.

(Author's note: I expect that many *Earth First!*ers disagree with the point of view expressed in this essay, and wholeheartedly support the humanitarian aims of the sanctuary movement. That is fine. This is not an issue of central importance to *Earth First!* and there is room for divergent opinions. I have no desire to enter into a debate on this issue in this newspaper. However, I have been branded as a "racist" and a "fascist," and have had my views on sanctuary and illegal immigration twisted by various knee-jerk leftists. I am not concerned by those attacks since I am not concerned with their perpetrators, but I do feel that the readers of *Earth First!* deserve to know where, in fact, I do stand on this issue and decide for themselves if my point of view is that of a "racist" or a "fascist." That is my only reason for presenting this essay.)

Sea Shepherd and Divine Wind Need Support

by Rod Coronado

Sea Shepherd Society's navy consists of one ship in the Atlantic, and one in the Pacific. The *Sea Shepherd* is a former North Atlantic cod trawler that was built in 1962. We sailed it through the Bering Sea into Russian waters to document illegal whaling, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to protect nurseries of Harp Seal pups. In the Faroe Islands, the *Sea Shepherd* was twice successful in defense of the Pilot Whales of the North Atlantic, and carries the bullet marks of Faroese shotguns to prove it. The *Shepherd* of the Seas is constantly in need of repairs.

In the Pacific, the ocean guardian is the *Divine Wind*, a former skipjack tuna-boat, built in Japan in 1972. On its maiden voyage, *Divine Wind* ventured into the treacherous waters of the North Pacific to defend the Dall's Porpoise and other sea creatures from the greed of the Japanese driftnet fleets. (Sea Shepherd Society actions have been covered in past issues of *EF!* See index of back issues in Mabon 87.)

Both vessels have proven effective in the fight for Mother Earth. Both have a voracious appetite for 1500 gallons of diesel fuel a day.

Some organizations fight with the pen; we choose the sword. We urgently need funds to continue to operate the whale navy. Our cetacean friends need

Dolphins continue to die in tuna nets. Harpoons will explode in the Antarctic and other oceans again, as Japan, Iceland, the Philippines, and South Korea continue to kill whales, now under the pretense of "scientific" whaling. (See next issue for update on whaling.) Our ships' crews are brave women and men volunteers. No one is paid, not even the Cap'n. Presently, we are trying to raise money to either sail to Antarctica, or to the South Pacific to confront tuna fishers who kill over 200,000 dolphins each year. We need nautical supplies, paint, food, tools, and camera equipment. Support your local *Kami-kaze* conservationists; send contributions to Sea Shepherd Society, POB 7000S, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.

Chicago Rainforest

by Hal of Chicago
Earth First!

Chicago now has rainforest! Well, not a real 3-D forest, actually a wall-mural, a 2-D; but hey, 2 out of 3 ain't bad. Gary Larson was the painter and organizer for the dedication of the mural on Friday and Saturday of Rainforest Week, featuring poets, singers, scolders, and the world's first eco-defense rap-music. Hundreds attended.

Gary's three story painting depicts a rainforest under attack from a bulldozer. Unfortunately, a condo planned for the lot next to the mural would destroy the mural visibility; dropping two of the proposed 24 condo units would spare it. We're submitting a petition to keep the mural alive. If the petition succeeds, we'll petition for dropping the other 22 units, then petition to stop all condos, then all buildings, then to tear down Sears Tower and Standard Oil and John Hancock and . . .

To obtain Chicago *EF!*'s newsletter, write: Chicago *EF!*, POB 6424, Evanston, IL 60204. To see the splendid mural, visit the 2700 block of N Halsted Street.

USUAL DISGUSTING PLEA FOR MONEY

The *Earth First!* movement runs on your financial support. We don't need as much as other groups since we are grassroots, volunteer, decentralized and have low overhead. Moreover, you get to select where your hard-earned money goes. Don't send your contributions to this newspaper, send them directly to one of these hard working groups:



Hal Lupinek and Roger Featherstone at Chicago Rainforest Mural dedication. Photo by Randy Feraldi.

- *Earth First! Foundation, POB 50681, Tucson, AZ 85703 (contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible)
- *Arizona Earth First!, POB 5871, Tucson, AZ 85703
- *Bay Area Earth First!, POB 83, Canyon, CA 94516
- *Biodiversity Task Force, Jasper Carlton, 1113 23rd St., Vienna, WV 26105
- *Florida Earth First!, 6820 SW 78th St., Gainesville, FL 32608
- *Grazing Task Force, POB 5784, Tucson, AZ 85703
- *Humboldt County Earth First!, POB 34, Garberville, CA 95440
- *Los Angeles Earth First!, 13110 Bloomfield St, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

- *Montana Earth First!, Box 6151, Bozeman, MT 59715
 - *New Mexico Earth First!, 456 Amado St, Santa Fe, NM 87501
 - *Nomadic Action Group, POB 210, Canyon, CA 94516
 - *Oregon Earth First!, POB 1437, Merlin, OR 97532
 - *PAW (Preserve Appalachian Wilderness), RR 1, Box 132-A, North Stratford, NH 03590
 - *Texas Earth First!, POB 7292, University Station, Austin, TX 78713
 - *Washington Earth First!, POB 2962, Bellingham, WA 98227
 - *Wolf Action Network, POB 272, Yosemite, CA 95389
- This fundraising appeal is placed as a service to the *Earth First!* movement. **THANK YOU** for your support!