

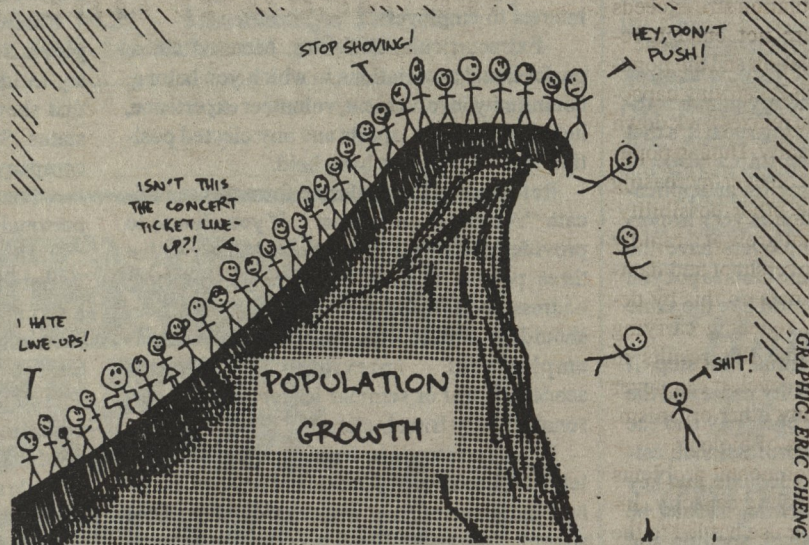
Population explosion not only problem

OTTAWA (CUP)--
by Vincent Lam

Headlines read "greenhouse effect", "ozone depletion", "habitat destruction". A radio announcer shouts, "aaand, the UV rating is...". The planet falls apart and slick TV ads flash messages, "phosphate-free soap", "donate to save the forests", "re-cycle." More disasters, new scientific findings. Everything that could go wrong with the planet suddenly has. Someone said, "know your enemy". Today, environmental enemies are everywhere. So many, so different, how to know them all? How to know the problems of this planet?

Most environmental problems are ultimately due to humanity's ecological impact on the planet. All organisms make their presence felt ecologically, by using resources and reproducing. The more organisms there are and the more they consume, the larger the ecological impact.

In 4000 BCE, there were two million humans. By 500 BCE, 100 million people and today, over six billion homo sapiens. Anyone can guess that our ecological impact is not small and this explains much.



Global warming occurs because there are many people burning fuel. De-forestation is rampant since many people eat many hamburgers. Ozone depletion can thank billions of styrofoam cups and refrigerators. Most environmental problems are due to the phenomenon of high numbers of people using resources at a rapid rate.

The damaging effect of the planet's high human population may lead one to believe that the world's problems rest with the most populous countries, like China, with 1.1 billion and

India with 750 million. This is not the case. What determines ecological impact is not the sheer number of people, but the resource consumption of these people.

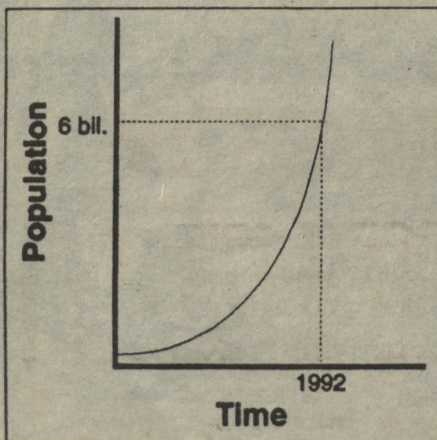
Rich, sparsely populated countries often have alarmingly high resource consumption. Caring For The World, A Strategy for Sustainability notes, "The chief value for large numbers of people today is growth in personal levels of consumption."

Each of Canada's 25 million people consumes

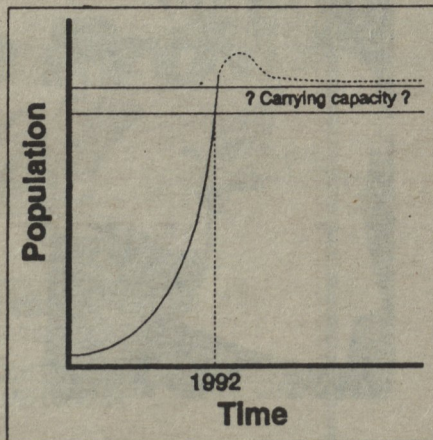
over 40 times as much energy as an average African, which has the ecological impact of over one billion effective people. Global population problems are more accurately viewed as consumption problems and that rich nations like Canada consume a vast proportion of resources.

Many nations of large population, such as China and India, already make concerted efforts to reduce population growth. It is equally important for rich nations to reduce consumption.

Graph 1



Graph 2



Graph 3

