

The Prescient Dr. Hardin

We are pleased to reproduce here an editorial from *Science* magazine, the publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, (12 February 1971, Volume 171, Number 3971). AAAS is the premier science organization in the United States, if not the world.

Dr. Hardin wrote this editorial thirty years ago. It is just as timely today as it was back then. See the last two paragraphs in particular. Such foresight fits our definition of "prescience."

The data show that per capita electricity consumption in California has been flat for 20 years (See Ric Oberlinks's article on page ?? of this issue.) Yet during that time the population of the Golden State has increased from 24 to 34 million — a 40 percent increase.

The electricity problems that confront California trace not to a failure of conservation or inefficient use of electricity, but to growth in numbers of users.

What will happen to energy demand if California expands to 50 million or more, as is projected? Will it be possible to meet the demand, or will there be chronic energy shortages? Now is the time to find out and perhaps change demographic course if we don't like the prospect that is staring us in the face.

JOHN H. TANTON

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Nobody Ever Dies of Overpopulation

Those of us who are deeply concerned about population and the environment—"econuts," we're called—are accused of seeing herbicides in trees, pollution in running brooks, radiation in rocks, and overpopulation everywhere. There is merit in the accusation.

I was in Calcutta when the cyclone struck East Bengal in November 1970. Early dispatches spoke of 15,000 dead, but the estimates rapidly escalated to 2,000,000 and then dropped back to 500,000. A nice round number: it will do as well as any, for we will never know. The nameless ones who died, "unimportant" people far beyond the fringes of the social power structure, left no trace of their existence. Pakistani parents repaired the population loss in just 40 days, and the world turned its attention to other matters.

What killed those unfortunate people? The cyclone, newspapers said. But one can just as logically say that overpopulation killed them. The Gangetic delta is barely above sea level. Every year several thousand people are killed in quite ordinary storms. If Pakistan were not overcrowded, no sane man would bring his family to such a place. Ecologically speaking, a delta belongs to the river and the sea; man obtrudes there at his peril.

In the web of life every event has many antecedents. Only by an arbitrary decision can we designate a single antecedent as "cause." Our choice is biased—biased to protect our egos against the onslaught of unwelcome truths. As T. S. Eliot put it in *Burnt Norton*:

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

Were we to identify overpopulation as the cause of a half-million deaths, we would threaten ourselves with a question to which we do not know the answer: *How can we control population without recourse to repugnant measures?* Fearfully we close our minds to an inventory of possibilities. Instead, we say that a cyclone caused the deaths, thus relieving ourselves of responsibility for this and future catastrophes. "Fate" is so comforting.

Every year we list tuberculosis, leprosy, enteric diseases, or animal parasites as the "cause of death" of millions of people. It is well known that malnutrition is an important antecedent of death in all these categories; and that malnutrition is connected with overpopulation. But overpopulation is not called the cause of death. We cannot bear the thought.

People are dying now of respiratory diseases in Tokyo, Birmingham, and Gary, because of the "need" for more industry. The "need" for more food justifies overfertilization of the land, leading to eutrophication of the waters, and lessened fish production—which leads to more "need" for food.

What will we say when the power shuts down some fine summer on our eastern seaboard and several thousand people die of heat prostration? Will we blame the weather? Or the power companies for not building enough generators? Or the econuts for insisting on pollution controls?

One thing is certain: we won't blame the deaths on overpopulation. No one ever dies of overpopulation. It is unthinkable.

—GARRETT HARDIN, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

The Failed Mission of the INS

Testimony before Congressional committee

by Roy Beck

[On Tuesday, May 15, 2001, the Immigration and Claims Subcommittee of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the "INS and the Executive Office for Immigration Review." Roy Beck, executive director of NumbersUSA.com was asked to testify on the issue of interior enforcement against illegal immigration. Before preparing his testimony, NumbersUSA solicited testimonies of citizen activists who or work in communities in which illegal immigration is being ignored by the INS. Dozens of citizens stepped forward and e-mailed us long memos either on how illegal immigration is being ignored by the INS in their community or how they, as an INS agent or other law enforcement officer are not allowed to enforce the law.

All of the accounts received were woven into a 19-page written testimony that was designed to make a compelling case for why the INS and the House Immigration Subcommittee this year should put top priority into ensuring that the INS always responds when any community asks for help in disrupting the illegal immigrant industry.

Interior enforcement is about identifying any of the 6 to 11 million illegal aliens who already have gotten into the country and then deporting them or making their lives so uncomfortable they will leave. It is about busting up day-labor hiring sites of illegals, about enforcing employer sanctions at the workplace, about arresting illegals anytime the police just happen on to them, etc.]

Roy Beck is director of the website NumbersUSA.com which offers a way to send faxes to Members of Congress about immigration issues and includes separate immigration voting records and co-sponsorship profiles on every Member of Congress.

The staff and citizen network of NumbersUSA.com thank the chairman and the committee for this opportunity to address issues of general oversight of the INS.

NumbersUSA.com was founded as a non-profit, nonpartisan organization in 1997 to advocate for key recommendations of the national, bi-partisan Commission on Immigration Reform. Those recommendations were set aside by Congress in 1996 to be addressed at a later date. As they have yet to be addressed, we are hopeful that this committee this year will renew the important work of the Commission and its chairman, the late Barbara Jordan.

Service for communities outside the rule of law

We would like to use this occasion to stress the importance of re-establishing the "service" in the Immigration and Naturalization Service. American citizens of all races and walks of life, native-born and foreign-born, in communities in every region of this country are failing to receive even the most rudimentary service when they call on the INS to deal with the rising tide of illegal immigrants.

In preparation for this testimony we communicated with citizens in more than two dozen communities where immigration laws are violated openly and without apparent consequence.

The general mood and feeling of helplessness we found is perhaps best described in a May 7, 2001, *Newsday* article by Bob Weimer, a columnist for the Long Island newspaper. He was specifically writing about the Long Island community of Farmingville where citizens have organized and met repeatedly with the INS and every other level of government — to no avail. Weimer describes the current scene in Farmingville, but he could easily be describing a hundred other communities: