

It's Not How Many We Are, It's How We're Organized

Thomas Prugh and Erik Assadourian make a strong case for a reduction in the human footprint upon the Earth. As they point out, "Bounty is taken for granted, especially by those societies in which the hallucination of limitless wealth is sustained by importing carrying capacity from elsewhere."

Ironically, one of the great threats to the Earth's ecology is that in much of the world, population growth is *slowing*. In his 1999 book, *Gray Dawn*, Peter Peterson asked, how will the needs of a huge elderly population be met when fewer and fewer adults will be working, producing goods and services, and paying taxes? A resurgent birth rate is hardly the solution. Yet, that is exactly how some governments are responding—by providing incentives for families to have more children.

In my view, the need to stabilize and reduce human population is not a validation of Malthusian forecasts. The problem is not the size of the human population itself. Rather, it is that the mass of people are prevented from securing a decent human existence by the manner in which human societies are organized.

An atmosphere of scarcity, whether natural or artificially contrived, tends to reduce our cooperative behavior and exacerbate conflict. Here we are in the twenty-first century, and a considerable part of humanity continues to live subjected to hierarchically dominated social structures of ancient origins, which perpetuate the worst sorts of inequities.

We instinctively react with horror to the devastation caused in the name of ethnic or quasi-religious nationalism. Yet, adherence to doctrines of cultural and moral relativism is widespread. What is needed to counter this destructive condition is a penetrating global dialogue to achieve significant understanding and acceptance of first principles.

The fundamental question I would pose to initiate such a dialogue is whether "the Earth is the birthright of all persons equally." If there is broad

acceptance of this perspective as a core principle, then we are required to challenge—on principle—the assertions of some that they have sovereign control over portions of the Earth.

EDWARD J. DODSON, *Director*
School of Cooperative Individualism

