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OVERPOPULATION & THE WINDEX/EASY-OFF SOLUTION

The world's human population passed seven billion souls last October with little fanfare. There were a few ripples of concern but, incredibly, others thought it was a moment for celebration. You'd think we'd won a prize for procreation or something. While progressives worry about the long-term effects of overpopulation, they offer few if any solutions. Conservative thought suggests there is nothing to worry about—that technology and the free market of ideas will solve any and all problems caused by an expanding global population. That 'growth' in all its incarnations is a good thing.

Demographers predict that around mid-century, the global population will stabilize somewhere between nine and eleven billion, as if that's a manageable number. Why they think population growth will finally grind to a halt is bewildering to me.



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I suppose there is an assumption that, as the world becomes more educated, affluence will follow and populations will decline. What it really means is that, as families become more connected to the developed world, they will prefer to spend their available incomes on stuff instead of kids. That alone is a mixed bag and a troubling possibility: the very future of the planet depends upon a less consumptive, more sustainable population and it cannot survive if all seven, or nine, or eleven billions choose to live like Americans. The American Dream is not sustainable.

We've heard the numbers again and again. The United States represents about 4% of the world's human popula-

tion but consumes almost 30% of its resources. If even half of the world's 2050 population consumes at the same rate as us, they'd be gobbling up seven and a half times MORE resources than exist! The math just doesn't work.

But what can we do? Even the most cheerfully optimistic (delusional) mainstream environmentalists agree there's no easy way to accomplish negative population growth. It's an absurdity to think voluntary population reduction is a viable notion. Governments are not, in the main, going to take draconian measures (The China Solution for example) to reduce population. Any government in this country that tried to take even the mildest of steps, like eliminating tax exemptions for families that bore more than two children, would be driven from office and out of the country. On a rail.

Pundits and social scientists may promote their Nine Point Plans for Population Reduction and talk about an ideal world where the human race takes a hard magnanimous look at itself and says meekly, 'Damn, there are WAY too many of us...we better stop having kids for a century or two.'

But it's not going to happen.

What other options do we have? Ed Abbey used to insist, "Our only hope is Catastrophe!" In 1986, Abbey scribbled in his journal, "...oh God when will your vengeance descend upon these mean ugly people? I long for the day of the coming collapse." He died three years later, his prayer unanswered.

And certainly many others, struggling with a solution to overpopulation and carefully avoiding the personal image of the human suffering such an apocalypse would cause, share his view.

And maybe it's the way it will happen, but I doubt it. So far, science seems to keep outwitting the germs, and, no matter how insane and murderous we may act as a species, no matter how frequently or intensely we make war on each other, we eventually emerge more fertile and productive than ever. World War II cost 50 million lives and the destruction of trillions of dollars in destruction. Yet, the war eventually generated the greatest population



and building boom in the history of the world.

Those who prefer the Apocalypse Solution may pray for earthquakes and famines and asteroids all they want. But it doesn't seem like a viable option to me.

There is another possibility. The Hope of Severe Infertility. It's hardly a new idea and it gets talked about more frequently these days. Scientists have already noted a decline in male fertility world-wide. Studies show that about 1.5% of all men were functionally sterile in 1938. Now it's up to 8-12%.

Still, the threat, or the hope (choose one,) remains.

Here, the 'solution' comes in conflict with both mainstream progressive and conservative thinking. The contradictions could easily cause them to develop a terrific headache and split in two. Bear with me a moment.

If the world's population should experience a precipitous decline due to wide-spread infertility, it has to be caused by something. It won't 'just happen.' For those who hope God might point a wrathful finger at the earth and render us all barren, keep praying. It might work. But there are other human-made processes that may have the same effect.

Years ago, I stumbled upon a fascinating fact—one of those stories that makes for great party conversation (if I

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ever went to a party). An article in Newsweek magazine featured the findings of Dr. Irwin Goldstein, an impotency expert from Boston University. Goldstein issued a grave warning to men who regularly ride bicycles. His studies showed that when a man rides a bike with a standard seat, the kind that looks like a mutated black banana, his body weight flattens his main penile artery. This artery is essential for an erection and, from a man's perspective, what could be more essential than that?

Goldstein believed that, over time, riding a bike and putting that kind of long-term pressure on the penile artery can irreversibly damage the vessel ("All hands abandon ship!"). The worried doctor was seeing several new patients a week. Among them was Ed Pavelka of "Bicycling Magazine." Pavelka complained that his years of intense marathon bike riding had left him "as soft as an over-cooked rigatoni." Not exactly a macho biker pick-up line.

But what are the odds that enough of us will take to the bicycle to cause this kind of impotency on a grand scale? Not likely.

Recently a story published in "Fertility & Sterility" magazine suggested that "wi-fi radiation may also be giving us more infertility by decreasing sperm motility and damaging DNA in sperm." A story at NaturalNews.com said, "Researchers in Argentina took semen samples from 29 healthy men, and they measured sperm motility after four hours of exposure to wi-fi radiation from a laptop wirelessly connected to the internet. Sperm in the control group was kept at the same temperature for the same amount of time, but was not exposed to wi-fi radiation.... Of the sperm exposed to the wi-fi radiation, 25 percent stopped swimming. Only 14 percent of unexposed sperm ceased to swim after four hours. Wi-fi sperm also showed 9 percent DNA fragmentation, or irreversible damage in the genetic code, while sperm in the control group only showed 3 percent."

But the study pointed out that the infertility effect is only noticeable when the laptop user sets it directly on his lap, for hours at a time. The odds of drastic population declines based on excessive laptop use are remote.

So what is the answer? How can infertility save the world? It's the solution that will confound and dismay everyone, from the most ardent 'progressive' to the most strident 'conservative,' for precisely the opposite reason.

What are the most potent causes of infertility? They're all around us—men who smoke have sperm counts that are 13 to 17% lower than non-smokers. Men exposed to agricultural pesticides were 10 times more likely to experience infertility problems. A chemical called chlordane has been found in 75% of all homes and is believed to contribute to infertility. Then there's the car exhaust, specifically

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benzopyrene, which has a profound negative effect on women's ovaries. Chemical solvents like xylene, acetone, trichlorethylene, and other petroleum distillates have caused spontaneous abortions in women. Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) has been shown to reduce the success of pregnancies. Chemicals used to make silicon chips have caused a dramatically increased miscarriage rates in women who worked with these solvents.

And then there are the products that are around us every day---laundry detergents, air-freshening products, fabric softeners, glass cleaners, carpet cleaners, hard-surface cleaners, and oven cleaners,

Are we risking infertility each time we reach for the Windex Aerosol, Formula 409, Lemon Fresh Pine-Sol or



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And there's the irony...Progressives worry about overpopulation and seek ways to bring it under control and even reduce it. But they have also historically believed in the strict regulation and often the total elimination of chemicals that might cause harm to the general public. Consequently they have a real dilemma. They can oppose the massive use of toxins and fight for their removal, but by so doing, they may also eliminate the one option that might slowly bring our global population down to a reasonable level.

Conservatives support and encourage an ever-expanding population and an economy that grows with it, based on the idea that all growth is good. They believe that a declining population would be a disaster. But they also oppose the regulation of toxic chemicals. They believe agencies like the FDA and the EP are harassing business and stalling growth. But by encouraging their continued wide-spread use, they may eventually contribute to a dramatic population collapse.

In the end, obviously, neither of these options is very appealing. The idea of choosing between slowly killing our species by destroying our ability to reproduce versus waiting for a comet to hit the planet is not something to cheer about. But it does say something about the way we've allowed our future and our destiny to get away from us. We no longer have any real control over our fate. Or maybe that's the point...

We never did.

**THE 99%:
(We really don't like each other very
much...but we'd better TRY)**

Since the Occupy Movement began last September, I've watched with bated breath. I love a good revolution and have spent most of my adult life hoping to see one, but in this day and age, especially here in the United States, I view these kinds of uprisings with a wary eye. I'd love to see this movement grow (if only we were in Egypt, it would be a sure thing) and become powerful and change forever the way Washington and Wall Street do business. But we've all been down these roads before. Where was the Great American Protest Movement during the Iraq War?

As I've said before, it takes more than signs and extended camp-outs to change the world. It might be a good start but it has to appeal to a much broader base. It's supposed to be about US---the 99%. But so far, I see very little to suggest the Masses are bonding.

It's been interesting to follow the Occupy Movement on facebook. I've saved many of these "un-groups" to my page favorites so I can monitor their progress. I love rhetoric as much as the next guy and can get pretty rhetorical

myself under the right climatic conditions, but some of it has been incomprehensible. For example, in January, in anticipation of the planned Occupy Congress march, the occupycongress.info group declared:

"Tens of thousands of people chanting outside the Capitol would be hard to ignore, and it doesn't matter what we chant, because WE are our demands! If Congress started working for the 99%, reckless corporations would be restrained, not bailed out. Come to Washington on January 17th, 2012."

I could not understand what that meant---"it doesn't matter what we chant, because WE are our demands?" It's not exactly a focused message. Or, I believe, the right one.

On the anadora.org/freepress page, they announced that, "Protesters say they hope to set up 1 million tents in front of the Capitol." Sad to say, less than a thousand turned out.

The protesters claimed they were being ignored by the mainstream media and they were probably right. But there really wasn't all that much there to ignore. I followed the LiveStream on several channels on the web and there was nothing there to rally around. I watched protesters taunt and yell obscenities at the cops and most of the comments flowing in from citizens who watched the live show complained that they couldn't let their kids watch because the language was too raunchy.

In Moab, Utah, the Occupy Moab group took a resolution condemning the Supreme Court's decision that gave "personhood" to corporations to the City Council. The Council agreed to create a draft of its own but wouldn't allow the petition gatherers the chance to speak. Apparently only a relative handful of citizens showed up for the meeting and one of the Occupy Moab facebook administrators expressed bitter disappointment at the small turnout, only to have the post removed a short while later. He/she could not understand WHY there wasn't stronger support for the Movement.



It's actually very easy to understand why the Occupy Movement stays so fragmented---

**WITHIN THE 99%, NOBODY LIKES EACH OTHER
VERY MUCH.**

We keep claiming unity within this new all-encompassing brand, but there's no unity at all. Within the 99% we despise each other to a great degree, or at least much of what many of the 99% stand for. Let me offer some exhibits:

I went back to the social media, to see what Republicans and Democrats were saying about each other on facebook this afternoon. In the 15 minutes I devoted to this task, these are some of the epithets and insults that were being hurled back and forth, via the comments, through the fiery rhetorical ethereal glow of cyberspace. They called each other...

"...thugs, trolls, outlaws, liars, criminals, shills, thieves, sheeple, mindless, pukes, crazy, RePUKElicans, decayed, DEMONcrats, racists, dumbasses, dicks, Socialists, Fascists, Commies, brain-dead, stupid, Obamatons, spoon-fed morons, haters, ignorant, ignnoramuses, un-American, SOBs, a joke, loon, delusional, deceitful, BS, mean-spirited, forked-tongue, Obumma, jack ass, asshole, lazy pieces of crap, and big fat turds."

After a while I gave up. Clearly, there's not much love being lost within this portion of the 99%. Republicans hate Democrats. Democrats hate Republicans. Conservatives hate Liberals and Liberals hate Conservatives. There are the Obama Haters. The Gingrich Haters. The Romney Haters.

And we can get more specific, out in the Rural West... Americans who:

---are Christians hate non-Christians. And vice versa.

---are Pro-Life hate the Pro-Choice people. And vice versa.

---are for closing the borders to immigrants and deporting the illegals despise the Americans who want a more liberal immigration policy. And vice versa.

---support gun control hate those who oppose gun control. And vice versa.

---support the military hate those that do not. And vice versa.

---want a national health care policy despise those that do not want one. And vice versa.

---support the oil and gas industry don't like Americans who oppose it. And vice versa

---support coal hate Americans who oppose it. And vice versa.

---oppose ATVs on public lands hate people who DO drive their ATVs on public lands. And vice versa.

---support Wilderness hate people who don't...and vice versa.

And so on. And so on. Ad nauseum.

In short, it's a war out there in America and the idea that 99% of our citizens are somehow mystically bound in a righteous war for Truth and Justice and Equality against the Forces of Evil strikes me as a bit absurd. You may think I'm just being cynical or counter-productive, that's fine.

In these insanely, embarrassingly politically correct times, if the point is to make the Occupy Movement successful, then its strongest adherents should want to hear all viewpoints from all directions, no matter how uncomfortable it might make us feel. After all, no matter how contradictory the criticisms, they're still coming from our fellow 99%ers. The secret to success here is not avoiding scrutiny but standing up to it. And maybe, by some miracle, learning from it.

If the '99%/Occupy Movement' wants to succeed, it has to find a way to reach out to the vast majority of that 99% who they are otherwise, and in so many ways, at odds with, or this nationwide protest will sputter and fail.

For starters, the movement might think about the notion that while it's easy to lump all of us into one basket and declare OUR 'demands,' it might be far more effective to stand on behalf of the millions of Americans who are really suffering.

I have never made more than \$25,000 in a year, I drive a 13 year old car, and my wife and I get most of our clothes at thrift shops, but we own our home and have very few debts. We are comfortable. Part of it has been luck and part of it has been timing and another part has been avoiding dangerous financial traps that have befallen so many Americans.

Before I start worrying about others like myself within the 99%, instead of offering lists of "demands" for US, I'd rather devote my energies and righteous indignation for THEM---the Americans that are homeless, hungry, and without any visible means of support...the citizens who worked hard and, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs because their companies found it more profitable to take their operations to China. I want to find ways for US to help the abused and forgotten children in this country, the ones who don't even get a decent breakfast in the morning. I want US to reach out to the veterans who can't find jobs and are still paying a price for their service, years and decades after they came 'home.' I want to help young people find a way to get a decent education without burdening themselves and their families with a lifetime of debt.

In short, I want to help the people who long to have SOMETHING good in their lives before I start worrying about so many of us who just want MORE. This movement should be, first and foremost, about helping those Americans who have so very little.

As for all the hot rhetoric and denigrating language that flies non-stop, day after day, across the multi-media fruited plain, the divisiveness that keeps the 99% divided and fractionalized, I don't know how you stop it. Clearly, I appreciate a good argument, based upon the facts and an earnest desire to express oneself. But sooner later, somebody has to make the first move and lay down the stones. Who's it going to be?

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OR LEAVE IT' STORIES BY STILES**