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POPULATION GROWTH – IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?

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Let me start with two disclaimers. I am neither a "world population expert" nor an expert on "population policy". However, I think it is important to be aware of some of the problems that are associated with current world population growth trends; with national (that is, U.S.) population growth and distribution trends; and with what I will call local (or Minnesota) trends. Of interest, too, is some information in which the state of Minnesota is considered as a "country" and compared with some of the 125 countries that are members of the United Nations. That, in a sense, may seem like a silly exercise but I think the results of these comparisons help us to realize why it seems to be nearly impossible for most of us (including myself) to psychologically grasp the potential enormity of the problems that will certainly - if you are a pessimist - or may possibly - if you are an optimist - face mankind in terms of future population growth trends.

In the book, <u>The Limits to Growth</u>, published in 1972 by the Club of Rome's project on The Predicament of Mankind the following riddle is offered to illustrate the danger of inaction in developing a realistic growth policy:

"Suppose you own a pond on which a water lily is growing. The lily plant doubles in size each day. If the lily is allowed grow to grow unchecked, it would completely cover the pond in 30 days, choking off other forms of life in the water. For a long time the lily plant seems small, so you decide not to worry about cutting it back until it covers half the pond. On what day will that be? On the twenty-ninth day, of course. You have only one day to save your pond!"

One can examine and understand population growth trends in another way. World population experts estimate that it took man 2 million years to reach a world population of 1 billion persons ... but only 100 more years to reach the 2 billion level. At the present time we are adding a billion persons every 11 years and, by the year 2000 the time span, per billion, will be down to a mere 5 years. To put that time span and rate of growth in perspective, that is roughly a new United States of America every year.

We can put those figures in another context. Let's assume, for the moment, that we compress those 2 million years into 12 months. Let's further assume that Adam and Eve were "born" on January 1, 1973 at 12:01 a.m. Each succeeding billion in population would have been reached at the following time: The first billion would not be reached until December 31, at 10:25 p.m. -- 364 days, 22 hours and 25 minutes later. The second

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billion would be reached that same night at 11:17 p.m; the third billion the same night at 11:41 p.m.; another by 11:52 p.m. and the fifth billion by 11:57 p.m. At midnight at the end of our compressed year, we would have the 6 billionth person on earth. And, if you extrapolate just one more time, we would have the 7th billion at 12:02 a.m. January 1, 1974. (See Figure 1)

That example vividly illustrates what's happening in terms of population growth. Concern for the consequences of population growth is not new, however. A gentleman by the name of Rev. T. R. Malthus, in 1798, predicted a world crisis because, by the observations he had made, population multiplied at a geometric rate whereas the food supply was increasing at only an arithmetic rate.

And he predicted the starvation of a substantial proportion of the world's population simply because population growth was going to outstrip food production.

To date, Malthus' gloomy predictions have been unfounded. In fact, technology, and the application of technology, has been probably the single saving factor for the world.

And here is where the two camps -- of the pessimist and the optimist -- part company today. There are those who say Malthus was right - just a little early. There are others who say he was wrong in 1798 and his theories are just as wrong today. I have some quotations from two individuals who represent essentially the two camps; I would like to put them into contradistinction to one another.

One of them is Burnham Beckwith, a social scientist and the author of "The Next 500 Years", -- he is the optimist. The other is Dennis Meadows, Director of the computer simulation project that led to the book, The Limits to Growth. Their opposing views were summarized in the magazine, "The Futurist", in April of 1972. Let me share them with you.

What will happen in the next few decades?

Meadows: There will likely be a marked decline in standards of living. The world's population may experience a "dieback" to more supportable levels, as a consequence of starvation, pollution, and other factors.

Beckwith: Despite the critical problems posed by population growth and pollution, there will be continued gradual economic progress.

What does history show?

Meadows: Famine, plague and resource depletion have been evident in the fall of many empires. We should not assume that some as-yet-undiscovered factor will release our society from the life cycle which has characterized all societies in the past.

Beckwith: History shows us 10,000 years of social progress. This progress may be expected to continue.

Figure 1

ESTIMATES OF WORLD POPULATION GROWTH

		HOW (FAST)	DOES MAN G	ROW?	(Compressed to 1 Years Time) If Adam & Eve were "born" at 12:01 a m on
	Number of Years Required to Add l Billion People to the Population		Year <u>Reached</u>	Net Population Growth (People Added) Per Year	January 1, 1973 then each succeed- ing billion would be born by:
lst	Billion - 2,000,000	years	1830	500	December 31, 1973 10 25 p m
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3 r d	Billion 30	years	1960	33,333,333	December 31, 1973 11.41 p m
4th	Billion 15	years	1975	66,666,667	December 31, 1973 11.52 p.m
5th	Billion 11	ye ar s	1986	90,909,090	December 31, 1973 11.57 p m
6th	Billion 9	years	1995	123,456,789	December 31, 1973 12.00 Midnight
7th	B11110n 5	years	2000	200,000,000	January 1, 1974 12·0/ a m

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Will we have enough raw materials in the years ahead?

Meadows: No, because more and more of the world's irreplaceable resources are being used up and population is rising steeply.

Beckwith: Yes, because the steady advance of technology enables man to use ever poorer deposits. There is no good reason to assume that technological progress will fail to develop new and cheaper substitutes for nearly all scarce natural materials. Where necessary, we can radically reduce demand for most scarce minerals by redesigning consumers' goods and changing social habits.

Lastly,

Will we have enough food?

Meadows: No, because population growth will eventually outstrip man's ability to grow sufficient food.

Beckwith: Yes, because scientific research in food production will continue. Within a generation or two, it may yield methods of producing cheap synthetic foods which will solve man's basic food problem for all time."

I present these opposing views because they represent the dilemma that we face when we consider the problem and the solution. One can find respectable and responsible experts who take dramatically opposed positions on the future of man. One such expert has even suggested that, "population will never outstrip food supply". His simple reasoning is, if it does, people will die of starvation, therefore, the food supply will be sufficient for those who are left. I leave it to you to sort out consequences of that sort of rationalization.

It has been said that, "No problem commands more attention in the world of discourse than the population problem. The solution consists in halting population growth promptly. Yet man's efforts to accomplish this are remindful of the efforts of an acrobat who bounds up and down on a trampoline in the vain hope that eventually a rebound will carry him up to the top of the Empire State Building."

Why has a solution not been forthcoming? The answer is, in a way, very simple. No society really wills a solution to a future problem. Population growth can be halted, but it will not be halted until a General Will to halt it develops and becomes effectively institutionalized and supported by adequate sanctions. It is preferable, of course, that institutionalization assume the form of controlling mechanisms which are economic and fairly automatic in character and as free as possible of cumbersome administrative intervention.*

Spengler and others have suggested that a clear-cut target should be established but we do not see suggestions as to exactly what that target might be. On National Public Radio the other day an expert was

^{*} The preceding two paragraphs are this author's version of a lengthier set of comments made by Joseph J. Spengler, Duke University economics Professor

discussing population growth and a mechanism for population control in this country. I am not sure that it is workable but he had what might be considered an ingenious solution. He suggested that every female child (at birth) be issued 2.3 green stamps; because 2.3 children per family is exactly the rate of reproduction that is needed to achieve and maintain a stable population. Women then would be allowed to have children — when they have their first child they turn in their first green stamp and when they have their second child they turn in their second green stamp. Then, if they wish to have more — and clearly many will — they shop on the open market for that other 0.7 of a green stamp that they need — in effect that they buy them from women who don't want the second or the third child. As an economist I hate to say it but it is a typical economist's solution to the problem. It is ingenious and it is clever but nowhere does it say what would happen if the woman has the third child and only has 0.3 of a green stamp — what are the sanctions?

Lester Brown, an authority on international development, has recently completed a book, <u>World Without Borders</u>, which speaks at least in part to the population problem. He says that, "Population is growing rapidly because man has succeeded to an unprecedented degree, in controlling disease and feeding the world's people. More babies survive to become parents. But while the death rate has been reduced, nations have been slow to reduce their high birth rates so that population would remain stable."

If one examines the available data on population growth rates or birth rates throughout the world, one is struck by the fact that (in terms of our scale of values) the less developed (or the less well off) a country is the higher is the birth rate in that country. It is, I think, a function of several factors. It is a function of the fact that life expectancy in those countries is much lower. It is also a function of the fact that most of the economic activities in those countries are labor intensive, therefore, a large number of children is an asset to a family in terms of its own production and productivity. So you find the birth rate in the less developed, underprivileged countries being much higher than in the well-developed countries. On the otherhand, birth rates in some countries in Western Europe are now down to essentially a stable population level (for example, in West Germany). In the United States they are approaching that level.

Brown makes the following statement:

"Not only are many of man's institutions incapable of resolving the problems he now faces, but his values, inherited largely from the past, are inconsistent with his survival. Values which are widely held, many of them built into the economic system, such as 'growth is good,' 'planned obsolescence,' 'reverence for motherhood,' and the nationalistic feelings which many of us hold, are becoming threats to our future well-being. Man must evolve a new social ethic, one which emphasizes economic and demographic stability and the recycling of raw materials. Such an ethic replaces international competition with global cooperation and sees man in harmony with nature rather than having dominion over nature."

And, I think many of us who have thought about the problem for very long will find general agreement with Mr. Brown. I referred to the book, Limits of Growth, published by the Club of Rome. For those who may not be familiar with it, the Club of Rome is a voluntary organization of businessmen, industrialists, and scholars who took it upon themselves a few years ago to construct a computer simulation model of the world. Data on what was known about rates of growth and change in a variety of factors such as population, resource use, etc. was entered as inputs. Then, they projected that model out into the future. The book contains predictions, under varying assumptions, of world collapse in the year 2000, or 1994 or 2020. There has been criticism of the book because of the fact that a computer simulation model will follow only the assumptions that one feeds into it and cannot accommodate itself to new facts without them having been fed it -- and those criticisms are valid. But, I think it is interesting to note that the conclusion of the book says something a little more than merely a dire prediction of collapse. It concludes --

"If there is cause for deep concern, there is also cause for hope. Deliberately limiting growth would be difficult, but not impossible. The way to proceed is clear, and the necessary steps, although they are new ones for human society are well within human capabilities. Man possesses, for a small moment in his history, the most powerful combination of knowledge, tools, and resources the world has ever known. He has all that is physically necessary to create a totally new form of human society—one that would be built to last for generations. The two missing ingredients are a realistic, long—term goal that can guide mankind to the equilibrium society and the human will to achieve that goal."

(We are back to Professor Spengler's "General Will").

"Without such a goal and a commitment to it, short-term concerns will generate the exponential growth that drives the world system toward the limits of the earth and ultimate collapse. With that goal and that commitment, mankind would be ready now to begin a controlled orderly transition from growth to global equilibrium."

At the national level, Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana has been outspoken in favor of legislation that would deal with the problem of planned (or "balanced") growth and with limits to population growth.

He has said,

"America is beset by a number of problems that continue to grow more rapidly than the government's ability to limit or contain them. Since 1900, the country has undergone something of a demographic revolution. In terms of total numbers, our population has increased from 76 million in 1900 to almost 205 million in 1970. This represents an additional 129 million people that our society has been called upon to accommodate over the past 70 years. By the end of the year 2000, the population will soar to between 270 and 320 million.

(Most people would agree today that, based on present trends, the lower figure is probably closer to being a reasonable projection.)

"More alarming, America, as a metropolitan nation, will see an even greater population increase in the urban areas. By 2000, present trends will concentrate 70% of the population in the 12 largest urban regions occupying one-tenth of the national land area."

He sees no let-up in the concentration in the metropolitan areas which we have experienced in the last several decades and I am inclined to agree with him. I can do this best by way of an illustration of projected changes in Minnesota population concentrations. Figures 2, 3 and 4 are called "population trees". In Figure 2, the upper lefthand "tree" shows the distribution of population, by age group, for the state of Minnesota in 1970. The upper right "tree" is the state in 1985 and the lower center "tree" shows the distribution in the year 2000, as projected. Total population is noted on each graphic.

By way of comparison, examine Figure 3. This is Anoka County in Minnesota; shown at the same scale in terms of percentage distributions. In comparison with the state "tree" there are rather substantial differences. Anoka County is a rapidly growing urban county that has experienced a substantial in-migration over the past two decades a situation that is expected to continue. Anoka will grow in total population from 154,000 people in 1970 to 683,000 by the year 2000. It will have in 2000 a much larger than normal percentage of people in the working age group. It is an example of Senator Hartke's references to the differential growth rates of urban areas.

Figure 4 illustrates a rural county -- Faribault County. Its location is right on the southern Minnesota border.

Faribault had a population distribution in 1970 that contained a substantially fewer than average percentage of people in the working age group. It will continue to have substantially fewer by the year 2000. And, by 2000, will have a substantially larger than average number of people in the age groups of over 55 or over 65. It is a clear fact that population growth and population distribution will vary widely throughout the counties of Minnesota and throughout the United State. Public policies dealing with governmental delivery of public services are going to have to adjust to those wide differences. In short, in examining population redistribution we ought to be considering what sorts of policies are necessary or useful in terms of affecting the reasons people migrate from one area to another.

About nine months ago a member of the Board of Regents commented to me that many years ago he had seen data which compared Minnesota with some other countries in the world that was very interesting. He asked, "do you have anything like that available now?" I didn't, but suggested that we would see what could be acquired. We examined available United Nations material and collected data on the 125 UN countries and the state

MINNESOTA ANALYSIS AND PLANNING SYSTEM POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX: 1970. 1985. AND 2000

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of Minnesota. The computer-based file contains 75 statistical attributes--population, production, medical services, newspapers. The results of that exercise are shown in Figures 5 and 6. I wondered when we collected the data who might use it--other than possibly the student who wanted to look at world or economic geography. The file has, in fact, been used by such students. We also found another very interesting use. It seems that the Minnesota Orchestra is going to make a tour of Europe this summer and they came to us and wanted some information comparing Minnesota with the countries in Europe that they were going to be visiting as a part of the promotional material they were going to distribute prior to leaving for these countries. They were going to be in Austria, France and Italy. Figure 5 shows the results of the comparisons they requested.

Figure 6 illustrates one other use we have made of the file. needs to be introduced with a little caution. Figure 6 says "preliminary" and it is. We asked, "what happens if we take a number of the statistical characteristics which (at least in our view) represent something that might be called 'quality of life'". (Use whatever label you want. I have used quality of life because that is the one that is the current rage in terms of comparing one place with another.) We took eight of the items and simply ranked the attributes for every UN country. For example, life expectancy is longest in Sweden so it has a number one rank. Livestock production per capita is highest in the United States -- we have the number one rank there. All 125 countries are ranked in Figure 6. The United States ranks as number one, Minnesota number two and, in order, the remainder of the top ten are Canada, Argentina, France, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Denmark and Japan. It is interesting to look at the third page of Figure 6. It shows the lowest third of the rankings and you almost have a listing that would produce a map of Africa and the lower Middle East.

By way of conclusion, let me reiterate that the problems of implementation of population stability are monumental. How can you get 125 or 150 independent nations to agree on what is a fair share of income or output for them to get (or give) and then get them to do it. My only concern is that the solutions that have been proposed to date, in terms of implementation, are probably a generation away. I am not offering an answer to the problem. I don't have one. As a matter of fact, in trying to decide whether I come down on the "pessimist" or the "optimist" side of the current discussion I am not sure which of those labels applies to me. By way of background I am an engineer and an economist. I tend to be optimistic from the technologist's point of view. However, the more I look at my social science background, the more of a pessimist I become—and that leaves me in a bit of a dilemma.

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101AL IRON ORF PRODUCTION, tons per person	13.15	0.17	0.36	0.01	
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NUMBER OF TELEVISIONS PER 1000 PEOPLE	992	192	201	181	
DAILY NEWSPAPFR CIRC PER 1000 PEOPLE	594	268	238	127	
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Figure 6

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Physicians Per Capita	19	\ \ \ \	ξ† (31	37	12	69	7	47	55	09	54	97	6	52	38	93	63	34	42	53	57	83	43	79	36	9/	62	73	26	61	88	7.1	45	89	29	51	41	97	99
Motor Vehicles Per Capita		1 .	20	20	28	31	34	40	91	38	91	91	16	91	26	91	35	33	47	91	91	91	43	91	54	51	45	91	20	91	91	30	16	91	91	91	91	53	91	16
Total Electrical Capacity Per Capita	19	\ r	3/	38	34	6	40	97	54	33	45	32	53	51	28	89	43	97	6	65	97	47	39	9	57	97	97	30	σ	26	67	36	62	97	97	99	97	97	42	97
Total Livestock Production Per Capita	30) >	4 ¢	95	43	39	58	95	63	45	09	23	95	54	37	95	47	34	95	87	95	95	20	59	95	40	26	2	24	95	95	42	61	62	95	95	95	95	95	95
Newspapers Per Capita	26		67	ኅ	77	41	43	21	37	55	26	87	31	34	65	32	73	84	59	54	61	30	29	20	72	114	114	114	74	53	95	63	62	4	114	47	38	23	52	99
Radios Per Capita	77	: [10	7	97	09	89	30	72	65	20	62	42	54	53	25	77	64	45	71	63	17	89	81	69	41	37	92	102	19	29	87	57	70	31	61	10	84	29	75
Life Expectancy	31	i C	۶.,	75	95	25	39	11	45	09	65	85	52	54	63	16	71	73	41	53	30	43	58	72	99	35	99	33	95	74	38	70	77	37	62	49	40	32	84	67
Pop. Density Deviation from UN Average	9.5) (90	108	66	68	22	101	5	89	26	30	16	81	82	87	33	28	29	61	4	115	88	37	6	92	19	85	114	70	113	107	65	83	32	65	124	126	38	13
Nation	Romania	1	Feru	Luxembourg	Portugal	Greece	Malaysia	Israel	Costa Rica	Turkey	Ecuador	Columbia	Panama	Mongolia	United Arab Republic	Cyprus	Morocco	Iran	Kuwait	Paraguay	FIT	Trinidad & Tobago	Thailand	Nicaragua	Tunisia	Cuba	Iraq	China	India	Bolivia	Jamaica	Phillipines	Guatemala	Albania	Syria	Guyana	Barbados	Singapore	Ghana	Jordan

Rank	73	74	75	9/	77	78	79	80	81	82		83	84	85	98	87	88	- 68	- 06	91	92	es :	94	95	96	,	24	86	66	100	101	102	103		104	707	107	108	9
Physicians Per Capita	82	70	16	99	85	84	72	110	77	65		95	87	77	104	98	66	29	106	108	86	101	96	36	102	,	81	88	80	91	125	100	06	,	112	103	C/ LTL	111	2
Motor Vehicles Per Capita	42	91	91	55	97	91	91	32	91	91		91	91	41	91	91	91	64	16	91	16	91	91	87	91		91	91	91	52	91	91	91	ļ	91	71	T 6	91	1
Total Electrical Capacity Per Capita	97	58	46	55	97	67	61	97	09	26		97	52	97	59	20	97	97	41	63	48	97	97	6	97		97	97	97	46	6	26	97	1	97	7.6	/ n c	/ 6 C 0	
Total Livestock Production Per Capita	99	95	95	95	95	51	95	41	95	95		95	95	27	53	95	95	95	35	57	95	95	95	95	7 7		52	95	95	95	32	95	95	1	95	υ ο Ο π	ر د م	ر د م)
Newspaper Per Capita	75	35	114	51	92	82	42	98	09	70		99	80	88	88	96	7.1	89	85	97	77	114	91	114	81		92	83	114	78	66	96	114	,	101	6/ 1	114	114	† 1 1
Radios Per Capita	83	58	18	91	85	92	55	59	93	79		43	112	113	110	52	80	88	100	96	106	20	74	33	116		118	99	95	119	121	108	82	·	96	70T	90,	77T	Ċ.
Life Expectancy	89	56	16	50	83	81	51	80	55	75		91	82	69	109	117	26	114	115	102	88	106	96	125	79		107	113	66	06	112	78	68		111	001	120	8/ 101	707
Pop. Density Deviation from UN Average	09	111	125	116	15	53	122	98	96	25		21	က	106	9	51	17	62	84	7.7	59	10	27	119	63		07	45	∞	99	12	39	f 58		14	20	7.5	1.1 7.	0/
Nation	Δlooria	El Salvador		Cevlon (SRI Lanka)		Uganda	Mauritius	Indonesia	Dominican Republic		Khmer Republic	(Cambodia)	Burma	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Libya	Nigeria	Cameroon	Zambia	Gambia	Senega1	Lebanon	Sudan	United Republic	Tanzania	Madagascar	Swaziland	Saudi Arabia	Ethiopia	Laos	Peoples Republic of	Yemen	Dahomey	Ivory Coast	Gabon	Lesotho	congo

		Rank	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126
	Physicians	Per Capita	74	109	105	115	123	107	117	113	96	126	119	124	116	122	114	120	121	118
Motor	Vehicles	Per Capita	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	16	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	16	91	16
Total Electrical		Per Capita	97	26	26	76	26	76	76	76	76	4	26	76	26	26	97	76	4	26
Total Livestock	Production	Per Capita	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
	Newspapers	Per Capita	76	87	69	114	114	114	100	86	93	114	114	114	95	114	114	114	114	114
	503	Per Capita	125	101	114	103	125	98	66	105	109		86	4	123	117	125	120	104	115
	Life	Expectancy	104	119	93	108	92	86	124	110	98	123	103	122	101	116	121	76	118	125
Pop. Density Deviation	from UN	Average	52	34	80	31	18	78	77	62	110	29	71	69	93	99	iblic 74	109	105	123
		Nation	Equatorial Guinea	Togo	Botswana	Malawi	Yemen	Mauritonia	Guinea	Somalia	Haiti	Upper Volta	Niger	Chad 69	Nepal	Mali	Central African Repu	Rwanda	Burundi	Maldives

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