

American Association for the Advancement of Science (On National Population Policies) Muffles ‘Obnoxious’ Canadians Too

By DAVID SCHINDLER, MADELINE WELD, AND STUART H. HURLBERT

If the UN Conference on the Human Environment, to be held in Stockholm in 1972, faces this issue [human population as “the basic cause of environmental problems”] squarely, there will be hope for the future. If it does not, then those individuals, agencies and governments that feel strongly on the matter, should become obnoxious in bringing the issue into uninhibited discussion.

— J.R. Vallentyne (1972)¹

[T]here is no shortage of censors and axers of truth out there in the scientific community. They normally work quietly, speak softly and euphemistically, and have a wide variety of pretexts for wielding the red pen, declaring certain topics taboo, and keeping the politically incorrect off the program. When challenged they are prone to embarrassing themselves.

— S.H. Hurlbert (2011)²

Introduction—the CAPS-AAAS saga

The first episode of the CAPS-AAAS saga was published in the Fall 2011 issue of *The Social Contract*. Stuart Hurlbert related how CAPS (Californians for Population Stabilization) had applied for, been granted, and then was denied an exhibitor’s booth at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting to be held in Vancouver, Canada, in February, 2012.³ The reason? CAPS apparently

did not “align” with AAAS. Further enquiries as to what exactly that meant revealed that CAPS was considered to have “a concerted political agenda and lobbying effort around immigration issues that impact the state of California and are of interest to its residents.” More unsuccessful rounds with the AAAS meetings manager, to whom it was explained that CAPS’ interests include the impact of population growth not only in California but throughout America and the world, led to an appeal to the AAAS Board of Directors. Alas, AAAS Chief Executive Officer Alan Leshner, on behalf of the Board, supported the meetings manager, saying that AAAS did not “provide space to organizations with as direct political and lobbying intent as CAPS has on issues that go beyond the multidisciplinary membership and meeting audience.”

Not surprisingly, CAPS noted that that response was a bit disingenuous, given that other organizations allowed to exhibit at the AAAS meeting have political agendas and engage in educating and lobbying. Furthermore, in July, two months before the exchange with CAPS, AAAS had published an issue of its flagship journal *Science* on population. One would think that AAAS might therefore considers the point of view of an organization such as CAPS, concerned as it is with population stabilization, to be of interest to its multidisciplinary membership.⁴

All key correspondence referenced here between CAPS and AAAS may be found in the appendix. This also includes key exchanges between PIC and AAAS during the former’s attempt, described below, to arrange for an exhibitor booth at the Vancouver meeting.

The saga continues, with a new player, PIC

In the early stages of this saga, while CAPS was applying for and getting (or so we thought) a booth, CAPS secretary Stuart Hurlbert contacted the Ottawa-based Population Institute of Canada (PIC), the only organization in Canada whose focus is specifically on population. A shared CAPS/PIC booth seemed like a fine idea for an American science meeting being held in Canada. PIC president Madeline Weld responded enthusiastically

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