

Editorial

Daily Nebraskan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Population peak Distribution is problem

Population pundits are again singing their prophecies of doom and despair. The cause is the estimation that sometime next year the world will receive its 5 billionth inhabitant.

Population doom sayers have been predicting the filling up of the earth for several decades now, along with great famines from the overpopulation. This scare is no different.

M. Rupert Cutler, executive director of Population-Environment Balance recently said, "Five billion probably puts the world population about at its carrying capacity. It will be difficult to feed, clothe, shelter and employ many more people at more than a subsistence level of life."

The statement overlooks several significant factors. First, more people means greater production. The vast majority of these people will become employed in productive jobs and will positively contribute to their society's wealth.

Second, technology is always changing and allowing for greater production at given resource levels.

Today's problem is not so much overpopulation as it is uneven social disruption caused by development. Western culture underwent industrial revolution and endured extreme cultural disruption for around a century in the 1800s. Other areas of the globe are now experiencing similar dislocations.

Carl Haub, a demographer at the private Population Reference Bureau pointed out that world population problems are a factor of "how they are distributed or maldistributed" and "that is really the issue, not whether the world passes 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 billion."

As the rest of the world passes through the industrial revolution, birth rates can be expected to decline as values and economic necessity are altered.

Although geometric population calculations are scary, populations and productivity need not obey simplistic projections. There are many very real problems facing the world today without having to worry about the chimera that the earth is filled up.

Prisons packed

Alternatives need consideration

A story in Monday's Lincoln Star said the number of inmates in Nebraska's correctional facilities reached a record high in June. A chart with the story showed that the maximum security facility in Lincoln has 189 more inmates than its design capacity.

John Dahm, assistant state corrections director, is quoted in the Star story saying the Nebraska prison situation is "worse than it's ever been but compared to other jurisdictions we're not in serious shape."

How nice. The state needs to be foresightful in its planning for correction facilities.

What are the options? With decreased budgets they are few. The most likely is the status quo — expanding already crowded prison populations. Facilities meant to house 300 inmates will instead house 500 or 600.

The best solution is to expand the current prison facilities or build new prison facilities. This

is much easier said than done, however, because of decreases in the state's budget.

While the situation in Nebraska's prisons might not be as bad as problems in other state prisons, it still appears to be a problem. The state needs to correct the problem before it becomes unmanageable.

One possible way to handle the problem of overcrowding is alternative sentencing for non-violent crimes. This alternative sentencing could include work-release, in-house arrests or community service sentences. These alternatives might ease the problem but would not correct it.

Obviously, the most helpful and hopeful remedy to the overcrowding of correctional facilities in Nebraska and other states is a reduction in crime. But because that is something state officials have little control over, prison expansion and alternative sentencing need to be considered.

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Moderation a viable choice

Emphasis on abstinence ignores route of responsible drinking

"I fear you may get the impression that I am expending too many words on a minor topic, if I deliver myself of a long discourse on so inconsiderable a topic as drinking. But . . ."

Platos, Laws I. 641(e)

If press reports are to be believed, the Alcoholism Council of Nebraska has set up a program using UNL athletes "to help convince girls and boys," entering junior high, not to use drugs or alcohol.

I suppose that such a program for youngsters is all well and good. But one line in the story struck me as somewhat funny: "None of the volunteers, some of the cream of UNL athletes, uses drugs or alcohol." I don't want to talk about the drugs part, but I do want to talk about the alcohol part.

Up to that line in the article I presumed that the program was intended to prevent young people — people without the requisite maturity to make reasonable choices — from drinking. But if that were the intended message of the program, it wouldn't matter whether the athletes themselves drank: The sole point being that there is a certain sphere of decisions that only adults are capable of making responsibly.

I object strenuously to the view that the only responsible way to drink is not to drink at all. And I object to any program teaching young children such a lesson.

Today it seems that only two perspectives on alcohol are presented:

Abuse and nonuse. Both strike me as somewhat infantile.

Alcohol can have a proper role in the adult world. But rarely is a voice accorded to those that embrace the moderation position. Let me be quite clear: I am repulsed by the shameful carousing that is associated with alcohol on this campus. But I am equally insistent that the solution to the abuse is not limited to abstinence.

The wisdom of the ancients concurs with my position.



James Rogers

For example, in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God commanded that Israel bring in a tithe (or a tenth) of their produce to a central location in the nation. This money was considered God's money, but a part of it could be used by the Israelites in a feast of celebration in the very presence of God. This was a very holy occasion, yet in purchasing materials for this feast it was proclaimed to Israel that "you may spend the money for whatever your heart desires, for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household" (Dt.

14.26). Similarly, Jesus Christ, the paradigm of the responsible adult, "came eating and drinking" (Mt. 11.19) and was consequently accused of being "a gluttonous man and a drunkard." Evidently the Alcoholism Council of Palestine had successfully "educated" the young people of Christ's time as to the evils of drinking.

On a less authoritative level, Plato also found much to commend in the practice of moderate drinking. His major argument was that "rightly controlled fellowship over our cups affords a disclosure of our native dispositions."

He found that alcohol was "an inexpensive and comparatively harmless pleasure" which served firstly, to "test" a companion's temperament, but also, "as a training" for self control. He concluded that "the proposed test of one another is a reasonably good one, and has the advantage of others in point of inexpensiveness, security, and speediness."

The perspective of responsible moderation avoids the woeful excesses of the hedonist, but also avoids the forbidden fruit syndrome and overkill of the abstinence position.

Alcohol "education" should not be allowed to neglect this perspective, and the Alcoholism Council of Nebraska should not limit their program's participants to nondrinkers, but to responsible drinkers.

Rogers, typically an economics graduate and law student, is picking up some math hours this summer.

American attitudes toward sex contribute to closing of Playboy clubs

Forgive me if I do not mourn the passing of the Playboy clubs. I wasn't at the closing ceremonies in Chicago or New York or Los Angeles. I had no key to turn in, you see, no souvenir ears to take home for nibbling. I had no nostalgia for titillations past.

If there is an afterlife, I only hope that the comedian in the Chicago club is right: "I envision a bunny heaven where bunnies are served drinks by middle-aged businessmen in funny little costumes." For eternity.

Over a life span of 26 years, one million men were members of Playboy clubs and 25,000 women encased themselves in the corsetted push-up costumes. They learned to do the bunny dips and get the bunny tips. But the only thing that remained unchanged on closing night was the age of the woman on Hugh Hefner's arm. She was 22.

I don't know exactly who killed this golden bunny. The last big-city hutch closed because they were no longer "hip." (Only three franchises keep the logo alive in more middle America.)

But I have a list of suspects, three of them from different backgrounds with different values.

First on any list, certainly Hefner's list, is his favorite all-time enemy, "the authoritarian true-believers," the fundamentalists on a comeback trail. Second are men who finally outgrew the adolescent image of women as cottontails. Third are the consumers who left the Playboy market behind, "graduating" from the risqué to the raunchy.



Ellen Goodman

They make an odd threesome — these suspects — and yet, it seems that they often form the triangular team that debates sexual politics today. They are behind the closing ceremonies of the Playboy club. They are arguing over the removal of magazines at convenience stores. They are rebutting

and re-buttling the report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

What labels, however simplistic, can we apply to such a trio? Puritans. Humanists. X-rated Sexual Consumers.

In the last 30 years, American attitudes toward sexual values have gravitated toward these three distant corners. In one corner, people rally around an external standard, the biblical arbiter of sexual dos and don'ts. In another, people seek some internal standard of love, both erotic and caring, as their guidelines for sexual intimacy. In a third and darkest corner are those who have no standard at all beyond exploitation.

Is it too much of an exaggeration to say that one group would dress those former bunnies in purdah, another in independence, while a third would strip them down to genitals?

The most unsettled corner of this triangle is one that holds those Humanists (for want of a better word) who

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