

# National Geographic Society Losing Its Way, Breaking Trust

BY DELL ERICKSON

The Spring 2011 edition of the *Social Contract* focused on population censorship in the scientific sphere. The Ecological Society of America (ESA), the North American Lake Management Society, and major environmental organizations were cited as primary examples. Most frequently censorship takes the form of a sin of omission — the refusal to mention issues or to integrate population with any number of tightly linked matters, the worst of which are (in my opinion) ecology, resources, and the environment. As exemplified by the experience of Stuart Hurlbert with ESA, censorship is a deliberate policy across a broad swath of the American science community.

This is obvious in the *National Geographic Magazine*'s year-long series on population, beginning with the January 2011 issue.<sup>1</sup> This is especially egregious in that the National Geographic Society's byline is "inspiring people to care about the planet since 1888" and that it claims to be "one of the largest non-profit scientific and educational institutions in the world."<sup>2</sup>

I read the articles in the series with disbelief, marveling at their shallowness and failure to take into account world or U.S. sustainability. They downplay population forecasts, omit U.S. population growth, and ignore immigration's role in U.S. population growth and sustainability, including immigration's effects on American jobs.

They frame the population issue as if populations are secondary or do not really matter. They believe the world is not overpopulated and contend population issues will work out favorably. The problem is poverty, they claim. Since there is no mention of limits or of peak anything — neither wood, dung, arable land, oil, coal, water, gas, nor integration of population and resources

— they can go their merry way. The *National Geographic* avoids or downplays declining resources (notably oil), and their role in struggling world economies, and lack of U.S. economic progress, and declining U.S. living standards. Its shallow view extends to alternative energies — *National Geographic* does not mention how unsatisfactory and problematic the net energy returns of alternative energies are.

To buttress their case, *National Geographic* attempts to discredit Malthus, Ehrlich, and Borlaug. India's less successful family planning programs are discussed in a positive light, while they level a mean-spirited attack on China's more successful programs. Central to their viewpoint is the UN Cairo '90 plan. Cairo '90 virtually silenced population discussions, replaced all previous helpful approaches with the emotional "solution" of making women feel good, and recommended plans to locate populations in megacities.

There were twelve pages of reasons not to worry before the initial article finally addresses the issue; "but will there be too many of us?" Fifty years ago studies reported, and the public at the time would have agreed, a better question would be: "there are too many of us — how many are sustainable?" Despite the laissez-faire attitude of *National Geographic*, researchers today conclude that human population numbers should be less than one-third of present levels.

## Demography is destiny

Although the article provides a brief discussion of demographics, it avoids discussing growth and the role of population momentum in sustainability. In other words, when overpopulation has reached a panic situation, it's already 50 years too late. Dr. Albert Bartlett succinctly states this predicament as follows: "the greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function."<sup>3,4</sup> It is easier to understand the idea if graphs of population growth are presented. However, the *National Geographic* excludes any U.S. population illustration.

---

**Dell Erickson**, environmentalist, writer, and speaker on energy, population, and sustainability, is Director of Research, Minnesotans For Sustainability.  
<http://www.mnforsustain.org>.

It would have been more informative to include a clear, or some descriptive U.S. population graph and graphs of important resources, historical and long-term projections. The *National Geographic* should have discussed immigration as a driver of U.S. population growth and called for an immigration policy reversal designed to stabilize, then achieve, a sustainable U.S. population level.

The equivalent Doubting Thomas approach is noticed with their world population projections. Truth is, projections do not have to happen, but a reader wouldn't know it from the *National Geographic* series. It neglects to suggest that growth trends may not happen; it is government policy.

In illustrating the exponential nature and momentum of growth, graphs effectively depict oil as a population resource factor. Other graphs illustrate U.S. population growth, and importantly, reveal the immigration factor. However, *National Geographic* provides a two-page graph that attempts to downplay the enormity of the world population. Downplaying growth, the graph is overlaid by a full page of text to the left and on the right a distracting photograph alongside the graph itself with a large paragraph of — seemingly out of place — text exclaiming that resources can be replenished.

To have accurately portrayed the current reality of billions of desperate people would take away from the magazine's what-me-worry agenda. Certainly, it's the reason no troublesome population or resource graphs were displayed and for the dumbed-down reporting. There are pictures of crowds, as if that were the problem, and mentions that one billion are malnourished, but only pretty pictures are published. Where is the urgency, where are the images of children with distended Kwashiorkor bellies?

A similar portrayal is seen for the U.S. One *National Geographic* photo caption states, "by 2050 America's population is expected to top 400 million." One reason *National Geographic* does not include a U.S. graph is that it allows them to make that kind of false statement. The projection is actually for 430-450 million at a minimum, and under the current rate of growth, possibly more than 175 million above their "topping" projection.

Nor do they shed light on the reasons behind the burgeoning population, nor question that growth, nor state that the U.S. exceeds or could exceed resource limits. The *National Geographic* should have added context to its U.S. population presentation. For example, the 2010 Census determined that the U.S. population increase in the last two decades exceeded all previous increases in our history. Or that the more than sixty million increase

in the previous two decades greatly exceeded the post-war Baby Boom's fifty-four million (1945–1965).<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the *National Geographic* has an obligation to discuss U.S. population policy. They could have used the proposed United States Sustainable Population Policy Project as an excellent template.<sup>8</sup> In the process, also include acknowledgement and arguments from earlier studies advocating U.S. population stabilization and reduction.

One impediment to stabilizing and reducing U.S. population levels is immigration, which accelerates population growth. U.S. population growth above approximately 250 million is from immigration. Today, over 90 percent of U.S. population growth is from immigration. Literally, this means all increases in energy consumption, emissions, most oil imports, and deepening import debt are due solely to immigration. Immigration is the only reason the U.S. cannot meet the Kyoto Protocols. Other studies have noted the negative effects on disadvantaged Americans and on wages and jobs, and have recommended U.S. population stabilization.<sup>9,10</sup>

Finally, it would weaken their U.S. stance, but if the series made straightforward comparisons, then *National Geographic* would compare the U.S. (or Canada or Australia) to the original European Union, the EU states. Combined, they have similar economies, population, and geographic areas. This realistic comparison demonstrates that there are only minor differences. The series unfairly berates Americans primarily because the U.S. is geographically broad. Sixty percent of oil energy is used in transportation, oranges travel from Florida to Washington State, wine and rice move from California to Maine. It's not much different than for the original EU states.

### Their global view makes matters worse

The overarching question to ask is, what level of society can be sustained and at what population level — for individual countries and the world in general?

In 1989 Garrett Hardin might have derided the *National Geographic*'s global view, saying, "there is no global population problem..." (but) "about 180 separate national population problems." Today he would be describing the UN Cairo '90 agenda. As only he could, getting straight to the point, he might add, "would the pothole in your street be filled sooner if we globalized the problem?" or he would say, "populations, like potholes, are produced locally..."<sup>11</sup>

Globally, *National Geographic*'s position deteriorates further. Bangladesh is cited as a template for adapting to overpopulation rather than an example of a nation in ominous circumstances. Using Spain as an example

of its (regrettable) thinking, *National Geographic* says, “[immigration is] bolstering Europe’s stagnant population growth.” This foolish statement announces to all that *National Geographic* does not comprehend sustainability factors.

Spain should have been cited as an example of what is required of all nations, especially developed ones, to achieve some level of sustainability. Declining fertility combined with little in-migration is the indispensable demographic to achieve a sustainable nation.

Predictably, it says, “decades from now, there will likely be two billion more mouths to feed.” Likewise for India, the article continues, “what’s inevitable is that India is going to exceed the population of China by 2030....”

Given circumstances and censorship practices today, the *National Geographic* forecasts are likely true. However, not mentioned is that India has fewer resources than China and is already over burdened. Adding another 400 million people in India is unlikely except with relentless increases in grinding poverty, environmental damage, and possibly economic and social breakdown. Furthermore, why isn’t India’s successful Kerala State population program they mention referred to as a template for all of India or the world? Why no argument for comprehensive application? If the Kerala program were fully implemented across India their grim population projections are unlikely to develop.

The articles berate China for its (misnamed) weak one-child family planning policy. China’s population growth rate is less than half that of India’s. It is important to state that China’s population policy was a direct response to the 40, 60, even 80 million Chinese who have died due to recurrent droughts. Family planning has likely already saved millions of Chinese lives, and will save countless more over future years. China appears to be revisiting its past; another serious draught is underway. China is importing substantial quantities of grain to feed its people and Russia for the same reason has ceased grain exports.

Severe drought in overpopulated regions often challenges adjoining nations; desperate for water, China is significantly reducing river flows through its country going into India.

It is difficult to point out, but it is highly unusual that *National Geographic* would mention sadly India’s overpopulation deaths but not China’s far greater numbers.

### **Redirection, Cairo 1990 and +5, China’s successes, and disappearing population programs**

Prior to UN Cairo ’90, population, resources, and

carrying capacity were considered critical factors in overpopulation issues and were topics of discussion. Essentially, Cairo reversed all successful UN population programs implemented over many decades, eliminated discussions of population, and ignored programs and studies calling for stabilization of the world (and U.S.) population. Nevertheless, those are the very programs which led to fertility declines and reductions in population growth rates over decades.<sup>12,13</sup> Literally, Cairo ’90 was an environmental and population betrayal. Numbers no longer count, they believe.

The *National Geographic*, environmental organizations, the media, and numerous non-government organizations, appear to follow the script prepared at the UN Cairo ’90 and Cairo +5 Conferences (International Conference on Population and Development; note its “Demotechnic Index”). The *National Geographic* practically quotes the Cairo script, claiming that “fixating on population numbers is not the best way to confront the future ... the problem that needs solving is poverty and lack of infrastructure, not overpopulation.”

More infrastructure? The reality is often, not always, the reverse: reduce fertility, then income levels rise — children are expensive!<sup>14</sup> This is precisely the Chinese example, with its one-child policy. The *National Geographic* does not allow China’s success story to be printed. As the world experienced, establishing population and family planning goals significantly decreased the world rate of population growth and produced the economic success China is becoming.

If the article mentioned Cairo it also would have to mention that, for three years prior to the meeting, monied and special non-governmental organizations met with attendees to obtain a population agreement. In essence, the *a priori* agreement removed numbers from population, alleged that feeling-good women were the answer, and transferred funding to ethnic and social activists, and to the few population organizations which accepted their restrictions. Those funding restrictions included no money for Planned Parenthood and no money to any organization dealing with U.S. population stabilization and reduction. A Population Dark Ages ensued.<sup>15</sup>

Previously, population scientists and activists (back in the late 1960s and early 1970s) thought they had not only won the battles, but won the population wars. We thought the planet had a good chance of making it!

Consistent with that optimism, initially President Nixon strongly supported the population stabilization efforts of the 1972 Rockefeller Population Commission Report<sup>9</sup>; then as soon as it was to be released, he sud-

denly turned away from it and all population matters went off radar and funding screens. Removal of population as the overarching issue was completed sometime in the 1980s, just prior to UN Cairo '90. Scientists lost the good fight again in 1999 when another government study recommending stabilizing the U.S. population was ignored.<sup>16</sup>

If the UN Cairo '90 plan with its women's transition is realistic, then it is of interest to note the irony that if fertility increases with increasing poverty and lack of resources, then by the same logic any population increase implies a reversal of the transition and a continuing fall into a black hole of desperation. Although not mentioned, it is clear that resources limit populations and are central in determining sustainability. In order to achieve sustainability, there must be a balancing of impact and resources.

### **Believing technology means sustainability**

The basic sustainability equation is:  $I = PAT$  (also variously known as ecological "Footprint"):  $I$  = impact,  $P$  = population,  $A$  = affluence,  $T$  = technological level, or population times living standards. Carrying capacity is often heard from biologists to denote the equation in balance.

Attempting to downplay population, *National Geographic* truncates the fundamental equation to  $I = AT$  (impact equals, in National Geographic Society terms, consumption or standard of living). Junior high school arithmetic demonstrates and ecological reality betrays the improper presentation.

Other living creatures ought to be considered also, since they have rights to exist equal to those of humans, and human success mirrors their success — a given in sustainability but not offered by *National Geographic*. It is discouraging that the series' almost purely anthropomorphic point of view leaves other living critters with little regard. For example, the *National Geographic* reduces discussions of biodiversity and species loss to a mere sidebar. Even then, species diversity is reduced to a game, a childlike game with little connection to the fundamental theme.

The January article makes the reader think *National Geographic* actually is questioning human sustainability. However, life scientists would think their approach rather humorous. They equate landmass size to population sustainability. There is a lot of ocean, but most of the ocean has very few fish. Angels on the head of a pin? Science says only arable land should be considered and it must be associated with other resources and living standards.

Although not directly stated, in removing  $P$  for population, as does the Ecological Society of America and major environmental organizations, *National Geographic* is compelled to kneel at the altar of technology to hit upon a solution to resource predicaments. On the other hand, life scientists and science-based environmentalists understand that technology is used to maintain  $P$  at the expense of living standards and the environment. Seasoned life scientists understand that technology is often a problem rather than a solution. Technology works best when the population is stable; the benefits directly flow through to improving human welfare, and possibly other species. Counter intuitively, technology results in a false sense of security and produces a relentless treadmill to keep up. In the end, it increases resource consumption and environmental predicaments.

### **National Geographic discrediting Malthus, Ehrlich, and Borlaug**

In similar biased fashion, *National Geographic* makes problematic statements regarding Malthus: "in the two centuries after Malthus declared that population couldn't continue to soar, that's exactly what it did." Malthus was not the alarmist the *National Geographic* paints him; he said that populations grow to the level where resource shortages occur and economic, social, and environmental consequences begin to arrest growth.<sup>17,18</sup>

Given the circumstances, Malthus's position was entirely reasonable. Malthus correctly implied that the world he lived in was overpopulated but not that it was in collapse, as the *National Geographic* suggests. In the period he studied, resources were plentiful but either undeveloped or only beginning to be developed. As identified previously, this is another attempt to discredit the population factor.

Malthus had history upon which to base his essay; anthropologists, life scientists, and historians have exposed numerous failed civilizations. Most frequently they failed because of populations exceeding their resource base and weather changes — often drought.

The article jumps about 100 years and says better technologies and developments such as sewers allowed populations to grow. Jumping forward another 50 years, they again downplay population, this time berating Paul Ehrlich because the population catastrophe outlined in his book, *The Population Explosion*, did not occur on schedule. However, are not the circumstances Dr. Ehrlich described, the same reasons underlying the current *National Geographic* population series?

Without providing the name, the article acknowl-

edges Dr. Norman Borlaug's Green Revolution successes were dependent on hybrid seeds and generally intensive agriculture. Yet, there is no mention that his hybrids work was only temporary, as he stated. He said that it bought time to remedy the population issue. But, because Borlaug's position was equally about population, that critical caveat was omitted in the series. In not stating his name, did the writers feel they had a moral right to provide half of the story about the Green Revolution?

In retrospect, it is clear that Dr. Borlaug's "Green Revolution," with its hybrid seeds and enhanced use of limited natural resources, temporarily saved the day from Malthus and Ehrlich. However, the Green Revolution fundamentally changed agriculture from largely natural processes into an intensive high fossil energy use system. The new system required substantial quantities of oil, natural gas, pesticides, and fossil water for irrigation.

It allowed the population growth paradigm to continue but did not change its fundamental unsustainable nature.

In short order, agriculture transitioned from a comparatively sustainable closed system to an unsustainable system dependent on unlimited energy inputs. Modern agriculture was converting ancient sunshine at great cost into feedstocks today. Yields increased accordingly. However, less known was that the energy from food, relative to the energy required to grow the food, soon began to fall. This high energy food system is now following peaks in energy resources and is beginning its irreversible trend back to an era of sustainable agriculture systems based primarily on natural processes — and with it, lower but sustainable yields based on sustainable energy.

As Malthus suggested, Borlaug indicated, and Ehrlich feared, the Green Revolution only postponed the inevitable. As recognized earlier, the panic button needed to be pressed 50 years ago. However, not wanting to send a distress signal, the *National Geographic* remains silent on the matter. Despite three bumper crops in the previous eight years, the world's granaries are at frighteningly low levels, and carryover food stocks are at historic lows. The prospects for this crop year are for below average crops. However, anything other than a bumper crop year and the world's peoples will begin to eat their seed crops. Any lower production and the Four Horsemen and the Grim Reaper join Malthus in overwhelming human denial. In another year or two and 160 million more hungry Earth passengers, the level of crop production won't change the grim outcome of inadequate or declining food stocks.

## Is the United States, the world, really making progress?

There have been serious economic and social consequences in not implementing the recommendations of previous U.S. population and sustainability studies. Unfortunately, the *National Geographic* does not mention these studies and avoids mentioning the consequences, only that Americans consume too much.

Economists calculate changes in Gross Domestic Product, GDP, to provide an indication of how the economy is progressing. However, GDP does not consider many of the costs of growth. On the contrary, GDP counts as an increase treating diseases, environmental pollution, or earthquake damage. Or increases in GDP related to population from immigration even if only \$1 more is produced. Thus, conventional GDP can be misleading.

Indicators of real U.S. economic progress are either in decline or show little real change. Indeed, trends of real progress in America ceased improving in the 1980s.

Not mere coincidence, U.S. oil production peaked in the early 1970s, as did natural gas. Subsequently, domestic oil production has irreversibly trended downward.

Immigration combined with the inability of domestic resources to provide for the current and additional population is the underlying reason the American economy has struggled for several decades. Growing U.S. debt due to energy imports cannot be reversed. The more people, the more sobering the outcomes.

It has been the piling on of debt that has masked the changes, giving the appearance of improvement while under the surface were growing environmental sacrifices and social problems, income inequalities, deteriorating schools and healthcare systems, and fewer job opportunities.

Where does it end? One suspects the answer is when the U.S. and other Western nations have fallen to the level of the average world's poor. Garrett Harden says, "when immigration is added to 'natural increase', the resultant population increase shows no sign of leveling off before we are impoverished."<sup>11</sup> The United States Genuine Progress Indicator is a visual representation of this slide into poverty. It implies a spiral down into collapse. This is not surprising after Cairo '90 and lax U.S. immigration law enforcement.

Can it get worse? Yes, mirroring the ESA and major environmental organizations, the *National Geographic* disregards carrying capacity and any number of

other related issues when quietly promoting the importation of millions of low-consuming immigrants from the underdeveloped world into high-consuming nations. Importing poverty appears to be a *National Geographic* solution to world overpopulation. To continue policies appropriate to one era may have negative consequences in another. Disadvantaged Americans and the environment bear the brunt of *National Geographic's* ill-conceived population policies.

### **Pretending what is not — immigration, labor, and unemployment**

A serious oversight of the *National Geographic* population policy is jobs. Economists report the U.S. unemployment rate is currently 9.1 percent; including discouraged workers brings the total to a staggering 15.9 percent.<sup>20,21</sup> Approximately 20 million Americans are unemployed. However, with 1.5–2 million legal and illegal immigrants entering every year, most seeking jobs, there are few job opportunities for Americans.<sup>22</sup> There is no other reason than censorship that that staggering level of unemployment is not connected with immigration.

There is more to the downside. Economists rarely state it, but to accommodate the significant increases in immigration due to the 1965, 1980s, and subsequent immigration law increases and amnesties, the government employment threshold for action was raised from 3 percent to 5 percent. The result was that more than one million additional Americans were destined to be unemployed on a relatively permanent basis.

Representative Barbara Jordan's 1985 immigration commission was especially concerned about the effects of immigration on disadvantaged and less-skilled Americans.<sup>23</sup> Its findings were ignored. Not only is unemployment currently at Depression Era levels, it falls disproportionately on those very people the Jordan Commission wanted most to protect. Because they directly compete with foreign labor, today, relative to the numbers employable, fewer low-skilled and less-educated American Blacks and the disadvantaged are employed than at any other period. Neither the current Administration nor *National Geographic* mentions the frightening statistic that 35 percent of black 25–54 year olds without a high school diploma are unemployed — in some measure because of immigration.<sup>24</sup>

Even today, with millions unemployed, the *National Geographic*, economists, and the Administration support immigration practices that substantially add to the pool of labor; indeed, President Obama proposes to double or triple those numbers!

### **It's all about declining resources and energy returned on energy invested**

In a series dealing with population and resources for its support, resources should play a determinant role. Energy is the starting point and foundation of society — at every level. Of the fossil fuels, human society is dependent on oil, and it is for this reason that oil resources are the most troublesome. Less understood are limits to coal and nuclear power, and serious questions regarding natural gas.<sup>25,26</sup> Again, *National Geographic* fails to alert the public, raise the matter, or integrate population with limited resources.

Because inventories are advertised as large, coal and sometimes natural gas are often thought of as an oil substitute and continuing generator of electricity. However, the high quality coal ores are nearly exhausted and what remains is significantly more difficult to extract and of lower quality. The issue is not the amount of “reserves” but the quality of the ores.<sup>27,28</sup> Today's inappropriately designed economic models cannot overcome geology. Net energy from coal in the U.S. peaked in the 1990s. Worldwide, coal will achieve its net energy peak soon, if it hasn't already occurred. With every additional consumer and passing year, it will require substantial volume increases simply to maintain current generation of electricity, be increasingly expensive to produce, and with corresponding need to safeguard emissions.

Japan can be thought of as a metaphor for the world, a relatively large population on an island limited in size and resources. It used technology, notably nuclear power, to provide the energy for its society. The need overwhelmed the cautious nature of its people.

Although probabilities of serious problems of nuclear power are small at any point in time, the cumulative total is the absolute certainty of grave outcomes. Fukushima was and is certain to occur again somewhere else at some time. Nuclear power's catastrophic certainties are unappreciated by being hidden from public view; out of sight out of mind. Although not visible, three of the four power plants have core meltdowns, one with containment core breach. The question being asked now is not if Fukushima is equal to Chernobyl, but how many times worse is it? Not mentioned is that the great Pacific Ocean fisheries are at stake.

### **Black gold and fool's gold alternatives**

A limit to oil is a real concern; coal is increasingly expensive and has emission problems and natural gas shares similar issues. Moreover, the Fukushima tragedy is forcing society to reevaluate nuclear as an energy

source, coerced into looking to other sources of energy with alternatives preferred. Yet, because of inherent deficiencies and serious difficulties, alternatives cannot replace fossil fuels.

Going forward, higher prices, notably high oil prices, are forecasted as demand begins to exceed production. This is the reason world economies continue to struggle. Unlike previous economic downturns, where cheap energy helped economies to recover, rising energy prices do not bode well for future economies. For example, the U.S. economy has almost always fallen into recession when oil prices reached a level equal to 4 percent of GDP. Currently in the U.S., the rate is approximately 5 percent of GDP and the result has been a grudging economic recovery.

Population is the issue. The population link is clearly demonstrated in the SUSPS graph seen previously<sup>6</sup>; populations follow energy resources. As a consequence of Peak Oil and falling quality of resources, society is increasingly dependent on non-conventional oils, deep water drilling, manufactured oils — tar sands and shale's, alcohols, and other biomass, and replacements with electricity.

*National Geographic* has the impression that alternatives will save us. This is a fool's gold viewpoint. A second look unearths the most important characteristic of alternative energies: rather than concentrated like coal, they are diffuse and unreliable, with low net energy returns. Alternative sources are often difficult to produce and expensive, and can suffer from serious environmental consequences.

Accordingly, alternative energies require taxpayer subsidies to be produced at acceptable consumer prices. One widely used technique to conceal the real price is to blend the high price of alternatives into the lower prices of traditional energies. This is also a method of guaranteeing profits to subsidized industries while shifting many of the costs to the public.

The *National Geographic* measures these costs in money terms. However, David Clarke says it better: "this will not fix the problem, since money is a proxy for the problem, not the problem."<sup>28</sup> Confusing money and energy with alternatives, an economist would say you don't get much bang for the buck. In prior years the magazine had articles discussing several of the drawbacks of various alternative energies. Today, partiality has set the bar low. The series fails to integrate past energy articles in their (overpopulation) solution. In the formative periods of industrial society, \$1 of energy invested returned approximately \$49 of benefit. Decades have passed since energy returned 30–50 times the inputs.

Subtly suggesting what may lie ahead, industrial nations were developed with net energies. Today, societies are consuming energies with energy returns one-fourth to one-fifth the returns of the early periods of industrialization. As society is beginning to experience, increasing use of alternative energies will require 3–5 times the extraction volumes, production time and costs, environmental predicaments, and ratcheting higher consumer prices. Today, rather than \$49, each \$1 invested may return \$5 to \$10 of benefit, tomorrow even less.

It would have been more helpful for *National Geographic* to suggest what the studies make available, that the planet Earth juggernaut is approaching the net energy cliff. It's not one of those unfathomable wicked problems. How soon and how rapid the possible descent depends in great measure on world and individual nation population policies; an energy policy is first and foremost a population policy.

Despite *National Geographic's* what-me-worry view, it is imperative that society move quickly to evolve into something sustainable. The issue is, are there sufficient resources to get us through our present situation and into long-term sustainability? *National Geographic* is of no help.

### ***National Geographic* says the solution is to make women feel good, then compact populations into megacities**

I will only touch on a few of the reasons this approach won't necessarily achieve its intended goals. The notion actually speaks down to women. Most women feel good about their lives, and most have families of their choosing. The relatively few that should, but do or cannot, will not make a substantial difference in the world's population growth rate. In other words, there is no guarantee that women feeling good will have families of less than 6 children, as many now do. The idea is a formidable, even Biblical, shift in many pronatalist cultures requiring several generations to be fully implemented, if at all. It is a faith-based social plan without true population objectives. It underlies the reason *National Geographic*, et al., have little sense of urgency or discuss sustainability. Unless, there is an immediate policy reversal, one based on science, not feel-good notions, nature will implement its old traditional population plan.

The growth of megacities is mentioned as a population solution but not a discussion of the resources required to maintain or continue to grow the cities. Avoiding the consequences, *National Geographic* fails to connect increasing resource demands, carrying capacity

issues, and other ills required by these developments. Plow a field and drain a wetland to build a Walmart or high-rise apartment, and sustainable population levels fall in lockstep.

Stumbling along, the article engages in some anti-American, anti-West bashing by showing a picture of a large track housing project. The photo subtly promotes the oxymoronic “smart growth” agenda. Smart growth implies packing people into high-density and sardine can high-rise housing. It’s the housing style of cities through the ages. Nor are they able to see the contradiction that similar photos which do not portray the U.S. are described as dreadful for human beings. It’s also where the Black Death, Spanish Flu, et al. achieved their highest death tolls.

“Smart growth” is known as a method promoting increasing populations while continuing as much as possible the historical growth paradigm. The term has lost much of its use because knowledgeable people understand that smart growth promotes growth, which is inconsistent with sustainability. It functions to raise resource demands and makes society more vulnerable.

In summary, the *National Geographic* has broken the people’s trust, downplayed and avoided serious population and sustainability issues, and failed in its obligation to provide the information the public and decision makers rely upon in order to make wise decisions. ■

### References

1. Population 7 Billion- how your world will change, Robert Kunzig, *National Geographic Magazine*, January 2011. Website version, see < <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/seven-billion/kunzig-text> >.
2. National Geographic Website: < <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/> >.
3. Dr. Albert A. Bartlett, Professor Emeritus, University of Colorado, Physics. For this and other insights, see < <http://www.albartlett.org/> >. Dr. Bartlett’s famous presentation, *Arithmetic, Population & Energy* is in video form, < [http://www.albartlett.org/presentations/arithmetic\\_population\\_energy\\_video1.html](http://www.albartlett.org/presentations/arithmetic_population_energy_video1.html) >.
4. The Pond Lilly Parable, Dell Erickson, September 24, 1999. See < [http://www.mnforsustain.org/erickson\\_d\\_pond\\_lilly\\_parable.htm](http://www.mnforsustain.org/erickson_d_pond_lilly_parable.htm) >.
5. United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data 2010. See < <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/> >.
6. SUSPS.org < <http://www.susps.org/> >. “SUSPS” formerly was, “Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization.”
7. Population-Environment Balance < <http://www.balance.org/> >.
8. United States Sustainable Population Policy Project, USS3P. See < [http://www.mnforsustain.org/uss3p\\_index\\_page.htm](http://www.mnforsustain.org/uss3p_index_page.htm) >. See also, “A Proposed National Population Policy”, Negative Population Growth, Inc., September 5, 2006. See < [http://www.npg.org/pop\\_policy.html](http://www.npg.org/pop_policy.html) >. Also, “Australia Considers a Population Policy: Any Lessons for a Drifting USA?”, David Simcox, NPG Forum Paper, Negative Population Growth, April 2011. See < [http://npg.org/forum\\_series/AUSTRALIA\\_CONSIDERS\\_A\\_POPULATION\\_POLICY.pdf](http://npg.org/forum_series/AUSTRALIA_CONSIDERS_A_POPULATION_POLICY.pdf) >. Although Australia is the framework, the essay uses United States population policy history and recommendations for a United States population policy.
9. Population and the American Future: The Report of The Commission On Population Growth And The American Future, John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Chairman, March 27, 1972. U.S. Government Printing Office. See report at < [http://www.mnforsustain.org/pop\\_rockefeller\\_72.htm](http://www.mnforsustain.org/pop_rockefeller_72.htm) >.
10. “The President’s Council on Sustainable Development, 1993-1999.” See < <http://clinton4.nara.gov/PCSD/Overview/index.html> >. “Goal 8: Population Move toward stabilization of U.S. population.”
11. “There is No Global Population Problem”, Garrett Hardin, 1989, The Garrett Hardin Society, < [http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art\\_no\\_global\\_pop\\_problem.html](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_no_global_pop_problem.html) >. The article first appeared in the July/August 1989 issue of *The Humanist*.
12. “Six Billion and Beyond: a Critical Review, 1999r”, Dell Erickson, 2002 < [http://www.mnforsustain.org/erickson\\_d\\_six\\_billion\\_and\\_beyond\\_critique.htm](http://www.mnforsustain.org/erickson_d_six_billion_and_beyond_critique.htm) >.
13. “The Demographic Transition Revisited: Lessons for Foreign Aid and U.S. Immigration Policy”, Virginia Deane Abernethy, Virginiaabernethy.com, 1999. See < <http://www.virginiaabernethy.com/publishdetail.php?publishid=22> >.
14. “Population and Environment: Assumptions, Interpretation, and Other Reasons for Confusion”, Virginia Deane Abernethy, Virginiaabernethy.com, 2000. See < <http://www.virginiaabernethy.com/publishdetail.php?publishid=7> >.
15. “The Life and Death of NSSM 200: How the Destruction of Political Will Doomed a U.S. Population Policy”, Stephen D. Mumford, Center for Research on Population and Security, April 1974, < <http://www.population-security.org/28-APP2.html> >.
16. “President’s Council on Sustainable Development”, President William Clinton, June 1999. Overview < <http://clinton2.nara.gov/PCSD/Overview/index.html> >.
17. “An essay on the principle of population by thomas robert malthus, preview”, John Gribbin, ElecBooks Classics, 2001. See < <http://www.scribd.com/> >



doc/18236286/an-essay-on-the-principle-of-population-by-thomas-robert-malthus-preview >.

18. “Not Tonight, Sweetie; No Energy”, Virginia Deane Abernethy, Virginiaabernethy.com, 2004. See < <http://www.virginiaabernethy.com/publishdetail.php?publishid=18> >. Excerpted from the September/October 2004 WorldWatch magazine, *Vision for a Sustainable World*.

19. *Genuine Progress Indicator*, Redefining Progress.org, 2004; at < [http://tabacco.blog-city.com/gpi\\_genuine\\_progress\\_indicator\\_vs\\_all\\_other\\_economic\\_indi.htm](http://tabacco.blog-city.com/gpi_genuine_progress_indicator_vs_all_other_economic_indi.htm) >; also Wikipedia < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genuine\\_progress\\_indicator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genuine_progress_indicator) >.

20. United States Department of Labor, Department of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release, May 6, 2011. *Table A-15. Alternative measures of labor underutilization*. See < <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t15.htm> >. Also see, ShadowStats.com. On June 3, 2011 reported the unbiased unemployment rate was 22.3%. *SGS Alternate Unemployment Rate*, John Williams, Shadow Government Statistics. See < <http://www.shadowstats.com/> >.

21. “America’s jobless men, Decline of the working man: Why ever fewer low-skilled American men have jobs”, *The Economist*, April 28, 2011. See < <http://www.economist.com/node/18618613> >.

22. “How Many Illegal Aliens Are in the U.S.? - An Alternative Methodology for Discovering the Numbers”, Fred Elbel, *The Social Contract*, Volume 17, Number 4 (Summer 2007). See < [http://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc\\_17\\_4/tsc\\_17\\_4\\_elbel.shtml](http://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc_17_4/tsc_17_4_elbel.shtml) >. “Intentionally low, static, and misleading official government estimates claim that 8 million to 12 million illegal aliens reside in the United States and that 700,000 new illegals enter and stay every year. Based upon the analysis presented here, it is likely that up to 20 million illegal aliens presently reside in the United States, with up to 12,000 additional illegal aliens entering every day.”

23. “Congressional testimony of Barbara Jordan, Chair, U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform”, U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, March 29, 1995. See < <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/032995.html> > and the full Commission < <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/index.html> >. Several recommendations were, “illegal aliens

should be eligible for no public benefits;” that the U.S. taxpayer should not “bear a burden when there is a sponsor in this country;” “those who do become a public charge- for reasons known prior to entry” should be deported; “Our (borders) goal should be zero apprehensions-not because aliens get past the Border Patrol but because they are prevented entry in the first place;” and “for too long we have neglected immigration as a public policy issue and now must pay for the consequences.”

24. “Unemployment, Immigration, and the Betrayal of Black Men: Thoughts of a Wise Black Woman”, Carol M. Swain, Carol M. Swain.net, May 12, 2011. See < <http://www.carolmswain.net/2011/05/unemployment-immigration-and-the-betrayal-of-black-men/> >.

25. “Peak Oil Picture: Yes, we can!! No, we can’t ..”, Jeremy Gilbert, ASPO Conference, October 2010, Washington, D.C. ASPO oil data < <http://www.aspousa.org/index.php/peak-oil-reference/peak-oil-data/> >.

26. “Will Natural Gas Fuel America in the 21st Century?”, David Hughes, Post Carbon Institute, May, 2011. See < <http://www.postcarbon.org/report/331901-will-natural-gas-fuel-america-in> >. Supplemental reports on agriculture, transportation, and shale’s at, < <http://www.postcarbon.org/reports/NatGasSupplements.pdf> >.

27. “*Blackout: Coal, Climate, and the Last Energy Crisis*”, Richard Heinberg, *New Society Publishers*, July 2009. < <http://www.postcarbon.org/report/331901-will-natural-gas-fuel-america-in> >.

28. “Diminishing Returns: why required extraction rates are about to surprise us”, David Clarke, Editorial Department, OilPrice.com, May 12, 2011. See < <http://oilprice.com/Energy/General/Diminishing-Returns-Why-Required-Extraction-Rates-Are-About-To-Surprise-Us.html> >.

29. The Oil Drum, The OilDrum.com, 2010. < <http://www.theoil drum.com/> >. Originally published in the *Oil & Gas Journal*, 2010.

30. “Peak Oil, Carrying Capacity and Overshoot: Population, the Elephant in the Room”, Paul Chefurka, 2007. See < <http://www.paulchefurka.ca/Population.html> >.

31. “Beyond the Barrel –and Over the Cliff”, Bruce Pile, Bruce Pile’s Instablog, April 22, 2010; < <http://seekingalpha.com/author/bruce-pile/instablog/tag/energy> >.