

Curbing Population Growth is Every Country's Responsibility

A population activist recently asked whether setting aside wildlife habitat should be reduced in order to allow greater resource exploitation by local communities in the less developed world. While this particular activist has no connection to corporate exploitation and resource extraction by foreign countries in places like Latin America and Africa, it is disconcerting to realize that even well-intentioned people have still not made (or accepted) the connection of unlimited population growth and the degradation and loss of natural resources and wildlife.

In many regions, especially Latin America, there are many successful efforts to work with local villagers in protecting habitat, relying on alternative economies that benefit the local population. But Africa is different...because it is vastly overpopulated and still growing exponentially. Wishing for widespread birth control to reduce breeding is a fantasy because it takes too much time for population to stabilize. We are already in overshoot by 150%.

Add on to population growth the impact of climate change on water and food crops and it is clear that the less developed world in the tropics worldwide faces ecological (and therefore social and economic) disaster within the next decade or two. What is now a comparative trickle of economic refugees into Western Europe will become a flood. The fact is that the world will soon be unable to provide humanitarian assistance to them, let alone land, housing and jobs.

African countries as well as their people have made no effort to control their numbers and it is well established that with

one or two exceptions, most parents actually WANT large families, even though the argument for large families is no longer valid. The same is true in the Arab world, where twelve children is not unusual. This is irresponsible. It is unacceptable to disrupt or threaten wildlife habitat and endangered species to accommodate large families who will not control their births. If these people demand human rights, this cannot include the right to uncontrolled numbers of children. Ask yourself this question: do people have the right to have as many children as they want...without regard to consequences? (And just how much longer can humanitarian groups expect to have resources to feed the tens of millions in Africa and Asia who regularly suffer droughts, famines, floods, even without climate change?)

The same applies to those refugees from Asia and Africa. We don't owe anything to people who refuse to contribute something in return. It is patronizing to treat people of other countries and races as if they were incapable of acting like responsible human beings. The standard we apply to ourselves regarding birth control must apply equally to them. Anything else is racist and shows contempt for their intelligence.

Population groups and activists should be shouting out loud about overpopulation, not just promoting "family planning" and birth control endlessly. There is no longer any excuse for people to have three, four, five, eight, ten and twelve children. And if they start running out of land and resources, it is their fault, not ours. We cannot be responsible for feeding housing and helping tens of millions of people who have had a free run to overpopulate their own countries. Someone has to step up to the plate and say so.

The corollary of the refugee issue is this: those who support unlimited entry to refugees in Europe are those who regard them not as victims but as potential contributors to ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MIDDLE CLASS CONSUMPTION. But the world's

ecological crisis is a direct result of economic growth.

Europeans still haven't come to grips with this fact. They should be challenging immigration on environmental grounds: that bringing in millions of low paid workers for factories to churn out consumer goods and support economic growth is ECOLOGICALLY IRRESPONSIBLE and will put even more stress on what is left of the natural environment in Europe...not to mention consuming more ENERGY and undermining the transition to renewable energy, and setting back any chance of controlling climate change.

This is the same argument many enviros in this country used when opposing limits on immigration from Latin America. These families will contribute to growth by producing and consuming MORE energy and resources. Yet we know full well that this country is one of the two leading contributors to climate change and fossil fuel emissions, along with China. How can anyone justify increasing the US population? The same applies to Europe.

The population contribution to environmental degradation is now clearer than ever. And when Europeans worry about not having enough workers to maintain the over-consuming wealthy middle and upper classes, they are defying the quite rational calls for REDUCING consumption of energy. Unlimited immigration will additionally put pressure on remaining open space, parks and recreation as well as wildlife habitat. Europe is too small to accommodate them, whether they are Muslims or not.

To ignore and deny these facts is not just illogical and irrational. It is suicidal. Birth control is not going to solve the problem because we are already vastly overpopulated and wildlife habitat already under threat. Humans are the (presumably) thinking and ethical animal. It's about time they were all made to understand their individual responsibility, whether they are Asian, African or Caucasian. Nature does not

have a double standard.

We now know, after long periods of error and decimation of nature, that the Sixth Extinction is nigh. Any more compromises to benefit humans and many species will go over the brink. 90% of top ocean predators are already gone. As species disappear, their role in ecosystem functions disappears. The ecosystem collapse brings more species extinctions. And so on.

We are not living in a pristine era where widespread slaughter of animals and clearance of forests was a small fraction of the whole. We are now living with a pathetically small remnant of intact habitat. Most of the world has sacrificed the land for agriculture, ranching, timber and minerals. And the extractive corporations know this full well, which is why they are busy claiming and exploiting the few remaining ones to shore up economic growth and profits....at the expense of the local people of course. China and other countries are buying up huge tracts of natural areas with agricultural and resource potential in Africa, which will mean less land and resources for Africa.

Wilderness and intact habitat are now confined to small disconnected areas. Without large areas to allow natural diversity within and between species, more and more species are threatened. It is high time that we stopped measuring everything in terms of human welfare. The humanitarian spirit of compassion has been in general a good thing. But today it is being distorted and justified at the expense of the rest of nature. If we have learned anything in the past century, it is that humans are not the sole purpose and pinnacle of evolution, and that it cannot flourish or survive unless it preserves the biological diversity and evolutionary relationships that support it. Compromising on habitat protection is no longer an ethically defensible one BECAUSE of these facts! There is a new ethics that has been long in coming and if it does not prevail, humans will go extinct. It

is as simple as that. When we preserve other species we preserve ourselves. When we cut off a branch of the evolutionary tree, we cut off the one that we are on.

Here are some of the obstacles to serious population control:

–immigration into the USA. Millions of people each year, legal and illegal, and possibly equal in size to the increase in annual births.

–patriarchy. In Africa particularly, machismo makes men refuse to use condoms and force their wives to have children. Polls taken in Africa show that most parents favor at least six children. In Latin America large families are the norm, especially in Brazil. Polygamy, widespread prostitution, poor disempowered women without rights and no job capability, are at the mercy of men and ancient customs.

–Islam. Like orthodox Judaism, it bans contraception, and gives men the right to force sex on their wives, otherwise known as rape. Girls are married before their teens and thus start breeding early. And polygamy is widespread.

–the Catholic church. A campaign in Latin America and parts of Africa against the Church's ban on birth control is imperative.

Short of outright coercion, here is a short list of actions that need to be taken by every country that exceeds replacement births:

1. We should have Reverse Welfare: remove benefits to families with each successive birth.
2. Ban new immigrants of breeding age (except to reunite separated families) until we have reached no more than 1.2 replacement rate.
3. Track down and expel polygamist families, some of which now collect multiple welfare benefits (yes, indeed, this is a fact, both here and in the

UK but authorities look the other way).

4. Require all new immigrants to speak and read English.

5. End foreign aid except in cases of natural disaster and epidemics, and for providing information on and access to birth control.

We treasure individual freedom and rights, but we also proscribe and often penalize anti-social behavior. Having more than one or two children is anti-social today.