

Northwest Voices

Letters and emails

'Climate legacy'

Re: "Rick Steves wrestles with 'flight shame' issue" [June 9, NWSunday]:

Danny Westneat wrote: "In terms of carbon emissions ... there's probably nothing worse we can do on an individual basis than take an intercontinental flight." Actually, there is something worse: having a child.

By choosing to reproduce, you're responsible for some fraction of the carbon-dioxide emissions of your children and grandchildren, and all their descendants. This is your "carbon legacy." In a 2009 article in *Global Environmental Change*, Paul A. Murtaugh and Michael G. Schlax of Oregon State University wrote, "Under current conditions in the United States ... each child adds about 9,441 metric tons of carbon dioxide to the carbon legacy of an average female ..." This is the equivalent of 2,700 round-trip flights between Seattle and Europe.

— *Stephen G. Warren, Seattle,
Professor Emeritus of
Atmospheric Sciences,
University of Washington*

Responses

(1) Dissappointing a scientist does not know that it is not overpopulation that is causing AGW. It is what the population is using for energy and what they are making with it. And it is too late to make a dent in it with fewer children. The USA population is growing via immigration, as the resident birth rate has been slightly below replacement level for decades now.

A better reason to not have children is to not subject them to the end result of the above, and the war, disease, resources scarcity, and suffering that results.

(2) Family planning should absolutely be a consideration for all but to say people should not have children is stupid and dangerous thinking. The US does not want to get into the same situation as a countries like Japan that are living a demographic time bomb with a birth rate that is actually reducing the population and rapidly increasing the aging of the population. Their aging population is endangering the social safety net and economic competitiveness. No one is saying people should have large 'unsustainable' families but we should have a birth rate that maintains a demographic balance.

(3) Before voting progressive, think of your bank account.

(4) With professors like this at the UW, why should I even consider sending my urchin to listen to this nonsense..??

(5) The earth and a healthy human population can co-exist. It's done it for almost a million years.

(6) There's much that could be debated in your statement. Human population on earth took a million years to reach one billion—likely with fits and starts along the way that reduced the worldwide population to tens of thousands. Then, under 200 years to eclipse seven billion. Humans today utilize a far different set of finite resources than before the industrial revolution. Couple that with the possibility of tech advances that could dramatically expand human lifespan (see "*singularity*"), and it becomes an open question as to whether the planet can support the human population in the future. Soylent Green, anybody?

(7) my daughter is going to inherit my gas guzzling SUV ...

(8) I'm going to will my Ram 2500 4x4 diesel pickup to my son-in-law.

(9) That's a great truck. I have one too.

(10) I'm the father of five adult children and the grandfather of six youngsters. Large families are the only way to go. The United States doesn't have enough births on an annual basis to sustain its population in part because of nonsense thinking like the professor's. Sky-is-falling alarmist histrionics demanding we give up our freedom, liberty, lifestyles and more and reduce ourselves to nothing more than groveling serfs isn't my idea of a good life. Frankly, I favor adopting Hungary's policy of exempting mothers from income tax for life if they have four or more children. Children are a blessing, not a curse.

(11) The days of groveling serfs were the days when families were large for a variety of reasons - no birth control, high mortality rate - reasons which are no longer true. It is a common trend in nations considered developed that the birth rate falls. The US has not hit zero population growth yet and even if it did, all we'd need to do is allow more immigrants in, provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers, etc. Large families are not the 'only way to go', you're just interested in getting a tax break.

(12) Well said, sir! Possibly this is the most honest and accurate statement ever made on this topic.

(13) This is the kind of Malthusian thinking that opens the door for the next generation towards thoughts of genocide and leftist terrorism. The professor is obviously in the winter of his days, and situations such as these require younger men to provide more hopeful and purposeful direction.

(14) Thank you for your service and may you have a peaceful retirement.

(15) For all of the hoopla that goes into demonstrations fighting for climate change, going green, reducing gas emissions, etc., I rarely see the statement "have less kids" as a partial solution. Kudos to the writer of this letter for speaking this truth.

(16) Isn't it about time for government to charge a "carbon-tax-like" fee on people who have more than two children?

(17) Two? I read it as having any children. Climate change deniers gotta love that, in a century the only ones left will be climate denier families.