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THE CASE FOR FEWER PEOPLE: The NPG Forum Papers

Lindsey Grant, Editor
Seven Locks Press, Santa Ana, California, 2006

NOTE: For four decades, the organization Negative Population Growth, has been publishing some of the best analyses of population issues confronting the United States and the world, usually in their NPG Forum series. In 2005, Lindsey Grant selected some of the best of these for republication in a 748-page hardcover book with the title above. If it is not in your local or institutional library, you should request they order it!

While the NPG website at <http://www.npg.org> makes all of these papers available, and provides pdfs of them, it occurred to us that knowledge of their existence and availability could be enhanced by preparing a short document giving the entire table of contents. This could be reproduced and distributed, here and there, to let a wider audience know of the availability of these valuable reports. **In the following, we provide the original front materials for the volume, and its full table of contents.** We omit page numbers, as **every article may be quickly found by simply googling its title;** but we have added year of publication for each item. When visiting the NPG website do take a look at the dozens of excellent post-2004 articles also to be found there.

– S. Hurlbert, San Diego State University

This book is dedicated to Donald Mann,
who created Negative Population Growth in 1972 and has been its President ever since.

and to

*Theresa Mickendrow,
NPG's loyal and longest-serving employee.*

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Lindsey Grant writes on population and public policy. A retired Foreign Service Officer, he was a China specialist and served as Director of the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, National Security Council staff member, and Department of State Policy Planning Staff member.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment and Population Affairs, he was Department of State coordinator for the Global 2000 Report to the President, Chairman of the interagency committee on International Environmental Affairs, United States delegate to (and Vice Chairman of) the OECD Environmental Committee and United States member of the UN ECE Committee of Experts on the Environment.

His books include: *Too Many People: The Case for Reversing Growth*, *Juggernaut: Growth on a Finite Planet*, *Foresight and National Decisions: the Horseman and the Bureaucrat*, *Elephants in the Volkswagen* (a study of optimum United States population) and *How Many Americans?*

ABOUT NPG

Negative Population Growth, Inc. was founded in 1972. In the same year, thirty-four of Great Britain's most distinguished scientists, including Sir Julian Huxley, endorsed the basic principles of a landmark study called A Blueprint for Survival. The study warned that demand for natural resources was becoming so great that it would exhaust reserves and inevitably cause the breakdown of society and the irreversible destruction of the life-support systems on this planet. To prevent disaster they urged Britain to cut its population in half. That study greatly influenced the thinking of NPG's founders, who were convinced that a similar reduction in population was necessary for our own country.

Now, thirty-two years later, NPG is a fast-growing organization with over 30,000 members nationwide. We continue our efforts to better educate the American people and our policymakers about the devastating effects of overpopulation on our resources, environment and the quality of our lives. Our purpose, broadly stated, is, through public education, to encourage the United States, and then every country in the entire world, to put into effect national programs with the goals of first achieving a negative rate of population growth, then eventually stabilizing population size at a far lower level than today's-a size that would be sustainable indefinitely in a sound and healthy environment.

Our extensive publications are intended to both stimulate public discussion and debate, and to change the way our opinion leaders and policymakers view the issues of population size and growth, and their impact on our environment, resources and quality of life.

INTRODUCTION, *Lindsey Grant, Editor*

There were remarkable changes during the twentieth century: the increase in consumption levels in the industrialized world, the dramatic increase in reliance on fossil fuels, the transformation of agriculture, the perturbation of natural systems as mankind rearranged the earth's flows of nitrogen, carbon and the other elements, and an exponential increase in the creation and manufacture of new chemicals. The most fundamental change of all, and the one that drove most of the others, was the quadrupling of the human population during that one century – a growth three times as large as the human tribe had experienced in all its previous history.

Those interconnected changes have profoundly altered the relationship of humankind to the Earth. It is astonishing how little that alteration is studied or understood in the midst of our preoccupation with secondary matters of religious and ethnic conflict, war, politics, and the pursuit of money, sex and novelty. Only occasionally is the public's attention momentarily diverted to the fundamentals of our existence, when some shocking moving picture appears, dramatizing the impacts of human crowding or climate change.

Scientists and environmentalists have attempted to understand one or another of those fundamental changes and to identify some of their consequences. However, there is very little cross-disciplinary literature relating those changes to each other and to the future of human well-being. And only a small fraction of that literature is focused on population growth, its connections with the other great changes, and the implications for present prosperity and future survival. For two decades, quite a bit of the writing directed toward that broad issue of population change and its consequences has come out of Negative Population Growth, Inc. (NPG).

The NPG studies are generally referred to as the NPG Forum papers. (Most of the papers bear that name, though I use it here to include various NPG Policy Papers, NPG Footnotes and NPG Booknotes that NPG has published from time to time.)

One problem with the reliance on short papers is their transience. The distribution of each Forum paper is now about 30,000 copies, which is fairly large by the standards of serious publishing. A much larger readership is exposed to the papers in the electronic library at the NPG website (www.npg.org). There is, however, a certain evanescent quality about an electronic document. Some readers have saved the paper copies, but such incidental papers do not usually stay long in libraries. For that reason, I suggested recently to Donald Mann, President of NPG, that it would be useful to put those papers together in a single volume. This book has emerged from that conversation. Its principal target is a list of major American libraries.

NPG plans to place copies gratis in as many libraries as it can afford, and to call other libraries' attention to its existence. Our hope is that present and future students, if they become interested in the immense issues raised by population change, will have available a single source dealing with the change itself and many of the issues it raises.

We have told NPG's membership of this project and have invited contributions to a special fund to be used solely to place the book in more libraries.

Some serious students of the issues described earlier in this introduction will, we hope, wish to have a

copy in their own library. Seven Locks Press, which has published several books based originally on NPG studies, has undertaken the commercial distribution of the book.

Three notes on the contents of the volume itself:

First, in the table of contents, we have grouped together the papers published in NPG's Optimum Population series. Shortly after beginning the Forum series, we realized that it would be worth- while to publish views by different specialists as to what an optimum population of the United States would be. That is a fundamental question raised by NPG's very title. It is not susceptible to a single, scientific answer because there are too many variables and value judgments, but we thought it valuable to get a sense of what numbers might seem reasonable from different scientific perspectives. In the end, the lowest proposed figure was 40 million people; the highest was a range of 125-250 million. From these calculations, I arbitrarily selected a range of 125-150 million as a tentative target. The important thing was that all the calculations suggested that U.S. population should be going down, not upwards – as it was then and is now, even faster.

That series of essays was incorporated into the book *Elephants in the Volkswagen* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1992). We are indebted to the experts who participated in a useful and unprecedented exercise.

Second, in putting this compilation together, we have had to leave out a few older Forum articles on secondary issues, in order to keep the collection within one volume. We apologize to the authors, but we do not believe the deletions substantially affect the usefulness of the volume.

Third, this does not mark the end of the NPG Forum series. We hope to keep producing them and, with luck, there may eventually be enough to bind together as Volume II.

We appreciate the support of NPG's members and contributors, who made the original papers and this compilation possible. Jason Smith did invaluable work in assembling the digital draft from NPG's website and organizing it into a book. Craig Lewis, NPG's Executive Vice President was as always a steady hand in making sure that things were done right, and on time.

-- Lindsey Grant, Santa Fe, NM, June 2006

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