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Green City Freiburg (see p14)

Population Edition

A Quaker witness on global population?

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Editorial

A big thank you to everyone who sent in articles and letters on population for this edition. Population is poignant theme for me at the moment because I am anticipating the arrival of my first grandchild in January.

Roger Plenty (p.2) sets out some of the trends that have led some Friends to call for Quaker engagement with population. Marco Bertaglia makes the case for focusing on sustainable living instead (p5), but Gill Westcott (p6) argues that we do need to pay attention to the linkages among population growth, migration, inequality and injustice. Laurie Michaelis (p.2) asks whether statistics can be the starting point for a Quaker Concern, stressing the call to answer that of God in every one and to live out our Quaker Testimony, and the letters section brings more perspectives and strong feelings.

In 2015 Living Witness is edging into the 21st century with a blog on the human dimensions of climate change. Do sign up on our website for e-mail notifications, join the email discussion list (p14), and perhaps even come to one of our events this year!

It seems to have worked well inviting contributions on a theme. Next time, we'd like to focus on the upcoming General Election. There are many issues at stake – from immigration and international aid to the NHS, austerity and, of course, climate change. How should we as Quakers be engaging with aspiring MPs?

Midwinter blessings to you all,

Dee

Population: The Problem

Roger Plenty

The species of humanity called *Homo sapiens* is about 200,000 years old. Its numbers grew slowly, with setbacks. The Black Death, killed between 30 to 60% of the population of Europe, and reduced the world population from about 450 million to 350-375 million. Growth reached one billion in about 1804. The second billion took 124 years, to 1927, then 33 years to the third billion in 1960: then 14, 13, 12 and 12 for the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh billion. Although world fertility has diminished, actual numbers of growth have not, because the base number is now so high. We are still adding an amount equal to the entire population in 1804 every twelve years (1).

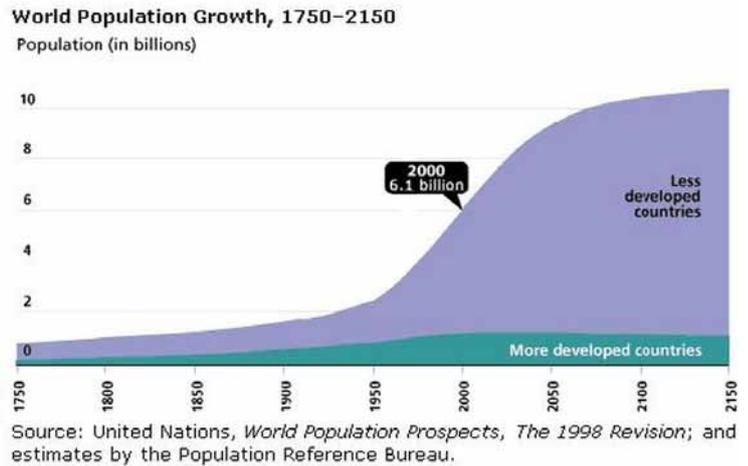
A widely accepted estimate of what the planet can support, assuming a per capita level of consumption equal to the present average of developed countries, is between 1.5 and 2 billion. (2) The population is now over 7 billion; so to achieve stability, we will have to reduce population, and/or consumption. However, if, as expected, population reaches 9 billion before 2050, we will need to reduce population and/or consumption by 7/9.

We would need to reduce per capita consumption by 5/7, as explained above. That is 5/7 of the average consumption of the developed world. Many of the world's poorest already consume less than 2/7, so their consumption needs to be allowed to rise correspondingly.

Many of us make conscientious efforts in this direction. We give up flying, don't drive unnecessarily, insulate our homes, don't buy things we don't need, are aware of where our food comes from, turn vegetarian and so on. But, this is not nearly enough, not by a mile. An individual can make the most severe cuts in his or her living style, but that does nothing for consumption carried out on our behalf by others: education, hospitals, water and power supply, roads, emergency services, transport of food, all our public services and everything else we pay for through our taxes will all have to be cut by 5/7. Considering the suffering caused by 'austerity' cuts of the last few years, which would be trivial in comparison, that would be unacceptable even to the very greenest of Greens, let alone the average citizen. We should try to do that as much as is possible, but

to impose cuts to the depth that is desirable would be beyond any but the most authoritarian government.

How about population? We know, because it has already been done in various places, that dramatic reductions in births are perfectly possible, without coercion. (3). The list of countries includes Islamic countries like Iran, which achieved a 50% reduction of fertility between 1988 and 1996; Bangladesh, Morocco and Tunisia; Latin American states like Brazil and Mexico, and others including Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka.



Yet in the world in general, 222 million women lack access to modern contraception (4) and 40% of all pregnancies are unintentional. Consequently, there are 42 million abortions annually, 20 million of which are unsafe. Over 40% of all pregnancies are unintentional (figures from UNFPA and WHO). To give some idea of the vastness of these numbers. It has been pointed out that the number of unintentional pregnancies is about equal to the number by which population grows.

What can we do?

Become informed. Make decisions about our own family size. The greenest thing anyone can do is to have fewer children than we might otherwise have had.

Support campaigning charities (Population Matters; Population Media Center and others, see p12).

Recommended reading:

Maybe One by Bill McKibben

Puts the case for single child families.

Full Planet, Empty Plates by Lester R Brown

Discusses food scarcity in the face of population growth.

The Post Carbon Reader by Heinberg and Lerch.

Every Meeting concerned about the coming sustainability crisis should have this. It includes an essay 'Population: the multiplier of everything else', by William Ryerson, founder and president of Population Media Center.

References

- (1) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population
- (2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optimum_population
- (3) <http://growthmadness.org/category/j-kenneth-smail/>
- (4) <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

A Quaker witness on global population?

Laurie Michaelis

The UN's medium growth scenario for world population sees a rise to eleven billion in 2100. Most of the growth is in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's population multiplies by six, reaching nearly a billion. The implications for people's lives, for geopolitics, for ecosystems, are hard to imagine. Meanwhile numbers begin to fall in China and India, the countries that saw most growth in the last half-century. But this is a scenario, not a forecast. In another of the UN scenarios, world population peaks by 2050, ending the century lower than today. And in another it rises to 16 billion.

Should world population be a Quaker Concern? In preparing this article I've been thinking about why my heart sinks when this subject comes up in conversations about sustainability. There are several reasons.

First, there's a kind of "yuck" factor to do with the heritage of the discussion. For decades, rich country governments and NGOs have called on poor countries to address population growth. The rhetoric contributes to alienation between North and South. Within the sustainability agenda it seems hypocritical when average CO2 emissions per capita are ten times higher in OECD Member countries than in Africa.

Second, population is one of several issues that people see as "the key" to sustainability that they want everyone to pay attention to. Others include lifestyles, the financial system or the deployment of clean technology. I think it is sterile to debate which of these is more urgent. We are part of a huge, complex system with no single driving force. In *The Burning Question*, Duncan Clark and Mike Berners-Lee point to structural factors that lead the fossil fuel industry to extract all the oil, coal and gas it can find. Without global constraints on extraction, neither lifestyle change nor birth control will reduce fuel use. The point is not that controlling fossil fuel extraction is the key, but that we actually need to address all aspects of the system, and to be more careful in looking for underlying causes.

Third, and perhaps most important, the word "population" suggests people as numbers rather than children of God. It suggests that people are the problem – probably other people. It begs the question: how are you living, reproducing and dying as a pattern and example in population reduction? As a proud parent, unwilling to end my own life, I cannot contribute much to this. Nor am I ready to encourage others to take an early exit as a solution to climate change.

In my early 20s, during a PhD in energy studies, I worked out that the UK could be self-sufficient in food and fuel if we cut energy use by two thirds, adopted a largely vegan diet, and switched land from feeding livestock to growing trees as fuel. My experience and analysis leads me to believe that eleven billion people could live with a fraction of the ecological impact of the current seven billion.

Changing my own life is something I can do. Provided I don't talk too much about it or guilt-trip people, I find it helps others to change. But I think we need to work on the underlying forces that shape our lives and society, which include the culture and values of our civilisation, with its emphasis on competition for individual material success, its neglect of community, and its willingness to exploit people and nature. One major contribution Friends can make is to nurture and live by a different set of values, embodied in our Quaker Testimony on simplicity, equality, peace and sustainability.

There are some really difficult questions about demographic change. China has made a transition from rapid population growth to rapid economic growth, based on low-waged industry supplying Western consumers. As a consequence it is now the largest emitter of CO2 globally. With Western consumption faltering, the fast-growing Chinese middle class is taking up the slack. Will four billion Africans become the marketing opportunity of the next century? And then, what about the implications of people moving from poor to rich countries and adopting high-impact lifestyles.

There may be a Quaker response to these questions, but I don't think it will be helped by middle class British Friends talking statistics or calling on others to have fewer children. It might come from African Friends in their witness for equality and a more sustainable way of life, and from the way Friends in Britain and America connect with our new neighbours.

For me the best Quaker ministry starts with the leadings of God whose light shows us our darkness, not other people's. It is based in the experience of new life, and in having a sense of all conditions. It answers that of God in others, respecting their journeys and truths, engaging them in I-thou relationships. And it lets go of personal positions in finding a way forward together.

Lifestyle, not population growth, is the primary driver of unsustainability

Marco Bertaglia

How many people the Earth can support is not just about numbers; it has more to do with how we live. For example:

- We can build passive houses that use no energy at all.
- Flushing human excreta with water off to a central treatment plant wastes nutrients, pollutes water and uses too much energy. Composting toilets would have a fraction of the impact, and the compost could be used in agriculture.
- Academics and peasants worked together on agro-ecological practices in the most difficult areas of the Andes. Potato yields went from about three tonnes per hectare using conventional methods to ten tonnes using no chemical inputs.
- Planting trees in the West African savannah could help treble millet yields, producing enough for the highest UN population forecast in that region in 2050.
- The UK typically imports about four hundred thousand tonnes of poultry meat products and exports three hundred and fifty tonnes of the same. Do we really need to exchange the very same quantity of potatoes with Germany?
- We should stop eating green beans from Africa and off-season apples from New Zealand. Eat our own food. Reduce travel. Live simply. "Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford."

In Britain, there are about 265 people per square km. Each emits almost eight tonnes of CO₂; that is over 2000 tonnes per square km. Are there too many people in India? Perhaps, but they emit only 700 tonnes of CO₂ per square km.

Indians surely have the right to improve their standard of living. But could they only do that in the same way as we in the Northern hemisphere have done? No! Well-being does not have to cost the Earth.

There is more to population growth than the single-minded effort to limit births. We are almost 7.3 billion people today. There have been 126 million births this year and slightly less than 52 million deaths. That's about 74 million people more.



photo <http://knowledge.allianz.com/>

The richest 20% of the world population has 83% of global income according to UNICEF. For every euro of development aid provided by donors, developing countries transfer ten euros to richer countries. Could it be partly because of the wealth we take from others that we can afford costly, advanced health systems that extend our life expectations so much? Who would dare suggest that we should seek to increase the death rate in affluent countries?

Friends should be encouraged to see the links, developing a finer understanding of this complex issue, and being brave enough to face unpalatable truths.

I certainly wish to have a long and healthy life. Do I also wish to drive an SUV (240 g of CO₂ per km instead of 90g for a hybrid car) and fly to Madagascar on holidays? If so, my impact will be huge. An additional human being behaving as I do would indeed be one too many.

If we do not change our ways, we're already too many. We would need 1.3 planets to sustain us, and the UN estimates we will need two planets by 2050. Conversely, widespread adoption of tried and tested sustainable lifestyles and technologies could actually cater for a larger population and yet generate less than half our current global environmental impact.

Population and immigration

Gill Wescott

Remember Alf Garnet? Pilloried in the '60's TV serial as the epitome of the racist, sexist, white male, Alf might today be in the forefront of UKIP support. But did the series lie, in presenting opposition to immigration as a matter purely of cultural attitudes (including ignorance and hypocrisy)? It was never mentioned that when at work Alf's wages, according to recent research, would likely have been lower and his chances of being in work less than if there had not been cheap migrant labour available in the UK¹; that resentment of immigrants is not just a matter of xenophobia and nostalgia for a certain culture, 'British values' and so forth, but could also be due to economic competition.

A larger population benefits employers who like to have more people looking for a job than there are jobs; business interests in general are not worried about either immigration or population growth, though the latter can sometimes come in handy to argue for, say, GMO's as ways to feed the growing numbers (even though there is enough food now if the hungry could afford it, the difficulty is distribution not production). Larger (and politically more influential) businesses prefer globalized markets which permit the advantages of economies of scale and downward pressure on wages towards the levels of the lowest paid, wherever in the world they may be.

On the right, we see tension between cosmopolitan global elites, often liberal on issues of gay and lesbian rights, and neoliberal in economics; and small business proprietors and unskilled labourers (Arturo Ui's 'little people' in the Brecht play) who can suffer immediate costs from immigration, and want national barriers. It is also these last who are liable to follow populist orators scapegoating the 'other', whether Jews, homosexuals or immigrants.

On a world level, it's the same with population. Business on the whole likes growth. But rising population adds pressure on land, soil, food production, social services, housing and the ability of the planet and municipalities to process waste. The things some people want from limiting immigration are the same things others propose as the benefits of limiting population – better living standards, less of struggle with inadequate public services and social housing. To pursue those goals we can either work in small units and build the walls higher, or think about global policies which will reduce the pressure on those walls.

In the long run continued world population growth harms everyone, as humanity hits the buffers of limited natural resources. Paradoxically, reductions in the stable populations of rich countries could do more to ease this situation than equivalent curtailing of growth in poor countries, though the latter matters too for humanitarian as well as ecological reasons. Of course, in many areas of the world having many children is the only strategy likely to afford some security in old age. Where other sources of security – wealth, or at least better health and survival rates – become available, birth rates tend to drop, Catholic teaching notwithstanding. But the private advantages of large families work to public detriment.

Growing population itself tends to increase inequality, as Henry George showed, rents tending to rise as people compete for resources in fixed supply. If population were to decline in the UK, house prices and rents would fall and the lowest wages would rise. So population control and the pursuit of greater equality go together.

One can acknowledge that the complaints about immigration have a basis in people's material interests, and still disagree with the policy conclusions that immigration should have more rigid controls and object to the exaggeration of the problem, the misrepresentation implicit in the term 'benefit tourism', and confusion of asylum seekers with economic migrants. We could assert that whatever our decisions about local policy for steering between the Scylla of open borders and the Charybdis of ever more fierce restrictions on migrants, the problem deserves consideration on a world scale. For immigration controls will surely fail if the conventional policies of economic development continue to produce increasing inequality and deprivation as well as soaring incomes at the top end; and fail to provide the security and universal health services to enable people to choose smaller families.

International economic orthodoxies favour economic growth (GDP), export led, depending on private enterprise, foreign investment, urbanization and semi-industrialization of the countryside, leading to a widening gap between rich and poor and dependence on fickle world markets. They seek to grow average income, never minding if this is due to elites enriching themselves through resource depletion or to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Instead, much more focused policies are needed which minimize risks and focus benefits on the poorest, providing a basic level of security for people at all income levels. This includes preserving sustainable traditional livelihoods from unsustainable energy intensive development. Organizations like Survival and WDM take on such causes and are effective campaigners for environmental justice.

Population and immigration are both class issues; therefore we are not likely to find a consensus based on 'evidence', least of all evidence about the earnings of immigrants – this is a red herring². The debate involves values as well as 'facts', and should include reference to justice and equality – not just money.

For many reasons, realistic global population policies should be back on the agenda, and reproductive health services should figure in foreign aid programmes, say no more than that (in many countries). But rather than debating population policy in terms of what is earth's 'carrying capacity', we should be thinking in terms of managing human withdrawal from the biosphere to leave more room for the survival of diverse ecologies and the rich variety of life on earth; but with the awareness also that there is a level of population in relation to resources which gives equality a much better chance.

¹The Labour Market Effects on Immigration www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/labour-market-effects-immigration referring to the period 1995 – 2010. Wages in more skilled sectors of the labour market tended to rise with immigration and employment showed no significant effects.

²Filling those jobs with workers born in the UK would bring similar gains to national income, possibly more because wages would need to rise.

Green City Freiburg: Study Retreat

Quaker Voluntary Action is organising a study retreat in Green City Freiburg next year.

Freiburg – population 230,000 – in South West Germany has established an international reputation for 'its advanced environmental practices.' (Wikipedia). This is seen in extensive use of solar power, high quality public transport, mass cycling and sustainable living – and much more.

Working with the local Quaker Meeting, QVA are organising a one-week study retreat designed both to draw lessons from the Freiburg experience and to reflect on how we may live simply in the light.



photo - Green City Freiburg

The retreat is planned for **Sat 12th to Sat 19th September 2015** and ten places are available. If you are interested in being involved please contact me on **01484 687139** or msmithholmfrith@phonecoop.coop

Martin Smith

For Quaker Voluntary Action

Letters

Population

As with global warming, the increase in world population is inevitable; it is already built into the system. However, most of our concerns are probably based upon ignorance of how much has happened to population growth in the last fifty years. It's entertainingly explained in the documentary *Population Explosion - Aftermath* (available on Youtube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dymPP9RhPjw) in which it sadly becomes clear that British people get misled by their prejudices quite a lot.

The message is that world population will stabilise at 11 billion, and it explains how that will happen. Can we feed a world with 11 billion souls? Yes we can, but it will take - as usual - some humility on the part of the developed nations and some changes in our lifestyle - in particular the desire amongst humans to eat meat, especially beef, and the growth of demand as countries develop. If we could reduce demand for meat consumption, we could not only save a lot of precious water but also use a lot more land for food production rather than animal fodder.

That change would itself have some not insignificant effect upon global warming, because more ruminants - especially those fed on grass - give off quite a lot of methane, which is a greenhouse gas far more powerful than CO₂. But if we seek to feed the 11 billion by using some of our existing technological fixes, most of which involve the use in one way or another of fossil fuels, we would feed everyone at the expense of the planet, generating runaway climate change which would probably result in a mass extinction on the scale of the Permian Mass Extinction 500 million years ago that destroyed 95% of all life on earth. Before that happened, social order would have broken down and a population collapse would have occurred anyway.

How do we even begin to move in the right direction? Probably not by the kind of worthy intellectual lecturing in which I've just indulged. Rather, by encouraging Meat-free Mondays for better health, by promoting electric vehicles as cheaper and less polluting travel, by stressing the feel-good factor in cycling and walking, the better taste of fresh produce from your own garden and the benefits of food grown locally rather than transported long distances with consequent loss of quality and nutritional value; and stress the fun to be had by doing these things together. I think it's called Nudge Theory, or something like that. I don't know if it will work, but it's got a better chance of working than warning of doom. Humans don't listen to - or like - prophets of doom, especially if they're right.

Jamie Wrench

Family size and birth control in East Africa

Changing attitudes to traditional practices is a long term and difficult process. In 1966 I was teaching in Kenya, and our steward asked how his wife could stop having more children. He told us he had 5, but when we visited his village, he had 8 children! At that time there were no family planning clinics in Kenya, and I explained the rhythm method to him. Since that time, in the last 48 years, the population of Kenya has quadrupled, from 10 million to an estimated 40 million people today.

Now in East Africa there are clinics and free supplies, but people continue to have very large families. In Uganda, 25% of married women use contraceptives, and there is an unmet need by another 35%, mainly those who are poor, illiterate and living in rural areas. 45% are able to pay for their contraceptives.



poster - www.pbs.org/

The change of name from the Family Planning Association to Reproductive Health Uganda represents a strategic shift and redirecting of focus, from vertical Family Planning programs to integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights services. With such young populations in many parts of the world, the likelihood of massive population growth is horrific.

In East Africa many parents cannot afford school fees for all their children, who are often malnourished. Large families are not just the need for many hands to collect water and firewood, grow food, and help care for the younger children, nor the fear many will die and no-one will care for the parents in their old age. Many elderly people in fact have no one to care for them, because their sons and daughters have died of HIV/AIDS. Children are an important sign of status to prove that a man is virile and his wife is fertile. It is upsetting to hear that some branches of the Church of Uganda, as well as the Catholic church, teach that birth control is against God's will.

Some of these attitudes are centuries old, deep rooted and very hard to change. People have to be persuaded that QUALITY is more important than QUANTITY.

Ella Young

Engagement with the issue of population

Am I alone in being disappointed in Friends' lack of serious engagement with the importance of the issue of population size as it affects our planet, and as major cause of conflict now and in the future? There is a growing and widespread acceptance that the World is over populated at the expense of the health of the planet, ourselves, our ecosystem and all other species. We are told and must know it is unsustainable.

In our current sympathy and shame for the treatment of desperate immigrants do we not notice that immigrants are mostly young men from over populated countries with no job prospects? Wouldn't it be more useful if our support and sympathy were given to the women left behind from whose families they come? They all too often are deprived of family planning. They have large numbers of children who they will struggle to bear, raise, feed, and educate, to the detriment of their own health and wellbeing. They are subjected to male agendas which as we know can include large families, female genital mutilation, child brides, more than one wife, honour killings, forbidden family planning, and so on. In the wider society women's bodies are seen as arenas for male power games - potential weapons of war to rape and murder and thus to hurt and humiliate their menfolk. I feel our efforts should be directed at educating and supporting all women and their rights especially in the countries from which economic migrants come.

Without a healthy planet supporting all God's creatures we will witness more famine, flood, fire, pestilence, and war - the four horses of the apocalypse. Reducing the human population of the planet to a sustainable level has to be a priority or as Prof Brian Cox has pointed out humanity is a doomed species. I feel that we need to speak truth to power on this and so hope to undermine racists, free market capitalists, UKIP and their sympathisers, and advocates of economic growth. Let us not ignore the issue because it is so uncomfortable and difficult - it won't get any easier with time.

Brigid Philip

As (73 year old married to same man for 50 years) parent of 4 humans (3 boys, 1 girl) and grandparent of 13 humans (9 boys, 4 girls) I would just point out that the increase of population depends entirely on the females to carry the babies - number of males (as long as they eat moderately and behave well) is not critical.

Judy Moody-Stuart

Population Sustainability

Human population growth. Adding extra billions in ever shorter periods of time since 1930s is the primary driver of the stresses affecting life on planet Earth. Humans, en masse, are clever animals, but also ultimately stupid in their continuing pursuit of the joys of life; less work, more pleasure and more children to care for us in old age.

Some humans are conscious of the resulting problems on a small isolated planet and nowhere else to go. Some humans and a few countries are aware and taking action to encourage and educate and facilitate sustainable population densities in their own places. Others are not.

Economists promoting creation of 'wealth' are worried about 'secular stagnation' and economic hardship caused by population decline, as seen in Japan and feared in China.

Face the fact that in any country that has had decades of population growth and that growth ceases or reverses, that country will inevitably have a period of preponderant old age persons, and a small proportion of working age persons. If 'solved' in the short term by permanent immigrants, the result will be perpetual population growth. With no immigration, Japan is facing the problem. Britain is torn between 'growth' and ecologically beneficial 'stagnation'.

A few governments, and many NGOs are aware and active. I welcome such efforts. However I believe that many more governments must become active and respond to the sustainability of their own country with respect to its population trends. Here I believe that United Nations should, and inevitably will eventually, be far more active in this matter, and Quakers should be pressing for urgent action, at national government level.

Tony Osborn
King's Lynn

Population and Sustainability

When I was living in Saudi Arabia in the seventies, I made friends with a neighbour called Ahmed. He had ten children. He confided to me that he did not really want so many children. He had thought of buying some pills for his wife but had heard at they might be harmful to her. Anyway as 'The God' had given them to him and all were in good health, he had to be thankful. His brothers had also many children and he hoped they would intermarry.

In those days, Riyadh was quite a pleasant city. It was possible to reach most parts of it on foot, although it was matter of prestige to use a car. When I came back ten years later it had grown beyond recognition. New suburbs stretched far out into the desert. The charming old central part with its houses built of local materials was being replaced by high-rise concrete structures. A wide new road was built through the centre. The traffic was tremendous. The changes were partly due to a desire for modernisation. The population had also doubled. For the country as a whole, it has now risen from seven million in the seventies till thirty million today. Saudi Arabia is in the fortunate position of having oil. It can afford to provide houses for all its citizens, with bathrooms and air conditioners. However this means vast increases in energy and water consumption. They are forced to desalinate seawater, which also consumes energy.

This is just one example of the connection between population and sustainability. Similar or worse scenarios could be described for many other countries. A further problem is the increase in unemployment among young people which is aggravated by population rise and tends to motivate social unrest and violence. What can we do about it? The answer seems to be not so much practical measures like digging wells, but in education and discussions with religious leaders.

Peter Lowden

Reversing climate change: In praise of futility?

A sketch in the comedy show *Beyond the Fringe* in the early 1960s has Perkins, an imaginary pilot in the Second World War, being sent off by his commanding officer with the exhortation, "We need a futile gesture at this stage. It will raise the whole tone of the war." Much of the campaigning for a fairer world carried out by Quakers and others can create the exhilaration of being part of a large movement, but at times there can be feelings of futility. None more so perhaps than in the campaigns that take a really long view – well beyond the end of our own lives. Some degree of self-interest can be a good motivator when the going gets tough or boring, or seemingly futile, but when it comes to campaigning against climate change policies, the catastrophic harm is going to occur when many of us are dead. Self-interest then may need to be re-defined in terms not just of ourselves but also of children or grandchildren and others of future generations.

These are some of the thoughts that are in the minds of a relatively new group, Grandparents for a Safe Earth, whose particular focus is on the world as we fear it could become. We are a (so far small) network of grandparents and elders in the Bristol area, who make links with similar-minded organizations. We disseminate information, lobby powerful organizations, and take non-violent direct action as a small – some might say futile - part of a campaign for halting global warming. We are not particularly looking to increase our numbers, but we like people to visit our website <https://network23.org/gfase/our-actions/> and watch Youtube clips (www.youtube.com then write Grandparents for a Safe Earth in the search box) of our actions. If small really is beautiful, then the vision of a cleaner world doesn't get much more beautiful than that.

Sigurd Reimers

Taunton

Harmful Insecticides

I was concerned to read in a letter published in the press on 20th November, that harmful insecticides are deliberately added after harvest, to the grain we all eat. These aren't chemical 'residues' from crop-spraying. They are additional cumulative poisons which are mixed with grains such as wheat, oats, barley & rye to reduce the risk of insect infestation during storage. There's no guarantee that such poison treatments will prevent infestation but they have been added for about 60 years, often by untrained & unsupervised staff, using methods that cause excessive doses in 'hot spots' in food.

In 1991 the British Medical Association referred to worrying levels of insecticides in bread & beer. Even the residues from crop-spraying with such chemicals raised concern when US scientists published a 1997 study calling for an immediate ban on their use because of the cumulative residue danger so children's health.

Worryingly, successive British governments have been determined to increase their use by the introduction of GM crops and have attempted to halt the EUs proposed ban on such poisons. Unfortunately the addition of insecticide doesn't have to be declared on food labels "because they're pesticides", yet scientific studies have linked them to conditions including DNA damage, diabetes, obesity, protein disorders, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, autism, ME & cancers. This is another reason to consider buying organic when possible. Even if you make your own healthy bread you would apparently still need to buy organic flour to avoid such insecticides.

Ann Wills

Useful internet links sent in by earthQuaker readers;

Current World Population

www.worldometers.info/world-population

World Clock - Peter Russell

Population related statistical information estimates.

www.peterrussell.com/Odds/WorldClock.php

Digital Visualisation 2014 & Beyond

Interactive data

www.prb.org/wpds/2014

How Many People Can Live on Planet Earth?

Naturalist Sir David Attenborough investigates whether the world is heading for a population crisis.

topdocumentaryfilms.com



<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

Screen shot taken on 23/12/2014 17:12

Global population growth, box by box.

Hans Rosling talks about the world's population growing to 9 billion over the next 50 years - and only by raising the living standards of the poorest can we check population growth.

www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_on_global_population_growth?

Don't Panic - The Facts About Population - Gapminder

The world might not be as bad as you might believe! Hans Rosling showing facts about population.

www.gapminder.org/videos/dont-panic-the-facts-about-population

Reincarnation and Population Growth - Exploring Theosophy

'Can population growth rule out reincarnation?' This is a question that often crops up in discussions on reincarnation.

davidpratt.info/population.htm

Marie Stopes International

Working in almost 40 countries providing life-saving services to millions of women in greatest need. In 2012 MSI enabled 13.6 million women to use contraception, and prevented 5.3 million unplanned pregnancies.

www.mariestopes.org.uk

Population Matters

Raising awareness of the cost to humanity and other species of unsustainable human numbers and promoting smaller families as part of a sustainable future.

www.populationmatters.org/

Population Media Center - strives to improve the health and well-being of people around the world through entertainment-education.

www.populationmedia.org

Pray and Fast for the Climate - A movement of Christians in the UK praying and fasting on the 1st of each month for a meaningful and just global climate agreement at the UN climate talks.

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk

Footprint Network

We are an international think tank that provides Ecological Footprint accounting tools to drive informed policy decisions in a resource-constrained world.

www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/

The Gaia Foundation is passionate about regenerating cultural and biological diversity, and restoring a respectful relationship with the Earth.

www.gaiafoundation.org/

Living Witness blog

livingwitness.org.uk/hd/

Evalyn Parry - poet and songwriter

One of her songs is a particular meditation on climate change, called To Live in an Age of Melting, and first performed at Friends' General Conference in America in 2011.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CMP17pF78s

Fossil Free UK

The fossil fuel divestment movement is worldwide and growing fast. Join in with the "Global Divestment Day," a worldwide day of action beginning on February 13th.

gofossilfree.org/uk/

Fossil Free Festival

[Huddersfield Quaker Meeting](#) recently organised a Fossil Free Festival on Saturday 22nd November at its Meeting House.

The event aimed to explore how to support the Fossil Free Divestment campaign (www.gofossilfree.org/uk/) which calls upon large institutional investors such as churches & faith groups, universities, councils and pension funds to pull their investments from fossil fuel investments.

Huddersfield Quaker co-clerk Robin Bowles commented: *"On the eve of the recent UN Climate Summit Desmond Tutu argued that the tactics used against firms that did business with apartheid South Africa must now be applied to fossil fuels: Divestment is a powerful new tool for the environmental movement and is based on the fact that 80% of known fossil fuel reserves have to stay in the ground to prevent catastrophic climate change. In other words, the fossil fuel industry's business plan and a liveable planet are simply incompatible."*



The Festival included a film screening of 'Do the Math', workshops, kids' eco activities, music, campaign group stalls & refreshments.

The event was held during Inter Faith week and faith groups from around Huddersfield were invited to join the event to explore ways we can take action on climate change and go 'fossil free'. The Festival was opened by Huddersfield MP Barry Sheerman and also attended by three Kirklees Council councillors.

Quakers in Britain has recently lent its support to the Fossil Free campaign and the Bright Now (www.brightnow.org.uk) campaign run by Operation Noah, an ecumenical Christian charity, is working to support churches to divest from fossil fuel investments.

Huddersfield Friend and co-organiser of the event Chayley Collis said. *"The event created a lot of interest and enthusiasm for local fossil free divestment campaigns. and we are having a follow-up meeting in January. We have been inspired by the Quakers in Britain's stance on divestment and also the powerful film 'Do the Math'. We are trying to take a regional approach to divestment, similar to that going on in Oxford, which is looking at faith groups, university and council divestment. If any other Meetings would like to hold a Fossil Free Festival please do get in touch and we can share ideas and resources that we used."*

Chayley Collis

Contact - chayleycollis@yahoo.co.uk

Human Dimensions Network

Over 100 Friends have signed up to be part of the new network exploring the social, psychological and spiritual aspects of climate change. There are several ways of getting involved:

1. Come to one of our events: we're holding a day workshop at Oxford Friends Meeting House on 14th March, and a retreat at the Quaker Community, Bamford, 18th – 22nd June (for details see Diary below).
2. Subscribe to our new blog site on the human dimensions of climate change at: www.livingwitness.org.uk/hd
3. Join our list for e-mail discussion of this theme by following the link on the home page of the Living Witness website (www.livingwitness.org.uk) or write to laurie@livingwitness.org.uk and ask to be added.

Creating community in streets and neighbourhoods

I will be leading a weekend at Woodbrooke in January called '[Tearing Down the Fences](#)' **Friday 23 - Sunday 25 January 2015**. It is really about how to retrofit some of the ideas of co-housing onto existing streets and neighbourhoods, how to change how we live with our neighbours to share skills, resources and facilities, how to live a simpler and more sustainable life by being better neighbours. This kind of lifestyle has a long and respected history in Britain and further afield. The Transition Movement might call this Transition Streets. It's not a new idea but it is taking new forms as society changes and the ecological crisis gathers pace. I have some good case stories to draw on and am keen to find out about more good examples. If you know of a place, a street or a neighbourhood, where exciting things are happening in sharing, collaboration, community growing, buying, transport or energy projects then please let me know.

I happen to live in a cohousing community. If you are keen to find out more about Lancaster Cohousing then please click here, www.lancastercohousing.org.uk or come along to the Woodbrooke Weekend in January.

Clíodhna Mulhern

Diary 2015

Housing and energy - Fairness for all - Workshop
Saturday 24th January, 11am-4.30pm at St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1TA
Green Christian will be holding a workshop in the "ecocell" series. The topic will be energy use in the home environment and how this ties in with economic justice in the housing sector.
www.greenchristian.org.uk

Quaker Network on Human Dimensions of Climate Change

Saturday 14 March 10am - 4pm
at Oxford Friends Meeting House

A gathering of our network exploring the social, psychological and spiritual aspects of climate change. £10. For a programme and registration form e-mail laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

Human Dimensions of Climate Change

Thurs 18th-Sunday 22 June, at Quaker Community, Bamford, Derbys - www.quakercommunity.org.uk
How can our Quaker spiritual practice and insight into psychology, community and relationships help us respond to climate change? £150-£240 (according to ability to pay) For a programme and registration form e-mail laurie@livingwitness.org.uk



photo - Quaker Community, Bamford

Deadline for the spring issue of earthQuaker - 1st March 2015

Theme is 'Upcoming General Election'

Please post or email contributions to the editor
Dee Sayce, 7, Bowden Crescent, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4LN
or **01663 308656 - 07837 578382** or email: **dee@livingwitness.org.uk**

All contributions welcome articles, reports, poems, ideas, letters, photos

Include your postal address and telephone number or email address but we will not include contributors' contact details in earthQuaker unless specifically asked to. Members wishing to contact a contributor can get in touch through the editor—contact details above.

We reserve the right to edit but will always try to check substantial edits with the author.

"We discover the Earth in the depths of our being through participation, not through isolation or exploitation. We are most ourselves when we are most intimate with the rivers and mountains and woodlands, with the sun, the moon and the stars in the heavens: when we are most intimate with the air we breathe, the earth that supports us, the soil that grows our food, with the meadows in bloom. We belong here. Our home is here.
The excitement and fulfilment of our lives is here."

Thomas Berry

Membership

I wish to join Living Witness as an individual member.

Suggested donation £10.00
(£3.00 for age 18-25)
Free to under 18's

Name:

Address:

Please make cheque payable to
"Living Witness Project"

Email/phone:

and send to:

Delete as appropriate - I prefer earthQuaker:

by post (b&w)

by email as a pdf (colour)

I am happy to access it from www.livingwitness.org.uk (colour)

Living Witness
7, Bowden Crescent
New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4LN

I enclose £

Gift Aid declaration (please tick box if appropriate):

I would like you to reclaim tax on my donations (you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations).

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Living Witness (LW) is a Quaker charity supporting Friends' witness to sustainable living and taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

LW has worked since 2002 with a growing network of Quaker meetings, connected through regular link group gatherings, newsletters and shared resources.

At the beginning of 2008 LWP merged with Quaker Green Action, which since 1986 has been the main forum for Friends sharing a Concern for sustainability.

We welcome both individual Friends and meetings as members of our network and participants in our gatherings. Please get in touch with the LW co-ordinator if you would like a workshop or speaker session in your meeting.

The co-ordinator is Laurie Michaelis.

The office address is Living Witness, Quaker Community, Water Lane, Bamford, Hope Valley S33 0DA
To contact Laurie by email use as before: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

Website is www.livingwitness.org.uk, where publications including earthQuaker (colour version!) can be downloaded.



If undelivered please return to:

Living Witness
7, Bowden Crescent
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