

This special issue, Beaver Fever: The Manic Quest to Grow Canada's Population, is dedicated to three Canadian pioneer advocates of population stabilization



Robert Elmer Whitman Wright
1921–2012



John R. Vallentyne
1926–2006



John Meyer
1951–

Whitman Wright was a civil engineer (B.Sc., Mount Allison University [NB]; M.Sc., University of Toronto; Ph.D., University of Illinois) who designed movable bridges for the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, taught graduate civil engineering at Carleton University (Ottawa), served in Public Works Canada, set up a private consulting practice, and was elected a Fellow Member of the Engineering Institute of Canada (2005). The Canadian Society for Civil Engineering created an annual award for “Excellence in Computer-aided Design in Civil Engineering” in his name (1985). Yet he also founded Planned Parenthood Ottawa (1963) and Population Institute Canada (1992). Growing up with five siblings in rural Ontario in the shadow of the Depression, Whitman understood the meaning of scarcity. He had wide-ranging interests and understood the evolutionary forces that drive humans into overshoot. His book, *An Encounter with the Limits* (1999), among others that he wrote, reflect his concern, compassion, and quest for a way forward.

—tribute by Madeline Weld

Jack Vallentyne, then professor at Cornell University, was recruited in 1966 to lead the new Eutrophication Section of the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg. Eutrophication, the algal blooms and related problems caused by increased nutrient inputs harmful to lakes and estuaries, is one of the first signals of overpopulation and overdevelopment. It was therefore logical for Jack to begin thinking about other manifestations of increasing population and technology, leading to his demotechnic index and other writings on environmental impacts of population and affluence. Jack may not have promoted his seminal ideas on demotechnic growth more aggressively because he became discouraged by the slow rates of change that were acceptable to adults in a world with urgent problems. He transferred his major efforts to schoolchildren, where he found young minds more receptive to new ideas. His efforts live on via his “Johnny Biosphere” website, a fund for science education in schools, administered by Queen’s University, reviving interest in his publications on demotechnics, and his two recent books, *Tragedy in Mouse Utopia* (2006) and *The Algal Bowl: Overfertilization of Lakes and Estuaries*, 2d edition (2008, with D. Schindler).

—tribute by David Schindler

John Meyer, at the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, John Meyer carried the ball in the fight for population stabilization in Canada. A graduate in commercial economics, he founded ZPG Canada, travelled the country, gave speeches, and wrote op-eds, letters, and solid analysis, until finally, in the early 1990s, as the zeitgeist turned against his cause, he folded ZPG and waited out the storm. Environmentalists had forsaken the fundamentals, and the era of hyper-immigration had begun. Now, after enduring two decades of this demographic onslaught, the public mood has turned, and the ever politically astute John Meyer has returned like a phoenix to lead a new effort, “Canadians for a Sustainable Society.”

—tribute by Tim Murray