

# Is an enlightened approach to migration possible?

Published: January 13, 2026, 2:47 pm

---

I have worked with environmentalist and campaigner Colin Hines for the last fifteen years. He and John Christensen of the Tax Justice Network are the two people with whom I have created many of my campaigning ideas. In Colin's case the focus has been the Green New Deal.

Throughout that time Colin has also been working on ideas on what he calls progressive protectionism. I will be honest; we have not always agreed on this. But, with environmentalist Jonathan Porritt, Colin argues that those on the left have a duty to make life better for people where they are. Our dependency on inducing many of the most able from many other countries to permanently reside in the UK is just another form of rent extraction from these countries is their argument. Colin best summarises this by noting that 20% of Romanian doctors work for the NHS, and whilst we appreciate them Romania needs them more than we do.

Colin had another of his (many) [letters to the Guardian](#) on this issue published this week. This is what he said:

*The way immigration utterly dominated your 20 June edition is a harbinger of things to come, as people grasp that this issue, and how to tackle it, will dominate the future of politics. To solve the migration crisis, which is tearing European and now US politics apart, will require a three-pronged approach. This must consider the pros and cons of immigration from the perspective of the countries the migrants have left, the migrants themselves, and the views of the majority in the country migrants have entered or are attempting to enter. The rapid rate of population growth in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean will add to the urgency of this approach.*

*Democratic, progressive and internationalist policies would include ones that meet the concerns of the majority with stricter border controls, but which also grasp the urgency of seeing all foreign policy, aid and trade agreements in terms of improving the lives of the majority in poorer countries, and thus helping to minimise permanent migration globally. Progressive policies could range from increasing living standards for the poorer section of society through fair taxation to limiting arms sales, decarbonising*

*economies and reducing resource use.*

*Finally, the other forces that have caused insecurity in the recipient countries — globalisation, austerity and the increasing additional threat of automation roaring up the skill ladder — must be reversed. The disruption at present caused by migration could be the prism through which such long-sought goals finally become reality.*

If we are to build a new vision of an enlightened country post-Brexit this is, I suspect, one of the many difficult issues we are going to have to address.