

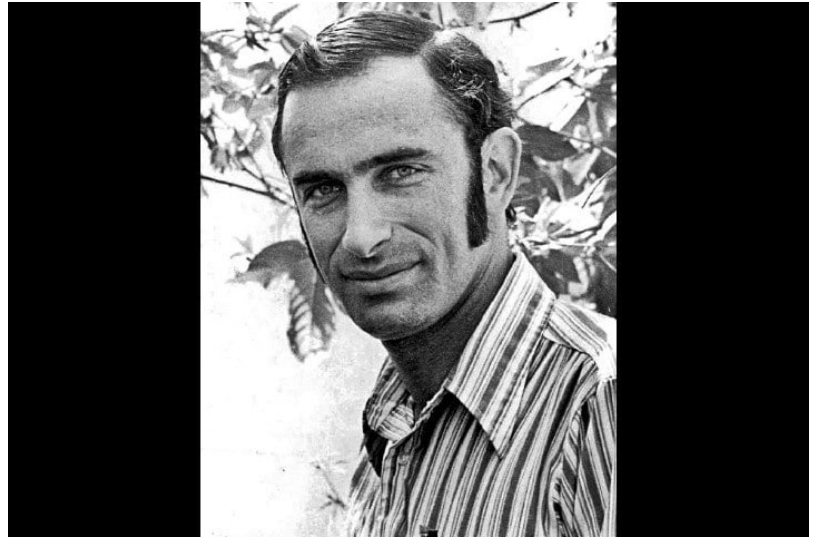


Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 3, 2023

Elon Musk Slams the Most Perennially Wrong Scientist of Our Time

Would you take investment advice from a broker whose stock picks had been consistently wrong for almost six decades straight? “News” show *60 Minutes* just might — that is, if the guest they chose to present as master prognosticator-prophet of doom this past Sunday is any indication. And the world’s second richest man, Elon Musk, certainly took notice.

“If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000.” So said biologist Paul Ehrlich, Bing Professor Emeritus of Population Studies of the Department of Biology of Stanford University and President of Stanford’s Center for Conservation Biology, decades ago.



Paul Ehrlich in 1974

Yet if Ehrlich were a gambler, he’d also be broke. In fact, he did [lose a bet](#), a 1980, \$1,000 wager with economist Julian Simon on whether the price of five precious metals would increase due to scarcity (Ehrlich’s prediction) or decrease/hold steady over the next decade.

But nothing was safer to bet on than the steadiness of Ehrlich’s bad prophet-of-doom prognostications. Author of the famous 1968 book *The Population Bomb* — which, [Malthusian-style](#), forecast widespread famine due to “overpopulation” — the professor also predicted “that 65 million Americans would die of starvation between 1980 and 1989, and by 1999 the U.S. population would have declined to 22.6 million,” as late economist Professor Walter E. Williams [put it](#) in 2008. Instead, we’re at a point 25 years later where a major political party can steal almost 22 million votes in a national election.

Nonetheless, the mainstream media still apparently fancy Ehrlich an enviro-disaster Nostradamus. This brings us to *60 Minutes*, which invited Ehrlich on to once again push his thesis that human overpopulation would spell doom (even though demographers tell us that man’s numbers will begin declining this century). As The College Fix [wrote](#) reporting on the appearance:

“Too many people, too much consumption and growth mania,” the professor told Scott Pelley for a segment on “mass extinction.”

“You seem to be saying that humanity is not sustainable?” Pelley asked.

“Oh, humanity is not sustainable. To maintain our lifestyle (yours and mine, basically) for the entire planet, you’d need five more Earths,” he said. “Not clear where they’re gonna come from.”

“I was alarmed. I am still alarmed. All of my colleagues are alarmed,” the Stanford professor ... said, when Pelley noted he had been called an “alarmist.”



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This inspired pushback from incredulous observers, Elon Musk among them (tweet below).

In fairness to *60 Minutes*, Pelley did point out that Ehrlich was “wrong” in his *Population Bomb* prediction that man’s rapid population growth would cause mass famines. Yet many still found it shocking that the discredited professor would be given air time at all (when the same media censor wiser voices). As ex-dean of Harvard Medical School Jeffrey Flier opined in response to Ehrlich’s appearance:

Michael Shellenberger, whom The College Fix called an “energy use researcher and former Time magazine ‘Hero of the Environment’ winner,” also weighed in with a Monday Substack [post](#).

“The assertion that ‘five more Earths’ are needed to sustain humanity comes from something called the Ecological Footprint calculation,” he wrote. “[I debunked it 10 years ago](#) with a group of other analysts and scientists, including the Chief Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, PLOS Biology.”

“We broke down the six measures that comprise the Ecological Footprint and found that five of the six, including food and forestry, were either in balance or surplus,” Shellenberger continued. “The only thing out of balance was humankind’s carbon emissions.”

(Hat tip: The College Fix.)

Alex Epstein, the author and commentator Musk was responding to in this piece’s first tweet, added more perspective. In [another tweet](#), he pointed out something of which our credentials-crazy pseudo-elites should take note: Ehrlich has *zero* on-paper expertise in the area on which his “expertise” is being sought.

Ehrlich’s “background was the *study of butterflies*, yet his work on resource economics was heralded by the media,” Epstein wrote.

And the professor’s bull-in-a-china-shop predictions have hardly been consequence-free. As the Daily Caller [related](#) on Monday:

“The battle to feed all of humanity is over,” Ehrlich predicted in the [*Population Bomb*] book. “In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death.”

His dire warnings led to the adoption of forced sterilization and other population control measures in various countries, including China’s one-child policy, according to Smithsonian Magazine.

In 1970 Ehrlich bet that “in 10 years all important animal life in the sea [would] be extinct.” He also wrongly predicted that in 1973, two “smog disasters” in both New York and Los Angeles would claim approximately 200,000 lives.

As for the 1970 “bet,” it wasn’t just that Ehrlich was wrong. It’s that, as [scientists discovered in 2014](#), deep sea fish biomass is actually *10 times greater than previously thought*.

In reality, it’s hard believing Ehrlich is sincere. For would an honest man not have learned from 55 years of continual errors and have developed some humility?



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Ehrlich's mistake goes back much further than six decades, too. It's the same error scholar [Thomas Malthus](#), alluded to earlier, made centuries ago: not realizing that advances in technology — which we couldn't even begin to foresee — would work life- and Earth-preserving miracles. This is why the freest, most prosperous, most technologically advanced nations [have the cleanest environments](#).

Technology-borne miracles will likely continue saving the Earth, too — that is, unless we scuttle innovation and productivity by listening to Ehrlich and his greentopian comrades.



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