



NEWSLETTER

Sustainable Population Australia Inc

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Patrons
Professor Ian Lowe
Dr Mary White

The Hon Bob Carr
Professor Tim Flannery
Dr Paul Collins

Typhoon Haiyan: did population play a role?

One aid worker described it as “worse than hell”. The magnitude of Typhoon Haiyan that ripped through the Philippines was unprecedented, enough for it to be called a Super-Typhoon. There were sustained winds of 250kph, rising at times to over 300kph. The damage was horrific. In Tacloban, the storm surge had been five metres high, like a tsunami. President Benigno Aquino declared the devastation a “national calamity”. Eleven million people affected; over 2300 dead, perhaps more. Early estimates of costs are around \$15 billion.

As the storm struck, the lead delegate from the Philippines, Yeb Saño was travelling to Warsaw, Poland, for the United Nations climate negotiations. In an emotional speech in the opening session, he spoke of the “hellstorm” that “left a vast wasteland of mud and debris and dead bodies.” He pleaded with the international community to take strong action in mitigating climate change and went on a hunger strike for the remaining two weeks of the conference.

While some disputed whether climate change had “caused” the massive storm, clearly it had worsened it. Australia’s Professor Will Steffen, formerly of the Climate Commission and currently a member of the community-funded Climate Council which took its place, said a hotter, moister climate is already affecting storms such as Haiyan. He said cyclones/typhoons get most of their energy from the surface of the water and sea-surface temperatures had been rising steadily with climate change. Indeed, the waters where Haiyan formed were one degree C. above normal. Dr Steffen added that cyclones are “packing more punch” in terms of wind and also the rain they are carrying. And, as in Tacloban, much of the damage came from the storm surge, and since climate change is already raising sea-levels, the risk of inundation from such surges is increasing.

The population of the Philippines has quintupled from 19 million in 1950 to nearly 100 million today. Was this a factor? It certainly made the people more vulnerable. As Simon Ross of the UK-based Population Matters noted: “Pressure on space and resources means people

are more likely to live in areas vulnerable to storms, such as coastal and low lying areas, where land is cheaper and where they can access fish stocks.

“Poverty, to which population growth contributes significantly, means that people cannot afford the sturdy dwellings which can withstand extreme weather events. The sheer numbers of people mean that more suffer when storms do strike and that recovery efforts are that much more difficult.”

The Filipinos were made more vulnerable by their high population growth rates, but were they to blame for the typhoon itself? Were they to blame for climate change which made the typhoon so devastating? Global warming is mostly the result of a buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere-largely from burning fossil fuels-that trap heat from the sun. Land use change - deforestation for agriculture - accounts for the rest. It is we in industrialised countries who burn coal, oil and natural gas that must shoulder most of the blame for climate change, not the average Filipino who only burns about a tenth as much fossil fuel as the average Australian.

Nevertheless, someone there has to be responsible for the land use change (deforestation for growing food) that also drives global warming. The finger points less at the people themselves than at the Catholic Church and previous governments (not that of Benigno Aquino) who have long denied people access to family planning and who must now accept responsibility for the country's population explosion and consequent excessive land use change which has contributed in part to climate change.



The counterintuitive facts about population growth



Michael Lardelli

by *Michael Lardelli*

This year, my eight-year-old daughter's school class has been studying "sustainability". Last term she was all over me like a rash about not wasting water. Unfortunately, I had to explain to her that saving every last drop of water was actually a waste of time, "The water you save will

just let the government bring in more people because it wants to grow the population. It actually makes more sense for you to use as much water as possible because that may slow the government down". Adelaide's population has now grown to a size where coping with the growth has outpaced our capacity to pay. SA's \$2 billion desalination plant (costing \$130 million per year to run) was built explicitly to cope with population growth and would be unnecessary without it. Then there are the costs of extra hospital beds, congested roads, crowded schools etc. Counterintuitively, these diseconomies of scale are counted as positives when GDP figures are calculated!

As a scientist I am used to reality sometimes appearing counterintuitive. The most famous example is Galileo dropping two metal balls of different weights from the leaning tower of Pisa to demonstrate that they would both hit the ground simultaneously. Demography – the study of the structure of human populations – is another area where the obvious answer is not necessarily the correct one. An interesting example of this was Senator Nick Xenophon's insistence before the recent election that he wanted to promote faster population growth in South Australia. Apparently Senator Xenophon believes that, with SA's population growing at 1% per year, "We're sitting on a demographic time bomb. There'll be fewer taxpayers compared to the rest of the population." Senator Xenophon appears envious of WA's population growth of more than 3.4% even though this will double WA's population in only two decades! Imagine trying to double a state's infrastructure – hospitals, roads, sewerage, power etc. - in 20 years when the current estimate is that each additional person requires about \$200,000ⁱ of infrastructure. From where will that money come?

Unfortunately, Senator Xenophon has been deceived by the notion that it is possible to significantly "youngify" our population through migration. But even pro-migration demographers reject this idea. As

demographers McDonald and Kippen stated in a reportⁱⁱ for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in 1999, "Levels of annual net migration [into Australia] above 80,000 become increasingly ineffective and inefficient in the retardation of ageing. Those who wish to argue for a higher level of immigration need to base their argument on the benefits of a larger population, not upon the illusory 'younging power' of high immigration." At the moment annual net migration is about three times higher than the 80,000 recommended! A 2008 paperⁱⁱⁱ by sociologist Katharine Betts shows how Australia's current sky-high rate of population growth could more than double our population by the end of the century (and our water, food and fuel consumption etc.) but make little difference to our population's median age. In fact, if we encourage immigration rather than supporting women to have children we could end up with an older population structure than otherwise! With ideas this counterintuitive it is no wonder that our normally intelligent Senator Xenophon is confused.

Australia's current rate of population growth is truly exceptional – or 'third world' – depending on your viewpoint. At the moment we are growing at three times the rate of the rest of the OECD. But despite the yawning infrastructure shortfalls that rate is not fast enough for Labor's Bill Shorten who wants to see still higher levels of immigration. The next arrival could "be the next Albert Einstein or a good taxpayer". But it could just as well be the next crime boss or a welfare recipient. And while the current SA Labor government starts to talk about dismantling our current planning approval system^{iv} (to make it easier to realise its urban expansion and densification dreams) the leader of the alternative Liberal government wants more incentives to boost our population growth.^v It's enough to make you bury your head in your hands in despair – or join Sustainable Population Australia.

Michael Lardelli is senior lecturer in genetics at the University of Adelaide and translator of Prof. Kjell Aleklett's book "Peeking at Peak Oil".

ⁱ<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=10137&page=0>

ⁱⁱ<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/ageing/ageing13.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=536232000862769;res=IELHSS>

^{iv}<http://indaily.com.au/news/2013/09/30/rau-wants-elected-councillors-out-of-planning/>

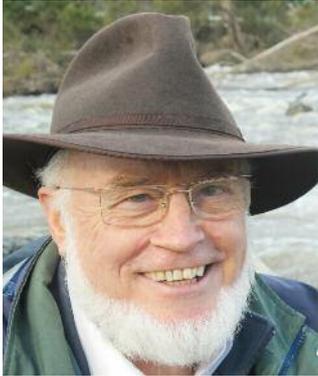
^v<http://indaily.com.au/news/2013/09/30/marshall-to-lobby-for-more-migrants/>

Strategic Thinking on Environmental Policy in Australia

The following is the talk given by **John Williams**, Founding Member, Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, at the conference 'Considering the Environment in National Strategic Thinking' at the Crawford School, ANU, on 15 November 2013.

In 1911, John Muir observed... *'When we try to pick out anything by itself in nature, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.'*

The world has a huge appetite for energy, water and food. The ecosystems and the natural resource base that provide all three are woven together and linked in a way that means we cannot manage one without impacting on at least one of the others. Energy, water and food each operate as threads in the fabric of life on this finite planet.



John Williams

While water can be seen as the gossamer that links together the web of food, energy, climate, economic growth and human well-being, energy and the capture of carbon in food production are similarly important.

All three are strongly interdependent.

Can you see how the threads of the cloth are hitched to other threads in the fabric of our civilization? In past times we could pull threads and it did not seem to matter. Now it does. We have lived as if our planet is infinite and now we see that it is finite and for the first time we see our impact on the properties and function of the Planet Earth.

Our frame of thinking has to change.

The two centuries since the start of the industrial era has been a period of rapid and almost unbroken economic growth in much of the world, based upon exponentially increasing the use of energy and water resources and the atmospheric commons.

It is axiomatic that exponential growth cannot continue forever on a finite planet, leading to an emerging collision between the presently irresistible force of economic growth and the immovable reality of the finitude of Planet Earth.

This collision takes many forms and will occur over many decades, but its effects on water resources and climate are already plainly evident. The inevitability of the collision has led to a contest between two broad narratives about energy, water and climate in the 21st

century - one framed around the paramount need for economic growth and the other around the paramount need to protect an increasingly fragile natural world.

Many features of recent public discourse (including the acceleration of the news cycle and the echo-chamber effect of interactive social media) have driven these narratives to become progressively more mutually antagonistic and incompatible.

- The future therefore depends upon the evolution of more subtle and resilient narratives about human-earth interactions, in which energy, water and climate are central.
- The evolutionary fitness test for these narratives is to empower a transition to a society that lives within the means of a finite planet and improves global wellbeing at the same time.

In summary then the bottom line is that we must change our incompatible stories about energy, water, food and climate. We cannot continue to foster one story that assumes an infinite planet and is framed around the paramount need for economic growth while maintaining the other story around the paramount need to protect an increasingly fragile natural world.

The future therefore depends upon the evolution of a more subtle and resilient story about human-earth interactions, in which energy, water and climate are central and where a new story evolves to empower a transition to a society that lives within the means of a finite planet and improves global wellbeing at the same time.

To take our first steps on this journey we in Wentworth Group see the following strategies important in Australia.

- Land-use planning and environmental regulation to maintain a healthy environment and to promote development
- Strengthening regional natural resource management authorities
- Building a system of National Environmental Accounts to inform investment and policy decisions
- Securing Australia's conservation estate and taking effective action to protect threatened species
- Using markets to repair and maintain natural capital.

References:

Raupach, Mike R., (2011) The role of narrative in shaping energy-water-climate futures, CSIRO http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/pup_session.asp?19122

Australian Government (2010) PMSEIC *Impact Statement*, <http://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PMSEIC-EWC-Impact-Statement.pdf>

The Coming Radical Change in Mining Practice

by *Simon Michaux*

Something is happening around us. It's been highly visible for five years or so by those who choose to look. It seemed that Australia had missed the troubles plaguing the United States and Europe. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) seemed to not bother us here at all. Australia was doing well, largely due to the economic performance of the mining industry in a boom cycle. But now the party seems to be over.

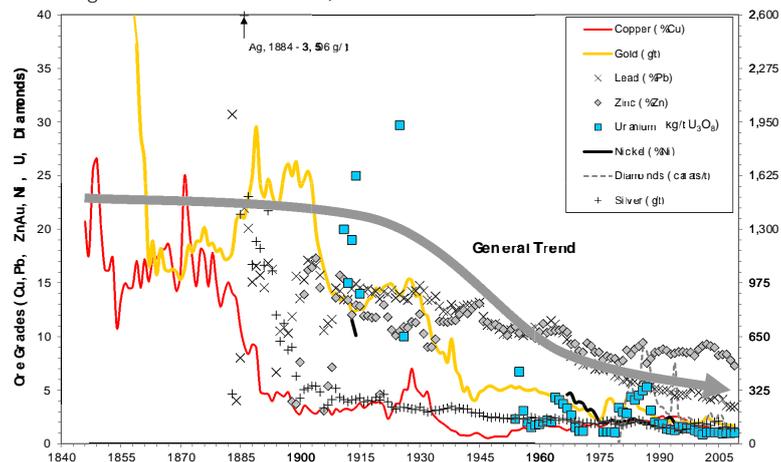
That mining boom has clearly moved into a contraction cycle. The mining industry has seen mass layoffs and large operation shutdowns, resulting in troubled economic predictions for the Australian economy. Mining is becoming economically unviable

There are a number of technical reasons for this, which have translated into an economic outcome.

- Decreasing grade
- Increasing rock hardness
- Higher strip ratio
- Increase in penalty elements
- Increase in required energy
- Increase in required potable water
- Much greater environmental impact

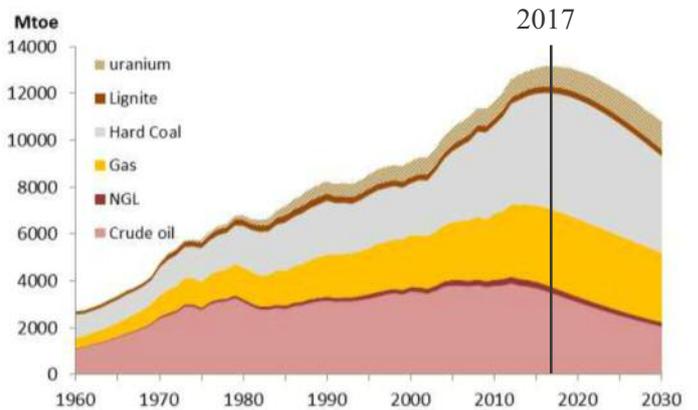
As we mine out all of the easy to work deposits, only the harder work deposits are left. Often ore deposits are deeper underground, requiring a greater strip ratio or deeper underground operations. This requires more energy and capital as part of the cost of doing business. Penalty elements in saleable concentrate going to the smelter like arsenic, fluoride or cyanide are not accepted where decades ago they would have been rejected. Often, only countries like China would accept these concentrates due to environmental pollution generated during their processing. Economies of scale need mining operations to double and triple in size for the next generation to be economically viable.

the next generation to economically viable



All future operations looked at now are huge low grade deposits, with penalty minerals more prominently present in deposit that prevent efficient processing at ever decreasing grind sizes. The scale of these low grade operations is much larger than what is done now.

Energy is the rate determining step mining is no longer the financial bonanza it used to be. Total world fossil fuel supply is close to peak, driven by peak of oil production. Declining oil production in the coming years will create a rising gap which other fossil fuels like gas or coal, will be unable to compensate for. The energy contribution of nuclear fuels is too low in order to have any significant influence at a global level, though this might be different for some countries. Moreover, like with fossil fuels, easy and cheap to develop mines are also being depleted in uranium production effort and cost will continuously increase as a consequence.



- 1 Mtoe = 7.1 million barrel of crude oil and condensate
- 1 Mtoe = 10 million barrel of natural gas
- 1 Mtoe = 1.16 billion m3 of natural gas liquids
- 1 Mtoe = 1.5 Mt hard coal (1.8 Mt sub-bituminous coal)
- 1 Mtoe = 3 Mt lignite
- 1 Mtoe = 58 t uranium

The industrial systems that each of these energy sources supports is quite different and are not interchangeable easily. That being said, each of those industrial systems are vital for our society to function. Putting all energy sources together gives a snapshot of our industrial capability. Peak total energy is projected to be approximately in the year 2017, four years away. As all of these sources are only a few years away from peaking and declining (with the exception of uranium), a compelling case can be made that our society and its industrial sector energy supply faces a fundamental problem, that is systemic in nature.

Article



Simon Michaux

All of the above results in an increase in power and water at a time when power and potable water shortages are probable. This implies that mining in its conventional form will peak and decline, just like production rates of any other non-renewable natural resource.

Unfortunately, the implications of contracting natural resources is counter to economic objectives and philosophies. Demand for all metals has been growing at an unsustainable rate.

Put these observable trends together and a compelling case can be made that our society is approaching an existential crisis that is systemic in nature and is in denial about the existence of that crisis. Everything we need and want to operate is drawn from non-renewable natural resources in a finite system. Most of those natural resources that we need are depleting or will do soon. Conversely, demand for everything we need and want is expanding fast in the name of economic growth (and increasing population). When these trends meet, there will come a point where how we do things will fundamentally change.

None of these issues can be seen in isolation. Everything interacts together. This means that a chain reaction is probably what is going to happen. A traditionally isolated problem will happen, which will trigger unprecedented chaos. This is the nature of systemic crises around fundamental support services.

The party is over when demand for something vital outstrips supply or some vital service ceases to function reliably (or at all). The flashpoint is not the peak production of any given natural resource but when the perception of the average people en-masse understands that the world they live in is no longer possible. Once those voting public understand that there is no easy solution at hand that allows their life to continue in the fashion they have become accustomed to, there will be no avoiding the supporting issues. Failure to address these issues will result our society being devastated. A school of thought tells us that there is considerable effort to keep the voting public largely ignorant of these issues, to keep them at their posts, working and consuming. What happens to the idea of democracy when there is no longer enough to go around? If we wish to stay a democracy then the average person must become educated in these issues and actively take part in developing the solutions.

The challenge for our political leadership is considerable. A series of solutions are required and then an unprecedented amount of leadership and vision needs to be applied. The voting public have to understand what the genuine issues are and all stake holders then have to work together. Our current approach seems to be wilful ignorance and 'give war a chance'.

We either meet these problems effectively, or those problems meet us with devastating consequences.

Call for Nominations for Election to the SPA National Executive Committee

The SPA Annual General Meeting will be held in Canberra ACT at 11am, Saturday 5th April 2014 at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Barton. In the afternoon there will be a public meeting on the Ethics of Migration.

At the AGM, elections for all SPA Committee positions will be held if there are more nominees than places to be filled. Nominations for these positions are now called. The tenure is 12 months.

You may nominate for more than one position e.g. Secretary and Committee member. The positions are National President; Vice President; Meetings Secretary; Correspondence Secretary; Treasurer and three to five committee members.

A nomination form is included with this Newsletter and on the website at www.population.org.au. Additional copies can be obtained from the SPA National Office in Canberra (email info@population.org.au or phone (02) 6288 6810). It must be completed and returned to the Returning Officer, SPA, PO Box 3851, Weston Creek, ACT 2611 to arrive no later than Friday 17 January, 2014.

Proxy voting forms will be distributed with the February 2014 Newsletter which will also include a list of candidates for positions and candidate statements.

Jenny Goldie, National President

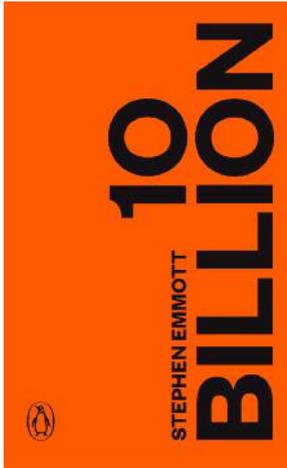
A new petition

Many of you signed the petition organised by Rod and Dawn Linklater. Here is another, set up by Mike Stenford of Victoria.

<http://www.communityrun.org/petitions/australia-requires-a-public-inquiry-to-determine-a-basis-for-the-optimum-rate-of-population-growth-2>

Sign it on-line and pass on to your networks!

Book Review



10 Billion

by *Stephen Emmott*

Penguin ISBN 978-0-141-97632-7 199 pages

Reviewed by Jenny Goldie

This book has gained a certain notoriety because of its ending. But you have to read the book to understand why. It's not difficult to read in one sense – sometimes only a few words to a page and lots of photos and easy to

understand graphs to help make a point. It's difficult to read in another sense though. I've read it three times now but the first time I had to stop halfway. It was simply too depressing to go on.

Stephen Emmott is a scientist and heads a broad scientific research program at Microsoft Research in Cambridge, UK, that tackles fundamental problems in science. His lab's research covers everything from immunology to climatology to conservation biology. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the UK National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts. I tell all this because Emmott needs to be taken seriously, even though the book has a slightly flippant tone. I suspect the tone was a means of masking despair.

As the title of the book implies, this is a book about population. Not about pure numbers though, but about what humans in their ever growing numbers have done to the planet, and how the planet is reacting, and what effect even greater numbers are likely to have. We tried to make these connections at our recent *Population, Resources and Climate Change* conference. Pity Emmott wasn't there; he would have fitted right in. Interestingly though, Paul Ehrlich in his keynote address picked up an early theme of Emmott's about the close connections between humans, agriculture and climate. Human population has expanded thanks largely to four revolutions in agriculture that each delivered food in greater quantities and more reliably: domestication of animals, selective breeding of plants, mechanisation, and last century's Green Revolution.

Much of the growth in human population has been relatively recent, growing from two billion in 1930 to over seven billion today. Increased agricultural productivity may have facilitated it, but it was aided and abetted by manufacturing, technological innovation, new industrial processes, better health care and transport. Significantly, coal, oil and gas became our principal sources of energy.

The Green Revolution was only made possible by

industrial scale use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers, an unprecedented expansion in land use and, indeed, industrialisation of the entire food production system. Twenty years after the start of the Green Revolution there were four billion of us on the planet with an astonishing growth in cars, shipping and air travel. By 1990 there was yet another billion.

It was about then that people came to understand that fresh water was a finite resource with unusual droughts in not only Africa, but Australia, the US, Europe and Asia as well. By 2000, with six billion on the planet, it had become clear that a changing climate was also a problem, thanks to the accumulation of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Our increasing use of land for agriculture, cities, roads and mining had begun to modify the biosphere.

So here are the connections, articulated by both Ehrlich and Emmott: an increasing human population accelerates the demand for water and food which in turn increases the demand for land and thus accelerates deforestation; greater food production demands more transportation; all these accelerate the demand for energy; this then accelerates greenhouse gas emissions which further accelerates climate change. Both climate change and growing populations put stress on land, water and food. In short, as populations and economies grow, stresses on the entire system accelerate sharply, diminishing the biosphere's very ability to provide for the human population.

This book, however, is more than food, climate and number of people. For instance, there's a section on the true cost of producing a car, of finding and transporting the iron ore, the steel, the tyres, the plastic, the lead. The cost is not just what you pay the car dealer, there's the cost of environmental degradation; pollution from mining, industrial processes and transportation; the resultant loss of ecosystems and climate change. "Who pays? Maybe you. More likely your children".

I'd better let you in on the ending: "I think we're f---ed," he wrote. He then asked one of his young, bright scientists on his team if there was one thing he had to do to deal with the situation we face, what would it be: "Teach my son how to use a gun," was the reply.

Despite one or two minor errors, this book is almost mandatory reading. In fact, buy several copies and give it to others. Perhaps wait until after Christmas though.



Stephen Emmott

Book Review

“Breaking New Ground – a personal history”

By Lester R Brown

Norton and Co., New York, 2013.

Reviewed by Jenny Goldie



Lester R Brown

Taking up nearly a shelf in my bookcase are the annual *State of the World* reports for which Lester Brown is largely responsible. Over the past four decades we have associated him with first The Worldwatch Institute and then Earth Policy Institute, both of which he established. Along the way he wrote many books including *Beyond Malthus: Nineteen Dimensions of the Population Challenge*; *Full House: Reassessing the Earth's Carrying Capacity*; and *World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental Collapse*. The one that caused the greatest stir, however, was *Who Will Feed China? Wake-Up Call for a Small Planet*.

It was not until this his autobiography came out, however, that we knew much about the man himself. As one commentator wrote on the back cover: “This is the life story of a true American hero...Lester Brown is in a class by himself.” Lester grew up on a farm in New Jersey in the post-Depression years in a house with no electricity, no running water or indoor plumbing and no refrigerator, music, radio or books. His hard-working parents were loving but had never read a book. For Lester to subsequently have had such international influence, and at a very young age, is a testament to his intelligence, drive, hard work and compassion. I say compassion because what drove him was his concern about the growing imbalance between food and the number of people in the world and thus the possibility of mass famine.

Before getting on to his broader accomplishments, it is worth noting how hard he and his younger brother worked, and never, it seemed, begrudgingly.

So in the spring, for example, my brother assumed the responsibility for milking the cows not only what he was responsible for, but also mine. I, meanwhile, would run a mile and a half to the local farm to spend a couple of hours before school helping the farmers cut his four acres of asparagus. He paid \$1

an hour, enabling us to accumulate some cash...In addition to picking strawberries and asparagus for other farmers, we would also help at hay baling time...

Lester studied agricultural science at Rutgers University in New Jersey and thought he would be a tomato farmer for the rest of his life, having already established a successful farm with his brother. But he was awarded a place on the International Farm Youth Exchange Program and spent some months in India, living with an Indian farming family.

While in India, I had become sensitized to population pressure. Although India only had 416 million people when I was there, it seemed densely populated even then. I was concerned about rapid population growth and how it frustrated efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and thus the opportunity for children to develop physically and mentally.

He sensed he needed to work for the Foreign Agricultural Service. To do so he needed a Masters in Agricultural Economics but in the process lost the farm. Just as well. The world needed him. In 1965, as a 31 year old he was sent to India to help draft the agricultural section of India's next five-year plan. On arrival, he realised the whole country was in drought and the anticipated harvest was unlikely to meet the grain demand of 95 million tons. They were in for a huge shortfall. He realised that only the US could fill the deficit and so telegraphed Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman, warning of a major food crisis and that 10-15 million tons of grain imports would be needed to help feed the, by then, 480 million people. President Lyndon Johnson agreed but on the condition that India develop its agriculture, and fast. So while a fifth of the US harvest was being shipped to Indian villages to stave off mass famine, Lester suggested to the Indian Government that they import from Mexico a shipload or two of the new high-yielding dwarf varieties of wheat, initially developed by Green Revolution's Norman Borlaug.

There was enormous backlog of agricultural technology that could be brought into play to help eradicate hunger and stave off the threat of future famine. At that time, I noted that new technologies could not solve the food problem – they would only buy time with which to slow population growth.

Lester Brown has since had nearly five decades of achievements and well-deserved honours. Space does not permit the listing of them all. Read the book if only to remind yourself of what one person can do – for good – in one lifetime.

Poem

Eve and the Fall

Roger Martin

In ancient Africa, the Lord of Earth,
The Gaia, keeper of the sacred flame
Of life upon this favoured speck of dust,
Spoke to the ape-girl, Lucy, in a dream.

“You have done well. That brain is growing fast.
Time to become a human. Listen hard,
And tell the others, and the ones to come.

Throughout this Eden I have given you
You shall be matriarch of beasts undreamt.
They’ll live a life of eagles, always fed,
And see all things, and roam the earth and sky,
And read the seas and stars, and want for nought,
Provided that they follow this command.
Already you can feed of plants and flesh,
And only two fruits grow beyond your reach.
Both now I give you. But remember this:
You must eat both together, or else none.
The tree of Knowledge has the sweetest fruit;
The fruit of Wisdom’s bitter, green and hard.
But if you gorge upon the first alone,
Without the second fruit to balance it,
Your offspring shall be locusts in the spring.
They’ll breed, and swarm, and feed, till, numberless,
They’ve stripped the land of everything that grows,
And, Earth once made a desert, die in heaps.
That brain will free you from my disciplines
Of claw and dearth and sickness for a time.
Control your numbers only, now you can,
And Earth shall always be your Paradise.”

And Lucy, awe-struck, grunted in her sleep;
And half-awoke, and jabbered to her mate,



Roger Martin
Roger is a former diplomat and
Chair of Population Matters

And told him all that lingered
from the dream.

“We’ll eat the fruit of
Knowledge, and we’ll live
Like eagles, and like locusts
numberless.
The Earth is ours.”

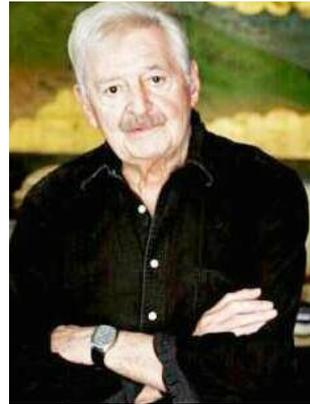
And so the legend passed.
And so the Fall of Man, a few
years on,
Took place exactly as the
Lord had said.

News

Sculthorpe Quartet

On a recent television program “Peter Sculthorpe: Quartets”, Australia’s eminent composer Peter Sculthorpe said his number 18 quartet was inspired by climate change but that his 19th, of similar elegiac tone, might be about the threat of population growth.

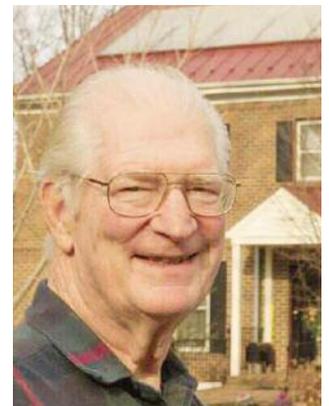
We’ll keep you posted!



Peter Sculthorpe

Herman Daly for Nobel Prize?

As part of their efforts in seeking a profound change to the unsustainable and destructive limitless economic growth paradigm, the International Ecological Safety Collaborative Organization (IESCO) together with the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE) are lobbying for Dr. Herman Daly to be awarded either the Nobel Prize in Economics or a Nobel Peace Prize. Fingers crossed.



Herman Daly

Status of children born in Australia to parents holding 457 visas

(Thanks to Kelvin Thomson MP for obtaining this information.)

Historical arrangements

Most children born in Australia before 20 August 1986 are Australian citizens by birth unless one parent was entitled to diplomatic privileges or was a consular officer of another country.

Current arrangements

Children born after 20 August 1986 are only Australian citizens if at least one parent was an Australian citizen or permanent resident at the time of their birth.

Children born in Australia to parents who hold temporary visas are considered to hold the same type of visa as their parents. The child is not automatically an Australian citizen.

Children born in Australia to parents, who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents, automatically acquire Australian citizenship on their 10th birthday if they have lived most of their life in Australia.

Report

Has sustainability run its course?

Reflections on the Fenner Conference 2013

by *Jim Donaldson*

Recently I have had cause to reflect: “Has the ‘limits to growth’ discourse re-emerged because of the failure of sustainable development, as a concept and paradigm, to resolve the conflict between conservation and development?”

It has been 20 years since the Rio Earth Summit when grand global plans for sustainable development, including major initiatives on biodiversity conservation and climate change, were enthusiastically promulgated. The concept has its origins in concerns about the impact of human beings on the environment, first internationally recognised over 40 years ago at the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment.

I wonder whether much has really changed in the past 40 years.

As Jenny Goldie observed in her opening remarks, most conference attendees were of an elder vintage. They seemed to be the cohort energized all those years ago in the first flush of environmental awakening with a hope and optimism that the planet could be ‘saved’.

The keynote presentation by Professor Paul Ehrlich seemed so apt: the conference referred often and reverentially to the notion of ‘population limits’ that he had expressed in 1968 in his famous book ‘The Population Bomb’.

I liked his idea of the current period being seen as a time of a great ‘endarkenment’. In his talk, he introduced the notion of ‘systems’ and system interdependencies, and how so often these are not taken into account in policy analyses, for example in our consideration of the underpinnings and vulnerabilities of the modern food and agricultural system.

It also seemed apt that another speaker, Ian Dunlop, is a current Club of Rome member and spoke convincingly about the resource and energy limits and the need for change.

Notwithstanding that I largely agreed with Professor Roger Short’s concluding conference comments, there was irony that his message about empowering women in contemporary society, was being delivered by an 83 year old Australian male of Anglo-Celtic background.

Overall, I was somewhat surprised by the tone of the conference. It was as if nothing has really changed in 40 years: there is just more evidence that the limits to growth are being reached, that the original prophecies, though perhaps delayed, are inevitably coming to pass. And that we need to simply stop using up resources in the way we currently do.

Limits were talked about in several ways, not least:

1. Limits on water extraction in the Murray-Darling Basin, through the setting of ‘sustainable diversion limits’
2. Setting of a carbon ‘budget’ for the global economy
3. Population limits
4. Limits on the destruction of habitat
5. Limits to our ability to produce food

Throughout the conference, there seemed to be an emerging concern that no one ‘outside’ was listening: from Professor Ehrlich’s ‘real problems get avoided’ in the media and politics; to what I’d heard second hand about what after-dinner speaker, Dr Richard Denniss, had said; through to the concluding session on formulating the conference declaration. Most delegates, it seemed, believed it was just a matter of needing better communication; get the message across and people will follow! There didn’t seem to be any room for a view that there might actually be some real differences in values and beliefs within our society, about what constitutes real societal ‘progress’.

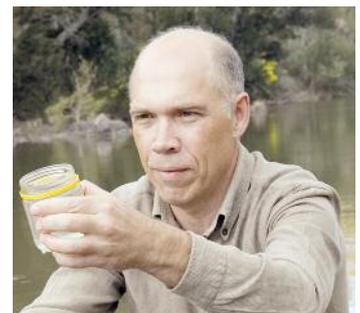
While each delegate will have come away with different ‘take home’ messages, I was keenly interested in what speakers had to say about biodiversity.

Professors Possingham, Lindenmayer and Dickman set a gloomy tone by chronicling the ongoing decline in Australia’s biodiversity and threatened species. Professor Possingham showed how the issue was qualitatively different from other environmental problems such as air and water pollution. He argued the cost of protection is not great, the opportunities just need to be grasped, yet they’re not.

But the question about exactly why Australians should care about the loss of biodiversity, e.g. for the provision of ecosystem services or for its intrinsic value, was not well discussed. It is odd this discussion of biodiversity loss is rarely connected, systemically, to how we actually use and manage land, water and vegetation, something Major-General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, emphasised when he called for soil, water, vegetation and biodiversity to be managed in an integrated way.

Regardless, it seems when push comes to shove, when we need to choose...

(continued back page)



Jim Donaldson is PhD Scholar at the Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU

BRANCH REPORTS

NSW: The branch AGM resulted in the reinstatement of the existing office bearers; Kris Spike- President, Graham Wood- Vice President, Peter Green- Hon. Secretary, Ralph Bennett- Hon. Treasurer. Brian Thompson was elected to the committee and replaces Rod and Dawn Linklater who deserve a warm vote of thanks from the branch for their many contributions over the past couple of years. The remaining committee members are Nola Stewart, George Carrard, Rob Child and Guy White.

Some members of the branch attended the National Day of Climate Action and paraded the SPA banner around a rather soggy Prince Alfred Park. A number of people responded positively to our attempt to link rising emissions with rising population. Some people have been asking... when is Rod Quantock coming back? George Carrard has begun the process and we have a working date of February 22. Rod is arguably one of Australia's funniest stand-up comedians but unlike most he has a knack for getting across some very serious messages while the audience is rolling in the aisles.

Kris Spike

QLD: SPA-Queensland joined in the Climate Action on 17 November, featuring our "invisible elephant" banner and an updated handout on population and climate change. We were generally well-received. The Queensland Branch held their Annual General Meeting on Monday 18 November, at Toowong Library. Guest speaker Dr. Geoffrey Chia spoke on "The Coming Crisis: Despair or Prepare?" The prospect of near-extinction of humanity this century stimulated an animated discussion! The branch committee was re-elected unchanged: President: Jane O'Sullivan, Treasurer: Tony Matta, Secretary: Jan McNicol, General Member: David Robertson.

Jane O'Sullivan

VIC/TAS: Annual population growth in Victoria to March 2013 exceeded 100,000. The Victorian Government is accommodating this ongoing level of growth through strategies in its new blueprint "Plan Melbourne" which aims to accommodate ongoing population growth through two "complementary ideas" – "the 20 minute neighborhood and the "polycentric city". The Premier in his forward to the "Plan Melbourne" document states that "Melbournians support growth as long as it is focused on areas around the city that have the necessary infrastructure and services". (It all depends how the question is asked and most indications are that services and infrastructure are not keeping up.)

Members of the branch have had a high number of published letters in the mainstream newspapers. A recent almost monopoly of the letter pages in the

Herald Sun was precipitated by a recent pro-growth article by Beverley O'Connor.

The following members of the branch manned an all-day stall at Maroondah festival on Sunday November 10: Sue James, Vivienne Ortega, Kit James, Steven Armstrong and Michael Bayliss.

On November 26 Jill Quirk participated in a panel discussion entitled "Population growth- challenges and opportunities" at the annual conference of the Commercial Teachers Association. Co-panelists were Dr. Bob Birrell, Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University; Ross Gittins AM, economics editor of the Sydney Morning Herald and columnist at The Age; Dr Julie Novak, Senior Fellow, Institute of Public Affairs; and Andrew Rimington, Senior Manager, policy- Employment Education and training, VECCL.

We are currently working towards our 3- day stall at the Sustainable Living Festival, Federation Square February 14 to 16, 2014. If any members would like to help us man the stall, please contact Jill Quirk vic@population.org.au or 0409742927 *Jill Quirk*

WA: Do we need to find a larger venue for our meetings? Our November 10 meeting had more than 80 attend on a very hot day with many events elsewhere. Our big attraction was speaker Linley Lutton, a noted WA planner, founder of the City Gatekeepers and vocal opponent of the Government project to create a pond on the Swan river foreshore. His talk "How should Perth respond to a growing population?" illustrated the impact of various styles of residential accommodation, both good and poor.

One issue in discussion was dominance of older citizens common to most meetings of community interest groups. The demands on younger people particularly those with children led to several people to call for a "wisdom of the elders" approach with more cooperative effort across organisations. There was general support for the view that responsibility for future care of our city, nation and the earth must lie with our elders, who have both more time and experience to critically examine government proposals. Our thanks go to all the friends, former members and all in our own organisation who helped at this meeting and in other ways.

The WA Branch supported, interested, younger West Australians with a competitive, all expenses paid award for a postgraduate student to attend the Fenner conference in Canberra. The high quality of applications, explaining why each candidate wished to attend, led our Branch to award two grants. Neville Ellis and Amanda Joseph from Murdoch and Curtin

SPA News

Universities were the recipients. Thank you to all applicants, selectors Clive Huxtable and John Weaver, and to President Jenny Goldie for her organising the conference and taking good care of our two award winners.

Harry Cohen addressed a meeting of Perth Rotary on November 21 and many members have had letters published in major and community newspapers.

Paddy Weaver

ACT: The ACT branch has had a great selection of speakers to keep us informed about the many aspects of the problems associated with population growth, and we have been able to get some traction in highlighting population issues the letters pages of the *Canberra Times*.

Many members attended the Fenner Conference exploring *Population, Resources and Climate Change*, and were impressed with the range and quality of the speakers, not least of whom was Paul Ehrlich, showing the audience that he still has fire in his belly! We are also looking forward to having Will Steffen speak to us about the Anthropocene at our annual Christmas gathering on the 9 December. Will Steffen's research interests range over climate change and Earth system science issues, with a focus on sustainability. He has written on adapting land use to climate change, bringing human processes into the modelling and analysis of the Earth system, and the history of and future prospects for the relationship between the natural world and humans. He has also been prominent advocating, along with Paul Crutzen, the concept of the Anthropocene and initiating along with Johan Rockström an international debate on planetary boundaries and the "safe operating space" for humanity.

Members attended the *National Day of Climate Action* protest in Canberra and were able to unfurl the SPA banner to highlight the link between climate change and population pressures. We have represented SPA at the *Sustainable Lifestyle Fair* at University of Canberra, as well as holding a stall at the upcoming *Living Next to Nature* Festival.

The committee has made a financial contribution to the distribution of Simon Michaux's excellent presentation on Peak Mining and have been active in consulting with other aligned organisations to increase our profile.

Mick Thompson

SA: We have had an extraordinary number of letters in the *Adelaide Advertiser* by our members and others. Nevertheless, we are selling two excellent presentations from our AGM in July, by mining engineer Simon Michaux. Available from me at jrpfc@bigpond.com for \$12 each or 2 for \$20.

John Coulter

Eulogy

Gerhard Weissmann

(1926 – 2013)

Gerhard was one of those rare people who followed where his understanding of truth led, and Gerhard's fundamental truths were derived from a commitment to science. Enrolled in a physics degree at Göttingen University, the origin of so many who led the world in Maths and Physics, Gerhard was destined not to complete his degree because of the war. In 1950 he migrated to Australia

By the early 1970s Gerhard had embraced a deep concern for the natural environment. He recognised that the environmentally unsustainable course that humanity was on linked to his understanding of thermodynamics. These matters were further linked to a deeply flawed monetary system. He joined Economic Reform Australia and Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population, now Sustainable Population Australia.

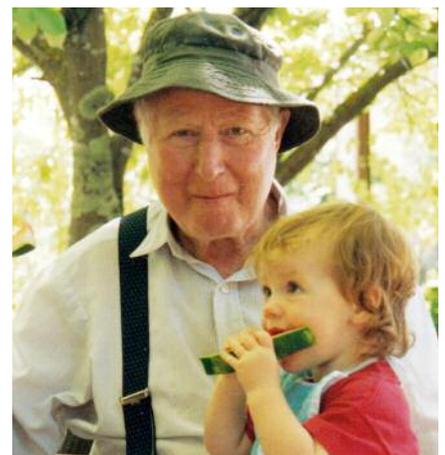
Gerhard cemented his academic credentials in this complex and interweaved tapestry of sustainability by gaining a master's degree in Environmental Studies in the 1990s. This study took him back to his first love: physics. His thesis was on entropy and the place of thermodynamics, especially the second law in an understanding of sustainability/unsustainability. His thesis, 'The Entropy Field' based on the integration of thermodynamics with economics and sustainability, being a new and different approach not surprisingly brought him into conflict with quite a few, especially economists.

It is this quality of honesty and commitment to following the truth that marked Gerhard's life all the years that I knew him. It is his legacy to us and his call for us to show this same

commitment. The time vector is unidirectional; entropy inexorably increases. We must spend our entropy gain wisely.

The time vector is unidirectional. We cannot change the past, but we can use the knowledge to become wiser and with the wisdom gained to shape a different future.

John Coulter



Gerhard Weissmann

(continued from page 9)

between economic development and conservation, Australians and their governments continue to opt to sacrifice a bit more biodiversity. Economists tell us that provided the overall stock of capital, or wealth, is increasing, be it natural, built, social or financial, society is better off. So it appears the outlook remains rather gloomy for biodiversity for the foreseeable future.

SPA's logo

About ten years ago, Jeremy Mears, who designs this newsletter, updated the existing logo which showed a man on a balance with a tree representing nature at the other end. There have been calls for a change, perhaps to something simpler in line with current styles for logos. Some members want to keep the current concept; others adopt something different. If you have an opinion on this, please contact editor@population.org.au in the next couple of months before the national executive addresses it again at their end-of-January meeting.

Letter to editor

As we are presently using up the planet's resources at 50 per cent above replacement rate, a one-third cut in our 7.2 billion should restore the balance.

The humane way: in every country, allow only half as many births (permits to be allotted in annual ballots) as there are deaths. Worldwide, 57 million pass away; thus with 28.5 million arriving, rather than the current 139 million, there'd be a similar drop in the population: 2400 divided by 28.5, it'd take at least 84 years. About half of all couples would end up with just one child, the other half none.

Of course that would be unacceptable, as well as impracticable; so in reality there'll be a substantial decrease in our numbers from famine, disease and war as ecosystems, economies, governments, and civilisations collapse.....unsustainability having finally brought our house-of-cards down.

There is a silver lining; with much less fossil fuel being burnt, the flora may be able to lower carbon dioxide levels and reverse global warming, so a shell of the wonderful world we had could survive.

Paul Prentice, North Fitzroy VIC.

DISCLAIMER

While every effort has been taken to ensure the reliability of the information contained in this newsletter, the opinions expressed are those of the various authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of either SPA or the editor.

ABOUT SPA

Formerly Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population.

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