

MEMORANDUM

April 15, 2011

World population will reach 7 billion later this year. Before the 20th century, no humans had lived through a doubling of population. But William B. Dickinson in this essay for the Biocentric Institute, points out that he is one who has seen it triple. He was born in 1931, when the human population stood at about 2 billion. And demographers project that our numbers will reach 9.3 billion in just the next 40 years.

“The sheer scale of the population explosion over the last century ought to give us pause,” Dickinson, a former Washington editor and journalism professor, writes. “It has been accomplished despite two sanguinary world wars, purges and famines under Stalin and Mao that carried off tens of millions, various world pandemics, civil wars and genocides, and assorted natural disasters. We keep reproducing at a phenomenal rate...and population momentum keeps pushing the numbers relentlessly higher.”

Watch TV news and note the preponderance of young people in the riotous crowds and toddlers among starving refugees in poor nations. These are the people who will be forming the families of the future. “As population outraces resources, we face a near-term future of ‘peak oil,’ food shortages and civil disorder,” Dickinson writes. “Our growing numbers threaten to undermine whatever steps we take to limit further damage to ecosystems.”

Dickinson acknowledges that apocalyptic predictions generally turn out to be wrong. Optimists believe that science and technology will overcome. “But it is worth noting,” Dickinson concludes, “that even before the undersized harvests last year, 27 countries were on apparently permanent international food welfare. Changing the growth bias that controls population policies in most countries will require not only stronger family planning policies but a major change in mindset.”

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