

New Malthusian Book: Beyond the Limits of Credibility

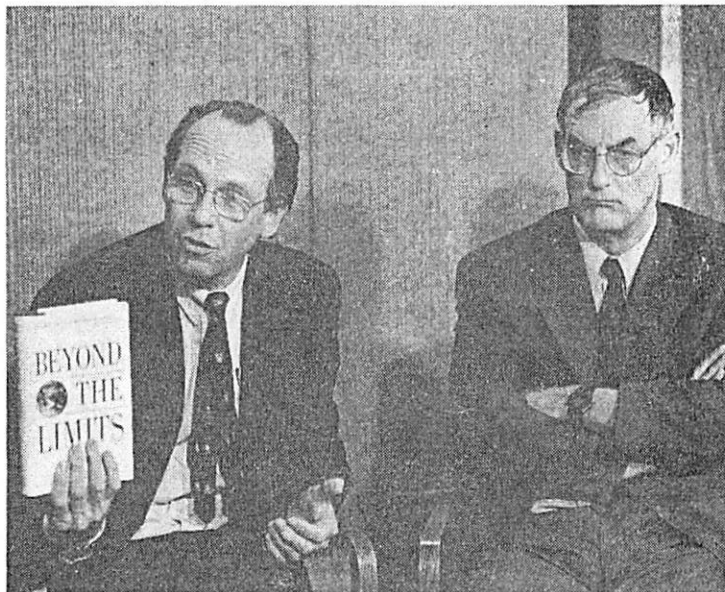
by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

April 27 (EIRNS)—In 1972, the Club of Rome popularized a little book, "The Limits to Growth," that established a protective coating of computer-modeling techno-gobbledygook around the Club's basic Malthusian goal: population reduction. Now, 20 years later, the authors of "The Limits to Growth" are back, having updated their techno-gobbledygook in a book titled "Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future." The 1972 book gave the world about 100 years before collapse. The 1992 book gives the world a much shorter lifespan before resources, living standards, industrial production, and agriculture explode into uncontrollable collapse.

It was easy to defeat "The Limits to Growth" economists in debates during the 1970s; they and their doomsday analysis were incompetent to the point of being comical. Today their economics are still laughable, but the growth of the green movement has created a gullibility gap into which the "Beyond the Limits" economists fit too comfortably in 1992.

The Club of Rome's pessimistic message about how greedily growing industrial society destroys the Earth remains the same in both books. What's new in the 1992 book is (1) the authors' expression of "love" and concern for the "poor" of the Earth, and (2) the solution they devise to counter greedy growth: "sustainable development."

These new items are geared especially to influence the developing-sector countries to go along with the Malthusians' agenda for the Earth Summit in June in Brazil: in brief, to cut living standards (affluence pollutes) and cut population (people pollute). During the past month, the authors, economists Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, and Jorgen Randers, held a series of press conferences to promote this message.



JORGEN RANDERS (left) and Dennis Meadows presenting their deranged new manual for destruction of populations—"Beyond the Limits," indeed.

For the leaders of developing countries—and for any human beings who believe in progress and envision the possibility of a better future for their children and grandchildren—this book should serve as a warning that the words "sustainable development" are just a euphemism for killing people. As much as the authors cry about poverty, berate the "growth-obsessed society of today," and ecstatically describe the loving way that the "sustainable society" will meet our "unmet nonmaterial needs," the bottom line of their model is that poor old Mother Earth is being irreparably damaged and to stop the decline we must immediately reduce population and living standards.

As this newspaper's predecessor, New Solidarity, argued in the 1970s, and as is still the case, it is the rate of introduction of new technologies into the economy that increases productivity and thus increases the potential for greater population

density at better living standards. This is historical fact, not some computerized hocus-pocus.

"Beyond the Limits," like its 1972 predecessor, is simply not credible. Three economists have created a computer model called World3, originally commissioned at MIT by the Club of Rome, to give a technical framework for their rotten worldview. No matter how many model runs the economists carry

out to show the consequences of what they term our "addiction to growth," the fact remains that the computer models only their own prejudices, not reality.

"Beyond the Limits" is so biased, in fact, that even the World Bank's chief economist, Lawrence Summers, attacked it at the authors' Washington press conference as having "no validity."

Touchy-Feely Big Lies

For those who lived through the counterculture of the 1960s and watched it ooze into the environmentalism of the 1980s, "Beyond the Limits" will bring a rush of recognition, especially Chapter 8, where the authors "take off their computer modeling hats and . . . reappear as plain human beings." The chapter reeks of touchy-feely group-awareness sessions, the endless rhetoric of brains made soft by an overdose of counterculture.

"People don't need enormous cars," the authors tell us, "they need respect. . . . A society that can admit and articulate its nonmaterial needs and find nonmaterial ways to satisfy them would require much lower material and energy throughputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment."

So, how do we achieve this sustainable society? By "visioning," "networking," "truth-telling," and "loving." Of course, such processes

can be moral and good—but not when they are built on a belief system of big lies.

The big lies are numerous: Growth is bad; development is good. (Development in their definition includes no growth.) The non-linearity of the impact of advanced technologies on the economy is denied. Energy resources modeled for the future exclude nuclear and fusion; only so-called renewables like solar and wind—which could never power an industrial society—are modeled. Resources are defined as finite. Technologies like pesticides and fertilizers are defined simply as polluting.

Perhaps most revealing is Chapter 5, "The Ozone Story." Here we are told that the model for a sustainable society is possible because "[T]he world's nations acknowledged that they had overrun a serious limit. Soberly, reluctantly, they agreed to give up a profitable and useful industrial product. They did it before there was any measurable economic, ecological, or human damage and before there was complete scientific certainty."

The truth is that not only is there not "complete scientific certainty"—there is no scientific certainty whatever that the very small amounts of manmade chlorofluorocarbons are depleting the ozone layer. The so-called evidence is the product of a computer model, not reality.

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