



NEWSLETTER

Sustainable Population Australia Inc

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Patrons
Professor Ian Lowe
Dr Mary White

Hon. Bob Carr
Professor Tim Flannery
Dr Paul Collins

SPA makes its presence felt in Durban

Jane O'Sullivan

The seventeenth annual “Conference of Parties” of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP17) was held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December. It was widely billed by NGOs as the “Africa COP”, giving prominence to the concerns of that continent least responsible and potentially most affected by climate change. For us, the “Africa COP” was a chance for our African allies to be represented in force, and build their networks with other African civil society organisations.

In addition to my own travel, SPA funded the attendance of Philip Otieno from Kenya Young Greens, and sponsored two other Africans. In addition, Isaac Kabongo, our Ugandan collaborator, was attending for Climate Action Network. Negash Teklu, the dynamic and affable director of Ethiopia’s PHE (Population Health and Environment) Consortium, was a great asset to our team. Justine Kocho, a co-worker with Isaac, added flair with his traditional dress.

Durban was the first COP I had attended, and was several times the size of the intersessional conferences. It was exhilarating and absorbing, despite the pervading sense of despair and futility among the NGO representatives, which grows more palpable with each dithering year of the UNFCCC process. There were effectively three campuses, the Convention Centre in which official negotiations of the climate change treaties were conducted, an exhibition venue housing several hundred exhibit booths and over a dozen seminar halls for official side events (more side events were being held in nearby hotels), and, outside the security barriers, a public exhibition space with pavilions, displays and performance space open to the general public.

SPA was allocated an exhibit booth for the first week of the conference, and a side event in collaboration with the USA-based Population Action International. PAI took over our booth in the second week. It was great to have the booth, which provided many good

conversations with passers-by, and many people browsed or collected our material. I had printed two posters and a postcard using Tim Newcomb’s cartoon “we don’t talk about that”, which was popular. We also displayed a number of charts, and had a range of handouts.

The side event was also successful, with about 60 people in attendance, who mostly seemed appreciative of our message. It was featured by the ‘Earth Negotiators Bulletin’ daily report on side events, and a couple of journalists hung about for further questions afterwards. It was the first time we had formally collaborated with PAI, and we hope this relationship will continue to grow, although we acknowledge differences in approach.

PAI also co-hosted a luncheon event featuring Mary Robinson, which was a treat for me. I had not been aware that she cut her teeth as a graduate lawyer getting contraception legalised in Ireland. She was denounced from pulpits for it, but it evidently didn’t harm her political career. She related this story when asked what she’d say to Al Gore, who reportedly avoids population as a topic too hot to handle, despite his call to use every tool available.



Negash Teklu (PHE Ethiopia), Isaac Kabongo and Justine Kocho (ECO Uganda), Philip Otieno (Kenya Young Greens) and Jane O'Sullivan at SPA's booth in Durban

Report

I spent most of my time attending side events, and frequently raised the issue of population growth as it related to the subject under discussion. In a few cases, this led to constructive discussion and follow-up. In general, the questions generated more considered responses and fewer negative or embarrassed responses than in the past. Perhaps I'm getting better at framing them, but others also commented that they thought population was no longer a taboo subject. A great sign, if so!

At this meeting, we didn't actively lobby negotiators regarding the text of the treaty. Population did not fit readily into the agenda for the various working groups. However, various negotiators visited our booth and were involved in side events where population was discussed.

The official outcome of the meeting was rescued from stalemate only by an extra 36 hours or so of frantic negotiation. In the wee hours of Sunday morning, as I was arriving home in Brisbane, governments were signing on to a commitment to some sort of "agreed outcome with legal force applicable to all parties" by 2020. This was hailed as a significant advance, since up to now key developing countries had been insisting that they should shoulder no binding commitment while their historical contribution to climate change is so far behind that of the developed world. While I acknowledge this positive step, in my view the gap between required action and action taken has been widening since the Bali meeting, and the Parties becoming more polarised. As Jason Anderson of WWF was quoted saying, "There's no point in being legally bound to a 4-degree world". In the mean time, the process is serving as a valuable vehicle for our message and an opportunity to build global collaboration. It may be as much as we can hope for.

2012 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SUSTAINABLE POPULATION AUSTRALIA Inc.

Saturday 14 April 2012 at 9.30 am
(Registrations 9.00 am)

University of Technology, Sydney

After morning tea, guest speaker Julian Cribb, author of *The Coming Famine*, will address the meeting. This will be followed by lunch, with two speakers in the afternoon including Graham Turner of CSIRO (see interview pages 4 and 5).

Events

Nicole Foss Australian tour



Nicole Foss

Energy and financial analyst, Nicole Foss, is touring Australia in February. The ACT and SA branches are co-sponsoring public seminars in Canberra and Adelaide respectively. Her basic message is that a decades-long credit expansion based on a credit bubble is ending. As a consequence, we are in the grip of a serious deflationary financial

crisis.

Ms Foss says that financial bubbles have burst in the past but we have been able to recover because of the ready supply of cheap energy. This time, we will not recover because energy, particularly oil, will become increasingly more expensive.

According to Ms Foss, energy shortages, along with climate change, population growth, food insecurity and political unrest, are forming a "perfect storm" that will disrupt our whole industrial system.

In an hour-long interview not long before she left for Australia, she referred to population.

"One of my concerns is that we might turn certain parts of the world into a giant Haiti as people cut down the trees. And then of course, we actively reduce carrying capacity on the way down at the same time as we're no longer able to compensate for the loss of artificially inflated carrying capacity as fossil fuels diminish. So we are just heading into a very dangerous situation on a whole range of fronts," Ms Foss said.

For the whole interview:

http://c-realm-podcast.podomatic.com/player/web/2012-01-18T12_17_24-08_00

For a shorter video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=FqRGVNUK5x0>

Details of her Australian tour can be found at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Nicole-Foss-Australian-Speaking-Tour/286744101374651?sk=info

Canberra: 7-9pm, Monday 13 February, CSIRO Discovery Centre, Clunies Ross Road, Acton.

Adelaide: Thursday 23 February, Hawke Centre, University of South Australia, West Campus
Doors open 4pm, Seminar starts 4.30pm.

How many people can the world support?

Paul Willis

Here's a simple thought experiment: imagine a glass seemingly empty apart from a scum on the bottom. That scum is yeast that doubles its size every day and you know that, after 60 days, the glass will be full to the brim with that yeasty scum. Question: on which day is the glass half full?

Answer: day 59. Just one day before the glass is filled to capacity it's half full. That's the sneaky thing about exponential growth. The final spurt happens so rapidly.

Take the world's human population. We only made it to the first one billion people within the last 300 years. But then we really started packing them in. When I was born in 1963 there were 3.5 billion people. Now, just 47 years later, we're double that figure and still climbing rapidly.

The question then becomes: how many people can the world support? There's surely nothing wrong with 7 billion people, or 10 billion or 20 billion if everyone gets what they need to live. And there's the rub. It takes a defined amount of water for each person to drink each day (a few litres for survival depending on local conditions) and the food we eat needs to be grown on land, the size of which is dependent on what we choose to eat. Air can be endlessly recycled but air quality needs to be maintained to keep it breathable.

Unfortunately the choices most of us make mean the consumption of more water than is available, the tilling of more arable land than exists on earth and pollution of the air to make it toxic to the hundreds of millions of people who have to breathe it in the heavily populated megacities that are growing rapidly around the world.

The carrying capacity of the world is more than a simple question of how many people there are or will be. It's the matter of how the resources of the world are divided among those people that is the current problem.

There is the concept of seven Earths: that it would take seven planets like ours to provide the resources consumed by the Earth's current population if they all had the standard of living comparable to that of Australia or the USA.

The sad fact is we in the West can only maintain our standard of living at the expense of the rest of humanity. 1.6 billion people do not have enough to eat and half the world's population consumes less than a tenth of all the resources used by humanity. We are quite literally living a fine life at their expense.

And it gets worse. Do the sums and even stealing from

the less well-off does not square the account of the profligate consumption of resources in the advanced economies. We can only maintain the high life by taking resources from another source: future generations. When we burn fossil fuels that can't be renewed we both deny their use by our kids and generate a pollution problem that they will have to solve.

When we feast on a steak we expand our footprint on the planet in both land area and water required to raise that cow. When we export wheat, we are sending our topsoil off shore never to return. We do not regenerate the fossil fuels, the food for the cattle or the topsoil for the wheat and thus we take those resources away from our kids.

OK, we could live more simply and consume fewer resources. Currently the average footprint for an Australian is about 8 hectares. That's enough land to grow all the food we eat. For the average person living in India, that footprint is around one hectare. But even if we tread more lightly on the planet, we still have the 'glass half full' problem of population growth.

No matter how lightly we step, we still leave an imprint and the more imprints we leave, the more resources we use as a species. Given that many of those resources are limited in quantity, falling in quality and non-renewable, a point has to be reached where the numbers of even the most frugal species outstrip the resources needed to support them.

As a biologist, I'd have to conclude that we're knackered. We've seen this experiment run countless times in other species: a glut of their host resources leads to an explosion in the population only to crash when the resources inevitably run out. This time it's different. We are that species under observation.

Our population is exploding, our resources are running out and the day of our capacity on Earth is fast approaching. We don't really know when, but the glass is more than half full.

Dr Paul Willis is Director of RiAus. He is well-respected as a palaeontologist and has a solid background in science communication as a former TV journalist with ABC's Catalyst program. This article first appeared in The Punch on 5 December 2011.



Paul Willis

Interview

40 years on, *Limits to Growth* predictions still hold



Graham Turner

40 years ago, in March 1972, the first edition of *Limits to Growth* was published in London. Commissioned by the Club of Rome two years before, the book modelled the consequences of a rapidly growing world

population and finite resource supplies. The authors, Dennis Meadows et al from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), used the World 3 systems dynamics model to simulate interactions between the Earth's and human systems. By linking the world economy with the environment, it was the first integrated global model.

The MIT team examined five basic factors that determine, and therefore ultimately limit, growth on this planet: population, agricultural production, natural resources, industrial production and pollution.

They found that continued growth in the global economy would lead to planetary limits being exceeded sometime in the 21st Century, most likely resulting in the collapse of population and economic systems. Collapse, however, could be avoided by early changes in a combination of behaviour, policy and technology.

In 2008 Graham Turner of CSIRO Ecosystems Science in Canberra published a paper called *A Comparison of 'The Limits to Growth' with Thirty Years of Reality*. He examined thirty years of observed data (1970-2000) with the predictions made in 1974 (the second edition of *Limits to Growth*). Dr Turner found that changes in industrial production, food production and pollution are all in line with the book's predictions of economic and societal collapse in the 21st century.

Jenny Goldie (JG), on behalf of SPA, interviewed Dr Turner (GT) recently.

JG: Your 2008 paper referred to the 30 years from 1970-2000. Have you done anything more over the last ten years which gives further evidence that we're on an unsustainable trajectory?

GT: I have. I've revised the methods and update of that

data comparison so that it now takes us to the 40 years. I expect that paper to be published this year though it's not out yet. The data definitely still supports the 'business-as-usual' or the 'standard run' scenario to growth... In the modelling, as resources run down, capital gets diverted out of other areas and goes to the resource centre, which means there's less capital for agriculture and for health and education. Interestingly, although we tend to think this scenario results in collapse occurring sometime later in the century, actually it's pretty close to the present in their modelling. We shouldn't read necessarily too much into the timing, but it might be an indicator for it. So for example, the industrial output starts to decline in the modelling in 2015, then food and services some years later, like 2020, and then ultimately the death rate will go up with the lack of food and services. So population actually starts to decline in about 2030 and then drops by about a billion a decade, I think, at that sort of rate.

JG: One assumes it won't be by natural means.

GT: That's a very good point and the authors themselves said we need to have some caution about interpreting what happens in the model when or if collapse were to happen because still the same equations are operating during collapse. That might not be the case when faced with crises. They didn't go on to say much more but I think you can interpret that a couple of different ways. One would be that wars and so on could be part of the scenario in a collapse, or the alternative of some global true leadership coming out in these times of hardship and perhaps changing things.

JG: What about non-renewable resources? Apart from oil, are they declining at the same rates that LtG anticipated?

GT: By my analysis you could say some minerals are potentially going over a peak, or already have, but quite often we do find a substitute.

JG: What about phosphorus which is so vital for agricultural production?

GT: Indeed. Obviously there are projections made already that phosphorus might peak in 2030, and then the counter arguments are that we haven't searched as well as we could have. There may be more phosphorus but more than likely it's at a lower grade and that's certainly what's happening already. We see that from the large fields in the western Sahara and Morocco, which are starting to be of a lower grade with the implication of requiring more energy (to extract it) and that completely fits with what happened in LtG about needing more capital. You still get the resources but

Interview

with much greater effort. In this recent comparison I've done, I've looked at Energy Returned On Energy Invested (EROEI) or net energy. I've only looked at the data available for oil and that data is very much in keeping, totally consistent, with the relevant parameter in the LtG model indicating we're starting to use more energy to get the oil out. Other people are even mentioning things like peak coal, although it's a huge resource.

But it seems to me the real issue at the moment is probably around peak oil where studies like the Hirsch Report indicate it takes two decades to actually put your alternative fuel systems in place. While we may just have time to do that, it probably means there will be further disruptions associated with a lack of oil and, indeed, constraints on oil and increasing prices – these were just one of contributing triggers to the GFC (Global Financial Crisis).

JG: Oil reached \$147 a barrel just before ...

GT: Exactly. Part of the complication is, however, any gain in oil prices is typically a very small percentage of typical final expenditure. You can have big, multifold increases in the price – ultimately that doesn't translate exactly the same to the final expenditure – but it may have been enough to push really struggling households – those with sub-prime mortgages and so on – just enough over the edge to make them default. It's these correlated defaults that were the start of the GFC. Oil may have been part of that trigger - lower income households experiencing high cost of living.

JG: There are a few things on the drawing board about developing alternatives to oil, not least algae. There have been huge advances in solar technology, for instance, since 1970, and while a lot of the renewables depend on non-renewable resources, neodymium for instance for wind generators, what is your view as to the extent technology can stave off collapse?

GT: That is obviously clearly a key question and because that is usually where an optimistic side of the debate comes in: 'Well we've always solved problems with technology.' Actually, that's not always been the case if you look at collapses of other complex societies. But coming to the more contemporary side of things – even though I'm brought up as a technologist, I would categorise technology as a double-edged sword. If we rely on technology alone, it won't be the solution, in fact, it may even make things worse. And part of this is that if we become more efficient at things, we'll be saving resources, but the irony is that, as we become more efficient, we displace labour, we make people unemployed. Factory workers in the car industry are no longer needed. Bookstores start to close down as we

deliver things more efficiently through an online system and so on. So over time, if we kept up our rate of technological growth, say one per cent or so per annum, that would lead to 50 per cent unemployment by the middle of the century. To avoid that mass unemployment and social unrest, our typical response is to grow the economic system to stimulate consumption that would then lead to re-employing people in new jobs to provide those goods.

JG: A lot of analysts are saying we are going to have to move out of big cities back into the countryside and grow our own food. Do you think this is a likely scenario?

GT: I don't think I see it as a likely scenario, all the pointers are to people still wanting to live in the exciting and vibrant areas that cities are. And there is certainly some evidence that shows that you get a disproportionate increase in innovation in urban areas, in cities. But I think from a systems dynamics perspective, exactly like LtG, the general message is, you need to bring your signals closer to you, i.e., to know what is happening in the environment, closer to you both spatially and closer to you in time. That suggests to me that a sensible solution is to have food production closer to where the people are. So ultimately, I do think it would be a good strategy to have fewer big cities and more people living in rural areas or closer to that and learning to grow their food. That, I think, has a couple of benefits. One is that it would help to solve the issue I talked of a little while ago, of technology – that was the bad side – but the good edge, we do need to use technology but use that efficiency dividend to release us from so much work. So if we were to ultimately work a three day week, say by the middle of the century, and use the rest of our time, say, growing food or having better social interactions, then that would be an ideal solution, along with lower population. So it could be part of the solution, to have people more connected with the land. But also, it is a good *life-boat!*

JG: There was an article in the New York Times last week about young Greeks moving back to the country side because there was no longer enough work in the cities. They're doing courses in animal husbandry and so on. It's already happening.

GT: And it's great if people are learning those skills which for many of us – we don't have a clue! Our own experience here of starting to grow some of our own food is that the initial part is relatively easy, but then you suddenly you find you need to be keyed in to the climate, the soil, and so on and actually there's a lot to learn.

Book Review



Fiona Heinrich

Sleepwalking to Catastrophe: 'Big Australia', Immigration, Population Expansion and the Impossibility of Endless Economic Growth in a Finite World.

by Fiona Heinrich

E-book only

<http://sleepwalking-to-catastrophe.com/>

Reviewed by Jenny Goldie

When I read Fiona Heinrich's *OnLine Opinion* article on Collapseology in June last year, I immediately sought permission to reprint it in the August SPA newsletter

http://www.population.org.au/sites/default/files/newsletters/nl201108_99_0.pdf

Needless to say I was impressed, but not nearly as impressed as when I read the book she had recently published on-line, *Sleepwalking to Catastrophe*. I was simply amazed that someone so young – she's in her early twenties – could encapsulate so much in a relatively small book, not only about population, but climate change and peak oil as well. I am pleased to say Fiona is now a member of SPA.

The book is peppered with questions that remind you of the child asking why the Emperor has no clothes. We older SPA members may have asked them in the past but, after being given the run-around for so long by various decision-makers, we're almost too tired to keep asking.

For example, Fiona writes of Ziggy Zwickowski who had claimed: 'Given the progress in engineering and technology anticipated in the decades ahead ... our continent could surely sustain more than 100 million people'.

Would a prudent business person make long-term decisions on such a hypothetical inductive basis: wouldn't one wait until the technology is invented before planting the population whose survival will depend upon it?

There are many pertinent observations in the book, for example:

It is certainly interesting that the liberal-left spend so much time attacking the conservative-right for being climate change deniers while simultaneously denying the fundamental contributing factor to climate change: population growth.

And another on the carbon tax:

With population growth expected to contribute to 83 percent of increases in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to 2020, surely any passionate climate change activist would tackle this environmental problem through immigration reform first?

Fiona's understanding of the population issue is summed up in this criticism of Heather Ridout of the Australian Industry Group and Chair of the Productivity and Prosperity Panel of *A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia: Issues Paper*. Ridout's main argument was that an immigration-fuelled economy would result in greater levels of investment in public infrastructure. This would involve investment in more productive capital equipment and allow more resources to repair environmental damage.

The argument is logically invalid, for the need for extra infrastructure and equipment by capital widening does not imply that capital deepening by more advanced technology will occur. Society may simply be running faster to stay in the same place due to the demands of immigration.

She quotes others at length and chooses well, not least this from steady state economist Herman Daly who argued that net immigration needs to end in order to stop the 'fatal wounding of community':

To globalise the economy by erasure of national economic boundaries through free trade, free capital mobility, and free, or at least uncontrolled, migration is to wound fatally the major unit of community capable of carrying out any policies for the common good. That includes not only national policies for purely domestic ends, but also international agreements required to deal with those environmental problems that are irreducibly global (CO2, ozone depletion). International agreements presuppose the ability of national governments to carry out policies in their support. If nations have no control over their borders they are in a poor position to enforce national laws, including those necessary to secure compliance with international treaties.

Fiona's conclusion to the book is profound:

The immigration paradigm of 'Big Australia' really comes down to the maximisation of short-term profits for the rich end of town, while the rest of the country burns. To oppose this will require all of those rejecting the growth paradigm taking a stand and mobilising in political advocacy as energetic as the peaceful liberation movements of the past and today. This time though, the battle is not just for freedom, but for the future of life itself.

What more can I say? Download the book now!

Report



Madeline Weld

Into the Bowels of the Denial Camp

Madeline Weld.

President of Population Institute Canada

On November 22, 2011, I attended the book launch

by Ian Angus of *Too Many People: Population, Immigration, and the Environmental Crisis*, co-written with Simon Butler. The launch, sponsored by the International Socialists, took place in the Alternative Cafeteria of the University of Ottawa.

Ian Angus, from near Ottawa, Canada, is editor of a website called Climate and Capitalism and author of two earlier books, *Canadian Bolsheviks* and *The Global Fight for Climate Justice*. Australian Simon Butler is co-editor of Green Left Weekly. The duo toured Australia last fall, launching this latest book and promoting the ecosocialist revolution.

I was gratified that there were only about 15 people at the launch. They were mostly young and predominantly female. Angus was interviewed by a young female organizer; a Question and Answer period followed. In the course of the interview, Angus provided the information, or misinformation as the case may be, summarized below:

*The idea that we can't solve our problems if we don't do something about population comes in waves, and right now it is strong. The book is intended to help people who know something is wrong with the population argument but have a hard time explaining what it is. The argument began in the modern environmental movement. Its most famous advocate, Paul Ehrlich, wrote *The Population Bomb*, whose predicted mass famine in India never happened.*

According to the UN, there is enough food for every human to have 3500 calories a day. Agriculture is efficient for agribusiness but not for feeding the hungry. Money determines where food goes: to feed cows or make biofuels that don't reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. There is also much waste. Water is a big problem. The technology to grow food with less water is available. We must be concerned about biodiversity. The attacks on biodiversity are by industry, e.g., palm plantations in Malaysia and the Philippines and cattle in the Amazon. The problem is not humans as bodies but economic systems.

The populationists are not one set of people. Some are looking for solutions. Others use environmental

arguments to argue for an anti-immigration position. A few weeks ago, Quirks and Quarks [a CBC radio weekly science program] had an interview for the world population reaching 7 billion. [The people interviewed were Worldwatch president Robert Engelman and me!] The overpopulation argument ends up as an anti-immigration argument.

In the 1990s, John Tanton founded the anti-immigration Zero Population Growth. Tanton is an anti-Semite and set up FAIR [Federation of American Immigration Reform], which wrote Arizona's anti-immigration law. Groups associated with him almost took over the Sierra Club. There is no point in arguing with racists using green arguments to forward a racist agenda. If capitalism is fine, then people become the problem.

GHG emissions are not simply linked to population. The countries with the highest emissions have the lowest birth rates. If everyone in the US did everything that Al Gore suggested to cut GHGs, emissions would only drop by 20%. So we should do what we can, but not deceive ourselves that we're changing the world.

*In many areas women don't have reproductive choice. We must defend that right but not with population arguments. India and Peru used quotas for population control; 200,000 indigenous women were sterilized. Barry Commoner, author of *The Closing Circle*, had an important message: Pollution begins not in the family bedroom, but in the corporate boardroom.*

Many of the questions in the Q & A reflected naiveté or ideological commitment. When called upon, I linked population growth to problems such as water scarcity, pointed out how the poor harm the environment, that escaping poverty means consuming more resources, and that China's GHG emissions exceed those of the USA. Later, in response to someone's comments about values, I said that nature doesn't care about values any more than an overloaded ferry cares about the character of its passengers.

It was clear from the interview and the Q & A that Angus understood that there is an ecological crisis, but he attributed it solely to the evils of capitalism. He cited John Bellamy Foster as rediscovering the environmentalism of Marx and Engels, abandoned by the socialists of the 20th century who focussed on production. Angus ended by saying that treating population as a problem leads to losing hope for a solution. Apparently, denial of a problem makes it go away.

When reality begins to bite, the learning curve of those misled by Angus will be as steep as the graph of human population growth in the age of oil.

PNG: Population growth fuels conflict

GOROKA, 21 December 2011 (IRIN) - Unchecked population growth is fast proving an additional source of conflict in Papua New Guinea (PNG), a country with a history of clan violence and clashes over land, experts say.

"Without doubt, rapid population growth is adding to the risk of conflict," Max Kep, director of the PNG's national Office of Urbanization, told IRIN, noting that various types of conflict are fuelled by limited resources, including a shortage of land.

As PNG's population nears seven million, comprised of nearly 700 ethnic groups speaking some 800 languages, communities are increasingly fighting over smaller plots of land, while city dwellers in swelling urban areas are clashing with nearby owners of traditional land, Kep said.

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=94512>

Immigration link to economic growth yet to be proven, says Productivity Commission

The Australian, October 29, 2011

The case for higher immigration as a driver for economic growth is far from proven, as is the notion that more immigrants can counter the negative effects of population ageing, the Productivity Commission says.

In an analysis of the "big Australia" debate in its 2011 annual report published yesterday, the commission said the economic impact of immigration "is sometimes clouded by misperception".

"Two benefits that are sometimes attributed to immigration, despite mixed or poor evidence to support them, are that immigration is an important driver of per capita economic growth, (and) immigration could alleviate the problem of population ageing," it says.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/immigration-link-to-economic-growth-yet-to-be-proven-says-productivity-commission/story-fn9hm1gu-1226179973978>

Capitalism versus the environment

Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich

Boston Review, 2 December 2011

Both culturally and genetically, human beings have always been small-group animals, evolved to deal with at most a few hundred individuals. Humanity is suddenly (in ecological time) faced with an emergency requiring that it quickly design a governance and economic system that is both equitable and suitable for

a population of billions, and sustainable on a finite planet. Earth is now so overpopulated that it would require something like five more planets to support permanently today's global population at the average American lifestyle, and yet several billion more people are scheduled to be added to the population by mid-century, even though several billion are now living in misery. Humanity is exhausting its natural capital: deep agricultural soils, fossil groundwater, and the biodiversity that runs its life-support systems. It is disrupting the climate, spreading toxic chemicals from pole to pole, increasing the chances of vast epidemics, and risking nuclear war over resources, especially water. And the scientific community fears that at most a decade or two remain to revolutionize our energy mobilizing systems (still extremely dependent on fossil fuels) and revise our agriculture and water-handling systems to enable them to respond to the centuries of changing precipitation patterns predicted by climate scientists. Any chance of growing enough food to give a decent diet to all of *today's* population requires success in these endeavors. Creating a just society, in which care for each other and our life-support systems moves to the top of the political agenda, depends on social movements such as Occupy Wall Street...

This article is part of Occupy the Future, a forum on lessons to be drawn from the Occupy movement.

http://www.bostonreview.net/BR36.6/paul_anne_ehrlich_occupy_movement_future.php

Home buyers priced out

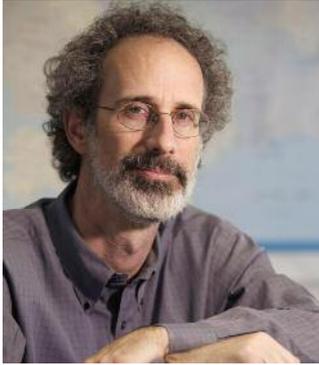
The Age, December 11, 2011

Despite one of the worst property slumps in two decades, many first-home buyers are finding it harder than ever to enter the market, with research showing they need at least \$100,000 after tax to buy in half of Melbourne's suburbs.

The research, commissioned by The Sunday Age, has been labelled "staggering" by housing advocates, who say Melbourne's long-term problem with affordability is a threat to the economy. It paints a bleak picture for average income earners still hoping to get a foothold on the property ladder, with price rises in the lower end of the market bucking the overall price-slide trend. This is locking many families out of home ownership anywhere except on the far edges of the city's urban fringe...

The analysis revealed that a household needed to have nearly \$103,000 a year in disposable income - roughly \$145,000 of taxable income - to afford an established home at the city's median house price of \$535,300.

<http://theage.domain.com.au/home-buyers-priced-out-20111210-1ooxm.html>



Peter Gleick

Peter Gleick on population

Peter Gleick, world renowned water expert from the Pacific Institute, California, spoke recently on video about the relationship between water and population.

“Water is tied to everything we care about.

It’s tied to energy, to ecosystems and to human health. It’s tied to international security *and* it’s fundamentally tied to population.

“We cannot talk about water or any other resource issue, frankly, in my opinion, without also understanding the enormously important role of population dynamics and population growth. The population of the planet continues to grow and continues to put pressure on every one of these resources that we care about. And we don’t like to talk about population but *unless* we talk about population and its role in all these resource issues then we’re *never* going to move to sustainable solutions. We’re never going to have an honest and open discussion on how to move forward to meet the needs of our growing population but to do so in a way that doesn’t, frankly, destroy the planet.

“In the long run, we’re going to have to move to discussion on population itself but, in the short term, we know that we have to provide water for the entire planet. We know we have to provide food for the entire planet. We know we have to integrate resources, water, food, energy issues into discussion of population dynamics. That’s proving to be a challenge for policy makers but it’s a challenge we’re going to have to overcome.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=SVPCsx-pypk

The Encroachment

These paintings were kindly provided by artist Jackie Ellis of Kununurra. <http://www.journeyfree.com.au>



Geoffrey Rush made Australian of the year

On 26 January, Prime Minister Julia Gillard awarded Geoffrey Rush with the honour for his “outstanding achievements in a lifetime career on the stage and screen and long term commitment to the Australian arts”. He’s achieved an Oscar, a Tony and an Emmy award, along with two Golden Globes, three Australian Film Institute Honours, four Screen Actors’ Guild Awards and three British Academy Awards.

Geoffrey Rush, however, is also an activist in opposing overdevelopment. On July 6, 2008, in a speech (<http://marvellousmelbourne.org/drupal/?q=node/168>) at an anti-development rally in Melbourne, Geoffrey Rush said:

“You know...I’d like to seek answers, prompt a debate and ask some really big dumb questions that baffle me e.g. we’re told we have to either go *out* or *up* because there’ll be a million more people living here within the next twelve years. Has anyone ever asked: “Is this really such a great idea anyway? How big should a city become? What are the alternatives?” I was reading stuff like The Club of Rome and the predictions of Ralph Nader in the early seventies where the warnings about today’s biggest planetary head-aches were being flagged (food shortage, climate control, and the one everyone seems to have stigmatised - Population Growth). Probably the most serious dilemma of this new century. How come our appointed leaders want to lower their IQ and arrogantly expand? Is that a dumb question? Please don’t tell me that the answer’s anything to do with the masculine insecurity that *size matters*.”



Geoffrey Rush

BRANCH NEWS

WA: As the previous report did not get through, I will reiterate the great success we had with the Tolling of the Bells for the 7 Billion. The Perth Bell Tower, Christ Church Claremont, Holy Trinity church York & the Church of Christ Mandurah all tolled the full 7 minute toll with the vicar of the latter incorporating the topic in his sermon. These happenings were noted in several local papers, produced a numbers of calls to talk back radio as well as to Paddy Weaver.

I attended another Splash, an open forum run by Sustainable WA, to make sure population was well and truly mentioned. This week I will be going to a Curtin University Sustainable Policy seminar – ‘Migrants and Nature: Migrant’s view on environmental activism in Western Australia’.

Paddy has been asked to give a talk on Population to the next meeting of the Independent Retirees.

The WA Branch notes with deep regret the passing of Bob Hammond, a generous donor to SPA over the years.

Judith Odgaard

SEQ: On 13 December, members of the SEQ Branch met with Larissa Waters, Greens Senator and population spokesperson, to discuss the Greens population policy. The meeting was constructive and will be part of an ongoing dialogue with the Greens. A number of bookings have been made to speak at meetings of other organisations in the next few months.

Jane O’Sullivan

NSW: The NSW Branch held its AGM on November 26. As there were no nominations received by the branch a motion was passed to continue with the same committee and office bearers. These are: Kris Spike president, Graham Wood vice president, Peter Green secretary, Ralph Bennett treasurer, Nola Stewart, Nick Car (media spokesperson), Rod and Dawn Linklatter (membership officers), George Carrard, Rob Child, Guy White. The meeting was followed by the award-winning documentary *Mother, Caring for 7 Billion* after which a panel of guests (Steve Keen, William Bourke and Haydn Washington) gave their thoughts on the film and discussed issues with the audience.

SPA member Ken Ferrier is not on the net (ideological position) so, apart from the newsletter, he does not have the opportunity to exchange views with other SPA members. He has asked if any

members living in the postcode range 2575 to 2580 would like to contact him to discuss issues and coordinate some regional activity. Ken’s phone number is 02 4883 6135.

Kris Spike

ACT: Michael Banyard and Christopher Dorman met with Dr Richard Denniss of The Australia Institute a few days before Christmas. The purpose was to explore the potential for joint function(s) in 2012. Joint functions would reach a wider audience, and the costs of venues, and promotions could be shared. For instance, the Australia Institute and SPA are co-sponsoring the seminar in Canberra on 13 February at the CSIRO Discovery Centre from 7-9pm. Richard suggested functions should be timed with the release dates of the 2011 ABS Census. First data release will be in June, and the media will be paying attention. The second release of data will be in October.

Christopher Dorman is now representing Sustainable Population Australia for ACT & Region on the board of the Conservation Council of the ACT, which represents 33 member groups.

SPA held its Christmas get together at Glebe Park on Friday 2 December,

Initiated and organised by Branch Treasurer, Michael Banyard and assisted by other Branch members, the University of the Third Age (U3A) is running a course “Planet Earth - Limits to Growth” on Monday mornings, starting 6 February, on population issues. The course of eight sessions ends on 2 April. Many of the speakers are branch members with expertise in particular areas. We are fully booked at 30, with about a dozen on the waiting list. Part of our strategy with this course was to help recruitment of new members.

Christopher Dorman

SA: Peter Martin has been overseas and is now camping on Kangaroo Island til the end of the month so SA has not been able to re-schedule its AGM. The main activity which has taken quite a bit of my time is making the arrangements for the talk by Nicole Foss to an Adelaide audience on 23 February at the Hawke Centre, University of South Australia, West Campus. Doors open 4pm, Seminar starts 4.30pm. I have managed to get ERA (SA), Beyond Oil SA and SPGN to all come aboard as co-sponsors so it will cost each organisation about \$200. I believe this will be a very successful venture. Notices have been circulated widely to a large range of community groups, government and university faculties as well as conservation organisations. I believe Nicole will paint in the broad-brush picture that the whole community needs to adopt and into which SPA’s emphasis on population inexorably fits.

John Coulter

VIC: Members of the Victorian branch and committee have had an enormous number of letters published in the main daily media (often more than one per day and

SPA News

at least one with SPA's name on it), and in local weekly media as well as keeping up with writing for and online media over the last two months. Vivienne Ortega, our branch secretary, attributes the high publication rate in main daily media to a quiet time over the holiday period and therefore more opportunities for us to be published. That may be true but someone still has to write the letters! The growth onslaught continues unabated and high population growth seems locked in. Some of the loudest pro-growth voices come from Victoria: those of Bernard Salt (see his video via You Tube <http://candobetter.net/node/2644>) and Andrew MacLeod, the departing CEO of Committee for Melbourne, who will no doubt be adequately replaced.

Jill Quirk did a 15 minute interview on 3CR on 28 November and a seven minute interview on commercial radio 3AW on 2 December, the starting point being from the media that day, the idea to recruit doctors from overseas to fill vacancies in country areas. Jill focused on the environment and the need to stabilise population.

The branch made a submission to the *Growth Corridor Plan - Growth Areas Authority* in December 2011.

We held a committee meeting on 17 December to plan for our presence at the 2012 Sustainable Living Festival on 17-19 February.

Jill Quirk

TASMANIA: Tom Nilsson is seeking interest from other members in Tasmania who might be interested in revitalising the branch. For the branch to retain branch status, an Annual General Meeting is required along with at least five members willing to commit themselves to the local committee. Please contact Tom Nilsson on 03 6225 4678 or tomnilsson@bigpond.com or Rosemary Scott on rscott1@vtown.com.au

AND FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT...

Sandra Kanck

Last week I bought some fresh fish fillets, but not my favourite, garfish, which now costs \$43/kilo, nor King George whiting, so favoured by many South Australians, which was selling for \$63/kilo.

Because you and I understand about population and environment, we know that the world's fisheries are over-fished and in many cases severely so. We know that if there were fewer people that pressure would not be as great. And we also know the relationship of technology and consumption in SPA's favourite equation $I=PAT$.

But always eager to learn more, I read some observations about energy use by engineer, Graham Palmer, in the Spring 2011 edition of "Dissent" magazine. He quotes 19th century economist Stanley Jevons: "It is a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth". Consequently, increased efficiencies in the steam engine led to a greater use of coal. Aviation efficiencies have resulted in air travel becoming accessible to all thereby increasing usage of aviation fuel.

So, let us return to the subject of fish. Improved technology, such as bigger boats, sonar to spot the schools of fish, longer lines, larger nets and onboard chillers and freezers which allow fishing fleets to travel further from land because they know they can get their fish back to market in good condition, have proliferated and created an expectation about the ready availability of fish for our plates.

Population numbers and technology have therefore combined and made things much worse - together they have created such a shortage of fish that soon it will be something eaten only by the wealthy.

The population deniers argue that there will always be another technological solution that will allow us to continue increasing population when the truth might well be the complete opposite, with technology exacerbating the problem.

STEP Inc Position Paper on Population

STEP is a community-based environmental organisation of over 400 members from Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and surrounding suburbs of northern Sydney. One of its members and also a SPA member, John Burke, prepared an excellent 20 page position paper on population and it was duly published by STEP in September 2011.

Barry Tomlinson, STEP's president, writes in the foreword: "STEP's decision to publish this *Position Paper on Population* is the culmination of nearly two decades of concern we have had on the impacts of population growth on our environment, our economic and business growth models and ultimately to the continued functioning of civil society as we know it today. Isaac Asimov, the well-known American author and professor of biochemistry at Boston University, has stated that 'democracy cannot survive overpopulation'."

The population paper is available from www.step.org.au or emailing secretary@step.org.au

LATEST FROM ABS

3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2011

Released 19 December 2011

	Population at end Jun qtr 2011	Change over previous year	Change over previous year
	'000	'000	%
PRELIMINARY DATA			
New South Wales	7 303.7	82.2	1.1
Victoria	5 624.1	84.2	1.5
Queensland	4 580.7	74.8	1.7
South Australia	1 657.0	12.8	0.8
Western Australia	2 346.4	55.8	2.4
Tasmania	510.6	3.2	0.6
Northern Territory	230.2	0.9	0.4
Australian Capital Territory	365.4	6.8	1.9
Australia	22 620.6	320.8	1.4

ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION

The preliminary **estimated resident population** (ERP) of Australia at 30 June 2011 was 22,620,600 persons. This was an increase of 320,800 persons since 30 June 2010.

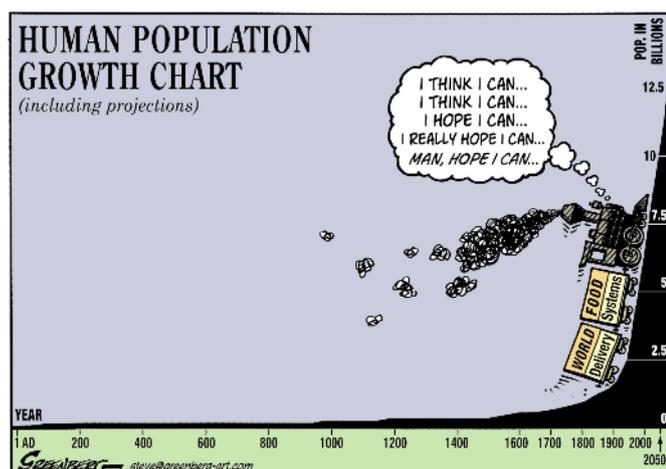
The preliminary **natural increase** recorded for the year ended 30 June 2011 (150,500 persons) was 0.5%, or 800 persons, higher than the natural increase recorded for the year ended 30 June 2010 (149,700 persons).

The preliminary **net overseas migration** recorded for the year ended 30 June 2011 (170,300 persons) was 14%, or 28,000 persons, lower than the net overseas migration recorded for the year ended 30 June 2010 (198,300 persons).

FOOD SECURITY

Agricultural scientist, Jane O'Sullivan, was disappointed in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change (CSACC) which was reported on the front page of the last issue. Roger Martin of Population Matters sent her this cartoon which, she says, "fits the report well".

Cartoon is reprinted with the kind permission of the artist Steve Greenberg, Los Angeles, www.greenberg-art.com



ABOUT SPA

Formerly Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population.

The SPA Newsletter is mailed bi-monthly to members of Sustainable Population Australia Inc. For further information, please contact the SPA Office or your nearest branch. All membership applications and renewals should be sent to the National Office. Newsletter contributions should be sent there or directly to the editor.

Newsletter editor: Jenny Goldie

editor@population.org.au 256 Barooka Road,
Michelago NSW 2620

Webmaster: Nicholas Car 0438 227 737

webmaster@population.org.au

Website: www.population.org.au

SPA NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

President: Hon Sandra Kanck Phone 08 8336 4114

president@population.org.au

Vice-president: Dr John Coulter 08 8388 2153

vp@population.org.au

Minutes Secretary: Nola Stewart 02 9686 3542

secretary@population.org.au

Correspondence secretary: Jill Quirk 03 9509 7429

secretary@population.org.au

Treasurer: Dr Michael Banyard 02 6285 6203

treasurer@population.org.au

TRUSTEES OF THE POPULATION FUND

Mr Gordon Hocking

Mr Ross Kingsland

Dr Bill Sorby

SPA NATIONAL OFFICE

Administrative Office: Successful Alliances

Office: 2C, 18 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600

Address: PO Box 3851, WESTON CREEK ACT 2611

Phone: 02 6288 6810 Fax: 02 6288 7195

Email: info@population.org.au

REGIONAL BRANCHES

NSW: President: Mr Kris Spike. Ph:02 96803245

nsw@population.org.au

WA: President: Dr Harry Cohen AM Ph: 08 9386

1890 wa@population.org.au

VIC: President: Jill Quirk Ph: 03 9509 7429

vic@population.org.au

ACT: President: Christopher Dorman

Ph: 02 6251 1945 act@population.org.au

SEQ: President: Dr Jane O'Sullivan

Ph: 07 3379 8090 seq@population.org.au

SA: President: Peter Martin Ph: 08 8178 0287

sa@population.org.au

NQ: President: Dr David Kault Ph: 07 4721 0487 (ah)

nqld@population.org.au

TAS: President: Tomas Nilsson 03 6225 4678

tas@population.org.au