

LETTERS

Nixing Nixon

Will Nixon displays a remarkable lack of perspective on population issues in his article "Crowded out" (*ITT*, September 5). A little math reveals the pronouncements of the "new Malthusians" to be no less wrong than those of the original. There are roughly 250 million people in the United States and roughly 1 billion people in India, and the average U.S. per capita resource consumption is roughly 20 times what it is in India. 20 times 250 million is 5 billion "Indian equivalents" in the United States. The United States thus has five times the impact on the global ecosystem that India has. Another way of looking at the current situation is that about 5 billion people can be added to the current population if the resources consumed in the United States were evenly

distributed among them, so the Earth can support 10 billion people at current resource consumption.

So, what are we to make of the pronouncements of "experts" who say we must stabilize the world population at 8 billion or so? Clearly, they are assuming that we should maintain the current discrepancy in consumption between the imperial North and the exploited South. Just as the original Malthus justified policies that benefited the rich at the expense of the poor, the "new Malthusians" are attempting to justify current disparities.

Although I am all for freedom of sexual choice and non-traditional family structures, I must side with the Catholic Church and the Muslim religious organizations who criticize the U.S. position in the International Conference on Population and Development meeting in Cairo. Questions of

morals aside, maintaining the existing distribution of resources by focusing on population control in the impoverished countries of the world will not achieve the stated goal of preserving the planet's ecosystem. About one-fifth of the resources consumed by the United States support the private automobile as the primary means of transportation. We need to look at more resource-efficient means of providing public transportation before we criticize 1 billion people for consuming an equivalent amount of the world's resources.

Chris Vail
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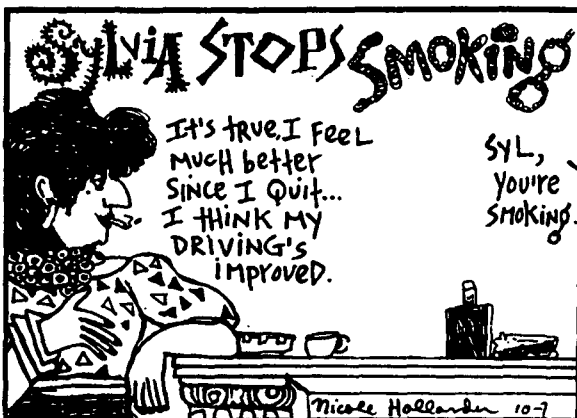
Dubious

Explaining impoverishment and political crises in terms of overpopulation—"the sheer crowding of the land," as Will Nixon puts it (*ITT*, September 5)—is highly dubious. If Africa is poor because it is overpopulated, why isn't Europe twice as poor, since it has almost twice as many people per square mile (132 vs. 69)?

Nixon cites crises in countries like Bosnia and Somalia as arguments for population control. If Bosnians can't get along because there are too many of them in too small a space (at 234 people per square mile), why isn't there ethnic cleansing in Belgium, with 860? And Somalia, with only 27 people per square mile, hardly suffers from lack of elbow room. Iraq and Mexico, two

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



other countries put forward as evidence that Malthus was right, are also relatively low-density countries.

For every hungry, war-torn country that actually is crowded, a peaceful, well-fed country can be found with as many or more people. The Netherlands has nearly twice the density of Haiti (1166 vs. 600 per square mile); Taiwan has twice the density of Rwanda (1,693 vs. 845).

This is not to cheer on unbridled population growth, or to argue that increasing population doesn't have a negative effect on the environment and global resources. But it simply isn't the major factor in why some people are poor or violent and others are not. I would think that a progressive publication like *In These Times* could come up with a deeper explanation for why Third World people are starving than that there are too many of them.

Jim Naureckas

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting
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to those that accompanied U.S. hostilities with Libya, Iraq and Iran.

A significant number of the Cuban people still believe that the cause of their misery is the U.S. embargo. The Cuban government plays this card admirably, and the State Department plays right into Castro's hands.

Lorenzo Canizares

Trenton, N.J.

Representation

In her discussion of John Roemer's book *A Future for Socialism* (ITT, August 8), Nancy Folbre does not say whether stockholder voting in Roemer's envisioned corporations would be on the basis of "one vote per share" or "one vote per member." That latter principle is, of course, the time-tested one used by Rochdale-type cooperatives, 150 years old this year.

I think that democratic socialism would be in better shape today if it had placed less emphasis on nationalization and more emphasis on changing corporation laws to provide for "one member, one vote" and other reforms while still providing for competition, profit and the freedom to start new businesses.

What I would like to see is "open enterprise" market competition between independently owned and democratically run corporations, each with a board of directors representing not only stockholders but also other *stakeholders*. One mix might be 60 percent of the board elected by the stockholders (again, by "one member, one vote"), 15 percent each elected by employees and customers and the remaining 10 percent representing community and environmental groups, and possibly other public interests.

Harry Hyde Jr.
Bryn Mawr, Penn.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGH MOUTH

by Peter Hannan

Castro's dupes

I congratulate *In These Times* for the well-balanced and well-reported article on Cuba by Rick Rockwell (ITT, August 8). It is rare to see a balanced viewpoint on Cuba in a progressive publication.

Rockwell notes that the "U.S. State Department doesn't understand why economic conditions haven't triggered serious political problems for Cuban leader Fidel Castro." And then he explains how Castro survives: "[I]n response to American criticism, Cuban officials defend their country as the vanguard of socialist revolution, speaking of a spirited people battling an evil economic blockade by the United States."

The Cuban government has it made. Leaders can blame the U.S. embargo for whatever inefficiency exists—and rally Cubans in support of their homeland. It seems our State Department does not learn from its experience in other countries. This "spirited people" syndrome is similar

