
Hardin's thesis: People in rich nations should do nothing (apart from providing birth control) for the people of poor nations, and we should close our borders to them.

Although people talk about our common bonds here on "spaceship earth," that metaphor is misleading. We don't have one ruler, a captain, who makes sure everyone behaves. A better metaphor is a lifeboat. The rich people of the world are in one of the lifeboats, and the poor are in the water, drowning. Most people are drowning. Americans aren't.

How should we respond to the drowning people if our boat is almost full? We have three options:

1. We could be charitable to all. And we'll all drown! (The Christian view is identical to Marxism here.)
2. We could be charitable to some people. But this will never be fair in the selection process.
3. We could do nothing for them, and survive while they die.

Let's now complicate it:

- Reproduction is faster among the poor nations. Soon, there will 7 people in poverty for every "rich" one. Assuming we should share everything, why should each of us support 7 others?
- Ruin of the commons: If we give them access instead of a share, we must assume some of those people will be more selfish than we are. The result of equal access is always harmful when it comes to shared resources. (Note that enforcing rules to protect what is common amounts to NOT making it common)
- Some people want a limited sharing through a World Food Bank. But it's not a bank, since the rich deposit and the poor take. It's a TRANSFER system. Result: WE will pay, and enrich agri-business and shipping companies, to benefit people when it's not a real emergency. Low-frequency certainties aren't genuine emergencies.

Ratchet Effect

In nature, overpopulation is self-correcting (e.g., famine and disease). But there is a lot of suffering in the process. Our efforts to stop the suffering are what break the natural cycle. Our interventions replace the natural cycle with a pejorative ratchet system. Each step is worse than the last, by escalating the number of mismanaged poor.

Eco-Destruction

You can't increase food without reducing other resources of many types (e.g., we increase pollution). In the long run, future generations must accept greatly decreased quality of life in order to reduce suffering now. This is backwards!.

Immigration

What are the real reasons that rich countries permit immigration? To get cheap labor. But generous immigration means that, over time, we prefer to benefit the children of immigrants, because they will take over the commons (example: compare the lives of Native Americans with those of the people who immigrated into North Dakota.)

Door-Shutting

The additional problem with immigration is where to draw a line. If we think it's wrong to stop or slow immigration for OUR benefits, we do so because we recognize that our resources are limited. These resources, however, are not really 'ours' since they were basically stolen from the Native Americans. So, to be fair, we should return all of the USA to the Native Americans - but this would result in a worsening of our lives, so this cannot be right. (Hardin assumes that questions of benefit are more important here than questions of justice.) We can only effect change here and now, now in regards to the past, so we should slow / stop immigration.