





Fort Morgan, Colorado

Local News

European ideas *creeping into U.S.*

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(Editor's note: This is the final story in a series of three stories on the theories of why farmers are facing hardships as presented at the Good Neighbor Forum in Greeley.

By DAN BARKER

Times Staff Writer

The way European ideas about environmental protection are creeping into the U.S. is akin to the movie "The Invasion of the Bodysnatchers."

This was how speaker Lawrence Kogan of New Jersey began his presentation of "Extortion Versus Just Compensation" at the Good Neighbor Forum Saturday in Greeley. It was a day-long forum in which about a quarter of the 230 preregistered guests and 30 walk-ins were from Morgan County.

He quoted an unnamed source, "There's an evil wind blowing across America."

He does not like how foreign laws have begun to affect the rights of people in the U.S., particularly when they impact how people can use their property, Kogan said.

"Sustainable development" is a catchword in environmental circles, but the European mindset has a very strict interpretation used in negotiating treaties with the U.S. and through the United Nations, he said.

Those terms are used against American producers by blocking imports to the European market, Kogan said.

What is particularly problematic are novel concepts of law these green advocates use with a theory guided by the “precautionary principle,” which aims to go further than avoiding policies to prevent provable environmental degradation. It is based on simply proving that bad things “could” happen, he said.

The U.S. has ceded sovereignty to Europeans who do not believe in individualism, believing the community comes first. The French, especially, are promoting a strong European Union in order to balance the power of the U.S., he said.

When Americans do not pay attention to this layer of international rules, “we don’t help ourselves, Kogan said.

The message is clear: “Don’t touch nature,” he said.

As these international environmental perspectives replace homegrown laws, the younger generations will take them for granted, Kogan said.

Environmentalism for some Europeans is so extreme it gets to the level of worship of “Gaia,” a kind of personification of the Earth, he said.

Much of this is based on fear of things which “might” happen. His group wants to set scientific standards as the final arbiters, combined with whether or not a law has a “takings” impact, Kogan said.

He noted environmental thinking leads to the circumvention of the Fifth Amendment in the form of “indirect” takings for the common good in which the government does not pay for the impact to property owners.

“We use hard power ... they use something else called soft power” by insisting on specific rules for trade agreements, he said.

He noted, for instance, that Japan and Korea do not accept U.S. beef.

That began after the “Mad Cow Disease” scare.

These kinds of environmentalists do not recognize property rights. In fact, one group went in to destroy genetically modified crops and was not punished by a court which said they had the right to strike at a site which could have caused “unalterable harm,” Kogan said.

Laboratories which use animals to test products have been harassed and fake

bombs planted. Workers have been stalked, he said.

When the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Earth Liberation Front did not like decisions at the New York Stock Exchange, some members painted a yacht club blood red, Kogan alleged.

“The same disease that’s in Europe came here,” he said.

What’s worse, “the new (Democratically controlled) Congress is in bed with the Europeans on this thinking ... Congress will become a rubber-stamp body if it adopts European rules,” Kogan said. “That gives me the chills.”

All is not lost, though. U.S. citizens need to prevent their representatives from even considering, let alone adopting, any of these environmental laws. They need to speak out, coordinate with neighbors and link up with allies on the Internet, he said.

They need to “promote American values abroad” whenever possible, perhaps by creating an exchange program, get involved in lawmaking, policy-making and state constitutional issues and visit governors.

“Scientific risk assessments are your friend,” Kogan added.

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