

The Social Contract*A Note from the Editor***PUBLISHER***John H. Tanton, M.D.*
Petoskey, Michigan**EDITOR***Wayne Lutton, Ph.D.*
Petoskey, Michigan**MANAGING EDITOR***Kevin Lamb*
Mt. Airy, Maryland**AUSTRALIAN CORRESPONDENT***Denis McCormack*
North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia**CONTRIBUTORS***Gerda Bikales*
Livingston, New Jersey*John Cairns, Jr., Ph.D.*
Blacksburg, Virginia*Lindsey Grant*
Santa Fe, New Mexico*Diana Hull, Ph.D.*
Santa Barbara, California*Lee Madland, Ph.D.*
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Fredericksburg, Virginia*John Rohe*
Petoskey, Michigan*Edwin Rubenstein, Ph.D.*
Carmel, Indiana*Craig Straub, Ph.D.*
Cincinnati, Ohio*Brenda Walker*
Berkeley, California*James Walsh, J.D.*
Longboat Key, Florida*Miles Wolpin, Ph.D.*
Potsdam, New York**The Social Contract**

is published quarterly

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Editorial and subscription offices:

445 E. Mitchell Street
Petoskey, MI 49770-2623

Phone: 231-347-1171 (Fax: - 1185)

E-mail: tsecontact@thesocialcontract.comWeb Page: www.thesocialcontract.com

300 Million... and Counting

In this issue of *The Social Contract*, a group of experts assembled by Brenda Walker discuss the significance of the United States' population passing the 300 million mark. As the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed, "There is simply nothing so important to a people and its government as how many of them there are, whether their number is growing or declining and which way these numbers are moving."

For the United States, the numbers are spiking upward. From 300 million now, we will likely reach 400 million by the middle of this century, if not well before. Half-a-billion is certainly in the foreseeable future.

The American public did not choose to go in the direction of India and China. On the contrary, by 1970, America's population was near stabilization, thanks to a voluntary reduction in the fertility rate. Demographers were optimistic that the United States population would peak at around 247 million by 2030 and then start to decline.

Against the public interest, at the very time that Americans were adopting population stabilization in their personal lives, Congress opened the door to massive population growth by the 1965 Immigration Act. Historian Theodore White, an admirer of Lyndon Johnson, confessed that the 1965 Immigration Act was "probably the most thoughtless of the many acts of the Great Society." He went on to admit in his book, *America in Search of Itself* (1982), the changes brought about by the 1965 Immigration Act may end up being key contributing factors in "What could become a catastrophe—the tide of immigration, legal and illegal, pouring into this country. For the under swell, neither the census nor any other authority can provide fully reliable measurements. One starts with the obvious: The United States has lost one of the cardinal attributes of sovereignty—it no longer controls its own borders...."

As time goes on, the problems associated with continuing population growth mount. Our authors offer suggestions on how we can deal with these issues. We welcome the thoughts of readers.

Wayne Lutton, Ph.D.
Editor