

A New Direction

"This then, is the central issue that is missed by those who view environmental concerns as a matter of nuisances, damage to scenery, and dirty air and water: with industrial nations in the forefront, mankind is systematically diminishing the capacity of the environment to perform its essential functions of pest control, nutrient recycling, waste management, and climate regulation, at the same time that growing population and rising consumption per person are creating ever larger demands for these services. Evidently, the inadequacy of present scientific knowledge to predict the time and character of the ultimate breakdown in this process is often taken to be grounds for complacency, but our ignorance here should be alarming, not reassuring" John P. Holdren

By now, there are many people who will recognize these statistics. The world population first reached one billion in the early 19th century. It doubled to two billion in a little more than 100 years--1930. By 1975 the number of people was 4 billion and it is expected to reach 6 billion by the end of this century. Such projections have been surprisingly accurate, usually more conservative than the actual growth rate. Therefore it is likely that the projection of a world population of 8 billion by the year 2025 would only be changed by a large mortality rate or, hopefully, a non-violent decrease in the population.

The time is long past due to examine why we must have a continually growing population. There is no sense to it; it threatens our existence and the existence of other species. We are certainly not doing it for the children. They will have to deal with our lack of concern for their welfare as they try to live in a world with immense problems that we have caused. There is no good argument for increasing the population; we have a great number of people and dwindling resources. It would seem logical to turn that equation around and have a reduced number of people and therefore an abundance of resources.

The great majority of people feel that the most serious problem facing us is avoiding the use of atomic weapons. Though it seems beyond our recognition, a problem of equal weight and urgency is human proliferation. In the past two and a half decades, the controversy over the growth of the world population has slipped from the public view and is now being debated only by experts in the field. Occasional stories in the media remind us that population problems have not gone away while we were not looking, but the immediacy of the problem to our daily lives seems quite distant. Recognition of the ramifications of overpopulation is not at all widespread, but rather is limited to countries with extensive and obvious difficulties. While ignoring these ramifications, we have continually used our energies to conceive of ways to accommodate Earth's growing and ubiquitous population. All the plans have been based upon the idea that we must prepare for larger and larger numbers of people, and somehow shore up our already failing systems to make them operate efficiently. It is a tautology that the population we have now is here. Short of turning our backs on the people who are here, we must attempt to care for our fellow men, women and children and provide for the continuation of other species.

Each of us personally may feel that a population reduction program of the sort that is necessary would have made our own existence impossible. "If there had been a program like that in the 1930s, I would not be here today"--anonymous politician. It is true that if a population reduction program had been in place in the past many of us would not be here today. Many of the problems that have a causal relationship to overpopulation would also not be here. It is also true that if certain people had

not been born we would not have had the benefit of their intellectual and artistic talent. Conversely, we may not have had to endure a Stalin or a Hitler. In any case, we would have had to have gotten by without the benefactors of humanity until their contributions were made by similarly talented people, or to have done without. In fact, the present planetary population undoubtedly harbors thousands of potential Einsteins, Rembrandts and Churchills. But we will never know because two-thirds of the world's populace are denied participation in creative endeavors that ultimately determine the future. Furthermore, many of the people who have made great contributions to civilization were born in a time when the world population was much smaller. It is a poor argument that says we must have a population that outstrips resources in order that we may have great art and scientific discoveries. No single human being is so important to the overall world view that it is worth sacrificing the ecological balance which maintains us all.

Our scientific progress has brought medical advances which prolong life. While few people are against medical progress, we have to be aware of the fact that we cannot keep bringing more and more human life into being if we prolong life for the human population we already have on the planet. If we do so, we jeopardize opportunities for one end of the spectrum or the other. It is obvious that both ends of the spectrum are at risk in most populations. Infants, or very young children, and the aged are the first groups to feel the impact of deteriorating social and economic conditions. The long term view of doing something to solve these problems includes a firm commitment to population reduction as soon as possible. The benefits of such a policy will extend far into the future.

Of course, there is no doubt that there will be problems with a policy of reduction. At present, some countries are urging people to have more children to prop up pension systems that depend on eternal expansion. Proponents of nationalism and factionalism are always looking for more "home-grown" advocates to swell their ranks. There is no doubt that population reduction will have other more serious effects, but the dislocation that will be caused by population reduction is nothing in comparison to the dislocation further population growth will cause, and, in fact, is already causing. There is no way to quantify the effects of reducing the world's population, but it is not a question of whether it should be done. It is more a question of how we would like to see it done. The forces that control all species' populations cannot be controverted by humans. We are clever, but we cannot repeal the laws of the universe. When we contemplate the awesome and uncontrollable forces of nature, we are struck by our powerlessness in the face of hurricanes or earthquakes. We should also be aware of the power of nature to balance itself. If we intend to dominate nature, we will be lost in the balance. Mass famine, disease and pollution are the result of our disregard for nature and our proclivity to reproduce ourselves. Migration, prevailing winds and resources common to all nations, such as the ocean, make any isolationist environmental policy futile. Recent studies of possible global climate changes show that we are all in the same lifeboat. Present conditions are worse for some, however, than they are for others.

Migration to the large cities of the world in search of better economic conditions has bloated their populations. They then become exhibits of extreme levels of wealth and poverty, pollution and deterioration, overcrowding and misery. The largest cities in the world are expected to grow to double their present population by the turn of the century. Doubling the population of Mexico City would mean 30 million people would be trying to exist in a megalopolis which at the present time is in crisis trying to care for its 15 million people. Our horror at the starvation, poverty and misery we see continuing to grow every year is belied by our lack of concern that population control worldwide is one of our lowest priorities. We have allowed population growth to spiral out of control, and seem

to be unwilling to deal with the problem in any realistic fashion. There is no concerted effort by our various institutions to recognize the ramifications of population growth.

In fact, the United States has recently cut funds toward population reduction programs in many areas of the world, specifically to countries such as China and others who will not renounce abortion as a means of reducing their population. But a refusal to support population reduction will not produce the desired results. Slowing population growth can be an economic stimulus. If combined with other economic aid and medical progress it can increase the standard of living in countries that are now trying desperately to maintain a meager status quo. **Nations reeling from the effects of obvious overpopulation do not need an expansionist economy. They need aid to develop population reduction programs which will enhance the general quality of life while reducing the stress on resources.** Opponents of this approach cite the experience of Singapore, a nation which instituted a successful population control program and, as a result, suffered a labor shortage. Labor shortages are bound to follow population control, but the general populace reaps the benefit of greater job opportunity, better working conditions and an increased respect by management for their contributions. The implementation of population control will not be a transition which has no negative economic repercussions, but the impact will be lessened if the process is begun before reaching critical mass.

It is simpler to believe that the world economy can be stimulated to provide for all. It is simpler to believe that those who do not have reasonable conditions under which they live are not exerting enough effort to obtain a better standard of living, but that is unrealistic. Although one can always find anecdotal evidence to support this argument, eventually we collide with the wall that defines the limits of the expansionist economy. It is more comforting to believe that our woes can be solved by economic solutions alone, and that all it takes is a little more effort by each individual; a little more work, a little more charity will solve the problems. That would mean that we would not have to give up the right to reproduce as we see fit, and would not have to face the reality that each of us has a responsibility in seeking a better future.

Those exhorting us to do better on moral grounds are losing their credibility. The impact of drought in Africa is greater in terms of sheer numbers of people affected due to the size of the population. In seeking to reduce this population there is immediate conflict with the Catholic church, but the need to have fewer children is apparent to many people, and they are defying the doctrines of the church in countries such as Kenya. According to Samuel Koo, reporting from Kinshasa, Zaire in 1985,

"Pope John Paul II's African campaign against birth control, abortion and sterilization faced its biggest challenge in Kenya, where the government is encouraging contraception to stem the fastest-growing population in the world. The issue has become a sore point between the Roman Catholic Church and the Kenyan government. The government of Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi has been pressing artificial birth control, provoking an outcry from local Roman Catholic Church leaders, who have charged that the government is seeking to legalize abortion. Kenyan Cardinal Maurice Otunga, who protested bitterly when he learned women were being surgically sterilized at government facilities, has said the most famine-stricken countries have no over-population problem. 'The problem is not that the Earth is unable to feed everyone. The problem is of distribution and production. We have not challenged the Earth enough.'

A Kenyan editor, Hilary Ngweni, in an editorial in his weekly review magazine, ridiculed the church stance on birth control, likening it to the church's former refusal to accept Copernicus' theory

that the sun was the center of the solar system. In Kenya the yearly birth rate is more than 4 percent, a rate that would triple its population to 57 million in 25 years. In Africa, where population growth is outstripping food production, the overall birth rate is 3.1 percent, the highest of any major region." (57)

In the face of the crisis of staying alive when there is no adequate living to be made, the sanctions of any religion become meaningless. In the midst of this effort by African nations to take positive action in relieving the stresses of overpopulation, the United States is cutting aid to population reduction efforts. There is no outcry of public opinion at these cuts in aid, because people do not recognize the cause and effect relationship of the burdens of population to famine, deforestation, conflict and pollution.

By cutting aid to these efforts we ensure the very consequences that we would wish to avoid. According to Jodi Jacobson, a World Watch Institute researcher, "Each year at least a half-million women die from pregnancy-related causes. Fully 99 percent of these deaths occur in the Third World, where complications arising from pregnancy and illegal abortions are the leading killers of women in their 20s and 30s. World Health Organization officials caution that maternal deaths--those resulting directly or indirectly from pregnancy within 42 days of childbirth, induced abortion, or miscarriage--may actually be twice the estimated figures. What is more, for every woman who dies, many suffer serious, often long-term, health problems." (58) The Agency for International Development, spurred by such groups as the Pro-Life/Pro-Family Alliance, has threatened to cut off funds for International Planned Parenthood, unless that group agrees to withdraw family planning assistance from those nations which offer abortion counseling. Experience in Brazil exposes the tragic consequences of such actions. Prior to family planning, 40 percent of the Brazilian public health budget for obstetrics and gynecology was spent on women injured by illegal abortions. (59) This tragedy can be avoided, however. Low cost health and family planning programs, emphasizing basic services and preventative care, can reduce mortality rates and raise contraceptive use rates by a factor of two within five years. (60) An alliance of people who are already concerned about these conditions and working to change them could point out the absurdity of undermining programs such as International Planned Parenthood. The consequence of cutting funds to such programs is to condemn people to a miserable impoverished existence, or death.

An enlightened approach to facing the reality of our international crises must begin with population reduction, incorporating the growing awareness that we are many nations which cannot remain in isolation. We must work together. We are aware of that fact in our international cooperation in scientific endeavor, in the international scope of trade and in our international concern about nuclear armaments, pollution, starvation and human rights abuses. It is the realistic assessment of the future which stimulates efforts to replenish resources, rather than obliterate them. Reforestation, aquaculture, hydroponics, energy alternatives and agricultural conservation techniques all have at their core a central idea--conserving what we have to assure future benefits. All of these strategies are vital to our interests. We should stress the connection that population reduction has to such subjects as world peace, environmental restoration, maintenance of wildlife and preservation of wilderness.

Groups such as the Audubon Society, Greenpeace, Earth First!, Ducks Unlimited and any other conservationist groups could ally with the Sierra Club and population control advocates in acknowledging the need for reducing population. Reducing the number of people who are using a resource or consuming goods and services which pollute would seem consistent with any

conservation effort. Reducing the number of people encroaching upon the habitats of species of feral animals would seem consistent with the goals of groups seeking to save such animals from extinction. Radical animal rights advocates set research animals free, but to what avail? Those animals that are freed are not going to return to their native habitat. They can't. Human encroachment is eliminating the habitat.

Advocates of peaceful non-interference in the affairs of Latin American and other countries are aware of the role of poverty and disease in the lives of the people of those nations. It would seem consistent that they would likewise be aware of the benefits to be gained by reducing population by non-violent means. Not all of those who wish to see peace and freedom in the world consider the role of population reduction in an unbiased fashion, however. Sadly, the image of population control has been connected in the public mind with visions of totalitarianism. The view of population control that has been prevalent is that of a dark, forbidding world which rigidly controls all things, where children are genetically perfected and raised in artificial laboratory environments. Continuing attempts by anti-abortion factions in the United States to deny women IUD contraception and the right to pregnancy termination are, in fact, more totalitarian and Draconian than any policy allowing freedom of choice. The recent Romanian experience of enforced childbearing illustrates this. As a result of Communist dictator Nicholae Ceausescu's ban on abortion and birth control, more than 100,000 children are living in poorly equipped orphanages. Many of them are sick, malnourished and neglected.

The image of population control is also tainted by charges that it is used to foster racism, anti-Semitism, genocide and a general intolerance of poverty-level families. Although many of these charges may be true of some theories of population control of the past (any theory can attract less than desirable advocates), there is no reason why reasonable and non-discriminatory population reduction cannot take place. Ironically, it seems that critics of population control fail to see that the development of the mass economy which demands continuous growth has played a role in racism and genocide throughout history. "Living room" (liebensraum) was the cry of the Nazi party in plans to eliminate the Jews as the scapegoat for Germany's economic problems. Adolf Hitler said in 1939 that the deaths of Polish men, women and children were justified in order "to gain the living space that we need." Development in North America was based upon the removal of the indigenous peoples, just as development in South America is rapidly removing Amazon natives from their land. The demise of aboriginal people in any country is preceded by the discovery that their lands contain some sort of wealth that is desired by the mass economy. If genocide does not take place through direct confrontation, it happens just as surely through removing or destroying the habitat which supports the aboriginal people. Support for human rights should include these examples of displaced people, people displaced by the juggernaut of the mass economy and its disregard for anything in its path. Human rights advocates should be aware of the ramifications of overpopulation and speak out for population reduction.

Even though the present birth rate in the United States is slightly less than replacement, it is still the fastest growing industrialized nation in the world. This is due to immigration and the large population base which is now having children. In this light the United States has the potential to be a particularly powerful example of rational population policy if it focused on reducing its population. It would send a message to others that an industrialized nation was not merely allowing the slowing of population growth that seems to accompany development, but instead was actively taking on a problem which cannot and should not be ignored. We could acknowledge the pervasive influence of overpopulation in the United States on issues such as pollution, unemployment, poor land use,

resource depletion, mountains of garbage, gridlock and many others. We could stop thinking of these issues as being the province of technocrats and bureaucrats, and then perhaps we would begin to see where changes are necessary. Unfortunately, in surveying the availability of birth control methods in developed countries, the Population Crisis Committee found that the United States ranked seventh on the list. The United Kingdom was first and West Germany second.

Though we are shocked by our number of teen pregnancies, we seem unwilling to do anything substantial about them. An international study of family planning policies by the Alan Guttmacher Institute revealed that the lowest rates of teen-age pregnancy were in countries that offered sex education and made contraceptives accessible to young people at low cost or for free, without parental notification. (61) As noted by James Trussel, a family planning researcher, "Our culture does not promote healthy sexuality nor does it encourage contraceptive use. The European experience proves that adolescents can use contraceptives very effectively to prevent pregnancy." A study of Baltimore schools linked programs which provide sex education counseling and contraceptive services in concert---after 28 months pregnancy rates decreased more than 30 percent in program schools while they increased more than 60 percent in control schools. (62)

Education is the most obvious place to start. For those who believe that change is impossible or unlikely, we can point to the idea that viewed slavery as an immoral act which could not be tolerated, or the idea that women could be trusted with the responsibility of the vote. Now these concepts are accepted by nearly everyone; indeed, it is radical to believe otherwise. What is necessary for people to accept is that a reduction of population by non-violent means will be a building block to a better life in the future for their children. It will not end war or stop all pollution or famine or disease, but it is better to reduce the population and make inroads on our problems than to ignore the issue and allow population-related problems to continue unabated. If we wish to create opportunities for a better life for the children of the future, we must realize that clean air and water are a better legacy than money in the bank, and that each of us can be a part of bringing that legacy about. Having children can no longer be considered as merely a personal or family decision. Reducing the present population of the world in all countries must come to be seen as a positive action. It must come to be seen as an action which will have benefits for all, rather than viewed as a negative encroachment on the right to reproduce infinitely.

In a sophisticated society such as ours it is possible to change rapidly to new ideas. The feminist movement was in its infancy in the early 1970s, though feminist writers had been espousing their ideas for decades and earlier movements had obtained the right to vote. Now the influence of feminist thinking is undeniable. Feminism was an idea which was passed by word-of-mouth, books, articles and television. Population reduction is also an idea which can be transmitted in a similar fashion. The Zero Population Growth movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s had some influence during that period, but many people seem to believe we have won the war, though the problems are all around us. We have not achieved zero population growth in modern industrial nations. The United States population is already above the projection of 250 million people by 1990, and will probably exceed the projection of 268 million by the year 2000. Yet there is no great effort made to curb this population increase, and most people do not think of the United States as a country with a population problem.

In the 10 years between 1980 and 1990 the population of the world grew by more than 800 million. By the year 2000 projections indicate that we will have added another billion people to our world population. The actions of past and present administrations in the United States have actively opposed population control. If there is any major concern about this issue in the world, it is not

being addressed by the governments of the modern industrial nations. Yet those who understand the need for population control are speaking out. Heads of state from many countries have called for the nations of the world to unite in recognizing and confronting the population problem in full page advertisements in large metropolitan newspapers. The larger national powers, such as the United States and the Soviet Union, are conspicuously absent in this plea, as are other powers in the international community.

The people of all nations should be applying pressure on their governments to support international population reduction, not just for Mexico or India or China, but for all countries. Immigration policy should favor countries who have recognized the need for population control and implemented a policy to reduce their population. Foreign aid should be allocated with consideration to what steps a recipient nation is taking to reduce its population, in conjunction with the desire to aid development. Population reduction would allow each country to realize its potential economic development without disastrous consequences for the planet as a whole.

The United States, though it is in the best position to promote population reduction, is among those that pay the least attention to the role of overpopulation in humanity's problems. Civic organizations and the news media in the U.S. are afflicted with the same mainstream notions held by the public-at-large concerning population control, so there is little controversy when funds to control population are cut. The problem of overpopulation stays on the back pages. Advertisements on television suggesting that pregnancy is not desirable are removed before they create any controversy. The media does not challenge administration policy of decreasing funds for population control, although the news organizations are constantly reporting on the issues surrounding overpopulation, and constantly questioning other aspects of foreign and domestic policy. Ironically, the need to address the AIDs epidemic has promoted concern to the point that advertisements for condoms can be shown on television, and even mentioned on television shows as a part of the plot.

The war in Vietnam was challenged by the news media, and the pressure that ensued eventually emerged in a national debate that changed our foreign policy. Each individual should become aware of the changes needed to stem world overpopulation and the need to question present policy in that area. This awareness could come about through word-of-mouth, books and articles, and if it becomes a cause celebre, the rest of the information media will adopt it. We should be challenging ourselves, our institutions and our traditions to seek long-range views of our future rather than continually attempting to patch together our present methods of facing disasters--a concert here or a promotion there. It is much more difficult to do because it requires examining our own behavior instead of blaming others. It requires possible sacrifice of individual pleasures of childbearing and parenting. It requires individual responsibility for the decision to reproduce. It requires examination of the problem of abandonment of children. It requires a change in the male role in parenting, including the decision to have fewer children. It means that many of our present traditions regarding reproduction will have to change. To paraphrase Jesse Jackson, virility is not the ability to conceive a child but the ability to raise a child. It is not unusual that such a message is not getting through. We have celebrity musicians singing for peace and rainforest preservation while seeing no contradiction in having six children of their own, or writing defiant songs about "keeping the baby." We have environmental advocates who are having several children, seeing no connection between their reproductive behavior and the problems we face.

To ensure that we have the opportunity to raise children in an environment with clean air and water and space to live we must take steps today. Tomorrow's children should have the chance to appreciate a wealth of plant and animal life in nature, rather than from pictures or movies. They

should be able to grow up in a world where starvation is an aberration, not a fact of life. They should have a reasonable possibility of employment rather than face a life of constant economic insecurity. They should have a reasonable chance at living without war, a phenomenon which is always present in an overpopulated world.

The liabilities of unregulated population growth, as well as the potential benefits of population reduction, should be a component of the educational curriculum. Children could be made aware of the idea that having children is not inevitable, that they may or may not want to have a child, and that they can choose not to reproduce at all if they wish. Children could be taught that the world has crises stemming from overpopulation, and that through their future decisions they can be instrumental in ameliorating those crises. If children were made aware of these concepts at a very early age and throughout their childhood into adolescence, many of our traditions which favor irresponsible reproductive behavior could be changed in the space of a generation. Parents could instill new attitudes about virility, parenthood and love for all life on the earth. The formal education system could reinforce these attitudes in the ensuing school years. Mathematics classes could illustrate how a geometric progression operates, showing not only how the population grew to its present state, but also how the population could reduce geometrically. History classes, and classes related to history such as world affairs and sociology, could incorporate examples of how world population growth is not a benign phenomenon that will take care of itself, but is capable of harsh impact on human life. The idea that renewable resources will ensure a rational and continuous supply cycle for a reasonable population could be the wave of the future, rather than the present uncertainty about resources and the mad scramble to exploit outer space, the ocean or the few remaining untouched continental areas of the earth such as the polar regions.

The international scientific community could be influential in changing the attitudes of the world's people about population reduction. In just a few years scientists and doctors have helped to publicize their powerlessness in the face of global nuclear conflict, making people begin to realize the absurdity of a policy of mutually assured destruction. In a similar manner, the message from the camps set up to give medical assistance to the starving in Africa is one of powerlessness in the face of large scale famine. In the short term this message has brought forth money for supplies and food, but the problem of starvation is a long term problem requiring a multifaceted solution. Better medical care, increased food production and improved transportation facilities are all a part of this solution, but they will not work unless combined with population reduction. The tidal wave of people needing help creates a situation where present systems of support are bound to fail. The scientific community could make population reduction its cause, in conjunction with nuclear fusion, breakthroughs in food production and other technological innovations that hold hope for the future.

Examination of the philosophy behind research goals is overdue. The present goal of technological development is, in many instances, an effort to stem the tide of our population-related problems. It would be more rational to deal directly with overpopulation by promoting birth control and the philosophy that the world has more than enough people to care for at present. Research goals of improving birth control, including contraception for males, should be of highest priority, while those of improving fertility should be given lowest priority. We should recognize that embryo transfer and improved fertility drugs are luxuries in comparison to the necessity of discovering and improving methods of non-violent population reduction.

Our religious institutions should awaken to the sobering fact of a million people being added to the world every four or five days, 85 million each year. As arbiters of our ethical conduct in life they should be the first group to recognize that reducing the population is beneficial. It is ridiculous to

espouse a philosophy which characterizes each human being as a unique and precious child of God, yet allow that human being to starve to death, due, in part, to an impractical and outdated dogma that depicts reproduction as an approved religious necessity. We must examine each religious doctrine in relation to its promotion of the principle of population reduction and seek to change those views that support unchecked reproduction. The Catholic and Mormon churches specifically are stubbornly opposed to change which would alleviate the pressures of our population burden. In 1986, Pope John Paul assured Catholics in Singapore, a densely populated nation which has actively discouraged large families, that their right to have children should be free from any coercion or pressure. Not surprisingly, he did not raise the issue in Bangladesh, a poor, overpopulated country of 100 million. (63) As with Kenya, it is not likely that the people of Bangladesh would have been favorably moved by his words. Taking a strong position which favors uncontrolled reproduction at this point in history is not beneficial to church members any more than a position favoring the escalation of nuclear weapons would be. The effects of overpopulation are more subtle than the threat of nuclear armaments, but the rapidly increasing disintegration of our environment due to continued insults provided by a huge worldwide population is no less deadly.

If the religious institutions in our lives were to change to a position that strongly advocated population reduction, they would be preparing their congregations for the shape of things to come. One aim of religion in our societies has been to comfort people in times of trouble, and history has provided us with examples of courageous leaders from the ranks of various religions who have spent their lives working to aid their fellow humans. Visionary leaders in religion, as well as other areas, will be working to find ways to change any dogmatic approach that forbids effective birth control. Working to change such dogma will cause turmoil in the lives of those who have the courage to speak out despite church doctrine. This has been evidenced by the disciplinary measures meted out to nuns who have dared to speak against the rigid stand of the Catholic church on the right of women to have abortions, and the possible censure of Catholic priests who have held that birth control is a personal issue.

The declining influence of the Catholic church around the world is no mystery. Any ideology that promotes procreation in the face of its ill effects on the faithful can expect losses. Though God ordered Abraham to kill his son, he was not expected to watch him starve to death with good cheer. People cannot be asked to continually thwart their own best interests and still believe that the church has their best interests at heart. A birth is not a blessed event if it has a negative impact on the quality of life.

Interfaith church organizations have been instrumental in pursuing charity for those who are experiencing famine or other disasters. These organizations work hard to provide food, farming supplies and medical care to people who are starving or malnourished. Such organizations could help in promoting the idea that population reduction is needed worldwide, not just in some far-off Third World country. This could be a great step toward reducing inhumane treatment of people and other species.

On one hand we must increase global cooperation. On the other we must pursue policies that would seem on the surface to be isolationist. Ending immigration to the United States would send a signal to other countries that we are serious about limiting growth. This might seem reactionary in light of the oft-quoted platitude engraved on the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free," but all countries should examine their immigration policies with an eye toward sending a signal that they are serious about population reduction. We must recognize the universal necessity for action on reducing the population. Population reduction

will be considered radical because of our entrenched pronatalist policies and traditions. **To most people it is far less foreign to consider extraterrestrial contact than to consider population reduction.** But reducing population by non-violent means does not favor liberal or conservative policies. It only favors pragmatic means of ensuring survival.

Our governments should be at the forefront of solutions, not forced by private organizations to comply when problems become obvious and oppressive. Government incentives to have fewer children would be welcome, but few governments have had the foresight or courage to promote such a policy. If governments would take part in promoting population reduction there could easily be incentives to encourage those who wish to have no children, and those who wish to have only one child. Governments could promote birth control and disseminate information regarding environmental, social and economic benefits of population reduction. But the innate sensibility of population reduction is that the individual will control the course of his or her life, the society and the health of the planet, rather than waiting for governments to finally recognize the solution.

The family can stop promoting reproduction by dispelling the commonly held notion that every little girl or boy will grow up to be a mommy or a daddy. They can pass on the information that the one child family is essential for our future. We all make our decisions based on the information that we have at the time. As we get better information, we make better decisions. What we have to do is make the information about population reduction and stabilization available to the world, and then, hopefully, we will see decisions made to restore the earth for the benefit of all its human and non-human inhabitants.