**Growth is key to innovation – economic collapse ensures massive die-offs, and environmental destruction from population shifts**

Martin **Lewis**, **1994**. Lecturer in history and director of the International Relations program at Stanford. Green Delusions, p. 8, Google Books.

Finally, the radical green movement threatens nature by advocating a return to the land, seeking to immerse the human community even more fully within the intricate webs of the natural world. Given the present human population, this is hardly possible, and even if it were to occur it would result only in accelerated destruction. Ecological philosophers may argue that we could follow the paths of the primal peoples who live in intrinsic harmony with nature, but they are mistaken. Tribal groups usually do live lightly on the earth, but often only because their population densities are low. To return to preindustrial “harmony” would necessarily entail much more than merely decimating the human population. Yet unless our numbers could be reduced to a small fraction of present levels, any return to nature would be an environmental catastrophe. The more the human presence is placed directly on the land and the more immediately it is provisioned from nature, the fewer resources will be available for non-human species. If all Americans were to flee from metropolitan areas, rural populations would soar and wildlife habitat would necessarily diminish. An instructive example of the deadly implications of returning to nature may be found when one considers the issue of fuel. Although more common in the 1970s than the 1990s, “split wood not atoms” is still one of the green radicals’ favored credos. To hold such a view one must remain oblivious to the clearly devastating consequences of wood burning, including suffocating winter air pollution in the enclosed basins of the American West, widespread indoor carbon monoxide poisoning, and the ongoing destruction of the oak woodlands and savannahs of California. If we were all to split wood, the United States would be a deforested, soot-choked wasteland within a few decades. To be sure, the pollution threat of wood stoves can be mitigated by the use of catalytic converters, but note that these are technologically sophisticated devices developed by capitalist firms. If the most extreme version of the radical green agenda were to be fully enacted without a truly massive human die-off first, forests would be stripped clean of wood and all large animals would be hunted to extinction by hordes of neo-primitives desperate for food and warmth. If, on the other hand, eco-extremeists were to succeed only in paralyzing the economy’s capacity for further research, development, and expansion, our future could turn out to be reminiscent of the environmental nightmare of Poland in the 1980s, with a stagnant economy continuing to rely on outmoded, pollution-belching industries. A throttled steady-state economy would simply lack the resources necessary to create an environmentally benign technological base for a populace that shows every sign of continuing to demand electricity, hot water, and other conveniences. Eastern Europe shows well the environmental devastation that occurs when economic growth stalls out in an already industrialized society.