

The Social Contract

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A Note from the Editor

A Sustainable U.S. Population

David and Marcia Pimentel's, "Land, Energy, and Water: The Constraints Governing Ideal U.S. Population Size,"* is the most important article I have ever read on the question of optimal United States population size and resource availability. Two years ago the U.S. population passed the 300 million mark and, thanks largely to immigrants and their descendants, is well on our way toward 400 million and more.

Yet, as David and Marcia Pimentel of Cornell University, argue here, the United States only has the resource base to support a population far smaller (at near the standard of living most Americans currently enjoy). Since their article first appeared over sixteen years ago, I have yet to encounter a convincing refutation of their main points. One of the obvious implications is that we should be taking positive steps to shrink U.S. population to a sustainable level, including ending immigration-fueled growth.

* This article first appeared in *Elephants in the Volkswagen: Facing the Tough Questions About Our Overcrowded Country*, edited by Lindsey Grant (New York: W. H. Freeman & Company, 1992). David Pimentel is Professor of Ecology and Agriculture at Cornell University. Marcia Pimentel is a senior lecturer in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University.



Readers of *The Social Contract* will be interested in Al Bartlett's new web site: www.AIBartlett.org, which contains the text of Professor Bartlett's articles, interviews, and speeches over the years. Information about his book, *The Essential Exponential* (reviewed by the late John Attarian in this journal), is also available on his web site.

The full text of John and Mary Lou Tanton's biography, *Mary Lou and John Tanton: A Journey into American Conservation* by John F. Rohe, is available from John Tanton's new web site: www.johntanton.org. ■

Wayne Lutton, Ph.D.
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