

Chapter 1 : The Population Bomb | Environment & Society Portal

*The Population Bomb is a best-selling book written by Stanford University Professor Paul R. Ehrlich and his wife, Anne Ehrlich (who was uncredited), in*

Human overpopulation The case for a population bomb: The case against a population bomb: Since the s population growth rate has decreased, and is projected to decline further. A lecture that Ehrlich gave on the topic of overpopulation at the Commonwealth Club of California was broadcast by radio in April Ehrlich and his wife, Anne Ehrlich , collaborated on the book, *The Population Bomb* , but the publisher insisted that a single author be credited. In the s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate By the end of the s, this prediction proved to be incorrect. However, he continued to argue that societies must take strong action to decrease population growth in order to mitigate future disasters, both ecological and social. In the book Ehrlich presented a number of "scenarios" detailing possible future events, some of which have been used as examples of errors in the years since. In honesty, the scenarios were way off, especially in their timing we underestimated the resilience of the world system. But they did deal with future issues that people in should have been thinking about. In *Population Bomb* he wrote, "We must have population control at home, hopefully through a system of incentives and penalties, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail. We must use our political power to push other countries into programs which combine agricultural development and population control. In he had expressed his belief that aid should only be given to those countries that were not considered to be "hopeless" to feed their own populations. The book calls for action to confront population growth and the ensuing crisis: In short, if the long-term carrying capacity of an area is clearly being degraded by its current human occupants, that area is overpopulated. They refer to establishing "social policies to influence fertility rates. He acknowledged that some of what he had published had not occurred, but reaffirmed his basic opinion that overpopulation is a major problem. My view has become depressingly mainline! He has disavowed some of what he said in *The Population Bomb*. He still thinks that governments should discourage people from having more than two children, suggesting, for example a greater tax rate for larger families. Gretchen Daily, he has performed work in countryside biogeography ; that is, the study of making human-disturbed areas hospitable to biodiversity. His research group at Stanford University examines extensively natural populations of the Bay checkerspot butterfly *Euphydryas editha bayensis*. Ronald Bailey of Reason Magazine has termed him an "irrepressible doomster Large areas of coastline will have to be evacuated because of the stench of dead fish. How wrong is another question. I would have lost if I had had taken the bet. However, if you look closely at England , what can I tell you? According to Haub "It makes no sense that Ehrlich is now criticized as being alarmist because his dire warnings did not, in the main, come true. But it was because of such warnings from Ehrlich and others that countries took action to avoid potential disaster. Dan Gardner argues that Ehrlich has been insufficiently forthright in acknowledging errors he made, while being intellectually dishonest or evasive in taking credit for things he claims he got "right". For example, he rarely acknowledges the mistakes he made in predicting material shortages, massive death tolls from starvation as many as one billion in the publication *Age of Affluence* or regarding the disastrous effects on specific countries. Meanwhile, he is happy to claim credit for "predicting" the increase of AIDS or global warming. However, in the case of disease, Ehrlich had predicted the increase of a disease based on overcrowding, or the weakened immune systems of starving people, so it is "a stretch to see this as forecasting the emergence of AIDS in the s. Gardner believes that Ehrlich is displaying classical signs of cognitive dissonance , and that his failure to acknowledge obvious errors of his own judgement render his current thinking suspect. That point for me is They had proposed a system of "triage" that would end food aid to "hopeless" countries such as India and Egypt. He argued that technological, and above all social development would result in a natural decrease of both population growth and environmental damage. Simonâ€™Ehrlich wager Julian Simon , a cornucopian economist , argued that overpopulation is not a problem in itself, and that humanity will adapt to changing conditions. Simon argued that eventually human creativity will improve

living standards, and that most resources were replaceable. Simon and Ehrlich could not agree about the terms of a second bet. Ehrlich claims that increasing populations and affluence are increasingly stressing the global environment, due to such factors as loss of biodiversity , overfishing , global warming , urbanization , chemical pollution and competition for raw materials. He and his wife Anne were part of the board of advisers of the Federation for American Immigration Reform until He has argued that "True Zionists should have small families".

Chapter 2 : The Population Bomb - Wikipedia

*In , on the fortieth anniversary of The Population Bomb, he reread his book and blushed a bit. He had learned a few new things in the preceding forty years, but his overall impression was that in he had been far too optimistic.*

Agricultural methods that rely on toxic chemicals, fertilizers, and genetic modification of seed stock, all dependent on petroleum that has surpassed its peak production and, if you talk about sustainability, half of the population in the USA will look at you like you are crazy. When I read this as a junior in high school in , I thought that the Chine 45 years ago, and the exponential growth of world population has continued. When I read this as a junior in high school in , I thought that the Chinese were the only ones who grasped the concept with their national policy of having only one child per family. The Catholic Church and other identifiable categories of people encouraged themselves to continue to have large families, perhaps because when it comes to the breaking point, those groups with the greatest numbers will be more likely to have an identity left over. And us idiots who bought into this Malthusian hogwash will be totally outnumbered, and we will end up at the end of the bread lines. Grow your organic gardens people! Ehrlich has been condemned to spend eternity with Thomas Malthus, in a dungeon reserved for doom perverts. To this day, professors still use the two lads as great reasons to never take seriously anyone who asserts that there are limits to growth. We all know, of course, that humankind has no limits. Actually, Malthus never predicted catastrop In , biologist Paul Ehrlich achieved infamy by publishing The Population Bomb, one of the most controversial eco-books ever printed. Actually, Malthus never predicted catastrophic famine. He simply stated the obvious " when population reaches overshoot, the death rate will automatically rise to restore balance, one way or another starvation, disease, conflict. A thousand people cannot prosper if forced to share ten cheeseburgers a day. The overshoot ceiling rises when food is abundant, and falls when food is scarce. Malthus was not a doomer. His cardinal sin was declaring the obvious " that there are limits to growth. Ehrlich, on the other hand, actually did predict catastrophic famine, and soon. In the s and s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. Everyone agrees that this prediction was inaccurate or premature. When Ehrlich was writing, India was sliding toward catastrophic famine. Only ten nations produced more food than they consumed in In America, the postwar baby boom led to a freakish population spike of 55 million in 20 years. The streets of were jammed with scruffy rebels protesting the Vietnam War, and our totally unhip way of life. It was hip to be loud, brash, and vigorously opposed to the status quo. At the same time, the Green Revolution was just getting rolling, and no one could foresee how well it would succeed at temporarily boosting grain production. Norman Borlaug was the wizard of the Green Revolution, and his holy mission was to reduce world hunger. He hoped that the new technology would give us 10 or 20 years to resolve our population issues. Those who recommend strict population control measures are called callous. But the leaders who take no action on population are also callous. Naturally, much more food led to many more people. In , there were 3. World hunger sharply increased, and many other problems worsened. The Green Revolution had wonderful intentions, but its unintended consequences far exceeded its benefits, because we refused to seize the opportunity to confront and subdue the pound gorilla. At the same time, he succeeded at pissing off almost everyone. Liberals hated him because he wanted to set population goals for poor nations, and withhold food aid from those who did not meet their goals. He contemplated the notion of withholding food aid to nations that had zero chance of becoming self-sufficient. Religious people hated him because he believed that contraception and abortion should be legal everywhere, and that all children should receive rigorous training in sex education and family planning. They hated him because he believed that fetuses were nothing more than potential humans. Environmentalists hated him, because he was a lightning rod for criticism. They believe that his fondness for bold statements made it hard for folks to trust anything greens said. He was a popular scapegoat to blame their failures on. If Ehrlich had never been born, would we be living in a sustainable utopia today? Conservatives hated him because he wanted to regulate pollution and pesticide use. He advocated compulsory population control, because voluntary family planning has never been successful at stabilizing or reducing population. Ehrlich detested their insane obsession with perpetual economic growth, which thrived

on population growth, and disregarded ecocide. But they loved him for being so loud and so bizarre. He made it easy for them to label all greens as hysterical nutjobs. Modern society is suffocating in information. Everyone in a hunter-gatherer clan knew the entire collection of their cultural information. So, climatologists are freaked out about rising temperatures, while the masses are blissfully ignorant. Petroleum geologists are freaked out about the looming specter of Peak Energy, while the masses are not. Within the realm of his specialty, Ehrlich could perceive enormous threats that society was unaware of, and this freaked him out. He was compelled to rattle cages. If he had written a dry, mature, scholarly discourse on population, with footnotes, it would not have reached a general audience and provoked lively and widespread discussion. In modern society, suffocating in information, you get attention by flaming and screaming, like the election ads for candidates. Whether or not it is honorable, it works. A taboo subject was let out of the closet, for a while. Others were inspired to write books. Green organizations boldly called for action, but many checkbook activists promptly revolted by putting away their checkbooks. So, the issue of overpopulation was handed over to Big Mama Nature to resolve, and she will. While his ideas continue to outrage many, they do have a basis in cold, hard reason. Childfree people could be eligible to win lottery prizes. Americans will do none of these things, you say. Hundreds of newer books are far more up to date. Read this book to contemplate morals, ethics, taboos, ideologies, and communication. Contemplate his critics, and why they are so determined to banish discussion on an issue that is a major threat to humankind and the planet see the reader comments on Amazon. The anger and pain that continues to swirl around this book provides a fascinating study in human nature – long-term survival vs. Ehrlich is an intelligent and charismatic fellow. In , on the fortieth anniversary of *The Population Bomb*, he reread his book and blushed a bit. He had learned a few new things in the preceding forty years, but his overall impression was that in he had been far too optimistic.

Chapter 3 : Paul R. Ehrlich - Wikipedia

*The Population Bomb, as its title suggests and as the tone of writing reflects, is a warning of impending crisis. It was one of the first books to discuss the inherent conflict between growing human demands and finite resources.*

It sold more than 2 million copies and went through 20 reprints by the early 1970s. By the early 1970s, many critics were savaging Ehrlich and the larger goal of achieving zero population growth. And the politics of "morning in America" in the 1980s successfully marginalized Ehrlich as a doomsdayer. However, as a historian who has studied debates about population growth throughout U.S. history, while Ehrlich has acknowledged significant errors, he was correct that lowering birth rates was "a crucial plank in addressing global environmental crises." A Malthusian warning Ehrlich drew on nearly 200 years of thinking inspired by British pastor and political economist Robert Thomas Malthus. In his study, "An Essay on the Principle of Population," Malthus famously predicted that "geometric" population growth would overwhelm "arithmetic" gains in agricultural production, leading to wars, famines and societal collapse. Fears of the potentially dangerous social and ecological effects of population growth intensified after World War II. Global population surged as public health improved greatly in developing nations, increasing life expectancy. And the Cold War promoted worries that population-induced poverty would breed communism. But growth has begun slowing as fertility rates decline. Mainstream advocates of arresting population growth emphasized better access to family planning and education, but Ehrlich had no use for such baby steps. Technological optimists pointed to the "Green Revolution" in agriculture, which had vastly increased crop yields up until the late 1960s. But Ehrlich, echoing a growing chorus of farmers and agricultural scientists, warned that pesticides ruined the environment and would eventually backfire as weeds and pests developed resistance. Ehrlich never called population the only variable. Nonetheless, Ehrlich believed that population was the key multiplier and massive reductions in global population were critical for human survival. He hoped that a combination of policy carrots and sticks would reduce fertility sufficiently and preserve voluntary family planning. But he held out the possibility that coercive measures, including compulsory sterilizations, might be needed. Concerns about the ecological impact of global population growth had helped birth modern American environmentalism. Feminists cited overpopulation to buttress the case for reproductive and abortion rights. Politicians on both sides of the aisle urged action to lower birth rates, and Republican President Richard Nixon signed into law a Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. But the "culture wars" of the 1970s subsumed and reconfigured population issues. Wade decision considered any talk of population reduction anathema. As nations develop economically, couples have fewer children and fertility rates decline. Moreover, newly ascendant anti-Keynesian economists rejected an older consensus that slowing population growth would yield economic benefits. These market-oriented economists asserted that denser populations created economies of scale, and that individual fertility decisions would adjust to any temporary population problems. President Ronald Reagan, who once had dabbled with Malthusianism, tellingly labeled advocates who worried about scarce resources "Doomsday prophets. In this context, white liberals increasingly risked being branded racist for supporting population reduction. By the late 1970s, both liberals and conservatives had bought into exaggerated talk of an "aging crisis" — too few workers to pay for the bulge of baby boomers headed toward retirement. This perspective bolstered calls for higher birth rates and further reduced the sting of the overpopulation critique. An unsolved equation Today Ehrlich is a largely forgotten prophet, although some small population-centric organizations continue to tilt at windmills and the mainstream press occasionally dips its toes in the water. After some very public rifts over immigration policy, mainstream environmental groups generally avoid or downplay the issue. Meanwhile, the Right continues to dismiss talk of population problems. In addition, the global total fertility rate has declined more than he anticipated — although the development and modernization that has helped lower birth rates, a process known as the demographic transition, comes at great environmental cost. The demographic transition is a pattern in which countries tend to transition from high birth and death rates to lower birth and death rates as they industrialize. And for now, one can reasonably argue that food insecurity remains primarily political rather than technological. Global population has

increased at a remarkably steady rate since , and the United Nations projects that it will reach 9. Scientists continue to extend his prescient warnings that efforts to feed all these people through pesticide-intensive monoculture may backfire. And although Ehrlich exaggerated the threat of mass starvation, about 8, young children die from malnutrition every day. Human-driven climate change is an overriding threat, and is unambiguously worsened by population growth. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that limiting warming in this century to 3. If impact equals people times affluence times technology, then reducing population alone is not sufficient to solve our ecological crises. But reducing affluence is neither possible nor desirable, since it would condemn millions to lifelong poverty. Ultimately, "The Population Bomb" offered no road map for transitioning away from capitalism without causing human ruin as serious as the environmental ruin that seems to be our destiny.

**Chapter 4 : The Population Bomb by Paul R. Ehrlich**

*In The Population Bomb and other works, he argued that government should adopt policies to achieve the optimum sustainable population size, which he approximated at about 17 percent to 40 percent of the earth's population circa*

It shows the extremely rapid growth in the world population since the eighteenth century. The Population Bomb was written at the suggestion of David Brower the executive director of the environmentalist Sierra Club , and Ian Ballantine of Ballantine Books following various public appearances Ehrlich had made regarding population issues and their relation to the environment. Although the Ehrlichs collaborated on the book, the publisher insisted that a single author be credited, and also asked to change their preferred title: Population, Resources, and Environment. The Ehrlichs regret the choice of title, which they admit was a perfect choice from a marketing perspective, but think that "it led Paul to be miscategorized as solely focused on human numbers, despite our interest in all the factors affecting the human trajectory. The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate Ehrlich argues that as the existing population was not being fed adequately, and as it was growing rapidly it was unreasonable to expect sufficient improvements in food production to feed everyone. He further argued that the growing population placed escalating strains on all aspects of the natural world. Conscious regulation of human numbers must be achieved. Simultaneously we must, at least temporarily, greatly increase our food production. In order to avoid charges of hypocrisy or racism it would have to take the lead in population reduction efforts. However, he rejects the idea as unpractical due to "criminal inadequacy of biomedical research in this area. He suggests incentives for men who agree to permanent sterilization before they have two children, as well as a variety of other monetary incentives. He proposes a powerful Department of Population and Environment which "should be set up with the power to take whatever steps are necessary to establish a reasonable population size in the United States and to put an end to the steady deterioration of our environment. Ehrlich suggested that if they could choose a male child this would reduce the birthrate. Legislation should be enacted guaranteeing the right to an abortion , and sex education should be expanded. After explaining the domestic policies the US should pursue, he discusses foreign policy. He advocates a system of "triage," such as that suggested by William and Paul Paddock in *Famine !* Under this system countries would be divided into categories based on their abilities to feed themselves going forward. Countries with sufficient programmes in place to limit population growth, and the ability to become self-sufficient in the future would continue to receive food aid. Countries, for example India, which were "so far behind in the population-food game that there is no hope that our food aid will see them through to self-sufficiency" would have their food aid eliminated. Ehrlich argued that this was the only realistic strategy in the long-term. He argues that the scheme would likely have to be implemented outside the framework of the United Nations due to the necessity of being selective regarding the targeted regions and countries, and suggests that within countries certain regions should be prioritized to the extent that cooperative separatist movements should be encouraged if they are an improvement over the existing authority. He mentions his support for government mandated sterilization of Indian males with three or more children. This is focused primarily on changing public opinion to create pressure on politicians to enact the policies he suggests, which he believed were not politically possible in . At the end of the book he discusses the possibility that his forecasts may be wrong, a fact which he felt he must acknowledge as a scientist. However, he believes that humanity will only be better off if it follows his prescriptions, so that even if he is incorrect it is the right course of action. Luten has said that although the book is often seen as a seminal work in the field, the Population Bomb is actually best understood as "climaxing and in a sense terminating the debate of the s and s. Ehrlich observed that since about the population of the world had doubled within a single generation, from 2 billion to nearly 4 billion, and was on track to do so again. He assumed that available resources on the other hand, and in particular food, were nearly at their limits. Some critics compare Ehrlich unfavorably to Malthus, saying that although Thomas Malthus did not make a firm prediction of imminent catastrophe, Ehrlich warned of a potential massive

disaster within the next decade or two. In addition, critics state that unlike Malthus, Ehrlich did not see any means of avoiding the disaster entirely although some mitigation was possible, and proposed solutions that were much more radical than those discussed by Malthus, such as starving whole countries that refused to implement population control measures. They have acknowledged that some predictions were incorrect. My language would be even more apocalyptic today. The UN does not keep official death-by-hunger statistics so it is hard to measure whether the "hundreds of millions of deaths" number is correct. Ehrlich himself suggested in that between million had died of hunger since However, that is measured over 40 years rather than the ten to twenty foreseen in the book, so it can be seen as significantly fewer than predicted. As of , India had almost 1. However, most epidemiologists, public health physicians and demographers identify corruption as the chief cause of malnutrition, not "overpopulation". However, since India became a democracy, there have been no recorded famines. Beyond that, he was by his account, off a little here and there, but only because the information he got from others was wrong. Basically, he was right across the board. He quotes a review from Natural History noting that Ehrlich does not try to "convince intellectually by mind dulling statistics," but rather roars "like an Old Testament Prophet. Criticism by Marxists[ edit ] On the political left the book received criticism that it was focusing on "the wrong problem", and that the real issue was one of distribution of resources rather than of overpopulation. He argued that technological, and above all social development would lead to a natural decrease in both population growth and environmental damage. However, as to a number of his fundamental ideas and assertions he maintained that facts and science proved them correct. In answer to the question: Anne and I have always followed UN population projections as modified by the Population Reference Bureau -- so we never made "predictions," even though idiots think we have. When I wrote The Population Bomb in , there were 3. My basic claims and those of the many scientific colleagues who reviewed my work were that population growth was a major problem. My view has become depressingly mainline! In another retrospective article published in , Ehrlich said, in response to criticism that many of his predictions had not come to pass: In honesty, the scenarios were way off, especially in their timing we underestimated the resilience of the world system. But they did deal with future issues that people in should have been thinking about " famines, plagues, water shortages, armed international interventions by the United States, and nuclear winter e.

**Chapter 5 : Paul Ehrlich: 'Collapse of civilisation is a near certainty within decades' | Cities | The Guardian**

*In the s, fears of overpopulation sparked campaigns for population control. But whatever became of the population bomb? Produced by: Retro Report.*

It sold more than 2 million copies and went through 20 reprints by By the early s, many critics were savaging Ehrlich and the larger goal of achieving zero population growth. However, as a historian who has studied debates about population growth throughout U. While Ehrlich has acknowledged significant errors, he was correct that lowering birth rates was “ and remains “ a crucial plank in addressing global environmental crises. Paul Ehrlich in Fears of the potentially dangerous social and ecological effects of population growth intensified after World War II. Global population surged as public health improved greatly in developing nations, increasing life expectancy. And the Cold War promoted worries that population-induced poverty would breed communism. Mainstream advocates of arresting population growth emphasized better access to family planning and education, but Ehrlich had no use for such baby steps. But growth has begun slowing as fertility rates decline. But Ehrlich, echoing a growing chorus of farmers and agricultural scientists , warned that pesticides ruined the environment and would eventually backfire as weeds and pests developed resistance. Ehrlich never called population the only variable. Nonetheless, Ehrlich believed that population was the key multiplier and massive reductions in global population were critical for human survival. He hoped that a combination of policy carrots and sticks would reduce fertility sufficiently and preserve voluntary family planning. But he held out the possibility that coercive measures, including compulsory sterilizations , might be needed. Concerns about the ecological impact of global population growth had helped birth modern American environmentalism. Feminists cited overpopulation to buttress the case for reproductive and abortion rights. Politicians on both sides of the aisle urged action to lower birth rates, and Republican President Richard Nixon signed into law a Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. Wade decision considered any talk of population reduction anathema. Moreover, newly ascendant anti-Keynesian economists rejected an older consensus that slowing population growth would yield economic benefits. These market-oriented economists asserted that denser populations created economies of scale, and that individual fertility decisions would adjust to any temporary population problems. CC BY-ND After Congress eliminated national-origin immigration quotas in , immigration rose steadily and accounted for a growing share of population growth in the U. In this context, white liberals increasingly risked being branded racist for supporting population reduction. This perspective bolstered calls for higher birth rates and further reduced the sting of the overpopulation critique. An unsolved equation Today Ehrlich is a largely forgotten prophet, although some small population-centric organizations continue to tilt at windmills and the mainstream press occasionally dips its toes in the water. After some very public rifts over immigration policy, mainstream environmental groups generally avoid or downplay the issue. Meanwhile, the Right continues to dismiss talk of population problems. In addition, the global total fertility rate has declined more than he anticipated “ although the development and modernization that has helped lower birth rates, a process known as the demographic transition, comes at great environmental cost. Ehrlich underestimated human ingenuity. And for now, one can reasonably argue that food insecurity remains primarily political rather than technological. Global population has increased at a remarkably steady rate since , and the United Nations projects that it will reach 9. Scientists continue to extend his prescient warnings that efforts to feed all these people through pesticide-intensive monoculture may backfire. And although Ehrlich exaggerated the threat of mass starvation, about 8, young children die from malnutrition every day. Human-driven climate change is an overriding threat, and is unambiguously worsened by population growth. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that limiting warming in this century to 3. If impact equals people times affluence times technology, then reducing population alone is not sufficient to solve our ecological crises. But reducing affluence is neither possible nor desirable, since it would condemn millions to lifelong poverty.

**Chapter 6 : The population bomb - Paul R. Ehrlich - Google Books**

*Paul Ehrlich got it wrong because he never understood human potential.*

**Chapter 7 : A long fuse: 'The Population Bomb' is still ticking 50 years after its publication**

*In bold documentary style, Retro Report looks back at the major stories that shaped the world using fresh interviews, analysis and compelling archival footage.*