

brought hordes of children into the cities where infrastructures were collapsing, and soon unemployed young men were roaming around with nothing to do.

"1992 was merely the spark."

In short, to cite two other examples, it is no accident that before the Rwandan genocide of 1995-96, Rwandan women were giving birth an average of eight times. It is also no accident that, in Haiti during these last years of implosion and civil war, Haitian women were giving birth an average of six times. These high population rates do not actually cause the slaughters, of course, but they exacerbate all the other problems and remove the possibilities of easier or quicker solutions. They also throw people too closely together and swiftly involve them in a fight for

food and water and make genocide an acceptable alternative.

In my own 34 years in the foreign field, I have seen how the sheer crowdedness of increasingly dingy and untenable urban centers (33 million in the valley of Mexico City alone now, and it's getting harder and harder even to breathe, much less move) causes frustration and then conflict on every possible level. I find myself writing more and more about the environmental scarcity that is upon us everywhere — the sobering disappearance of water in China, for instance.

And meanwhile, we continue to have to live on this Earth, which had 1.6 billion people at the beginning of the 20th century and will have 6 billion by the dawn of the 21st.

Being an optimistic sort, I also write about the countries that are making it because they are smart and disciplined, and because they care about the quality and evolution of life. One of these is little Tunisia on the north coast of Africa which in those same '60s, when all these other countries were confounding their fates with overpopulation, introduced birth control. That is one major reason given by Tunisians for a thriving populace, which is bettering itself today.

Kaplan has the last word in trying to answer the critics of Malthus. "A man can only write at the time in which he is living, and Malthus was very daring for his time," he said. "In an indirect, subtle sense, Malthus was right." TSC

There's No Getting Past Nature's Limits

by Charley Reese

This is the 200th anniversary of the publication of Thomas Robert Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population*. Perhaps no writer in history has ever had more people with a vested interest in proving him

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wrong, though, in fact, Malthus was right.

Malthus' basic hypothesis that the number of people this planet can feed is limited while population increase is not is correct. Because he was operating with the knowledge available to him in 1798, his timing was off. Both the development of North and South American continents plus later technological and scientific advances pushed the crisis further into the future than he anticipated.

But, while there are about 6 billion people today, 2 billion of them live in the dire misery Malthus predicted. And for most of that 2 billion, their only hope is somehow to find their way to the industrially developed countries. Those folks are coming to dinner. Better not put all the farmers out of business.

What several categories of people most vehemently object to in Malthus is the idea that the human being, like the squirrel and the deer, is subject to the iron laws of nature.

Capitalists love the idea of perpetual growth and are loath to admit that there are any natural limits that might curb their greed for profits.

The social determinists hate the very idea that biology imposes any limits on human beings. Their whole racket depends on the false hypothesis that humans are equal and that only social environment creates inequality. That, of course, is stuff and nonsense. The determinists include a whole gaggle of people from socialists to nonideological, redistributionist fans to the folks who just have a cash interest in the huge welfare industry, both public and private. Their jobs depend on the fantasy that humans are infinitely malleable people who can be resurrected from bum to sterling citizen with the right social program. That's rubbish, of course.

Finally, there are the

superstitious. Because nature programs people to believe in mystery, when people chuck belief in God as too restrictive, they inevitably end up with blind faith in some ideology or in science and technology.

Oh, no matter what, they believe blindly, science and technology, like the cavalry in the Hollywood movies, will always ride to the rescue. That, too, is rubbish. You might ask the survivors of Hiroshima or all the dying cancer patients what they think of science and technology.

There are no more continents to develop. The oceans, once thought to hold limitless resources, are increasingly polluted and overexploited. People in the seafood business told me 15 years ago that seafood was going to become scarce and expensive, and they were exactly right. It has become both.

As for the foolish notion that

there's always space, the nearest star around which there may nor may not be any habitable planets is 24 trillion miles away. Forget it. No way are humans going to devise a machine that could achieve the velocity necessary to travel beyond our solar system. Earth is our birthplace and our graveyard.

We'd better not screw it up to the point that it becomes uninhabitable, but we're moving in that direction.

We have to change our thinking. We have to drop this one-dimensional, special-interest style of thinking that amounts really to advocacy of a narrow point of view and *ad hominem* attacks on everyone who disagrees.

Somehow, without tearing each others' throats out, we have to find a way to live within the limits imposed by nature.

And it pays to remember that nature is merciless. TRC



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High-tech Foreign Workers Could Hurt U.S. Security

by Richard Estrada

[Editor's note: As this issue of The Social Contract goes to press the President has threatened to veto H1-B as it is formulated, and the House Republican leadership is attempting to strike a compromise that responds to the demands from Silicon Valley.]

DALLAS, TEXAS

It may still come to be known popularly as the High-Tech Trojan Horse Act of 1998.

The Senate's recent decision to hike by 30,000 the number of six-year visas for specialized workers from abroad over the next four months may actually be another ticking immigration time bomb left on the nation's doorstep by Congress.

And hope that the House would heed concerns that more foreign workers in certain skilled and professional fields would displace U.S. workers began to evaporate after the House immigration subcommittee approved a companion measure expanding the "H1-B" immigration program. In raising the cap on these particular newcomers from 65,000 to 95,000,

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immigration subcommittees led by Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich) and Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), have cast aside mounting evidence that alleged high-tech worker shortages are spurious.

As powerful as the story of the betrayal of the American high-tech worker is, it may yet be upstaged by the possible betrayal of the American nation. Ironically, the special-interest bill so vigorously sought by high-tech magnates such as Bill Gates of Microsoft is doing precisely what Republicans on Capitol Hill are saying President did in his China policy: elevating business interests over national security.

Alarmed at late-breaking news reports that India's nuclear program might benefit from Indian workers who gain sensitive information and know-how while employed in U.S. high-tech industries, Abraham quickly moved to defuse the issue. An Abraham spokesman says the legislation would require the attorney general to deny any petition for H1-B workers "for any employer that has knowledge or reasonable cause to know that the employee is providing material assistance for the development of nuclear weapons in India or any other country." Critics recently raised questions in this regard about the Tata Group, which allegedly has links to the Indian government and that country's

nuclear program. Tata, which provides U.S. employers with Indian workers, denies any wrongdoing.

The new twist in the debate emphasizes the pitfalls of accepting false arguments based on erroneous information. In recent months, the most reliable reviews of high-tech labor shortage claims made by information technology lobbyists have concluded that no shortage exists. The General Accounting Office strongly criticized the methodology employed by the Information Technology Association of America, just as it debunked Department of Commerce claims based on that study.

As usual, there is a kicker to the story. It is unfolding at a time when high-tech firms in the Silicon Valley are *laying off* workers, software firms nationwide are hiring no more than 20 percent of applicants, and many employers are openly contemptuous of retraining previously laid-off American workers.

Last week the annual cap of 65,000 visas for specialized workers was attained for the first time since 1990. Yet, primed to do the bidding of powerful special-interest groups, the politicians on Capitol Hill forget that the reason caps were imposed in the first place was to oblige employers to live within limits and begin doing more for