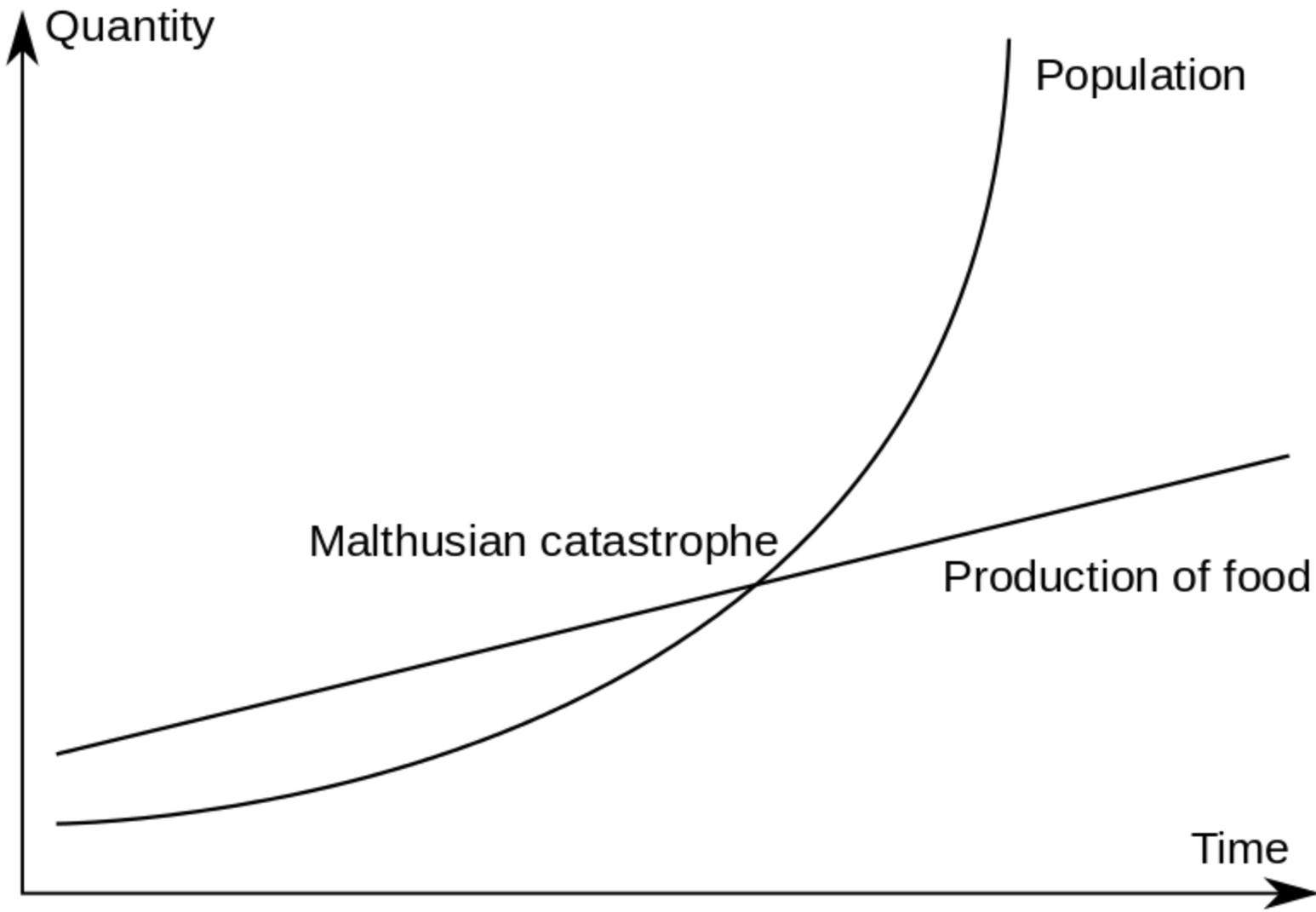


Population growth and Science for the People's critique of Malthusianism

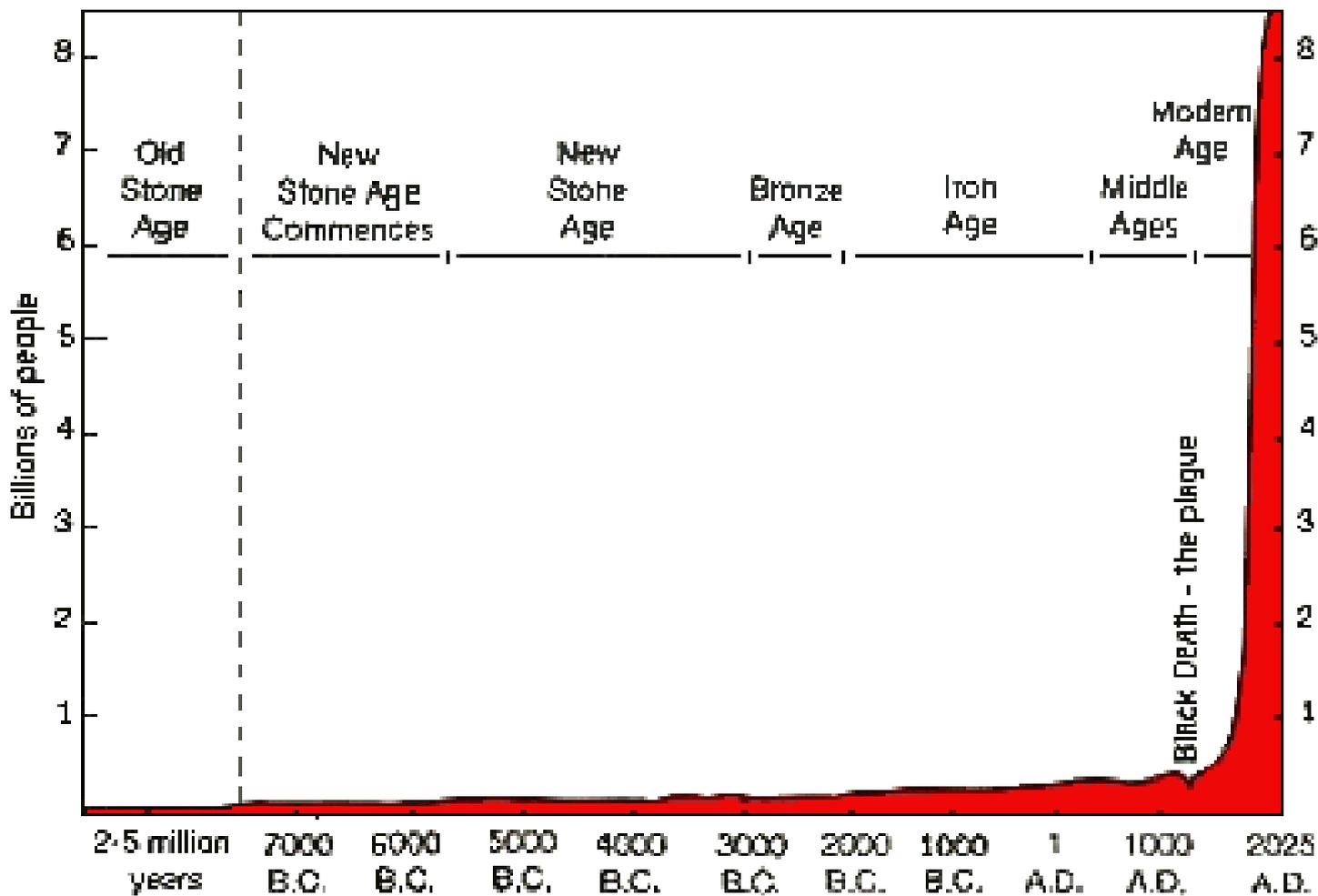
Doug Boucher

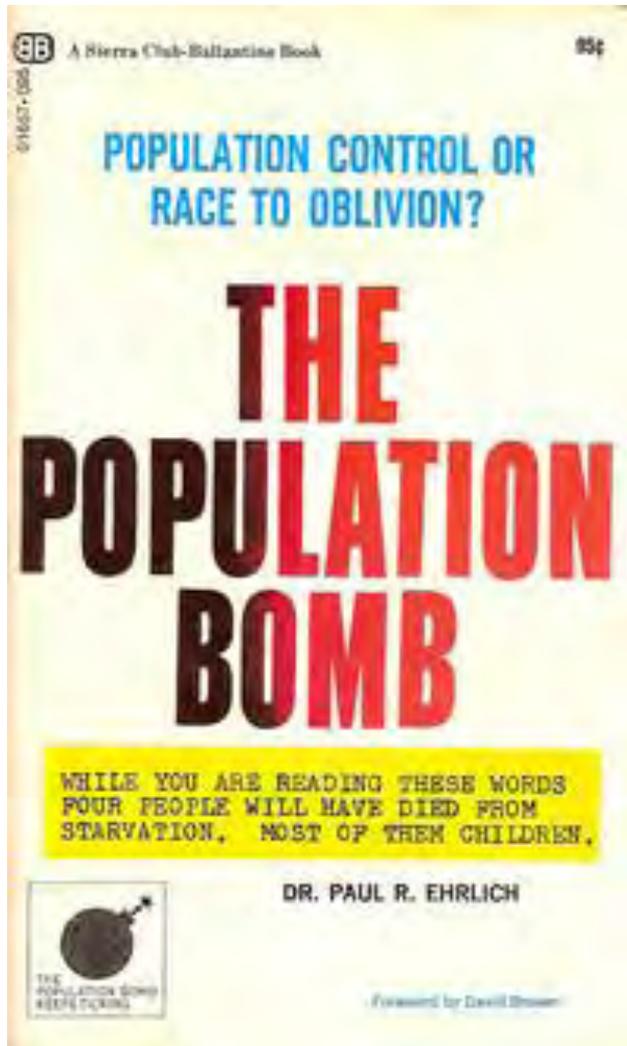
dboucher@ucsusa.org

Science for the People Conference
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
12 April 2014



World Population Growth Through History





Liberal Malthusianism

“We must have population control at home, hopefully through a system of incentives and penalties, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail. We must use our political power to push other countries into programs which combine agricultural development and population control.”

Paul Ehrlich (1968) *The Population Bomb*

Conservative Malthusianism

“Our responsibility is to keep our from being overwhelmed by immigrants. The responsibility of each poor country is to keep the excess population from being produced.”

“Most of the world’s wretchedness is caused by the crunch of overpopulation, which will only be made worse by the drug called ‘aid’.”

Garrett Hardin (1981) *Newsweek*



High-Tech Malthusianism

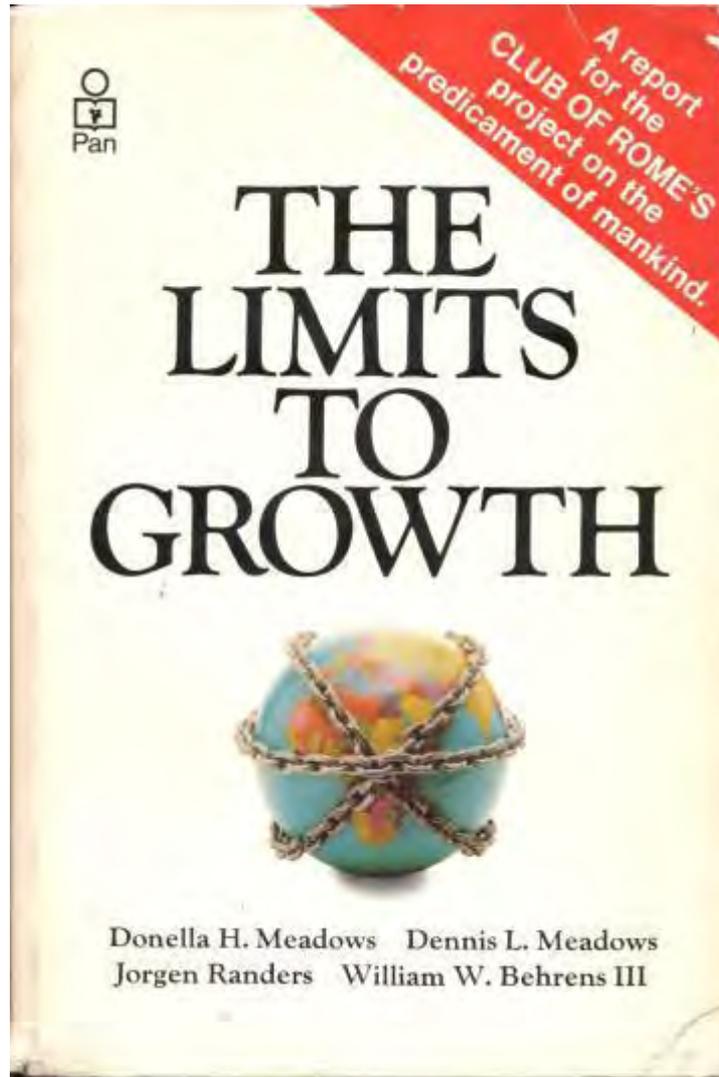
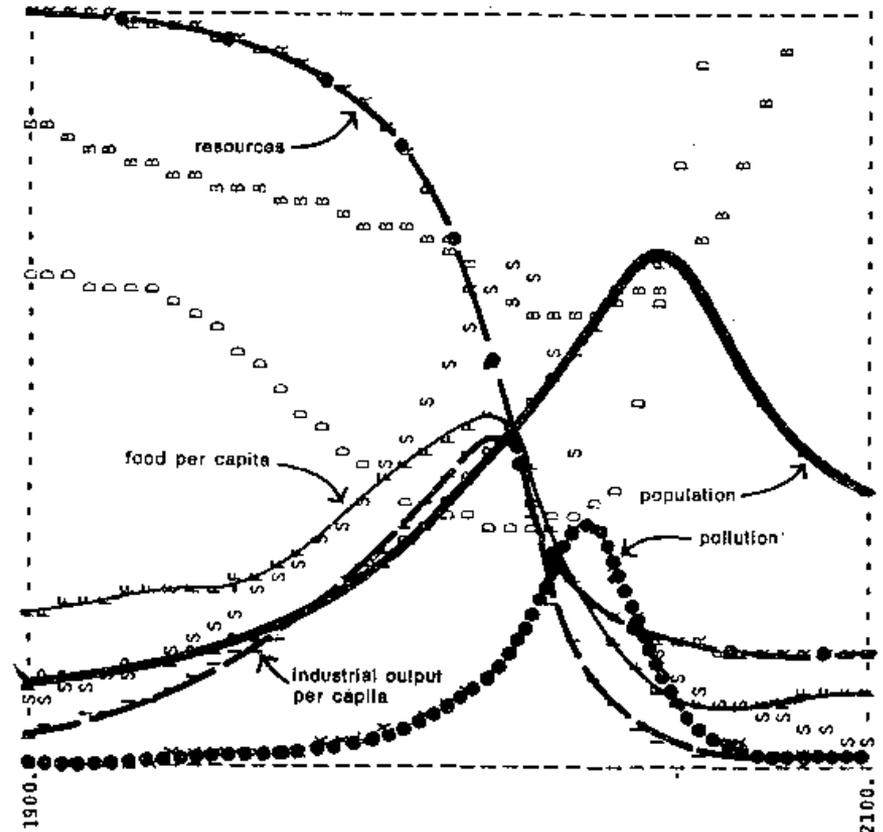


Figure 35 WORLD MODEL STANDARD RUN



Donella Meadows et al.
(1972) *The Limits to Growth*

Elements of SftP's Critique of Malthusianism

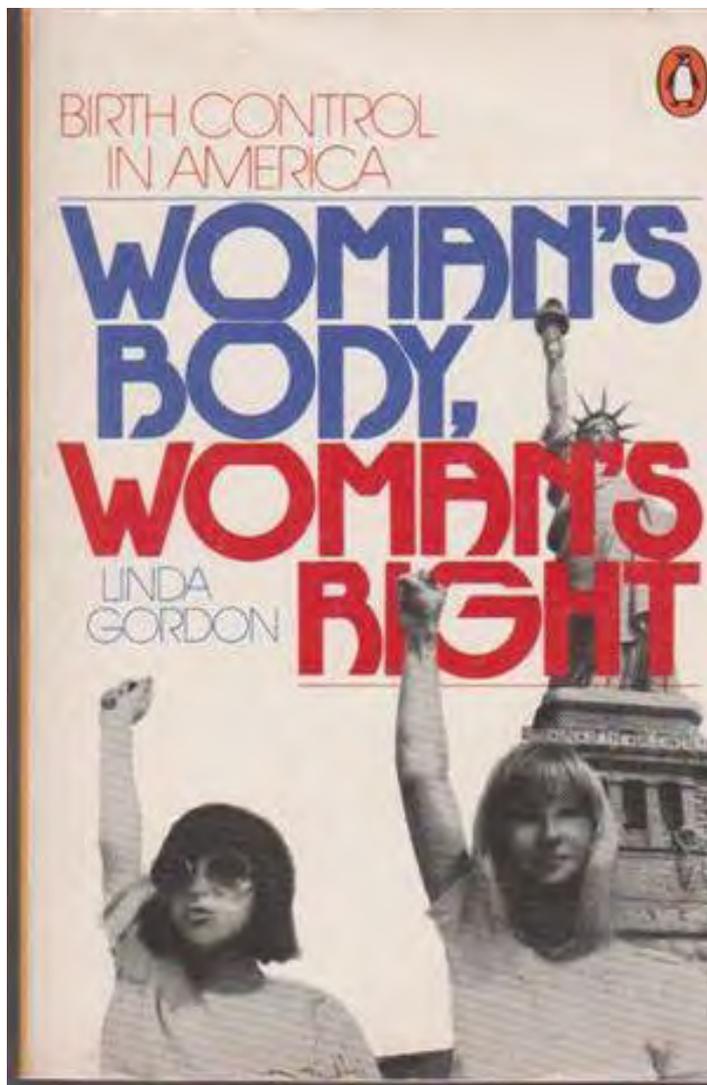
Woman's rights – e.g. forced sterilization in
Latin America

The difference between population control
and birth control

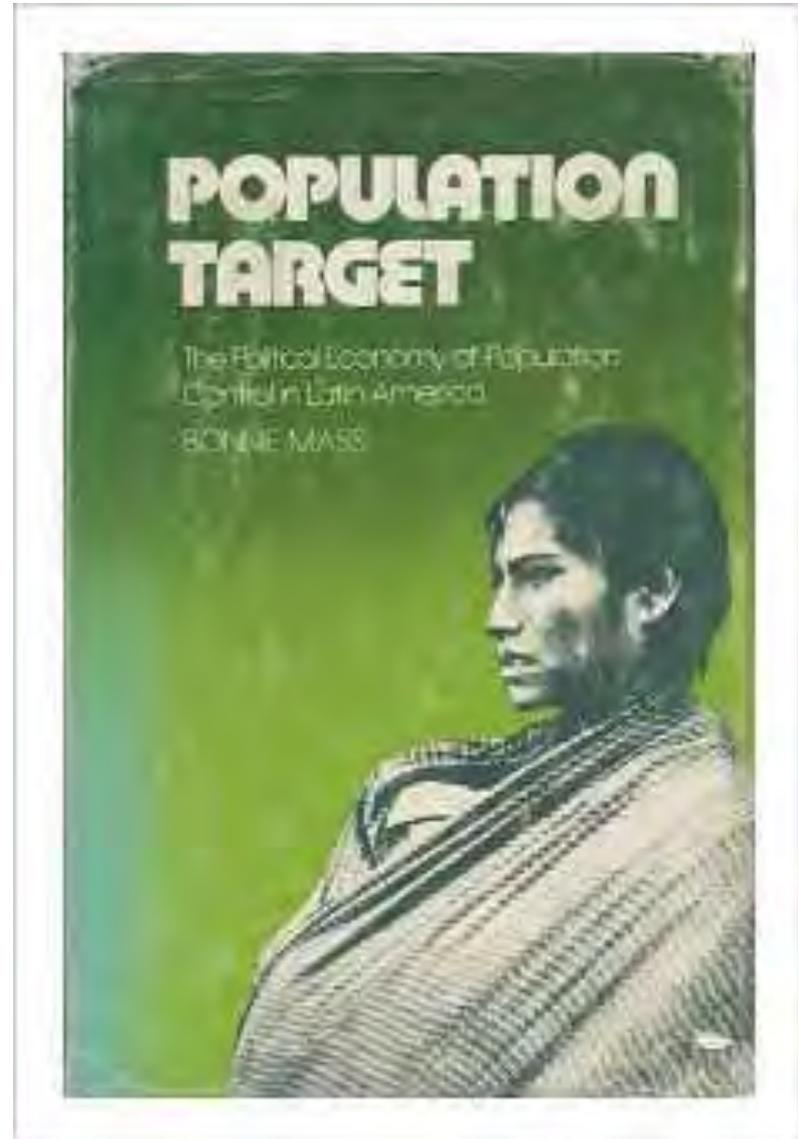
Eugenics and scientific racism

Social science – e.g. the demographic
transition

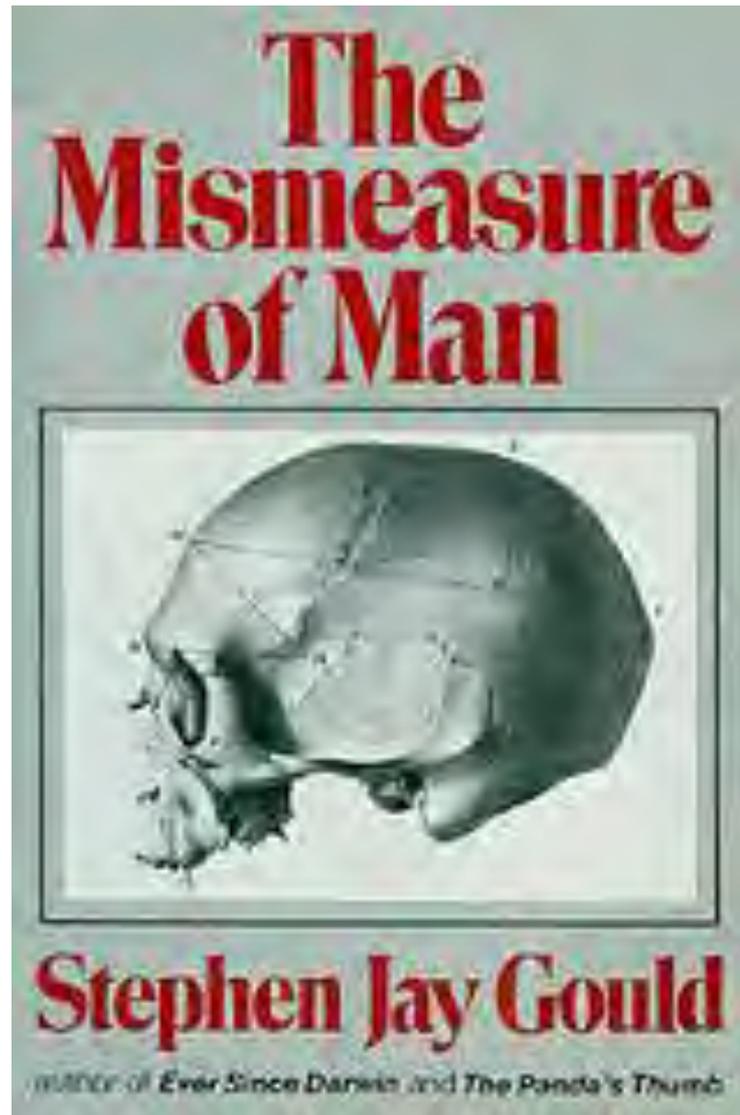
New thinking in economics – e.g. Ester
Boserup



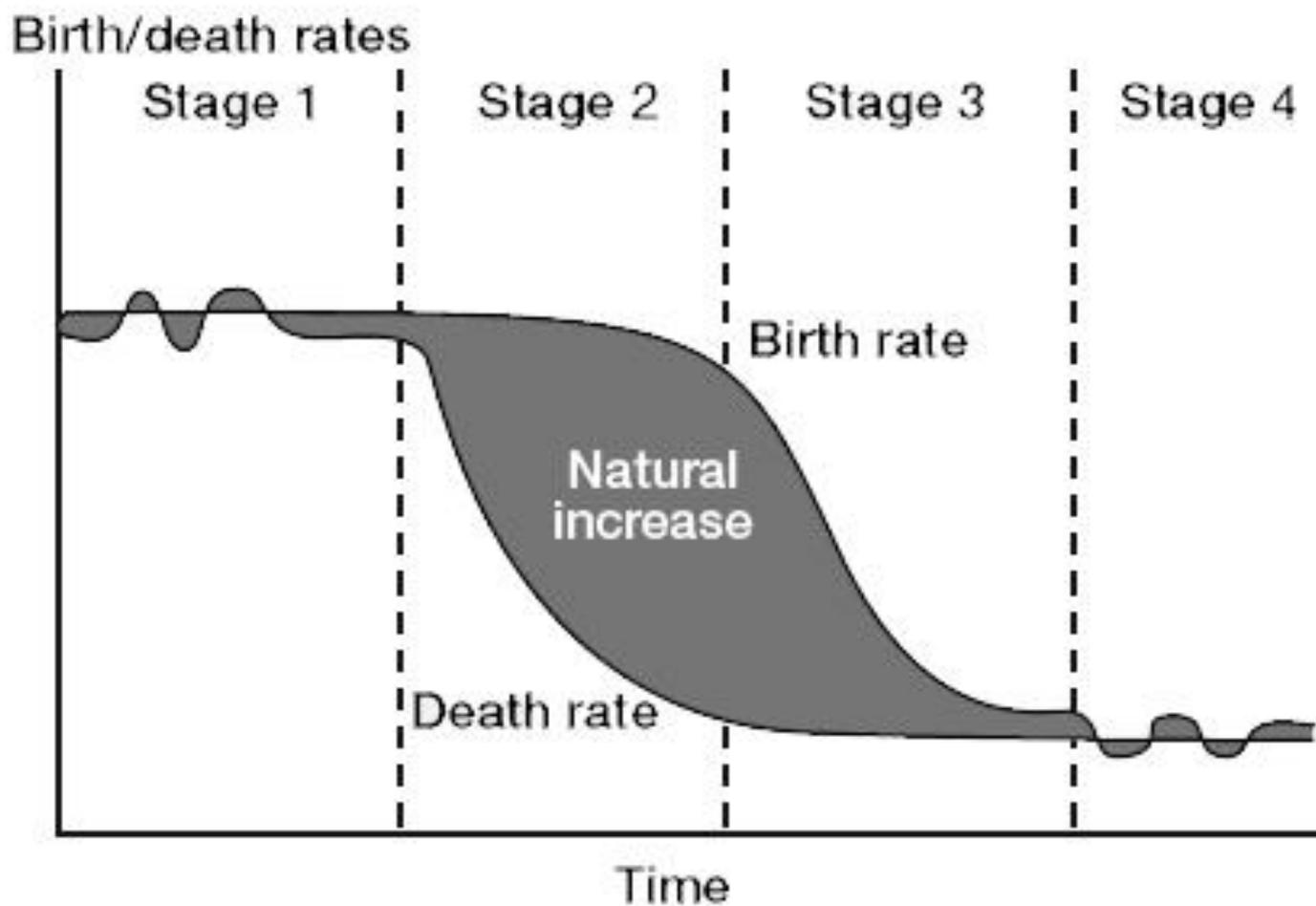
Linda Gordon (1976) *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America*

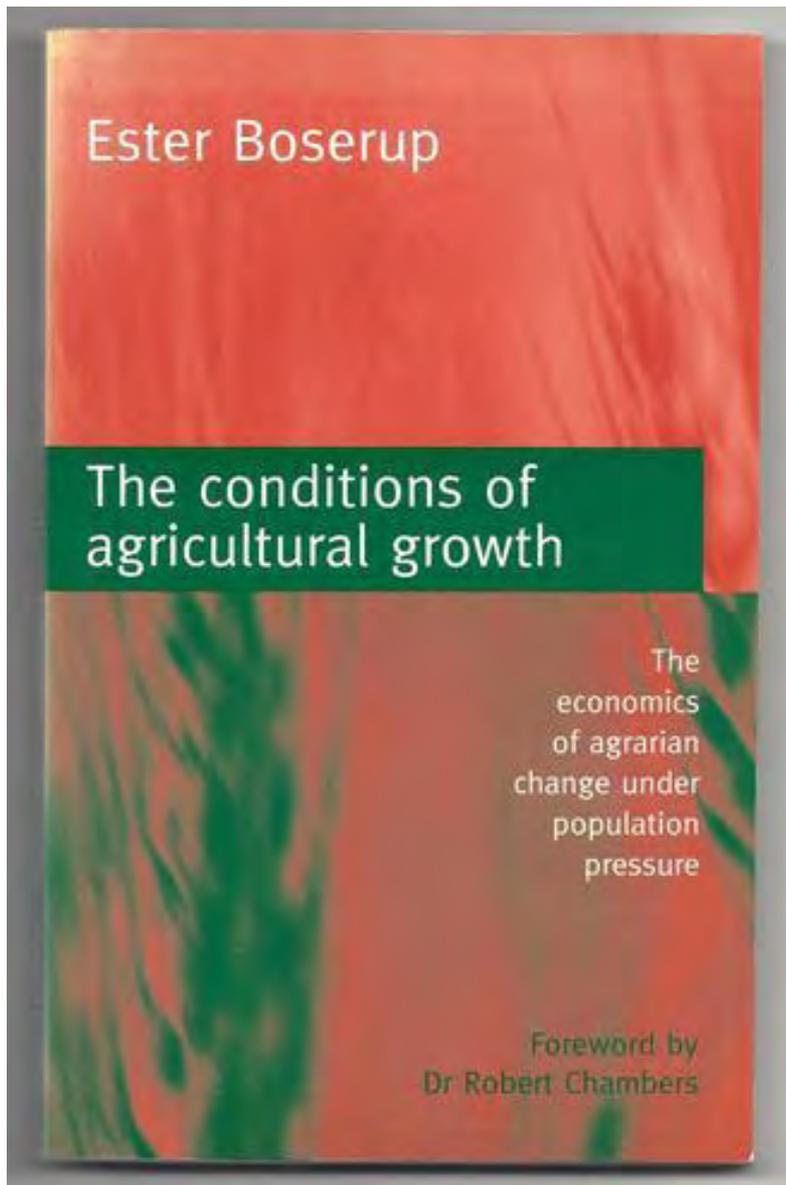


Bonnie Mass (1976) *Population Target: The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America*



Stephen Jay Gould (1981) *The Mismeasure of Man*.





Ester Boserup (1965) *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*

What SftP Contributed that was Distinctive

Some memory of the history of science

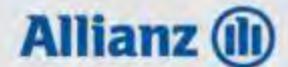
Expertise on population biology

Criticism of the mathematical and computer model arguments on their own terms

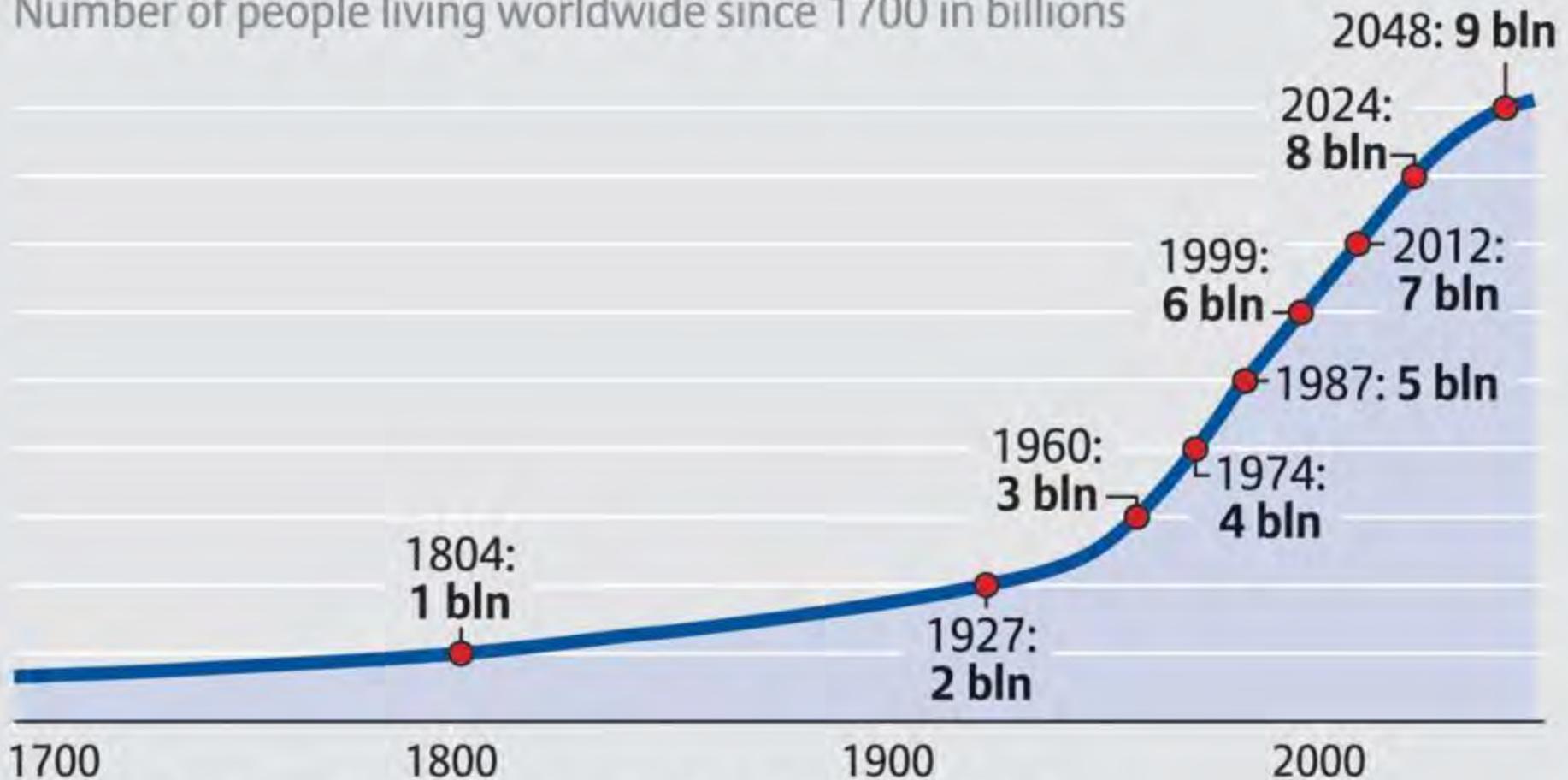
Willingness to question the positivist view of science as objective and value-free

Acknowledgement that we, just like other scientists, had our own ideologies and biases

POPULATION OF THE EARTH



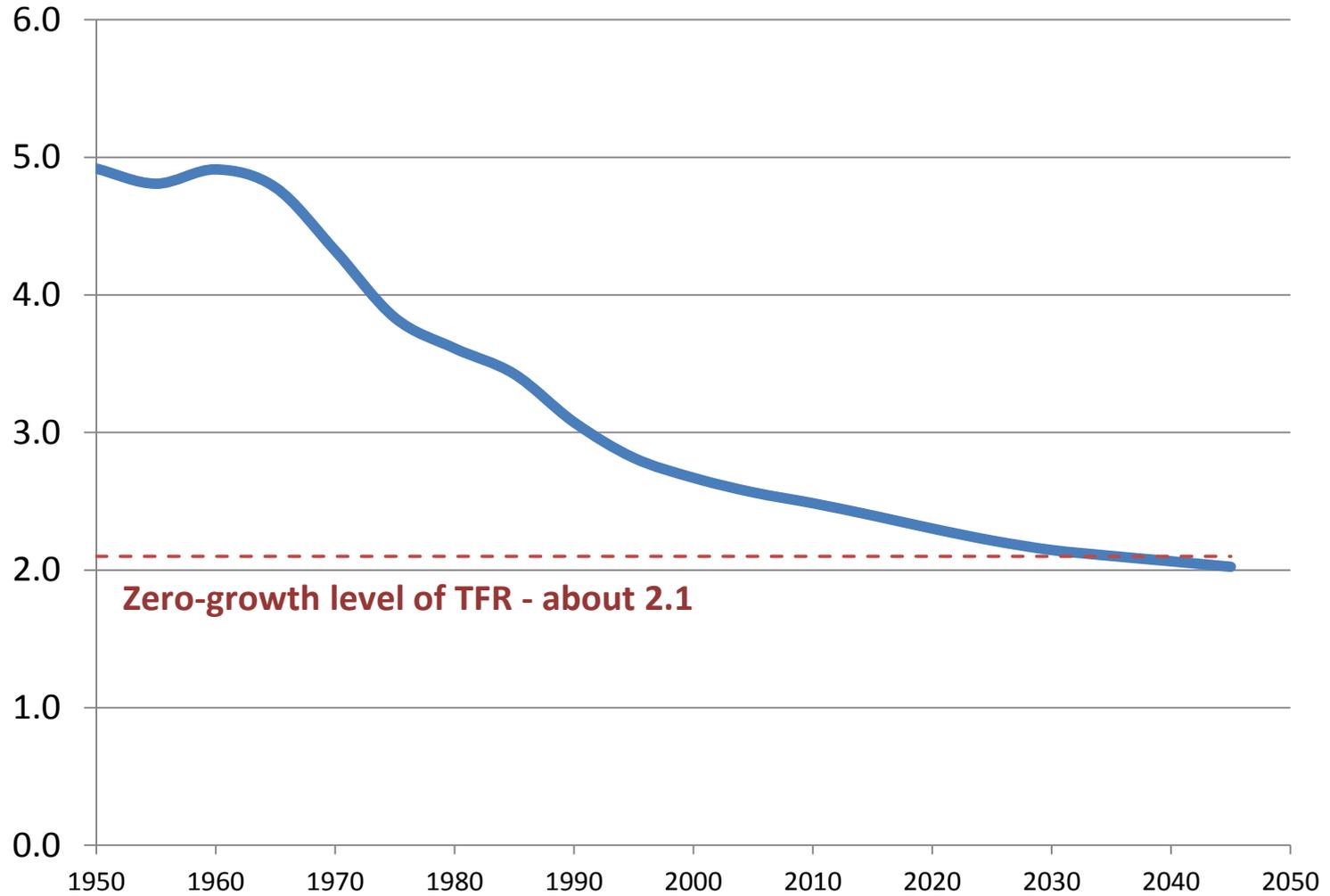
Number of people living worldwide since 1700 in billions



Source: United Nations World Population Prospects, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung

For further information please visit: www.knowledge.allianz.com

The Global Total Fertility Rate, 1950-2050



Interpreting this history

Empiricist Version:

The evidence has proven that we were right

We made successful predictions, and the
Malthusians did not

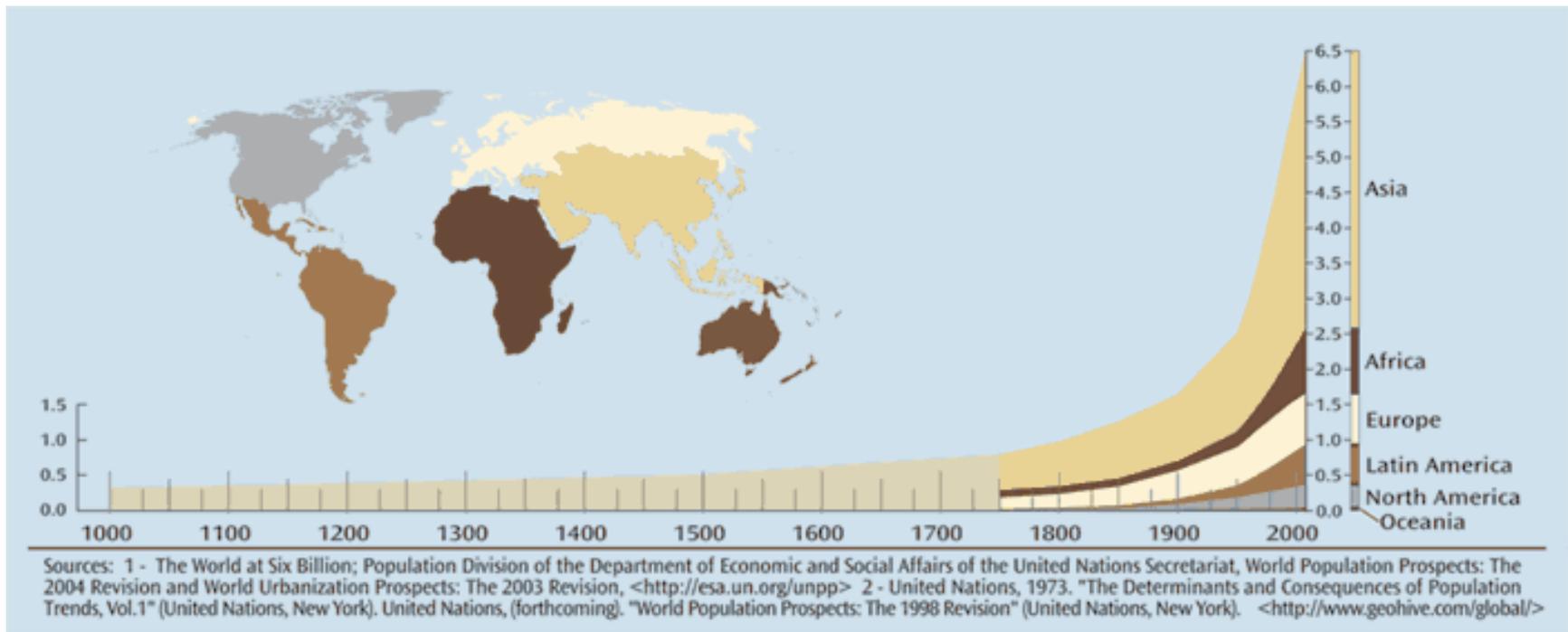
Eventually, the science always wins out

Alternative Version, more in the spirit of SftP:

Our “victory” was related to the rise of feminism
and the decline of overt racism

Compromise expressed in the Cairo Consensus
(1994): improvements in women’s status
(e.g. education) reduce population growth
rates

Our “victory” is still very partial



ECONOMIC SCENE

Old Forecast of Famine May Yet Come True



Water stored in a warehouse in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. The United Nations has warned of stressed water supplies.

ANDREI FUNG OVSCHI / AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

By EDUARDO PORTER

April 1, 2014

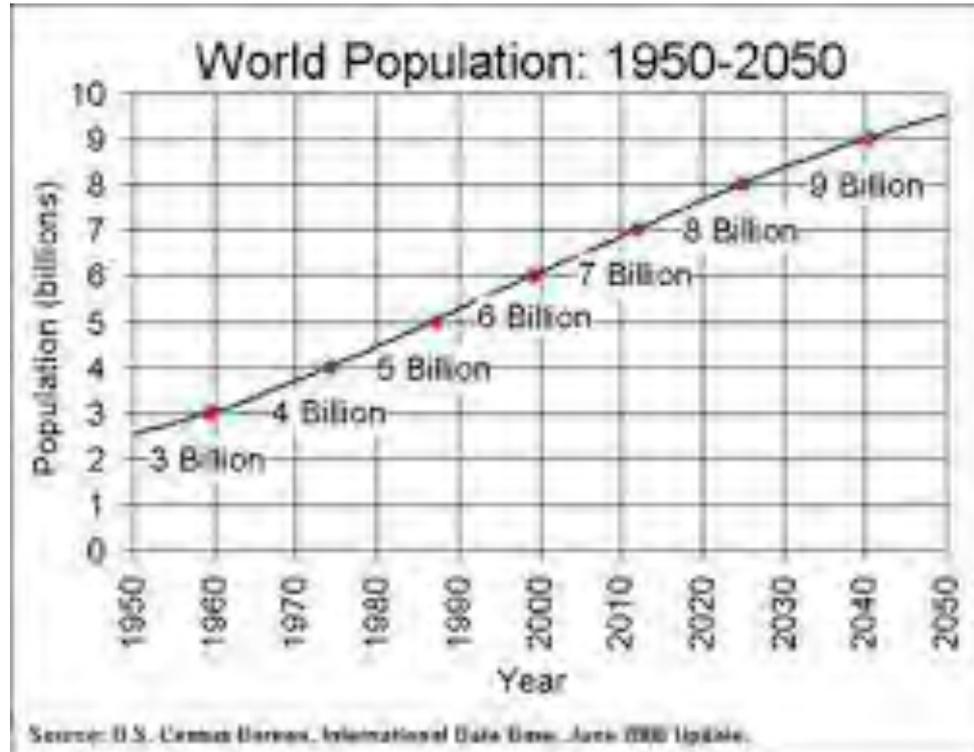
Might Thomas Malthus be vindicated in the end?

Two centuries ago — only 10 years after a hungry, angry populace had ushered in the French Revolution — the dour Englishman predicted that exponential population growth would condemn humanity to the edge of subsistence.

“The power of population is so superior to the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race,” he wrote with alarm.

The New York Times
April 1, 2014

Thank you!



Doug Boucher

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