

Beware the return of the Malthusians

The left once again embraces population control to save the planet

Washington Times, By Stephen Moore, Sept. 9, 2019



Is the left once again embracing Malthusian population control in order to save the planet?

Of all the preposterous proposals put forward by the Democratic presidential candidates during the CNN climate change townhall meeting last week, the dumbest wasn't outlawing plastic straws, incandescent light bulbs or air travel. It wasn't the contention that climate change is the greatest threat since World War II. It wasn't even the fantastical hypothesis that hurricanes are racist because they target "communities of color" more than white areas.

No, the dumbest (and most dangerous) idea was a rehash of the widely discredited authoritarian idea from the 1960s and 1970s — population control. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders was asked by a school teacher whether it would even be possible to fight global warming given that "the world's population has doubled over the last 50 years." Would the senator be "courageous enough to discuss curbing population growth" as part of his climate plan.

Mr. Sanders obediently blurted out "absolutely yes" and then meandered into a discussion about a woman's right to choose and better access to birth control.

Here we go again. In the 1960s, biologist Paul Ehrlich of Stanford became the patron saint of the modern population control movement with his mega-best seller "The Population Bomb." That book — which argued that the world was overpopulated by more than 1 billion people and that the only way to save the planet from environmental doomsday was to force people to have fewer children — became the rallying cry for Stalinistic population control measures around the world.

This led to tens of millions of forced abortions, involuntary sterilization programs, forced contraception and even homicidal infanticide — all in the name of saving the planet.

China took the population control crusade to a whole new level when it instituted its notorious one-child policy. To this day there are tens of millions of females demographically missing in China. The homicidal environmental policy was cheered on by the United Nations and many of the same leftwing activists and organizations that preach "reproductive freedom" and women's rights. Similarly brutish population control programs were implemented in Africa, India, Egypt and many South American nations. To save the planet, babies had to be prevented.

Fortunately, scholars like the late Julian Simon of the University of Illinois proved that human beings do not deplete the world's resources, but help discover and create them. A larger number of human beings — especially when combined with freedom and free enterprise — leave the planet materially and environmentally better off not worse off.

Simon also showed that freedom and prosperity are the best forms of contraception. Population growth happened because we found ways to conquer early death — with infant mortality rates falling by 70 percent and 80 percent — and eradicate killer diseases like small pox and tuberculosis.

The Malthusians were not just immoral; they were dead wrong on their population projections.

All of those population forecasting models that predicted standing room only on the planet over the next 25-50 years were lies. In the 1970s, the left predicted a population by today of more than 10 billion people. The number is closer to 7.5 billion.

These doomsday demographic models of the future were about as accurate as the climate change models predicting catastrophic temperature changes have been.

What the population control crowd didn't see happening was that population growth has radically slowed down — and not because of government edicts. As people get richer and freer, couples have chosen to have fewer, but healthier children. In most countries of the world today — including in China — the tragedy is not too many children, but too few.

But at its core the radical greens really do believe that the fundamental problem with the human race is that there are too many of us. People are the pollution. Celebrities like Miley Cyrus and Prince Harry are urging people to have fewer or no kids. Rep. Alexandria Ocasia-Cortez wondered earlier this year whether young women should feel ethically bound to not have children so as to help prevent climate change. At the end of the day, she rejected that lunacy idea, but the very idea that liberals had to ask the question shows how anti-human the left has become.

This is a fundamentally anti-Judeo Christian ideology that disrespects human life and — as history proves all too well — can lead to dastardly consequences for basic human rights and economic progress. Human ingenuity is the solution to, not the cause of, environmental problems, and the constantly changing climate of our planet.

Stephen Moore, a columnist for The Washington Times, is a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation and an economic consultant with FreedomWorks.

https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=d7c7d634e576a24ebe8709d9ece7f124_5d766e20_6dbe28b&selDate=20190909