

**Paul Ehrlich: The Problem<sup>16</sup>**

I have understood the population explosion intellectually for a long time. I came to understand it emotionally one stinking hot night in Delhi a few years ago. My wife and daughter and I were returning to our hotel in an ancient taxi. The seats were hopping with fleas. The only functional gear was third. As we crawled through the city, we entered a crowded slum area. The temperature was well over 100, and the air was a haze of dust and smoke. The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people. As we moved slowly through the mob, hand horn squawking, the dust, noise, heat, and cooking fires gave the scene a hellish aspect. Would we ever get to our hotel? All three of us were, frankly, frightened. It seemed that anything could happen – but, of course, nothing did. Old India hands will laugh at our reaction. We were just some overprivileged tourists, unaccustomed to the sights and sounds of India. Perhaps, but the problems of Delhi and Calcutta are our problems too. Americans have helped to create them; we help to prevent their solution. We must all learn to identify with the plight of our less fortunate fellows on Spaceship Earth if we are to help both them and ourselves to survive.

**QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:**

How did Ehrlich come to the conclusion that there are too many people in the world? What kind of reaction did he have?

Where did Ehrlich go wrong when interpreting his feelings, according to Greer?

Were Ehrlich's emotions adequately integrated with his power to think excellently? Explain.

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16 The Population Bomb by Paul Ehrlich.