



For a
sustainable
future

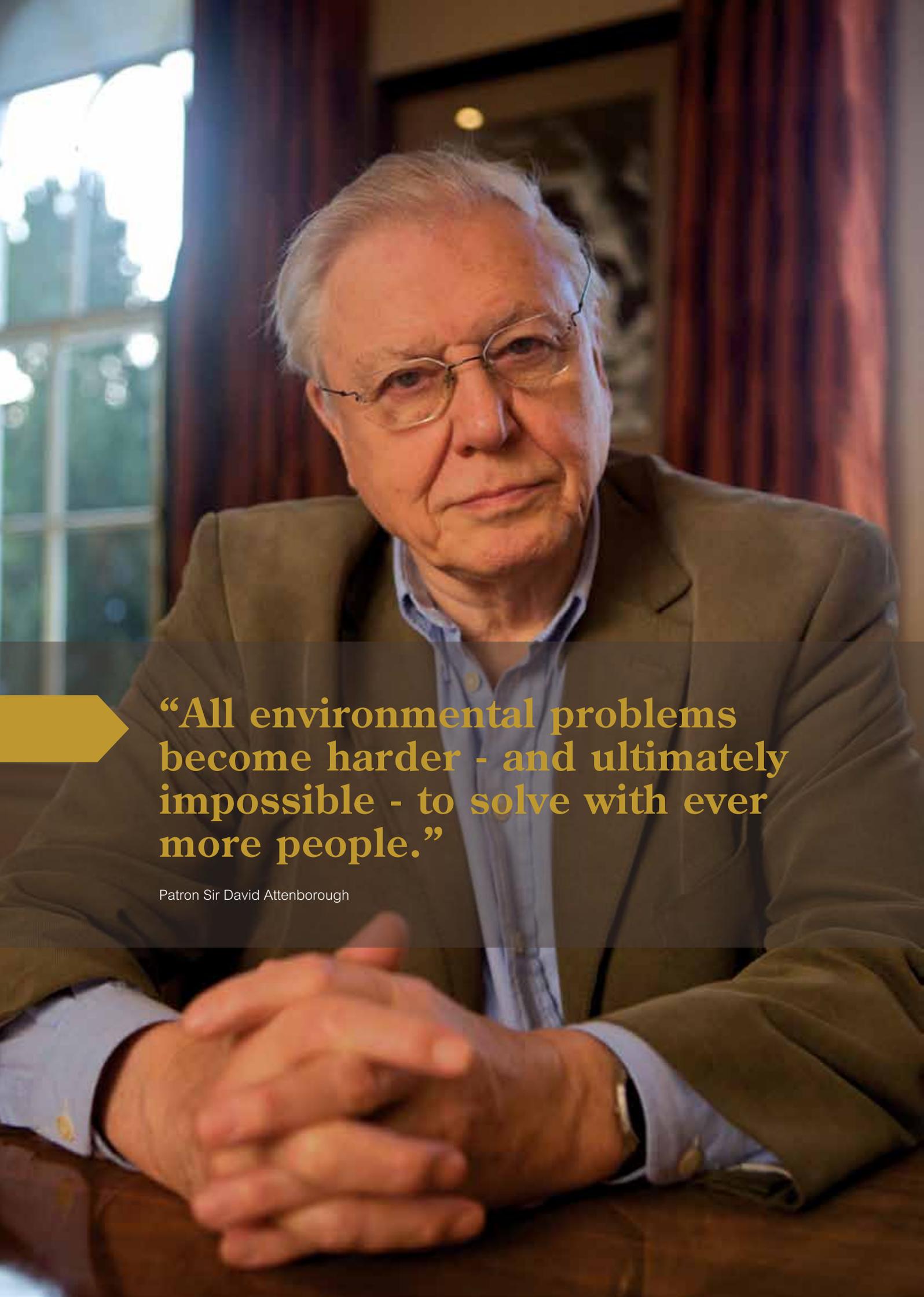


Population Matters Magazine

Issue 18 February 2011

**“13 barriers to communicating
the population message”**

www.populationmatters.org



“All environmental problems become harder - and ultimately impossible - to solve with ever more people.”

Patron Sir David Attenborough

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About Population Matters

Population Matters campaigns for sustainable population levels for the UK and the world. We advocate gender equality, poverty alleviation, universal access to reproductive health services and balanced migration.

We’re a charity whose activities comprise education, research and policy promotion. We’re funded entirely by our members and by donations and grants. We receive no funding from official or commercial bodies.

Population Matters is the working name of the Optimum Population Trust Regd. Charity 1114109

Support our campaign

Individuals can become Supporter Members of Population Matters from £20 per annum (£5 per annum for those who are under 25, unwaged or pensioners). Members receive the bi-monthly Newsletter and the bi-annual Magazine and Journal. Donations and legacies are welcome.

Supporter Members with a track record of activity can apply to become Guarantor Members, who can vote at the AGM and stand for election as trustees. Contact the administrator for details.

Magazine

Members are welcome to contribute articles, reviews and letters for consideration. Contributions should be brief, informative and related to population concern; they may be edited for length and the editor’s decision is final. Deadlines are end June and end December.

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From the Chief Executive

Simon Ross



Our major initiatives during 2011 will be our re-launch and activity around the 7 billion milestone.

A re-launch is always a major exercise. We're being particularly ambitious with the simultaneous launch of a new name and new website. However, we're confident that this will mark a real step change in our ability to make an impact.

The new name is intended above all to be more accessible – to move from less common terminology to a clear expression of our message: that population isn't the only cause of biodiversity loss, climate change and resource depletion, but that it does matter. Research we conducted found it was preferred to our current name by both members and the public and we're looking forward to seeing the difference it makes. For practical reasons, Optimum Population Trust remains the legal name of the organisation as a company and charity.

Our new website, too, is intended to be more accessible. Even at launch, we think it will be a strong asset and we intend to continue building the resources available through it and the ways in which it supports our activities.

From 1960 till 2025, the UN estimates that the world population rises by a billion every 13 years or so. We'll be hitting 7 billion this year or next. The UN has fixed a day to mark the event, which they will revise when they issue the biennial population projections around Easter. The milestone is already raising media interest and it's a great opportunity for us to raise the profile of the issue.

The UK government's Department for International Development has announced maternal health as one of their priorities. Both the UN and US announced last year an increased focus on maternal health. After a decade of relative neglect, these are welcome developments. We'll be encouraging this focus and seeking similar commitments in Europe where many countries do much less.

Here in the UK, we'll continue to make the link between population and the environment, both in public and through lobbying other organisations. We'll also seek to support family planning services and sexual health and relationship education in this time of cuts. By minimising unintended pregnancies, these services save society much more than they cost.

I'd like to extend my personal thanks to outgoing Editor William Partridge for his unstinting efforts in editing our membership magazine, Jackdaw, for so many years. We feel a rebrand is appropriate, in line with the organisation, and the style of the magazine will inevitably be different. However, we remain committed to producing a publication that educates and informs, and one that is open to the views of members.

I'd also like to thank past Policy Director David Nicholson-Lord, who also stepped down this year for health reasons, for his enormous contribution in writing the Newsletter and raising our profile in the media in recent years. His skills will be sorely missed as we seek to establish our new name and make the most of the opportunities this year provides.

“Two’s plenty” – A meeting in Scotland

Penny McKee of our Scottish group



About 50 people from many walks of Scottish life attended a lively evening debate held by Population Matters at the Scottish Parliament building and sponsored by Dr Ian McKee MBE MSP.

Population Matters patron Prof. Aubrey Manning pointed out that **“In biological terms the Earth is already overpopulated and the life support systems on which all depend are threatened. The conventional view, in Scotland as almost everywhere, is that we need more people to ensure ‘economic growth’. In fact, Scotland has thousands of under-achieving young people who deserve more attention. Human numbers must be recognised as a key factor for any society: in the end growth is impossible. It threatens the quality of our existence and effectively condemns us to struggling up a down escalator”.**

Family planning pioneer Dr Libby Wilson said that **“Motivation, or lack of it, to use family planning, in both sexes, is the overriding problem in the UK: long-acting methods could be used more. In much of the rest of the world, the problem is inadequate access to cheap and reliable contraception”.**

Patrick Harvie MSP felt that there is an environmental crisis: people need to be engaged in this issue to see the need for change in their life-style.

Prof. Peter Gregory, crop scientist, noted that **“Scotland, like most countries, imports and exports substantial quantities of food; all arable land is in use but the area available per person is about 50% of the world average. Current crop yields and food systems are very dependent on the use of fossil fuels. Increasing yields to meet the demands of a growing world population largely located in cities will pose considerable challenges.”**

Kampala Conference report

Roger Martin,
Chair of Population Matters



As a career diplomat for over twenty years, including four at the UN in Geneva, I have been to more international conferences than I can count. Now again, as Chair of Population Matters after twenty years as an environmentalist in Somerset, I have been to seven such conferences in the last 18 months.

Quite the best was the Kampala Conference on Population Growth and Climate Change in September 2010. It was convened by a dynamic Ugandan, Isaac Kabongo, Director of the Ecological Christian Organisation and a leading figure in the regional Climate Action Network. He won support from the UNFPA and our partner body Sustainable Population Australia (SPA) and invited a mixture of NGOs from the region, all already aware that their problems were exacerbated by rapid population growth, and that climate change would make all these problems harder to solve.

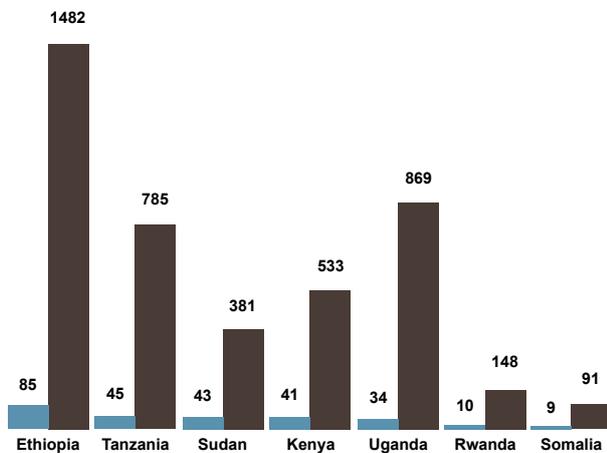
I was asked to give the opening talk, sketching the linkages between population and climate change. This is easy. Every additional person (currently 10,000 more of us per hour) consumes carbon and emits CO₂ (the rich far more, of course, than the poor) and is a future victim of climate change (the poor far more than the rich). With every extra person, everyone else's "fair share" of the already dwindling natural resources of our finite planet is reduced. So, all population growth exacerbates all problems everywhere of both mitigation (total emissions reduction) and adaptation (coping with climate change). We urgently need (naturally non-coercive) population stabilisation/reduction policies in all countries – otherwise we are simply "running up a down escalator" without end.

It's not just climate change. As our Patron David Attenborough often says, all environmental problems become harder – and ultimately impossible – to solve with ever more people. Our total impact is, by definition, the average impact per person multiplied by the number of people. Consumption, especially by the rich (much discussed), is one half of the equation; population growth (barely mentioned) is the other. This is all obvious – we all know it. Yet a crazy taboo prevents most people from saying so.

But this was happily not so in Kampala. I was followed by the Environment Minister, Hon. Jesca Eriyo, who said, "A larger population will emit more greenhouse gases...It is unfortunate that for the past decade population explosion control mechanisms have had low priority...The consequences of inaction on the population issue are dire...We have produced a world population close to the limit of the Earth's carrying capacity in terms of available resources." Speakers from the UNFPA, UNDP, SPA, the Ugandan Population Secretariat, the Kenya Young Greens Movement, the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Climate Action Network for Eastern Africa, Population Action International, and the World Food Programme all spoke in similar vein.

I showed a graphic which aroused much interest and concern, projecting current population growth rates for the countries represented over 100 years. It illustrated both the power of compound growth and the urgency of the issue, because the projected numbers are obviously impossible – Uganda, for instance, rising from 33 million to 860 million. The sobering point was that populations will clearly stop growing well before that figure and that when they do, it can only be either sooner by fewer births, the humane way (contraception backed by policy and funding to make it available and encourage people to use it); or later by more deaths, nature's way (famine, disease and predation/war). There is no alternative of indefinite growth.

Population(m) 2010 and 2110 based on current growth rates



The conference ended by setting up the (world first) 'Horn of Africa Population and Climate Change Forum', which later issued a joint position statement, including my draft text for the Cancun climate conference (of course not adopted!) The language was uniformly strong, and totally supportive of our own long-standing approach. For instance:

“The high and unsustainable rate of population growth in Horn of Africa countries not only undermines our capacity to lift people out of poverty and to manage natural resources sustainably, it will also increase the toll of future climate change victims.”

“We appeal to change the perception and false arguments that drawing attention to population growth is a distraction from Western over-consumption, and an attempt to blame climate change on the poor”.

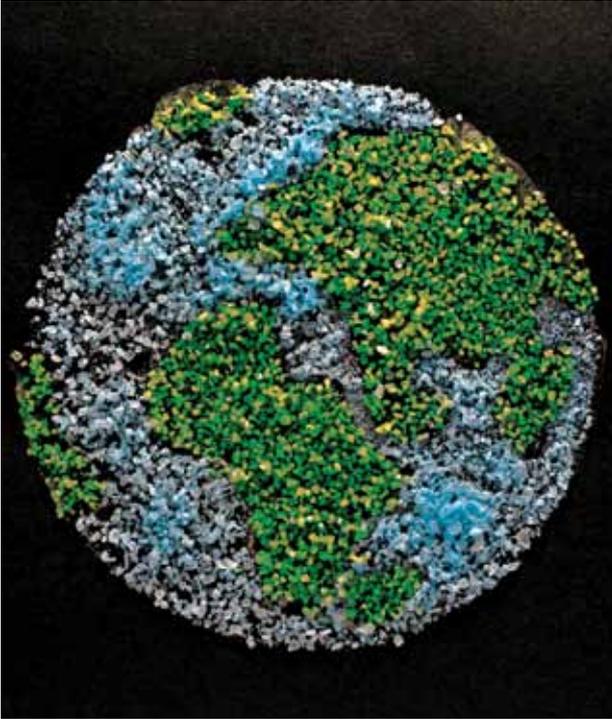
“We demand that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations taking place in Tianjin and Cancun this year includes population issues and concern prominently in the text, acknowledging that population growth globally is responsible for increasing the number of carbon emitters and the number of climate change victims.”

This tough statement was circulated at the conferences in Tianjin and Cancun. The impact is not known, but Isaac and other colleagues encountered little outright opposition there. The new Forum is still, of course, a small and relatively powerless NGO body. But it does show that at least some Africans are far ahead of the politically correct observers of the 'mad taboo' in their desire to tackle their desperate population problem head-on, using plain language still considered improper in right-minded Western circles like Oxfam, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and even some of our partner organisations in Washington, e.g. **“Population stabilisation”, “We demand...”, and even “Population control” (which we too have learnt to avoid!).**

Our African partners need help to tackle what they and we can see is one of their most urgent problems. We will back them all the way.

Think global, act local

Simon Ross



In talking to members, it's clear that some are motivated by concern about population numbers in the UK. They see that England is the most densely-populated country in Europe; that net migration in recent years is at record levels; and that an ever-rising population is affecting their everyday lives and causing national concerns over housing, wildlife, water supplies, food and energy security and quality of life. Other members are more focused on the global picture. They recognise that the big issues of climate change, resource depletion and biodiversity collapse can only be truly solved at a global level and that the additional 2 billion expected in the next 40 years will come from countries other than ours.

We have always believed that both perspectives are important. The grave issues we face operate everywhere and can only be solved internationally, while high birth rates are now limited to certain parts of the world. But the UK is one of the most overpopulated countries, whether one looks at land mass or sustainability, and is where we are based. We can be most effective if we continue to both be citizens of the world and have an eye on our own back yard.

“... it's how you say it”

Roger Martin

Working in sensitive areas and in a movement with a somewhat mixed reputation, it behoves us to think not just about what we say but also about how to say it.

The most obvious one for us is the term for what we want. Never use **“Population Control”**, and correct others who do - it implies coercion to many people, and often elicits a highly emotional response. **“Population management, limitation and planning”** all carry similar unhelpful overtones (“family planning” is of course fine). **“Restraint”** is OK, and is used by some of our most distinguished Patrons. But it's best to state plainly that we aim for **“Non-coercive population policies**

in ALL countries, aimed at stabilizing numbers and then, in countries already beyond their environmental limits (most rich countries and many others), reducing them to sustainable levels.”

One can't say **“non-coercive”** often enough. Most people are still unaware that there are some 70 countries with **“population policies”**, of which only one, China's, is coercive; yet this is the only “population policy” many seem to have heard of. When the Home Secretary in 2009, told that England had just become the most crowded country in Europe, that the ONS projected 10 million more in the next 22 years, and that our YouGov poll showed 70% of us were seriously concerned at the environmental damage our population growth was causing, while most want a smaller population and only 8% actually want any more growth at all, he dismissed any concerns with

a reference to China! Thailand and Iran have achieved similar reductions in fertility to China by non-coercive means; while India has recently greatly strengthened its own Population Stabilisation Fund and programme, with a high profile launch by the Prime Minister and President, and an increase in the incentive/compensation payment to women who voluntarily undergo sterilization. (They will clearly be anxious to avoid the coercive abuses of the voluntary scheme in the 1970s).

The next question is **“Why do we want stabilization?”** As an environmental body, we have to state the facts clearly, as in our Joint International Position Paper; and it is a fact, not an opinion, that on a physically finite planet, physical growth in anything will definitely stop at some point. For human numbers this can only happen either sooner by fewer births (the humane way – contraception backed by non-coercive policy to make it available and encourage people to use it), or later by more deaths (the natural way – famine, disease and predation, or in our case war). All sane people must prefer the former.

Our Patron Paul Ehrlich’s **IPAT formula - (Environmental Impact = Population x Affluence (per capita consumption) x Technology** – is a good starting point. It’s not **“either consumption or population or technology”** - we have to tackle all three to achieve sustainability. So population stabilization is not, by itself, the answer to any problem; but it’s an essential part of the answer to every problem. Thus we’re not part of a **“population concern movement”**; we’re part of the sustainability movement; and we only talk about the essential population element alongside all the other issues because most environmental and developmental NGOs (with the honourable exception of Save the Children) ignore it.

Unfortunately, the mainstream organizations concerned with population have, since the 1994 Cairo conference, tended to define the population problem as an issue purely of **“sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)”**. Of course we agree with them that these are vital humanitarian and developmental issues. But to define the vast problem of population growth exclusively in these terms is to marginalise it as a specialist sub-set (reproductive health) of a sub-set (health) of Government priorities and budgets, of interest only to Health Ministries. As a result, our colleagues have consistently failed, for 16 years, to raise the priority and funding for the necessary family planning and women’s empowerment programmes to meet the ever-growing unmet need, and start reducing (ideally to zero) the number of unintended pregnancies (currently 40% of the total across all countries, rich and poor). As it is, aid budgets for reproductive health have not been bad, but AIDS treatment has taken an ever-growing proportion of them. Thus total donor assistance for family planning remains a derisory \$400 million per year – or 10% of Goldman Sachs’ bonus pot!

If only our colleagues could free themselves from their own self-imposed linguistic hyper-sensitivity about population growth (and even family planning!), they could state a case so strong it would command the attention of Heads of Government and Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Environment, Energy, Education, Planning, Transport, Industry, even Defence – all of whose efforts are doomed to fail if populations keep rising indefinitely. The funds would then flow. This is one of our strongest points – we talk plain English. If you stop 100 people in the street and ask **“Do you have a view on sexual and reproductive health and rights? Demographic dynamics? Population growth?”** which would get the biggest response?



It’s important, however, always to stress that we are not just talking of growth in developing countries, but in all, especially the UK, since every additional Brit has the carbon footprint of 22 more Malawians. Our new ‘Overshoot Index’ on the website gives a mass of data to back this up, linking consumption, population and sustainability.

On another point, it goes without saying that denying people their humanity isn’t likely to improve their opinion of us. Talk of **“breeding”** and so on is entirely counter-productive. More understandable is the pessimism by some about the state of the world and its future. This may be justified, but is likely to be seen as de-motivating by many. If you are seeking to encourage action, you must offer the hope that the action will bring the desired outcome. Expressions such as **“overcrowded cesspit”** and **“We’re dooomed”** aren’t calculated to inspire!

To sum up, in seeking to persuade, we must begin by understanding and respecting those we wish to influence; but we owe it to our children not to compromise over the harsh facts of the finite and degrading planet we are leaving them.

Why people just won't listen

Simon Ross



George Marshall of the Climate Outreach and Information Network analysed responses to the climate-change message

to help understand the barriers to its acceptance. Here, I adapt his analysis to provide lessons for us. The video recording of his lecture is at <http://bit.ly/eeWVN9>.

- **Risk** – people respond best to threats that: are visible; have historical precedent; are immediate; have simple causality; are caused by another “tribe”; and have a direct personal impact. How do we best convey the risks caused by population size, which tend not to meet these criteria? Better, how do we endow our message with these characteristics?
 - **Belief** – people tend to believe things, not just on the facts, but when they suit their internal ethics, world view, social norms and behaviour. How do we reframe our message so that we avoid so contradicting people’s core beliefs that they reject it out of hand?
 - **Attention** – there are subjects of which people are aware but which it is not socially acceptable to discuss. This is also known as failing the “dinner party test”. These subjects are taboo, perhaps because they’re potentially distressing, or embarrassing, or controversial, or might challenge the audience’s behaviour. Think about how you’d start a conversation at your next night out with friends on incest, or Morris dancing. How do we keep moving population growth further out of the “unmentionable subject” category?
 - **Stories or interpretative narratives** – the way we mediate information. What is the “story” or message of population growth about? It could be about resources, or the environment, or quality of life, or ageing, or gender equality, or poverty alleviation, or technological progress, or, less positively, national competition, immigration or political control. Of course, it’s to some extent about all of these things. Given this complexity and these very different possible narratives, how do we construct a coherent (it hangs together), convincing (it’s believable) and compelling (it makes people care) story?
 - **Responsibilities** – similarly, who should be doing something about population numbers? Possible answers include: women; men; wealthy countries; developing countries; the government; the UN; schools; teenage girls; even all of us. How do we construct a story that allocates responsibility for action in a way that is seen as appropriate?
 - **Objections** – reasons people give for rejecting our message. Examples: I do other environmentally friendly things; you have no right to tell me what to do; I’m not the main cause of the problem; I’ve done nothing wrong; I can’t make any difference on my own; it’s too difficult for me to change my reproductive behaviour/ speak out; society won’t accept change in its reproductive behaviour/ discussion on this; there are too many obstacles to changing reproductive behaviour. What can we say to counter these?
 - **Distancing** – some people will say that population is a problem that’s happening to someone else, or somewhere else, or that it’s buried in the past, or something for the future. How do we convince them that it’s important to them personally, here, and now?
 - **Compartmentalising** – some people will agree it’s a problem, and then ignore it with reference to their own behaviour. How do we persuade them to change their behaviour and what they say about population?
 - **Positive framing** – people may focus on perceived positive aspects of population growth. How do we ensure the downside is seen as more important?
 - **Ethical offsets** – people may say they’ve ‘done their bit’ by having only one or two children. How do we encourage them to do more?
 - **Cynicism** – people may decide to have more children before it becomes unfashionable. Can we persuade them to be responsible?
 - **Agnosticism** – people will say that the impact of population numbers is unproven. How do we convince them it’s real?
 - **Denial** – some will deny it’s a problem at all. How do we limit their influence?
- The evolution of this complex mix of views and responses will depend on what we and others say. Public attitudes can change rapidly given the right circumstances!

Annual General Meeting 2010 - Report

Simon Ross

The proceedings



Chair Roger Martin presented our Annual Report, summarising our activities during the year. Treasurer Yvette Willey presented the finance report which showed income rising to £143,774 from £87,863 in 2009, and expenditure rising to £99,279 from £72,327 in 2009. Total assets increased to £424,022. The Annual Report and Accounts are available

from the Charity Commission website.

It was agreed to reappoint independent examiners Findlay, Wetherfield, Scott & Co. and to pass resolutions which brought our Articles into line with recent changes in company law.

In the elections, trustees Steve Bown, Harry Cripps, Pip Hayes, Roger Martin and Alan Stedall were re-elected. Garry Jones and Yvette Willey did not stand again but will continue to be involved. Janet Boston, Colin Gallagher, Robin Maynard and Nick Reeves were elected as trustees (see their details below).

Roger Martin proposed a vote of thanks, passed unanimously, to Yvette Willey for her invaluable and longstanding roles as Company Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer.

Introducing the new trustees

Four new trustees were elected at the AGM. Janet Boston is a senior executive with management experience in the media and charity sectors, which will be of great benefit to us.

Professor Colin Gallagher chairs a leading UK economic research and strategy consultancy. He is also a committee member of our Scottish group and will help maintain the links between the trustees and the Scottish group.

Robin Maynard has extensive experience of working for leading environmental campaign organisations, something that should be very useful as we seek to win such bodies to recognise the importance of population.

Finally, Nick Reeves who was previously a member of our advisory council and is Executive Director of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management. Nick was instrumental in persuading CIWEM to adopt a population policy and was awarded an OBE in January this year for services to the environment.

As an aside, the management committee has been mostly female in the past, but is currently mainly men. While we don't have quotas, we believe it's helpful to us to have both male and female trustees, so we're hoping more women will get involved in activities in the current year, and then consider standing as trustees at the next AGM.

Conference 2010 – Richard Ottaway MP

Rachel Mawle and Simon Ross



The principal speaker was Richard Ottaway MP – Vice Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health.

His talk, entitled “Ten Myths about Population Growth”, was also delivered to the Conservative Party Conference in October. Richard

has been talking of the problem of population growth (PG) since the 1980s, and believes that if action had been taken then, many current problems could have been avoided.

In his introduction, Richard pointed out that a PG of 3% pa requires a 3% increase in the provision of infrastructure and that the post-war baby boom was actually a decrease in death rates, especially in developing countries. PG causes resource depletion, conflict, migration and limits structural development and a government's ability to provide quality of life to its citizens. He noted that the APPGPDRH report Return of the PG factor concluded that the UN Millennium Development Goals would not be achieved in countries with high population growth rates. Richard then set out his rejection of the Ten Myths, summarised below.

1. It isn't the case that population growth is over. World population is projected to grow from 6.8 billion now to 10.5 billion in 2050 on current growth rates. There are 230,000 net births per day today compared to 150,000 in the 1960s while the Indian population alone grows by 1million people every 20 days. While the birth rate remains high in many poorer countries, populations in developed countries are growing as a result of ageing and migration.
2. Aid for family planning isn't wasted. There are many successes, such as Thailand, and funding is increasing.
3. Technology isn't sufficient to prevent climate change, biodiversity loss or resource constraints. By 2025, 3 billion people will be short of water.
4. Contrary to development having to precede contraception, as some suggest, a reduced birth rate is essential for a society to fund development.
5. Urbanisation will increase rather than decrease demand for resources, while not necessarily improving living standards.
6. Education of women can help, but isn't necessary to, nor sufficient for, a lower birth rate. That needs family planning and often male endorsement.

7. Family planning isn't about coercion; most programmes aren't coercive, women want family planning and very many births are unplanned.
8. The Vatican and US religious right are obstacles but can be overcome or bypassed.
9. Neither HIV nor other diseases are significantly slowing population growth.
10. It isn't too late; whatever we do to reduce future population size helps wildlife and future generations. Family planning can make a huge difference to quality of life, unemployment, war, terrorism, poverty, malnutrition, migration and infant mortality.

Richard noted the positive impact of celebrities deciding not to have children e.g. Cameron Diaz. His advice was that we should concentrate our work on the developing countries, rather than the UK and concentrate on the root causes of PG.

Questions from the audience:

Q. Is the Iranian president trying to reverse small family sizes?

A. Likely that people will continue to use FP.

Q. Why are governments not on a war footing about this?

A. A difficult subject. UK may yet become a leader in this field.

Q. What proportion of parliament has knowledge of this?

A. The All Parliamentary Group has 100 members, approx 15% of government.

Q. What proportion of foreign aid budget is available to FP?

A. Approx 10%.

Q. How is it that he has been elected if this is such a controversial topic?

A. Has not campaigned on this issue during election.

Q. Why was 10% of overseas aid going to DfID for FP, but no controlled allocation to FP projects by DfID?

A. All Parliamentary Group has met with Andrew Mitchell, Sec. of State for DfID, he is aware of the importance of FP. The new government is asking all charities what they are doing about PG before giving support.

Q. Is there a need for the UK do something about our own PG before telling other countries what to do?

A. Research has shown that many countries consider that PG is a serious problem, so no.

Q. What would you like OPT to concentrate on if not UK PG?

A. Address root causes of migration, this has the biggest impact on UK population.

Conference 2010 – Other speakers



The next speaker was Dr Pip Hayes, who talked about recent efforts to spread our message to a younger audience including attending festivals, wearing T-shirts, offering to speak at local gatherings and attending meetings.

Pip was followed by Penny McKee, who described the process of setting up the Scottish group with advice for others contemplating establishing a group. Penny felt that the group had raised awareness, encouraged debate and identified a lack of concern over PG in Scotland. For this year, the group plans to have more contact with other groups, HQ and young people and to attend political conferences.



Ex-chair Val Stephens gave a moving tribute to departing colleagues, David Nicholson-Lord and Bill Partridge.

Conference 2010 – Plans for 2011

The final speaker was incoming Chief Executive Simon Ross who talked about our plans for 2011. He started by promising that, though we are undergoing a great deal of change – website, name, staff – the organisation had not changed its aims or way of thinking about issues.



He noted that there were many opportunities in 2011. Population will increasingly be on the political agenda as we reach 7 billion people in the next 18 months, while the fact that we won't achieve the Millennium Development

Goals by 2015 should concentrate minds. He felt that we could easily link population to many current issues: climate change, loss of biodiversity, increase in fuel and food prices, shortage of water, and pollution. There's also an increasing recognition that society requires more sustainable living and that a resumption of growth will not solve our underlying problems.

More immediately, family planning provision in the UK may be threatened by financial cuts: we should ensure services are protected.

Simon felt that the organisation was in a good position to take advantage of those opportunities with a record number of members and strong resources. He listed the principal activities for 2011 as: lobbying, underpinned by solid research; responding to consultations; attending conferences at home and abroad; gaining more support from NGOs and broadening our approach to more charities; increasing use of Facebook and Twitter; activity in schools and colleges; more effort on fundraising, sponsorship and legacy raising; and encouraging membership activity in local groups and the letter writing group.

Questions from the audience:

Q. What is being done to diversify membership, especially amongst young women?

A. We're open to greater diversity and shall look at options, including lower fees for young people.

Q. Why not advertise, such as on the tube?

A. We shall resume advertising post-launch but prudently, as previous results have been mixed.

Q. Will we grapple with the issue of inequality and call for fundamental restructuring of the welfare state?

A. We agree that social conditions and the benefit system affect family size and shall look at this area.

Conference 2010 - Discussion

The conference's last item was a general discussion.

Incentives



There was a debate on the merits of child benefit and incentives for people not to have children. Payment for sterilisation was recognized as being unacceptable, but some suggested we might support incentives for use of long-acting reversible contraceptives. Others felt that this would open us up to criticism and be seen as bribing the poor. They argued that the message should be that it's not cool to have more than two children and any potentially coercive measures such as these payments should not be necessary. The women in the audience were asked to vote on whether it was offensive to offer incentive payments, and voted by 2:1 that it was.

Education

A further suggestion was that we survey teenage girls to understand what influences their decisions about sex and pregnancy. It was suggested that more work needs to be done in education. Examples included co-operation between Gove and Attenborough and changes to the curriculum.

Q and A

Q Why did we fail to get NGOs on board after a year of trying?

A: NGOs fear losing credibility and support and do not believe that the public think it an important topic. This is contrary to a MORI poll that found 44% of people considered over-population to be the biggest problem facing the UK. We need to chip away at e.g. FoE. There is also a need to understand public psychology in order to respond and it was suggested that we need proper studies into this. NGOs are reacting in fear to our message, for fear of how others will react. For example, CPRE has decided to make population a topic of concern, but has not spoken out about it. Sustainability can be in opposition to other goals, and therefore pulls NGOs in different directions.

Q. Should we mention abortion and accept that it is a weapon against population growth?

A. We shall review our policy on this.

Q. Why do people call us eco-fascists? Do they really think we want to kill people and reduce medical care?

A. We're planning a couple of sentences that clearly explains the organisation's message and removes the room for such accusations.

Q. Should we retain "Stop at Two?" or instead encourage debate rather than ordering people how to behave?

A. Pip Hayes' experience at Glastonbury was that Stop at Two put people off. Making the link between population growth and the environment is difficult because the gap between the current situation and a biologically sustainable population is perceived as too great. We need to change our language.

Healthcare

More work with colleges and universities was proposed, targeting students at Freshers' Week. We need to make links with family-planning organisations and GPs. Pip Hayes is planning to speak to midwives, health workers and the sex education network, Sexpressions.

Urgency

We need to make people more aware of how immediate the issue of overpopulation is. People don't understand the risk, e.g. how little time the UK could survive on existing food reserves.

In the closing remarks, the chair recognised the enthusiasm for debate and promised that it would form part of future conferences.

Other UK population concern bodies

Simon Ross



Following on from the review of population concern bodies overseas in recent issues, we come home to look at the principal ones in the UK. In addition to Population Matters, which is the only membership-based organisation, there's the

snappily named All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health. Established in 1979, it has 100 members and aims to encourage initiatives to increase access to, and improve reproductive and sexual health programmes worldwide.

The other body is the Population Sustainability Network, established in 2004, which seeks to promote dialogue on, and understanding of, population issues amongst its institutional members and more widely.

News from sister organisations abroad

Simon Ross

Sustainable Population Australia reports that the Horizon documentary presented by our patron Sir David Attenborough *How many people can live on planet earth?* was screened on Australian TV and that the Anglican Church of Australia has called for both a sustainable population policy for Australia and more support for reproductive health programmes for developing countries. The Australian government has issued a discussion paper on developing a sustainable population strategy, but the contents have been criticised by population activists.

In the US, population-concern campaigners are concerned about the outcome of the congressional mid-term elections, where supporters of reproductive health programmes at home and abroad lost out to opponents. More positively, they're campaigning for pharmacists to be obliged to fulfil prescriptions for contraception and to dispense over-the-counter emergency contraception. In Britain, too, pharmacists can currently refuse to dispense contraception.

Twenty years with OPT

Yvette Willey

"OPT was conceived, if readers will pardon the word, in a committee room of the House of Commons on March 21st, 1991." These were the first words of the first magazine of OPT published in January 1993 and written by its first chairman, my late husband David Willey. In this first issue we can also read: "It seemed unlikely that OPT would become a mass membership organisation in the near future. At least until we had a proper launch it looked as if we would have to make up in quality for what we lacked in quantity!"

This is exactly what happened as the membership of OPT never reached 100 during the first decade. But there were a lot of initiatives and ambitions. A seminar in Oxford took place in August 1992, followed by the first World Optimum Population Conference at Trinity College in Cambridge in August 1993. After the success of this conference David Richardson even suggested that the next one should be in the USA with a satellite link to Beijing!

My husband also attended the UN World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 and the European Population conference in Milan in 1995, delivered a paper *Optimum Population for Europe* at the Rome workshop on Population and Environment in 1996. This was done at no cost to OPT.

The organisation had also to define its legal status. The Charity Commission had turned down OPT's application for registration as a charity and had suggested that we "divorce the educational work from the campaigning work" in such a way that the former alone might qualify for charitable status. OPT was finally turned into a non-profit-making company limited by guarantee in 1995. Such a company could be granted charitable status at some later date.

OPT also suggested the idea of setting up an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate the activities of European organisations concerned with carrying capacity. In 1996, EPOC (European Pherology Organisations Confederation) was then created with the slogan "More humanity with fewer humans". Sadly, it did not survive too long into the new millennium. But with new links being established or old ones being rediscovered, a revival should be possible.

My role in OPT was fairly limited during the first decade. I took over the membership around 1998 and the accounts were not time-consuming as there was so little money. Looking back at the records I could fit three months of income on one single page of an A5 cash book with some spare room. But I can testify that my husband spent several hours every single day of every single week sustaining OPT until his last breath in November 2000 and he had my full support.

I got far more directly involved in the second decade of OPT, a decade of expansion mainly due to the creation of the website by Rosamund McDougall. I took on all the administrative work, the combined role of membership secretary and treasurer, being already the company secretary. The membership started swelling. The bank statements got longer. The organisation was granted charity status in 2005 and this brought the extra work that I feared it would, plus the duty and tasks of being a trustee. We needed an online membership and I was given the task of creating a Paypal account, a daunting prospect for me as I had never used the system before and to this day I have still never used it for myself. Simultaneously, I had to deal with the OPT petition signatories, Just Giving, the Charity Aid Foundation, liaisons with the Charity Commission, renewals of the subscriptions, welcome packs for the new members, dealing with the mail (and sometimes its peculiar letters like the one suggesting that women would only be allowed to have children if they won the right to do so in a raffle), proof-reading of the Journal and the Newsletter, acknowledgements of the donations, transactions with the banks, the annual accounts, etc. It felt often like a full-time job.

There is a memorable day in this flurry of activities. It was Easter Monday 2009, the day it was announced officially that Sir David Attenborough had become a Patron of OPT. I only switched on my computer towards the end of the day, having totally forgotten that we had a press release about it that day. A cascade of emails started filling my inbox and at first I thought it was spam, then I realised it was new members. There was more in the morning, and over the following days. It was a tide and I was nearly drowning. I only resurfaced with the help of Barbara Droop. I hope Sir David will forgive me if I associate his name with a very stressful week.

In the last two years, our Administrator, Julie Lewis, progressively took responsibility for most of these tasks. Seeing that they were in very safe hands, I sensed that now was the optimal time for me to step down as a Trustee and to regain some breathing space. OPT has been "lodging" in our house since its creation. It had its infancy and its teenage years here. Now it has grown up and is leaving the nest for an address in London. Will I miss it? Will I suffer from the empty nest syndrome? Will I even recognise it now that it has a new working name?

I have been given some roses to plant in my garden as an appreciation of my work for OPT and I had to create a new bed for them. Now that I have turned over a new leaf, is my life going to be a bed of roses?

Lessons from Deepwater

Trustee Nick Reeves OBE

Our fixation with fossil fuels means we're all to blame for the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.

It's hard to imagine anything that could trump the unfolding ecological disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. No words, no matter how Churchillian in tone, uttered from the Oval Office, can compete with the live feed of oil that will be BP's legacy for many years to come. On 17 June the oil had been gushing for 57 days and members of the US Congress were inflamed by the beleaguered BP boss Tony Hayward who simply had no answers.

What the world wanted to know was: when will the nightmare end and who is to blame; when President Obama addressed the American people on television on 15 June he had no answer to the first question and the real answer to the second was far more uncomfortable than any of his viewers are willing to admit.

But those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad. And this is the collective madness of America's talking heads that criticised the President for failing to come up with the right words. By what measure of reason can any president be held politically responsible for a catastrophic failure of hi-tech engineering? But the more he identifies himself with solving the oil spill problem, the more he looks like he owns it too.

To get a measure of the hypocrisy with which Mr Obama is being assailed, it is worth returning to the heady days of 2008 when the Republican right explained in strident tones why America needed to produce more of its own oil and gas. In hockey mom mode Sarah Palin added, "And take it from a gal who knows the north slopes of Alaska, we've got lots of both." America has indeed lots of oil, as shrimp fisherman are now finding.

The same people who chanted "drill, baby, drill" at that Republican convention stand aghast at the inability of a president to cope with the disastrous consequences of the policies they promoted. From riskier off-shore drilling to light-touch regulation, they are reaping exactly what they sowed. And they are rightly indignant about it. The same people who called hysterically for less government are now calling for more of it. And the hockey mom turned TV pundit keeps talking, saddened, she said, that the President cannot see the link between oil and freedom.

The extent to which this represents mainstream opinion – the extent to which the consumption of oil (America consumes 20% of the world's oil) is still regarded as untouchable, something akin to a constitutional right – is the measure of Mr Obama's real problem. So he can be forgiven for trying to steer America towards the "promised land" where all is green. But from this vision, he shrank away too in his speech. Not one mention of climate change, or carbon, or cap and trade; no call on the Senate to adopt the climate change legislation that the House of Representatives passed last year.

Some commentators interpreted these omissions as deliberate, as a death-knell of a bill (by no means radical) to curb emissions 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. This may be the President's acknowledgement that even in the wake of the disaster, the centre-ground of political debate cannot make the link between gushing oil and a weak climate-change bill. It is still a bridge too far. But instead of leading the debate on a measure that is clearly dear to his heart, the self-professed warrior against a phoney, anthropomorphised foe – the oil spill – shrinks away from a real fight over which he could have some influence. If this is true, he has got no one but himself to blame. Time and again, he reverts to his default ambition of acting as some sort of political alchemist, someone who can miracle up a consensus where none exists. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair both tried to do the same, before realising that this too was an illusion.

President Obama restored some of his credibility as a manager of disaster in the deal struck with BP to create a 20 billion dollar fund for compensation claims. BP has amply deserved the blame for the disaster. But it created a cross for its own back by promoting itself as a green multinational business when it had one of the worst records for breaches of environmental and safety regulation. It went in for outsourcing, cost-cutting and risk-taking and never had a plan B, let alone a plan A, for a blow-out of this seriousness.

When news of it broke, BP's reaction was to understate the oil flow. But like it or not, BP's fate and that of Obama's administration are now firmly forged. The world – not just the US – is now committed to ensuring that BP trades long enough to meet its obligations and to deal with the clean-up operation. No wonder President Obama did not mention climate change in his Oval Office address. He needs every motorist, everywhere, to fill up at their local BP petrol stations. In the meantime the value of BP shares has recovered, exposing the hypocrisy that has come to define this tragedy. BP is to blame, but we are all responsible for creating and sustaining the conditions that led to it. The US Congress may be beside itself with anger and frustration but – lest we forget – it was craven politicians, pressing for more oil and for more tax revenues, who encouraged riskier oil exploration and inadequate safeguards.

In the arc of human history, the idea that the planet is a machine for us to re-engineer at will is a relatively recent conceit. Pre-Enlightenment, Europeans, like indigenous people the world over, believed the Earth to be a living organism full of life-giving powers and wrathful tempers. For this reason there were strong taboos against any action that would desecrate and deform it. With nature now cast as machine, devoid of mystery and sanctity, its component parts could be dammed, extracted and remade with impunity. It is therefore tempting to believe that the Deepwater Horizon disaster is not just an industrial accident but a violent wound inflicted on the Earth itself, laying bare the hubris at the very heart of consumer capitalism. But too few dig this suggestion. So the response is rife with the arrogance that created it in the first place.

The most positive response to this disaster would be not only an acceleration of renewable energy sources like wind, wave and solar but a full embrace of the precautionary principle in science so that "when an activity raises threats to the environment or human health" we tread carefully, as if failure were possible, even likely.

Indian Signs

William Partridge

When Christopher Columbus set foot on American shores in 1492 the North American Indian populated the length and breadth of what is now USA. Semi-nomadic and estimated at maybe one million in total, they farmed and they hunted. Tribal conflict was far from unknown in this beautiful and limitless land but courtesy and a developed affinity with the land was what Columbus found. He wrote of the Tainos Indians, "So tractable, so peaceable, are these people that there is not in the world a better nation. They love their neighbour as themselves, and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle.....".

More Spaniards and later, the British (in 1605), arrived. Such was their parlous state, after an arduous Atlantic journey, many immigrants owed their very survival to Indian hospitality. More arrived and land grants, a quite alien concept to the Indians, were agreed. Wasn't the land limitless after all? Shipload followed shipload. Land began to be taken, not agreed. Dispute flickered and European guns blazed their authority over the east coast tribes.

In 1805 the Lewis Clark expedition reached the Pacific coast. The trickle of immigrants became a stream, then a flood. New iron-built steamers transported European settlers by the million. The settlers themselves tended to be the poor and the dispossessed, the survivors of the 1840's Irish potato famine amongst them. They headed west, over Indian land and over Indian objections. The violence, the betrayals, the greed as well as the courage; Geronimo, Red Cloud, General Custer, Buffalo Bill – all have been well recorded in print and on film. The Indian way of life has been recorded less well.

Ever-present, and accelerating as the 19th century wore on, was a relentless tide of land-hungry settlers sweeping west, and by the end of the 19th century American Indian society was effectively extinct. The European justified this wholesale robbery of Indian land under the slightly sickening title "Manifest Destiny" - a Darwinian (except that it preceded Darwin's Origin of Species) right of superior, Christian Europeans to the rewards of their enterprise, in this case, all of America and the riches within it.

But why such an unequal struggle? The Indian was very different in culture from, but not basically inferior to, the European one; given the chance, individuals showed themselves capable of qualifying as lawyers as early as 1850. Simply, the Indians and the immigrants they ended up opposing were products of two separate and very different environments. Although no pacifist, the free-roaming Indian developed no concept of individual land ownership, and little of possessions either, and the main reason for this (and the big difference between the two cultures) was the abundant availability of land.

The European was a much more competitive fellow. Used to the close and increasing proximity of both neighbours and neighbouring nations, a more watchful and belligerent stance was both natural and essential. Thus aggressive land ownership, heightened competition together with the progress it encourages, and war. In a clash of the two cultures, it was no contest.

Right until the end, the Indian hoped for peaceful co-existence and that agreements would be honoured. He hoped in vain. Naively, he never began to understand the forces at work within the European. The expanding European masses saw in America what was unavailable at home-land. Sitting Bull, revered Indian leader and victor over Custer in 1876, said, "They made many promises, more than I can remember, but they kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it".

How many emigrate entirely voluntarily? Mass migration is supply-driven. What would America and the American Indian be without European population growth, which made existence, even survival, untenable for so many at home? Yet how many Europeans even now with the benefit of hindsight would entertain a notion that their own thoughtless procreation sounded the death knell of thousands half a world away, that the children so profusely parented at that time ultimately extinguished life for children elsewhere and out of sight? Even by our own sympathetic standards, travelling for days without encountering another soul is a fragile pleasure. The European first intruded upon this culture, then decimated it; looked upon the Indian as a heathen and called it "Manifest Destiny".

The galvanising, relentless power of population growth is a power that is appreciated historically rather than contemporaneously. Expanding needs demand to be satisfied and sooner or later they will be, be it the appropriation of America or the unwelcome building of a local housing estate. For, alongside those demands inevitably come the tools to satisfy them – the inventions, the arms, the self-centred justifications. There is sufficient evidence to ponder population growth as one of the great engines of conflict. One can look at the world's recent conflagrations: the Balkans, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Israel – all have a population growth dimension whereas Europe, a hotbed of past conflict, is now more peaceful and this happens to coincide with Europe's decline in population growth.

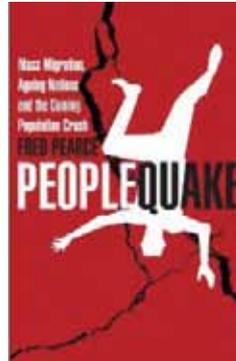
Taking the American experience one might ponder on what an optimum population would be was peace to be the only yardstick. The population density of pre-Columbus America was an environmentally super-friendly 4 square miles each! Can we do no better than that? Maybe we can't.

For further reading, try *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown, first published in GB by Barrie & Jenkins Ltd (1971)

Reviews

Peoplequake – Fred Pearce

Simon Ross



Fred Pearce, an established journalist on science and the environment, has been actively promoting his book, *Peoplequake*, since its publication last year. Subtitled *Mass Migration, Ageing Nations, and the Coming Population Crash*, the book argues that the global population will soon reach its peak, that environmental and resource issues can be largely addressed by the better use of technology and by reducing

inequality and that we should be more concerned about the future impact of ageing and declining populations.

He reaches these odd conclusions by a highly selective approach to these issues, something that has been the subject of some criticism.

For example, he, like others, seeks to link population concern (focused on population quantity) with eugenics (focused on population quality). In fact, there is no necessary or logical link between the two. That some people may have been interested in both subjects in the past (and in many others), does not establish such a link. By raising eugenics when no modern population concern organisation countenances it, he is simply intentionally perpetuating the damaging falsehood that eugenics lies concealed within the "hidden heart" of those concerned with population and sustainability.

In another misleading non sequitur, he blames the views of Malthus for the fact that British authorities failed to prevent famine within their empire. Malthus' responsibility is hardly proven, is probably unprovable and isn't at all relevant to the situation we face now. No-one today suggests that famine relief be suspended.

Pearce then establishes that the average number of births per women is falling and suggests that this closes the subject. He doesn't recognise either that as long as births are above replacement level, the population will increase or that the rate of increase is also boosted by the falling death rate. He also ignores the compounding effect: that the lower birth rate per head must be multiplied by an ever growing number of heads. Finally, he doesn't take account of the massive past increase in the base population, the doubling over the last fifty years. The fact that numbers are already unsustainable is as important as the extra 1.5 million people there are every week.

He perversely uses the success stories of some recent family planning campaigns to suggest that the issue has disappeared, instead of urging that such campaigns be launched in the many countries where birth rates are still high.

His complacency about future world population growth is bolstered by a strongly disputed interpretation of research on the size and timing of the peak. This complacency is not shared with those who study resources, ecosystems or climate change. Pearce even claims to be concerned about what he predicts will be a rapid decline in the European population. In fact, UN projections to 2050 are that the population will broadly stabilise. A collapse is not likely and, if the population did fall somewhat, that would be no bad thing.

The book's underlying point and rationale is to claim that the sustainability and environmental problem isn't population, it's consumption. His argument is that rich people do the consuming while poor people have the children. It's true that large consumption disparities do exist, which is why rich countries should work even harder than poor ones to achieve a sustainable population size. However, poorer countries are becoming more prosperous and it will be much easier for them to slow their currently rapid population growth now than for their population to decline in the future. Moreover, his point is not sufficient reason at all to ignore and even seek to undermine the growing recognition of the impact of population numbers on sustainability and the environment. It's people who do the consuming, after all, and population and consumption issues are not in opposition to one another. That's akin to saying one should ignore water pollution because air pollution is more damaging to human health. If we're concerned about pollution, we should act to limit both. His assertions that population concern means "blaming the poor" and "downplaying" western consumption levels are simply false.

Similarly, he notes that per capita consumption is predicted to rise, as though that means one should ignore population growth as irrelevant. He could more productively see that limiting population numbers would create more environmental 'head room' for per capita consumption growth, particularly in poorer countries.

Finally, in all his attacks on population concern, he notably fails to provide alternative strategies to the sustainability and environmental issues we all face. If he did, it would quickly become apparent that population concern is complementary to other solutions, not an alternative to or distraction from them, and that environmentalists such as Pearce should welcome multiple solutions.

Freedom – Jonathan Franzen

Jo Hanson

Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* puts a strong case for population control through one of its main characters. This book is being hailed as a masterpiece in the USA, so is being read by millions of people. This is a great way to spread the message.



Letters

The trouble with analogies like "another Birmingham" is that most people haven't a clue how big Birmingham is. Even if they do, the numbers don't mean anything to them. You need to put them in terms that people can understand. So: 3.2 million (Birmingham) is about 5% of total UK population (61 million). That is equivalent to adding 3 extra classrooms to every secondary school (pupils ~ 1300, class size just over 20). I think that numbers like that are much more meaningful to people.

Alain Williams

The charity Project Prevention pays drug-addicts to be temporarily sterilised whilst they continue to take drugs, in order to prevent them becoming pregnant. The circumstances of the babies born to these addicts makes harrowing reading and most of the babies are born addicted to drugs. The founder has now helped in excess of 3,500 women but has an endless struggle to justify her motives. It strikes me that this is a positive approach to another aspect of our work and members might feel motivated to respond.

Anthea Watson

(Editor's comment: This is clearly a serious public health issue. However, the limited numbers involved mean that it is marginal to overall population numbers while offering money to people in difficult circumstances to induce them to be sterilised does raise ethical issues.)

On breaking down the taboo on population, it is fine having the disturbing population counter on our website but would it be possible to continually disturb everyone else by making it universally and permanently obvious? Would Population Matters consider approaching Bill Gates and the Mac Corp. to get them to include the population counter as a feature on their operating systems and thus present this unavoidable statistic to everyone worldwide?

Geoff Heald

Geoff Heald

Request for feedback

We'd love to know what you think of the magazine and any ideas you have for making it better. To take part by answering three simple questions, just copy the link below in your computer browser address window. Your details will not be shared with third parties and you will not be contacted as a result of taking part. The privacy of your individual responses will be respected.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y865GH8>

Things to do or buy

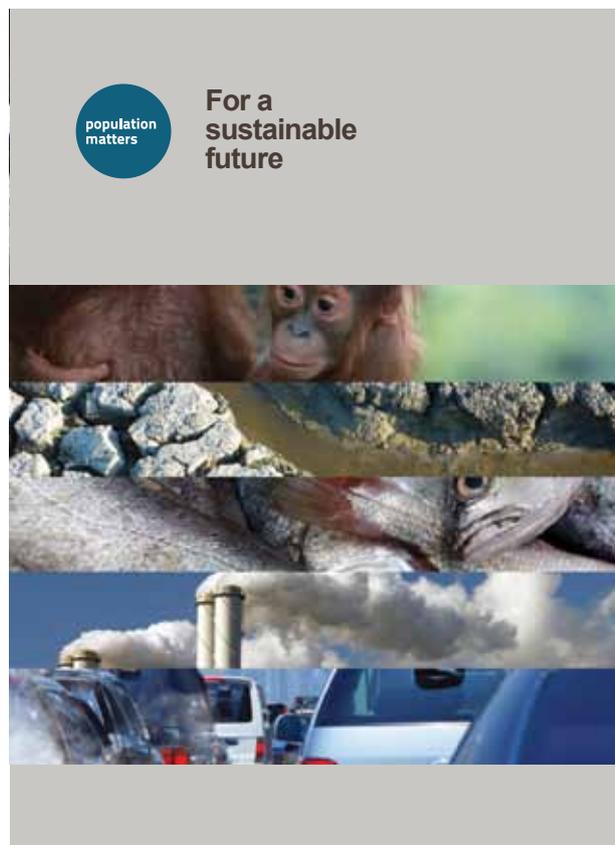
Have you signed the Petition and Stop at Two Pledge? Just go to the website and search for Petition or Pledge.

Join the debate on the active discussion groups on Facebook, Google, LinkedIn and Yahoo and pick us up on Twitter.

The letter-writing group rebuts critics, supports friends and argues our case by writing to the press and opinion formers. Members share opportunities, example letters and tips. To join, contact the Administrator.

If you'd like other involvement, contact the Administrator with your interests and skills.

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01 Climate Change and Population
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