



Contraceptives Vital to Climate Fight?

As the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference draws nearer, almost every day brings a new headline from environmental alarmists threatening the imminent end of the world unless all nations submit to their agenda. Today's threat? Overpopulation — with a Third World spin.

A September 18 Reuters story ("Contraception vital in climate change fight: expert") was typical of the coverage of the latest perceived crisis: the need to dramatically limit the growing human population of the Third World. According to Reuters:



Contraception advice is crucial to poor countries' battle with climate change, and policy makers are failing their people if they continue to shy away from the issue, a leading family planning expert said on Friday.

Leo Bryant, a lead researcher on a World Health Organisation study on population growth and climate change, said the stigma attached to birth control in both developing and developed countries was hindering vital progress.

"We are certainly not advocating that governments should start telling people how many children they can have," said Bryant, an advocacy manager at the family planning group Marie Stopes International, who wrote a commentary in the *Lancet* medical journal on Friday.

"The ability to choose your family size...is a fundamental human right. But lack of access to family planning means millions of people in developing countries don't have that right," he told Reuters.

You read that right: the "stigma attached to birth control" is "hindering vital progress." Progress, of course, is a term that implies advancement toward a goal. And what is this "vital progress"? Reducing the number of human beings in the world — in this case, through contraception. Despite the warm and glowing talk of about "a fundamental human right" to determine one's family size, the implicit definition of "progress" in this situation clearly implies how this right is expected to be used — and thus is a misappropriation of terminology such as one finds in the "pro-choice" language used to describe permitting legalized homicide, in utero.

Reuters did at least allude to a seeming conflict of interest on Bryant's part, mentioning that he is "an advocacy manager at the family planning group Marie Stopes International," but what was not mentioned is that this organization just this week signed an agreement with United Nations Population Fund. According to [an article](#) posted Friday on the group's website,

Marie Stopes International (MSI) has this week signed an agreement with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to receive \$2.5million worth of family planning supplies. The supplies will be used in MSI programmes around the world including the Philippines, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda.



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“This support is vital for MSI programmes and the millions of women we serve around the world,” said Dana Hovig, MSI’s Chief Executive. “It will ensure that as MSI continues its sustained growth we will be better positioned to maintain the greatest range of contraceptive options for women we can.”

More than 200 million women want to use contraception but don’t have access to it, often due to shortages. Something that MSI itself has experienced.

According to Mr Hovig, many MSI programmes run low of family planning supplies and are actively seeking short-term supplies from a variety of sources in order to try to meet demand. He continued, “2010 promises to be another year of substantial growth for MSI. This agreement with UNFPA could not have come at a better time.”

Neither, apparently, could lots of free press advocating the very programs that MSI is being funded to implement. In fact, MSI is quite proud of the global reach of their organization. Again, according to the MSI website:

In 2007 alone, the organisation provided over five million people in 40 countries with high quality health services, including family planning; safe abortion & post-abortion care; maternal & child health care including safe delivery and obstetrics; diagnosis & treatment of sexually transmitted infections; and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Around the world, Marie Stopes International Partners have become major players in national health systems. In Tanzania and Malawi, for example, Marie Stopes International provides nearly 20% of all family planning services in each country. In Bangladesh, Marie Stopes International has over 120 clinics and rural outreach teams throughout the country, protecting over one million women per year from unwanted pregnancy. Whilst in Afghanistan, Marie Stopes International works closely with three government ministries to provide sexual and reproductive health services to more than 435,000 people; outreach services to more than 182,000 women; train more than 1,000 health professionals and to promote the rights of women.

According to Reuters, “Bryant said 200 million women across the world want contraceptives, but cannot get them. Addressing this need would slow population growth and reduce demographic pressure on the environment.” When an MSI “advocacy manager” for an organization that provides birth control and abortions in 40 countries tells the press that 200 million women “want contraceptives, but cannot get them,” should the press at least ask, “Cui bono?”

The other “expert” cited by Reuters is Martin Rees: “Bryant’s comments echo those by the head of Britain’s science academy Martin Rees, who told Reuters this month that the stigma holding women back from getting access to birth control must be removed to reduce the impact of rising populations on climate change.”

Undeniably, Martin Rees is an accomplished expert in his field— of Cosmology and Astrophysics. But whatever his knowledge of galactic nuclei and black holes, Dr. Rees has some quite odd views about the human species which may leave one wishing he would stick to his area of expertise.

In a brief article entitled, “[We should take the ‘Posthuman’ Era Seriously](#),” Dr. Rees engages in some speculation about saving the world for the intelligent species that will one day take the place of mankind:

Public discourse on very long-term planning is riddled with inconsistencies. Mostly we discount



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the future very heavily — investment decisions are expected to pay off within a decade or two. But when we do look further ahead — in discussions of energy policy, global warming and so forth — we underestimate the possible pace of transformational change. In particular, we need to keep our minds open — or at least ajar — to the possibility that humans themselves could change drastically within a few centuries....

Our own species will surely change and diversify faster than any predecessor — via human-induced modifications (whether intelligently-controlled or unintended), not by natural selection alone. Just how fast this could happen is disputed by experts, but the post-human era may be only centuries away.

In truth, most politicians cannot see farther than the next election cycle, and winning the post-human vote is not a really big priority for them. Thus, Dr. Rees explains why he believes that international environmental efforts are vitally necessary:

It's real political progress that these long-term challenges are higher on the international agenda, and that planners seriously worry about what might happen more than a century hence.

But in such planning, we need to be mindful that it may not be people like us who confront the consequences of our actions today. We are custodians of a 'posthuman' future — here on Earth and perhaps beyond — that can't just be left to writers of science fiction.

So, don't save the world for the whales, the baby seals, or even for the spotted-owls — do it for the "posthumans."

Welcome to the world of the environmentalists, where one may gleefully advocate limiting human reproduction for the sake of saving the world for a species that will one day take our place. In the real world, however, people might get rather nervous about all this sort of talk. The questions one would like to hear such people answer: "How small do you think the human population ought to be?" and, "What are you going to advocate when we won't reduce the numbers voluntarily for the sake of your 'posthuman' future?"



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