

How Many Is Too Many?

by Frosty Wooldridge

Today, America stands at 280 million and grows by 3 million per year. An average of 8,200 people are added to our country every day via annual net gains in U.S. births at 1.2 million and immigrants at 1.8 million (legal and illegal) and their births. Just after mid century, 200 million more people will be struggling for dwindling resources, water, food and a diminishing quality of life.

For graphic examples, one need only look at India and China. In a recent speech, Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, said, "In my country, 4 million people are born in the streets, live in the streets and die in the streets — never having used a toilet or shower." If massive population is so good, why is India so poor? China's plight is even more sobering.

Where is America headed? Do we want such a legacy for our own children? According to *60 Minutes*, we have one million homeless children struggling in our inner cities today. Why can't we take care of their needs? What will be the fate of another 200 million people who create homeless children?

How many is too many and when will Americans address that fact? Why won't they? Who possesses the courage to step up to the reality of overpopulation/consumption/pollution in America — in the long term?

At this time, no one. Politicians scurry like cockroaches at the mention of population stabilization. They fear religious rebuke from the pope, who is out of touch with the 21st century, all the way down to those locked into fundamentalist religions. Their views are rooted in the ancient thinking of "go forth and multiply" of 2000 years ago when only a half-billion people lived on

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the entire planet. Wake up! It's 6.1 billion today.

Americans face consequences in every corner of our nation. Our East and West coasts, teeming with too many people, strive to deal with escalating water, air, and land dilemmas. Deep-water wells, already polluted with industrial chemicals from farmers and manufacturing plants dumping poisons — are drying up. Acid rains pound the lakes with poison. Our cities create thick clouds where millions of children breathe carcinogens with every breath. Farmers kill microbes in the soil with fertilizers and pesticides — leaving us with poisoned foods for eating — thus 1.3 million new cancers each year, an epidemic of our own making, are detected in U.S. citizens.

Eleanor Roosevelt said it fifty years ago:

We must prevent human tragedy rather than run around trying to save ourselves after an event has already occurred. Unfortunately, history clearly shows that we arrive at catastrophe by failing to meet the situation, by failing to act when we should have acted. The opportunity passes us by and the next disaster is always more difficult and compounded than the last one.

By failing to act now, what kinds of consequences will we as a nation face when we hit 1/2 billion people? That's 77 percent more traffic, 77 percent more planes in the air, 77 percent more pollution, 77 percent faster uses of already limited resources such as gasoline, etc. In the next ten years, according to the National Academy of Sciences, 2,500 plants and animals will become extinct in the USA because of habitat destruction via population growth. Why aren't we addressing the moral and biological consequences of such horrific extinction rates?

When you add global warming, ocean fisheries collapsing, acid rain, ozone destruction, drought, contaminated water supplies, poisoning and sterilization of the soils by insecticides and fertilizers — we're building massive consequences.

Yet, no one wants to deal with overpopulation in

America. I do.

If you are as concerned about runaway growth, you may write me at e-mail: frostyw@juno.com and I will direct you to organizations which are working to stabilize US population. The more extreme our numbers the more extreme our consequences. The worst decision you can make is to think you can do so little that you do nothing at all. Do something for your kids and their kids, and the future of America. •