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## **Radical reformers - advocates of population reduction**

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- By Lee Penn

Summary:

**Some prominent reformers and ecologists - Jacques Yves Cousteau, Ted Turner, Paul Ehrlich, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Robert Muller, and other trendy folk - believe that the world population needs to radically decrease. Some say there should be 2 billion people on earth - or fewer, a steep decrease from the current 6 billion population. Ted Turner proposes to reach the goal via a global, "voluntary" one-child policy for the next 80-100 years; others do not specify how they would achieve their goal of depopulating the earth.**

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The sponsors of the Earth Charter call for "fundamental economic, social, and cultural changes," and wish to rectify the "anthropocentric emphasis" of the 1992 Declaration on the environment produced by the UN at Rio de Janeiro." The Millennium Institute says that the new millennium "must be the moment when humans interchange bad and good, unreal and real, and set themselves and Earth on a new course." Bishop Swing, the founder of the United Religions Initiative (URI), told the 1997 summit meeting of the URI that "a spirit of colossal energy is being born in the loins of earth."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Back in 1888, Robert Louis Stevenson forecast the agenda of utopians such as these. In "The Four Reformers," he wrote:

"Four reformers met under a bramble bush. They were all agreed the world must be changed. 'We must abolish property,' said one. 'We must abolish marriage,' said the second. 'We must abolish God,' said the third. 'I wish we could abolish work,' said the fourth. 'Do not let us get beyond practical politics,' said the first. 'The first thing is reduce men to a common level.' 'The first thing,' said the second, 'is to give freedom to the sexes.' 'The first thing,' said the third, 'is to find out how to do it.' 'The first step,' said the first, 'is to abolish the Bible.' 'The first thing,' said the second, 'is to abolish the laws,' 'The first thing,' said the third, 'is to abolish mankind.'" (1125)

"Abolish mankind" ... a true case of reductio ad absurdum, right? Wrong.

- Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Jacques-Yves Cousteau wanted to go part of the way toward abolishing mankind. In a November 1991 interview with The UNESCO Courier, he said:

[In response to an interviewer's question, "Some snakes, mosquitoes, and other animal species pose threats or dangers for humankind. Can they be eliminated like viruses that cause certain diseases?," Cousteau said:] "Getting rid of viruses is an admirable idea, but it raises enormous problems. In the first 1,400 years of the Christian era, population numbers were virtually stationary. Through epidemics, nature compensated for excess births by excess deaths. I talked about this problem with the director of the Egyptian Academy of Sciences. He told me that scientists were appalled to think that by the year 2080 the population of Egypt might reach 250 million. **What should we do to eliminate suffering and disease? It's a wonderful idea but perhaps not altogether a beneficial one in the long run. If we try to implement it we may jeopardize the future of our species. It's terrible to have to say this. World population must be stabilized and to do that we must eliminate 350,000 people per day. This is so horrible to contemplate that we shouldn't even say it. But the general situation in which we are involved is lamentable.**" (1126)

**"We must eliminate 350,000 people per day." That works out to 127,750,000 people per year, and 1.27 billion people over 10 years.**

- Ted Turner

**Ted Turner, one of the co-chairs of the State of the World Forum, is more patient than Cousteau is. He will allow 80 to 100 years to reduce the population of the Earth from 6 billion to 2 billion.** In an interview with E Magazine, an environmentalist publication, Turner explained:

“The simplest answer is that the world’s population should be about two billion, and we’ve got about six billion now. I haven’t done the actuarial tables, but if every woman in the world voluntarily stepped up and said, ‘I’ll only have one child,’ and if we did that for the next 80 to 100 years, that would reduce the kind of suffering we’re having. ... **We could have 10 billion people living below the poverty line, or we could have two billion people living well, and having color TVs and an automobile. The planet can support that number of people, and that’s the way it was in 1930.** You didn’t have the global warming problem then, or all these problems that have occurred since the population has built up. And how you get there is very complicated. It’s going to take a lot of education and improvements in health care. Personally, I think the population should be closer to when we had indigenous populations, back before the advent of farming. Fifteen thousand years ago, there was somewhere between 40 and 100 million people. But [population researchers] Paul and Anne Ehrlich have convinced me that if we’re going to have a modern infrastructure, with commercial airlines and interstate highways around the world, we’re going to need about two billion people to support it.” (1127)

- Paul Ehrlich

Paul Ehrlich, the Stanford University population biologist who achieved fame by writing *The Population Bomb* in the late 1960s, agrees with Ted Turner that the Earth’s population should decrease to 2 billion. On June 20, 1999, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported:

“‘We’re at 6 billion people on the Earth,’ said Paul Ehrlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies at Stanford University, who was awarded the prestigious Blue Planet prize last week. ‘And that’s roughly three times what the planet should have. About 2 billion is optimal.’ ” (1128)

- Ernest Callenbach

**Ernest Callenbach, author of *Ecotopia* and other best-selling environmentalist books, recently published *Ecology: A Pocket Guide*. In this book, he predicts and advocates reduction of world population to 1 billion people:**

**“The current world human population of almost six billion is vulnerable to sudden reduction because it is surging toward maximum carrying capacity. Rough estimates suggest that about one billion people, using renewable energy and other technologies that reduce ecological impacts, could survive sustainably on Earth at a level of consumption close to that of modern industrial peoples.”** (1129)

“The movement called Deep Ecology emphasizes spiritual or religious awareness as a guide for our relationships to the living world. ... Supporters of Deep Ecology have laid down these principles as a platform for their movement: ... \* That civilization could continue to flourish during the substantial decrease of the human population that is needed to reduce our ecological impacts, with an improvement in ‘life quality’ rather than increasing levels of consumption.” (1130)

**“There are simply too many consumption-minded people for the carrying capacity of the planet. It seems likely that in the next several decades, one way or another, their combined impacts will bring breakdowns in food production, health protection, and social order. Ironically, disruptions and possibly collapses of corporate production would bring about a reduction in world human population - and thus lower impacts too.”** (1131)

**“A sustainable future would also require a steady or declining rather than growing human population, much smaller than today’s unless the average level of consumption were far lower.”** (1132)

**“In the long run, nature will enforce the basic rules of sustainability; she does not accept excuses.”** (1133)

The University of California Press, not the Unabomber Press, published these misanthropic sentiments.

- Rosemary Radford Ruether

The eco-feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether has a similarly low view of humanity. Like Callenbach, she favors “Deep Ecology,” saying, “the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.” (1134) She also said, “The world of nature, plants and animals existed billions of years before we came on the scene. Nature does not need us to rule over it, but runs itself very well and better without humans. We are the parasites on the food chain of life, consuming more and more, and putting too little back to restore and maintain the life system that supports us.” (1135)

**Ruether told those who attended a May 1998 conference that “We need to seek the most compassionate way of weeding out people.”:**

“ ‘To allow unrestrained fertility is not pro-life’ she said. ‘A good gardener weeds and thins his seedlings to allow the proper amount of room for the plants to grow properly. We need to seek the most compassionate way of weeding out people. Our current pro-life movement is really killing people through disease and poverty,’ she said. In place of the pro-life movement we need to develop the ‘spirituality of recycling,’ proposed Ruether, ‘a spirituality that includes ourselves in the renewal of earth and self. We need to compost ourselves’.” (1136)

Repeating what she had previously written in “Ecofeminism,” Ruether also told the conference:

“ ‘Nature does not need us to rule over it. We are parasites,’ she asserted, ‘utterly dependent upon the rest of the food chain. Nature would be much better off without us.’ ” (1137)

A few months later, Ruether said how many people must go onto the compost heap. She told those who attended a national conference of Call To Action, a dissident Catholic organization, that “We must return to the population level of 1930.” (1138)

She agrees with Ted Turner on this point; maybe they consulted the same environmental avatar.

Ruether’s reference to “weeding out people” finds an echo among the Theosophists. Share International, a Los Angeles-based Theosophist sect devoted to a soon-to-appear Maitreya, the “Christ” of the New Age, reports this teaching from “Christ”:

“My Teaching goes forth. Simple it is, but remember, My friends, it embodies the Plan of God. Where the Plan takes root no weeds shall grow.” (1139)

A disciple explains this message:

“So now let us realize that we are in the harvest time of the Piscean Age - the last days of that 2,100 year period. If we have eyes to see we will realize that the harvest of all the ‘wheat’ grown during that old age is happening all around us.

And we can also see the other side of the parable - prophecy being fulfilled before our eyes. For the process of the burning up of the weeds which have grown so furiously has indeed begun. We might add that the fire of burning is getting hotter all the time! How reassuring it is to be told on such high authority that, in this New Age, where God’s Plan takes root ‘no weeds shall grow.’ ... The key phrase in all this is: ‘Where the Plan takes root.’ This indicates that it will be an ongoing process, not an overnight happening.” (1140)

- Robert Muller

Robert Muller, a prominent United Religions Initiative supporter and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, gives an imprimatur to efforts to reduce human population, and credits UN activities for preventing the birth of 2.2 billion people:

“Idea 1024 ~ 30 April 1997 **I am surprised that no one has as yet thought of creating a Pro-Earth, Humanity-challenging Organization which would put itself in the shoes of our Mother Earth and rejoice whenever humans diminish in numbers or consume less. It would give yearly prizes to people, events or institutions which achieve a reduction of the human population or of the consumption of Earth resources. The first prize should go to the United Nations which through its world population conferences and anti-population work has prevented 2 billion 200 million more people from being born between 1952 and the year 2000.**” (1141)

Robert Muller extols the cosmology of the Mayans. (1142) How far does his admiration go? “The ancient Maya in Central America believed that earthquakes were the gods’ way of thinning out the population of humans when they became too numerous.” (1143) Does Muller, like the ancient Mayans and like Rosemary Radford Ruether, favor “thinning out” the human population?

● Matthew Fox

Matthew Fox, the apostle of the “Cosmic Christ,” was willing to consider going further than any of the others in weeding out excess population. In *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, he said,

“It has been suggested that we call a United Species Conference - a conference far more representative than the United Nations is - and put this one question to the ten million representatives (one for each species): ‘Should the human species be allowed to continue on this planet?’ The vote would most likely be 9,999,999 to 1 that we humans, with our dualistic hatred of earth, of one another, and of our own existence, be banished to some distant place in the galaxy so that Mother Earth could continue her birthing of beauty, amazement, colors, and health.” (1144)

Once again, the liberal death wish rears its head.

Footnotes

NOTE: Internet document citations are based on research done between September 1997 and August 1999. Web citations are accurate as of the time the Web page was printed, but some documents may have been moved to a different Web site since then, or they may have been removed entirely from the Web.

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