

## Growing, Growing, Gone

Kudos to *MJ* for taking on the sacred cows of overpopulation ("The Last Taboo"), and economic growth ("Nothing Grows Forever"), subjects which few national magazines or environmentalists seem willing to address in a critical manner. Growth is the creed underlying all our environmental and social problems, and by its very nature, growth tends to wipe out the gains made in technological innovation, efficiency, and policy. Like economist Kenneth Boulding once said, no one believes that growth can go on forever but a madman or an economist.

ANTHONY LADD

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

Economist Peter Victor seems to profess a formula for economic utopia devoid of calculations for human selfishness, wherein the current generation expects future generations to pay for its welfare and lifestyle.

AVRUM FINE

*West Chester, Pennsylvania*

Congratulations on Julia Whitty's fine piece on the perilous politics of overpopulation. It was with great relief that I read her clear-minded statement that only through a combination of population stabilization and reduction of consumption can we regain a sustainable existence on our finite planet. No doubt you'll be bombarded with the usual narrow and counterproductive arguments that the real problem lies in just one or the other of these binary challenges. We recently launched a campaign to distribute free Endangered Species Condoms to highlight the connection between unsustainable human population growth and the growing extinction crisis. Rather than miring us in controversy, this project has been wildly popular.

RANDY SERRAGLIO

*Center for Biological Diversity*

It's a relief that most people in a panic over the "population crisis" are no longer calling for forced sterilizations, but the new solutions—micro-lending and literacy programs—still have the same goal:



controlling the fertility of women in the developing world. Why is that still our goal, even after you admit that the average American mom with 2 kids has a carbon footprint equal to that of 136 Bangladeshi moms and their 337 kids?

MAXWELL CIARDULLO

*Bronx, New York*

## Don't Be Dense

Nobody denies that there could be environmental benefits from denser cities ("Tall is Beautiful"). But allowing for-profit developers to drive the path to urban density will only create new social, economic, and environmental problems. High-rise condominiums with seven-figure price tags and \$700-per-month HOA dues don't exactly attract people with a monthly transit pass.

JOE MORSE

*San Francisco, California*

## Flight of Fancy

I appreciate Christie Aschwanden's desire to feel virtuous by not flying ("Jet Blues") as a way to reduce her carbon footprint. Just one question about that flight she didn't take: Did it use any less fuel because she wasn't on it? Individual choices like hers may have a symbolic or consciousness-raising function (and may be valuable for those reasons). Only government policy

will make a significant difference. Only when far more of us feel that we have to make decisions like Christie's—for reasons of prohibitive cost or whatever—will there be fewer flights and less carbon output.

CHRISTOPHER SANFORD

*Durham, North Carolina*

## Buying the Farmworkers

John Bowe's "Bound for America" was an excellent, eye-opening article on the misuse of so-called guestworker visas. The author quoted some farmers as saying that they liked using the Thai workers better because "Mexicans run away," and the contract workers can't run off. As someone from a rural eastern Washington farm background, I can assure your readers that Central American migrant workers don't just "run away." They maintain informal networks of information on who has the best crop and which ranch has the best working conditions. So any farmer who has trouble with his workers running away must have had some kind of poor working conditions or bad pay.

LORIE LUCKY

*Seattle, Washington*

## Sweet or Sour?

I am saddened that you have fallen so short of fairness in Heather Rogers' "Sweet & Lowdown." The article focuses on Paraguay, which is a very poor country with a huge number of subsistence farmers among its 6 million people. The farmers can earn a premium price for organic sugar cane. I personally see that as a huge positive development in encouraging "trade not aid" to underdeveloped countries. That is our philosophy.

NIGEL WILLERTON

*CEO, Wholesome Sweeteners*

*Correction: In "The Last Taboo," we said the exchange rate for 5 rupees was .1 cents. It should have read 10 cents.*

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