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The "Billionaire Brigade" of Population Controllers

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Ted Turner, founder of the Cable News Network, believes that there are "too many people" in the world and that they harm the environment. In a 1997 interview with the *Village Voice*, Turner said that humanity can be dumb "and go to extinction like the dodo. Or we can be real smart and intelligent, and progress to a brave new world." Turner, who has five children, made a startling proposal: "What we need to have for 100 years is a one-child policy....If everybody voluntarily had one child for 100 years, we'd basically be back to two billion people..."⁽¹⁾ Writers Paul and Anne Ehrlich, of "population bomb" fame, had told him years earlier that roughly two billion would be an ideal population for the world.⁽²⁾

Now Turner is putting up serious money to advance population control through the United Nations. Soon after the *Village Voice* interview, he announced a gift of one billion dollars to the U.N. The money is supposed to promote peace and children's health and to help poor people, but also to restrain population growth. Grants are to be given over a period of 10 years, through a new foundation that Turner

controls. When his United Nations Foundation announced its first grants, they included ones for population control in the Philippines, Honduras and Lebanon. Also included was a \$300,000 grant to the United Nations Population Fund to influence media coverage of population stories.⁽³⁾

Old wealth in the United States has long supported eugenics and population control, especially through major private foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller. But while the old-wealth families generally give their money quietly, Turner likes to make a big splash.

Tact is not his strong point. In 1989, for example, when right-to-lifers criticized a Turner television film that supported abortion, he promised a televised debate after the film. "We'll give the other bozos a chance to talk back," he said, according to the Associated Press. "They look like idiots anyway."⁽⁴⁾

In 1996 he criticized fellow billionaires Warren Buffett and William H. Gates III (Bill Gates of Microsoft) for not giving enough money to charity. "Why isn't it better to be the biggest giver rather than the biggest hog?" Turner asked a *New York Times* columnist. He claimed that he had talked to Buffett and Gates and that "they would be inclined to give more if there was a list of who did the giving rather than the having." Buffett and Gates, though, denied having said that.⁽⁵⁾

Actually, both men make substantial donations to various causes, and Buffett's foundation may eventually become one of the largest funders of population control. After Buffett, 70, and his wife die, their shares in the Berkshire Hathaway holding company--worth many billions of dollars--are scheduled to go to the Buffett Foundation. That foundation is already deeply involved in population control. It has given substantial sums to Planned Parenthood groups, Pathfinder International, the Population Council, and a host of similar groups. It has helped finance research on the abortion pill, RU-486, and has given large sums to International Projects Assistance Services, a group that sends abortion equipment to poor countries. The foundation has also helped finance Catholics for a Free Choice, which campaigns against Catholic teaching on abortion, and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, which tries to put a religious seal of approval on the choice of abortion.⁽⁶⁾

Warren Buffett doesn't like to talk about population issues in public. In 1997 he told *Barron's* financial weekly that he might write about them eventually: "But until then, I don't want to comment on the

question or become a spokesman. I'd end up getting 50 letters a day. It would change my life too much."

Relying on comments by Buffett acquaintances, *Barron's* said that the billionaire investor "holds fairly conventional, neo-Malthusian views about overpopulation." But *Barron's* stressed that many industrialized nations' fertility rates have dropped below replacement level and that even the birth rate of poor nations has declined to an average of "3.3 births per woman."⁽⁷⁾

Max Schulz of the Competitive Enterprise Institute criticized Buffett and other members of what he called the "Billionaire Brigade" for buying into "the phony crisis of overpopulation." Schulz contended that problems in high-density population areas "stem from failed socialist policies, not from too many people."⁽⁸⁾

Thomas Goetz, the *Village Voice* writer who interviewed Ted Turner in 1997, made an intriguing comment about the economics of population control. He said that "our billionaires can't fully tap a global market when the potential customers are too busy scrounging for food to save for a laptop. For television, software, and investment alike, a developed economy--with its corresponding low birthrate--produces the best consumers."⁽⁹⁾

Warren Buffett's good friend, Microsoft entrepreneur Bill Gates, shares his interest in population. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, now the wealthiest U.S. foundation, gives large sums to population control. Bill Gates and his father accompanied Buffett and his wife on a 1995 trip to China. The senior Gates told *Barron's* that "we all made a point of visiting a family-planning center at a small village on the Yangtze River." *Barron's* didn't indicate whether the group was concerned about coercive population control in China.⁽¹⁰⁾

But the Gates foundation at least applies one limit. In late 1999 its spokesman said: "We, as a policy, don't fund any abortion services of any kind....We have specific guidelines that our funding isn't to be used to provide abortion services."⁽¹¹⁾

Warren Buffett has given advice to the four children of the late David Packard, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, on how to spend the money of their huge family foundation. The David & Lucile Packard Foundation has put huge sums into population control for many years. Among its grants have been ones for abortion training in Africa, birth control pills in Vietnam, and "emergency contraceptives" promotion in

Washington State.⁽¹²⁾ ("Emergency contraceptives" are largely abortifacient.)

Another immensely wealthy individual, financier George Soros, also funds population control. Soros, like Turner, has five children but worries that other people are having too many. His foundations include the Open Society Institute (OSI), which has a unit that supports abortion. Like many other foundations, OSI is intensely political in its grant-making. In 1998 it noted a large grant to one group "to protect the laws governing reproductive health care, especially abortions"; a grant to another group "to support public opinion research and field organizing in Colorado and Washington states to combat anti-choice activities"; and a \$1 million grant to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America for a "campaign to gain widespread public awareness and acceptance of emergency contraception." More recent grants also show a keen appreciation of propaganda campaigns, especially ones "targeting young people."⁽¹³⁾

In 1998 the International Women's Health Coalition, which has received generous grants from OSI, published a strategy booklet on how to spread abortion in poor nations. Focusing on legal change, it suggested:

Using documents from recent international conferences to promote abortion. While conceding that such documents "do not explicitly assert a woman's *right* to abortion," the booklet suggested that they can be "broadly interpreted and skillfully argued" in order "to expand access to safe abortion."

Training "health professionals in basic abortion techniques" so abortion will be available where it is permitted

Exploiting loopholes so that abortions can be done "even in settings where laws are restrictive"

Changing administrative practice so that, for example, paramedics can do early abortions

Using research on illegal and "unsafe" abortion to campaign for legalization⁽¹⁴⁾

The booklet is one of a long line of Western plans to suppress birth rates in poor nations by propaganda and pressure for legal change. Cultural imperialism is an accurate description of this and other projects of the Billionaire Brigade. Some people use an even harsher term: genocide.



Notes

1. Quoted in Thomas Goetz, "Billionaire Boys' Cause," *Village Voice*, 7 Oct. 1997, 42.

2. *Washington Times*, 17 Feb. 1999, A-3.

3. "Ted Turner Announces \$1 Billion Donation," *Philanthropy News Digest*, 24 Sept. 1997, 1-2, <http://fdncenter.org>, 25 Sept. 1997; Stephen G. Greene, "Ted Turner Maps Out His Sphere of Influence," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 4 June 1998, 9 ff.; Tom Riley, "Keeping Ted's Promise," *Philanthropy*, May-June 1999, 17-22. For current information, see www.unfoundation.org.

4. *New York Times*, 15 July 1989, 8.

5. Quoted in Maureen Dowd, "Ted's Excellent Idea," *ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1996, A-25. See, also, Robert Lenzner, "The Mouth of the South Puts His Foot In It," *Forbes 400*, 14 Oct. 1996, 40-41.

6. Jennifer Moore and Grant Williams, "Corporate Giving, the Buffett Way," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 13 Nov. 1997, 1 ff.; 1996 and 1997 Buffett Foundation tax returns; Jonathan R. Laing, "Baby Bust Ahead," *Barron's*, 8 Dec. 1997, 37 ff.

7. *Ibid.*, 37 & 40.

8. Max Schulz, "From the Editor: Population Control Billionaires," *CEI UpDate*, July 1999, 2.

9. Goetz (n. 1), 43.

10. Laing (n. 6), 38.

11. Trevor Neilson, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 5 Nov. 1999.

12. George Anders, "Giving Away \$9 Billion Isn't Easy; Just Ask the Packard Children," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 1998, A-1 & A-9.

13. Open Society Institute, *U.S. Program Notes*, Oct. 1998, 15; "Program on Reproductive Health and Choice: Grants, 1997-2001," www.soros.org, 13 July 2001.

14. Adrienne Germain and Theresa Kim, *Expanding Access to Abortion: Strategies for Action* (New York, 1998), 6-13. OSI support for the International Women's Health Coalition is noted in Geoffrey Knox, "A Revolution Brewing in Women's Health," *Open Society News*, Spring 1999, 4-5.