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## Put a Stop to Large Families?

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These days, the issue of family size can be controversial — just ask any couple with several children. Large families are often seen as oddities and treated as an imposition. Why would anyone willingly have so many kids? Don't they know about birth control?

Few comments reveal as much about our times as these. Those with even the slightest historical awareness would know that large families were the norm throughout human history, and for good reason. In the Bible, large families are seen as a sign of God's blessing and children are celebrated as God's gifts. Only with the development of modern birth control and the transformations of values and worldviews that followed, does any other view of large families make sense.

The pill changed everything. In addition, concerns about human overpopulation and an ecological crisis led some to see large families as expensive and inefficient hobbies, or worse. Social planners held out the example of the two-child family, and some ideologues wanted to define "normal" as one child per couple. By the early twenty-first century, reproduction rates were falling around the world. Some European nations were facing a demographic crisis of *low* birthrates and not a single major European nation was reproducing at even the replacement rate.

The same would be true of America, were it not for the higher reproduction rates found among recent immigrants.

Now, within the span of just a few months, two major figures have called for putting a stop to large families — and at least one has suggested making large families illegal.

One of those calling for an end to large families is the Duke of Edinburgh, Britain's Prince Philip. In an interview broadcast on British television this past spring, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II spoke his mind on a number of issues, including family size.

As *The Times* [London] reports,

*Prince Philip emerges in a television interview this week as the model royal "eco-warrior" who believes overpopulation has contributed to the pressures on the world and that anyone who believes in God should go green.*

*The duke hints that curbing family sizes may be the best means of keeping the soaring cost of staple food products, such as bread and rice, in check.*

He continued by arguing that rising food prices should be blamed on large families. "Everyone thinks it's to do with not enough food, but it's really that demand is too great – too many people," the duke asserted. "Basically, it's a little embarrassing for everybody. No one quite knows how to handle it. Nobody wants their family life to be interfered with by the government."

Just taking that argument at face value, the duke states that the problem is not that there is not enough food, but that there are "too many people." Speaking as



delicately as those words allow, that argument is stunningly stupid. If food was in abundance, would the duke argue that people are too few? How does he arrive at the “right” number of people?



Of course, Prince Philip and his wife, the Queen, have four children, we might note. This is far above the level Prince Philip wants others to have. Perhaps there is a Windsor dynasty exception to his proposal.

The interview was conducted by Sir Trevor McDonald, who evidently saw the duke’s comments as rather . . . surprising. Nevertheless, as Sir Trevor explained of the duke, “If he launches into a flow, it is not proper to interrupt.”

In *The Rise and Fall of the House of Windsor*, A. N. Wilson describes the awkwardness British citizens feel when Prince Philip and his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, speak in public. Wilson writes of the sense that there is “something extremely embarrassing about men of clear intellectual limitations attempting to form sentences which would impress the average newspaper reader.”

Prince Philip is famous as the consort to the reigning British monarch, Elizabeth II. He and his children have done much to bring that royal house into disrepute. Prince Philip has sought to burnish his reputation by taking on ecological issues as a personal cause. This has been hard for the duke to pull off, given his penchant for pheasant shooting and fox hunting. As Kermit the Frog might advise the duke, “It isn’t easy being green.”

The other figure to warn against large families in recent days is Paul Ehrlich, author of the scaremongering 1968 bestseller, *The Population Bomb*. The on-line magazine *Salon* recently interviewed Ehrlich, along with several others.

In the *Salon* interview, Ehrlich suggested that every couple “should have slightly fewer than two children.” Then he said this:

*I believe it is immoral and should be illegal for people to have very large numbers of children because they are then co-opting for themselves and their children resources that should be spread elsewhere in the world. You only get a chance to get your fair share.*

Look closely at those words. Ehrlich, a professor at Stanford University argues that “it is immoral and should be illegal” for couples to have “very large numbers of children.” Immoral? Should be illegal?

Ehrlich even finds good things to say about totalitarian China’s “one child only” policy. “The Chinese government, by the way, is the only government that has connected population numbers to global warming, and pointed out how much they have saved in the way of CO2 emissions by their family-planning policy,” Ehrlich explained.

Later, Ehrlich allowed that perhaps a change in tax policy would suffice. “You could simply raise the taxes very high on people who have beyond two children.”

The most amazing thing about this interview is that anyone would take Paul Ehrlich seriously — but the ideological Left still does. Ehrlich has been spectacularly wrong time and time again. In the 1960s, he predicted mass starvation around the world that would threaten the existence of humanity. It didn’t happen. In the 1970s, he warned that within the next decade all major species in the oceans would be dead. Didn’t happen. He warned that great smog attacks in New York City would kill hundreds of thousands in the city in 1973. Didn’t happen. He once predicted that there was a good chance that London would not even exist in the year 2000. We can assume that the interview with Prince Philip is a sign that London still exists.

He has been wrong again, and again, and again. He is still taken seriously by many on the Left because he tells them what they want to hear — and they want to hear that big families are a threat to humanity.

These two interviews, coming to public attention within a few months of each other, are indications of the worldview clash all around us. The response to large families with several children is now like a litmus test that reveals what we really think about the family, about children, and about humanity. Remember that the next time you see that multiple passenger van pull up in the church parking lot. Do you smile?

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