

# **Don't Fence Me In**

by  
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21-11-06 ([www.mountainsentinel.com](http://www.mountainsentinel.com)) Over twenty years ago, when I began writing *Giants in Their Steps*, I conceived of a virtual fence enclosing much of the Canadian and Alaskan portions of the North American Cordillera. Never in my wildest imagination would I have thought that anyone would undertake such an ambitious fencing project, either in the North American Cordillera or elsewhere.

But now George W. Bush is planning to do just that with the Mexican and Canadian borders. In *Giants in Their Steps*, the fence was promoted for the supposed purpose of keeping people out of the remaining wilderness in order to protect the resources there. In reality, the fence was erected to prevent prisoners from escaping from the work camps established within that wilderness. Likewise, the fence George Bush is promoting has the stated purpose of keeping illegal immigrants out of the US. But I am sure that, as time goes on, we will find that the fence functions equally well to keep US citizens from fleeing the country. That's right folks, George Bush is going to fence off the largest prison camp in the world.

This virtual fence will make it much harder for inductees to evade serving in the "War on Terror." And, as the US economy collapses and many in the US find themselves sinking into debt servitude, they will be unable to escape across the border.

If you believe the fence will stop illegal immigrants from coming over the border, think again. Smuggling illegal immigrants is a lucrative business, and US corporations depend too much on illegal immigrants for cheap labor. Whoever builds the fence will make sure there are holes to allow illegal immigrants into the US.

The virtual fence will not hinder commerce. Just as in *Giants in Their Steps*, the fence will be an aid to commerce, ensuring that workers stay where they are needed, while allowing business to function unimpeded. NAFTA and the FTOA will keep the borders open to free trade, even as the virtual fence restricts the freedom of people.

And now we learn from an audit conducted by the Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General that the fence will cost much more to erect than the \$2 billion initial estimate. Before it is completed, the fence could cost more than \$30 billion. This truly is insanity: a \$30 billion fence that won't keep illegal immigrants or terrorists out but will lock US citizens in.

If we truly wanted to solve the illegal immigrant problem, we could do it in a much more cost effective manner, and without curtailing anyone's freedom. On the contrary, a truly effective strategy would support freedom and quality of life. The first step in this strategy would be to repeal NAFTA and the FTOA, while backing stronger pro-labor laws both in the US and abroad. This step would cost the US government nothing.

Next, we would recognize the rights of local citizens to govern their own resources. The Latin American countries are as poor as they are largely because US corporations appropriate their resources and exploit their workers. The US holds 5% of the world population but consumes over 25% of the world's resources. This has to stop. For our own good, we need to go on a diet.

Finally, a fraction of that \$30 billion would go a long way toward making restitution towards the people we have pillaged to maintain our conspicuous lifestyle. We could use these funds to enrich the communities, supporting education, health services, human rights, agrarian and labor reform, and backing real democracy. And we could use the majority of this \$30 billion to rebuild our rotting social infrastructure here within the US, thus improving the quality of life for our citizens.

It is funny that this is much the same prescription that I have given for putting an end to terrorism. Between the two, we would save the US hundreds of billions, if not trillions. We would make the world a better place to live. We would replace our paranoid, exploitive outlook, with an outlook of compassion and brotherhood/sisterhood. And we would cease being the world tyrant and become the extollers of peace and freedom.

All this simply by doing what is right. Go figure.