



# Lumens

Mensa Canada's Western  
Region Newsletter

Islands Mensa, Mountain Mensa, Vancouver Mensa & Yukon Mensa

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## Reg Rep Rap


by Dave Stubbs



A recent major study by an American university has concluded that an individual's mental abilities peak somewhere between the ages of 22 and 27, after which time they gradually decline. For those of us who qualified for Mensa during those five 'prime' years of our life, I guess we're just plain lucky to have chosen the 'brainiest' time of our life to write the test. It's also fortunate that, once accepted into Mensa, we are not required to re-qualify, as many of us might not make the grade the second time around.

Those of you who read MC2 (don't we all?) may have noticed that our national magazine recently took on a new editor named Esme Mills. What you may not know is that she is a local member who lives on one of the Gulf Islands (yes, she's one of us). Welcome, Esme, and thank you for taking on this important role within our organization.

On February 2, the national office sent out an email to all those who had not renewed by that date (yes, I got one) pointing out the benefits of membership and reminding recipients that failing to renew would result in their being dropped from the membership database. As at the end of February, Mensa membership in B.C. stood at 235, out of a total of 1,393 members nation-wide.

This year, the Mensa Canada Annual Gathering is taking place in Ottawa during the weekend of July 10-12, 2009, at Carleton University, with accommodations available in the student residences. Not only are the rooms priced very reasonably, they are also available to us for an extended period of time both before and after the AG. As one who has had many trips to Ottawa (I used to be a federal civil servant), I can vouch for the fact that the city is a beautiful place to visit, parks to relax in, and trails to hike (examples of your federal tax dollars at work). Every Canadian should visit their national capital once in their lifetime, so plan your visit for this July, and get to enjoy a Mensa AG as well. For complete details on the AG, visit the Mensa Ottawa website at [www.mensa-ottawa.org](http://www.mensa-ottawa.org) 

## Mensa Stuff

by Diana Powell

I've encountered a few new faces at Mensa events lately, and I was wondering how many more of you might be out there, who are not too sure about what to do and where to go because we're all new to you. I thought I'd tell you about the events which Ted and I host.

We started a games night in 1999, while I was still living in Los Angeles, assuming the host role from Barb Barker who moved to California. This has evolved into an evening of snacking and schmoozing interrupted by various games. We currently have a bunch of games, including our most recently played ones of Balderdash, Thurn and Taxis, Carcassone - Hunters and Gatherers, Truro, Apples to Apples, and Quiddler. We occasionally have people playing Scrabble, and other stuff. I will be writing up our evenings now, so we can let you know what you're missing! Usually we don't embarrass players by telling who wins and loses, but sometimes I brag if I win, because I seldom win! At one time there was a fierce competition in the snacks we shared and we have had some notable ones. (You know that Mensans think with their stomachs...)

Our second event was the brunch bunch which takes place on the fourth Sunday of each month. This began in May of 2000, with our first trip to the Boathouse in New Westminster. We go all over the greater Vancouver area, with our northernmost restaurant being the Salmon House. To the south, we have gone to Hazelmere Golf and Tennis Club, near the US border, and to the east (depending on your orientation) are the Frogstone Grill and Milestone's in Coquitlam, and Duffy's at Northview Golf and Country Club in Cloverdale. Some of our sites are Buffet, some are menu only, and some combine these two options. Ted and I laboriously and diligently explore all venues before we schedule a brunch, and we are particular about certain things, one of them being price. A number of people suggest places that range in the \$40 to \$50 range, but we try to keep the tab somewhere near a maximum of \$20. So the very fancy places downtown are not on the list. We began the year at the Coquitlam Milestone's; in February, we were at Cucumber Cafe in Richmond, and in March, we went back to the Boathouse with about 21 people.

We began a third event in January, with a tryout (unadvertised) of Video Night at our house. We watched Jabberwocky with its Monty Python alumni cast, and an episode of Rosemary and Thyme, an English PBS mystery series. In February, we moved on to see our newly acquired Religulous, a documentary made by atheist comedian Bill Maher (of HBO fame). We have some snacks, and I have made popcorn each time. Generally the earliest arrivals get to decide what we will be watching.

Do any of these events sound like your cup of tea? Please call us at 604-738-9000 for information.

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# Editor's Letter

by Lisa Le Blanc



*And the child explained,*

*"Easter is a Christian holiday that coincides with the Jewish festival of Passover. Jesus was having a Passover feast with his disciples when He was betrayed by Judas, and the Romans arrested Him.*

*The Romans hung Him on the cross and eventually He died. Then they buried Him in a tomb behind a very large boulder.*

*Now, every year the Jewish people roll away the boulder and Jesus comes out. If he sees his shadow, we have six more weeks of hockey."*



*Happy Easter to All.  
Looking forward to hearing  
from you,  
Lisa*



## Here's another fine mess you've gotten me into...

**WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?**

**DICK CHENEY:** Where's my gun?

**BARACK OBAMA:** The chicken crossed the road because it was time for change! The chicken wanted change!

**GEORGE W. BUSH:** We don't really care why the chicken crossed the road. We just want to know if the chicken is on our side of the road, or not. The chicken is either against us, or for us. There is no middle ground here.



**JOHN MCCAIN:** My friends, that chicken crossed the road because he recognized the need to engage in cooperation and dialogue with all the chickens on the other side of the road.

**COLIN POWELL:** Now to the left of the screen, you can clearly see the satellite image of the chicken crossing the road with what is certainly weapons of mass destruction, perhaps nuclear. We must bomb the chicken before it attacks us, and destroys our American way of life!

**HILLARY CLINTON:** When I was First Lady, I personally helped that little chicken to cross the road. This experience makes me uniquely qualified to ensure right from Day One that every chicken in this country gets the chance it deserves to cross the road. But then, this really isn't about me. Anyway, call me again circa 3 am.

**BILL CLINTON:** I did not have sex with that chicken!

**SARAH PALIN:** As a Mayor and Governor of Alaska I have fought against and stopped the good old boy chickens attempts to cross the road against God's will. It appears I have not fully succeeded. Where's my gun?

**AL SHARPTON:** Why are all the chickens white? We need some black chickens.

**PAT BUCHANAN:** To steal the job of a decent, hardworking American.

# Dear Editor

*Dear Editor,*

Taking a quick read of Canon Bryan's article in the Feb/Mar 2009 Lumens triggers several thoughts.

1. The United States has also provided the Palestinians with billions of dollars, which have been used to buy weapons and train terrorists to attack Israel and other nations of the world.

2. The Jews were given a homeland by international agreement but bought it. Upon the arrival of holocaust Jewish survivors in Israel, Egypt told some 300,000 people to leave their homes in Palestine for a few days while the armies of seven Arab nations would wipe out the Jews. After winning the war of liberation in 1948, the Jews invited all of these "refugees" to return. Some did; others did not. The Jews paid huge prices for land from a few Arab landowners, mostly swamps or desert land that was filled with rocks. There never was a Palestinian people, culture, nation, or language, nor was there an Arab state on that land. The late Syrian leader, Hafez Assad, said: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people; there is no Palestinian entity, there is only Syria!"

3. The Palestinians are not all Arabs. Arabs are Islamic, while over 50% of Palestinians

are Christians.

4. The conflict is not one of Jews versus Arabs. We might better characterize it as Jews versus Moslems.

5. Canon attaches some significance to low Israeli casualties and remarks on the high level of civilian "Arab casualties". When Hamas and Hizbullah militants co-mingle with civilians, establishing military facilities in hospitals and schools (in a deliberate effort to hide behind children), it is no surprise, albeit a sad event, that civilians are victims.

6. If the chief aim of USA support of Israel was to obtain power over oil, wouldn't it make more sense for that support to be thrown at the oil producing nations? I suspect that much of the impetus behind this support comes from American Jews in high places.

I find it appalling that many Palestinian people older than me have spent their whole lives living in refugee camps, but to ask the Jews to not defend against the violence of those would destroy them man, woman and child is not reasonable. It is a huge problem that I reckon no man will solve.

*Gordon Feil*

*Dear Editor,*

In response to Canon Bryan's "superficial" essay (which, I won't disagree, it is certainly is) in the last issue of Lumens, there are a number of topics he raises, tangentially, to a bigger thesis that's as accurate in its conclusion as the rest of his article. His mixing of apples and oranges results in a tasty fruit salad of nonsense.

I will respond to his general bashing of Israel first. It needs to be understood that Israel has effectively been under attack for over 60 years, since its creation. Not only did Israel fend off an attack, from 5 different sides, hours after its statehood was declared, but that battle has been raging on since the beginning. One side will call it occupation, the other side will call it defensive measures. Whatever you want to call it, Israel left the Gaza strip, along with 7,000 Israeli citizens, in 2005. Incidentally, those Israelis left a number of greenhouses in Gaza, greenhouses that would have provided ample amounts fruits and vegetables, enough to even provide for export. Those greenhouses were destroyed by Arabs mere hours after the Israeli exodus.

(Continued on page 4)

## That's a good idea, Ollie, tell me that again...

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: To die in the rain, alone.

ARISTOTLE: It is the nature of chickens to cross the road.

JOHN LENNON: Imagine all the chickens in the world crossing roads together, in peace.

BILL GATES: I have just released eChicken2009, which will not only cross roads, but will lay eggs, file your important documents, and balance your checkbook. Internet Explorer is an integral part of eChicken2009. This new platform is much more stable and will never need to reboot.

ALBERT EINSTEIN: Did the chicken really cross the road, or did the road move beneath the chicken?

GRANDPA: In my day we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Somebody told us the chicken crossed the road, and that was good enough.

DR. PHIL: The problem we have here is that this chicken won't realize that he must first deal with the problem on this side of the road before it goes after the problem on the other side of the road. What we need to do is help him realize how stupid he's acting by not taking on his current problems before adding new problems.



OPRAH: Well, I understand that the chicken is having problems, which is why he wants to cross this road so bad. So instead of having the chicken learn from his mistakes and take falls, which is a part of life, I'm going to give this chicken a car so that he can just drive across the road and not live his life like the rest of the chickens.

BARBARA WALTERS: Isn't this interesting? In a few moments, we will be listening to the chicken tell, for the first time, the heart warming story of how it experienced a serious case of molting, and went on to accomplish its lifelong dream of crossing the road.

COLONEL SANDERS: Did I miss one?

## More Dear Editor (continued from page 3)

Since that time, Hamas has fired no less than 7,000 rockets into Israel. The Chinese rockets (originally sold to Iran) currently being fired into Israel have a range that puts 900,000 Israelis at risk. Israel's defensive actions to get to the heart of the attacks have been widely criticized as disproportionate. There's far too much loss of innocent lives.

The unfortunate truth is that the cowardly methods of Hamas are almost entirely to blame. What kind of people, who actually care about civilians, would use their own innocent people as shields? Would set up mobile rocket launchers in heavily populated areas? In school playgrounds? In Mosques? When that's your strategy, unfortunately there will be civilian casualties.

A great deal of credit should be given to the Israelis for their measured response. Rather than carpet bomb the area into oblivion, they drop leaflets, place phone calls and announce with as much advance warning as possible what, where and when they're going to attack. It is sickening to think of the reports where women and children are directed TO those areas, to inevitably serve as martyrs to the cause, if their waving from rooftops doesn't thwart the attack.

The world erupts in protests. It should be pointed out that between 1948 and 2008, there have been 40,000 Arabs and 22,000 Israelis killed in the middle east conflict. In the same time period, there have been 11,000,000 Muslims killed in wars and terror attacks by other Muslims. There haven't been many protests about that.

Canon goes on to imply that American support for Israel is based on the American need to have some stability in the area, and a launch pad into problem areas, if needed – all under the umbrella of having some control over the vast oil reserves.

First of all, it would seem logical to assume that if you want the oil guys on your side, simply take their side. Imagine how friendly the Arab nations would be if the US were suddenly against Israel? No need for this "launchpad", they'd all be best buddies. Oh, wait a second... they already ARE best buddies, certainly with the Saudis. The Iranians, until 1979, were good friends.

Saddam himself was an ally until he decided to march on Kuwait. UAE, Kuwait, Oman... all in the American good books. The fact is, the US dropping support for

Israel would instantly and strongly boost their standing in the Arab world, whatever part of that world is left to "conquer". It's that simple. And consider all the attacking the US has done (and/or is planning) in the area, and has never once used Israel as a launchpad, I think that's the final nail in that argument's coffin. The whole thing is a pretty weird argument, frankly, based entirely on conjecture with zero credible evidence to support it.

No, the simple fact is that the US played an enormous part (specifically Truman) in the formation of Israel, and therefore has a vested interest in its survival. Initially, I'm sure that was the thinking. In more recent years, given what Israel is providing to the US (and to the world), and given their geographical/geo-political fragility, it's a good thing someone is helping look after them. The list of what Israel and its brilliant minds have contributed to the world is long and easily Googleable, and if you're not familiar with it, I urge you to investigate. You'll be stunned.

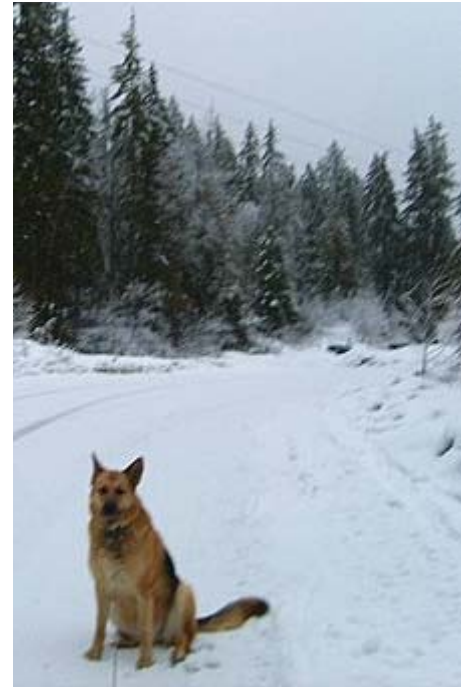
Ultimately, the problem comes down to anti-Semitism. You can call it anti-Zionism, anti-Judaism, anti-Israelism... at the end of the day, it's really just different flavours of the same Kool-Aid. Trust me, "moving Israel" wouldn't solve the problem, it'd just move it so somewhere else. The issue is not "that" land, it's any land. Keep in mind that prior to 1948, much of it was abandoned as arid and useless. It became far more valuable when the Israelis figured out how to make good use of it.

Consider the following:

Arab land total in the world – 300,000,000 people covering 13,500,000 sq km

Israel – 6,000,000 people covering an area of 20,000 sq km (for comparison, Vancouver island is 32,000 sq km)

Israel is less than 0.15% the size of the world's Arab lands. Do you seriously think that's the difference, that's what'll make them happy? To round that 99.85% up? If the world's Arab lands were a football field, Israel is the size of a pack of matches on one sideline. I'm of the opinion the world should support this pack of matches and not be critical of its simple desire to survive. Let it survive, thrive and give to the world all it has to offer. *Horatio Kemeney*



*Kyra, Birthe's Dog, Nelson, B.C.*

### Mountain Mensa

*by Birthe Wilson Ahtner*

After missing bringing my camera for my early morning walk I brought it to-day. Despite numerous tracks in the snow there was no sign of the two deer I had seen the previous days, so I took a picture of my dog Kyra instead.

Is there anywhere in Murphy's Law that states that if you have a camera with you, nothing in particular will appear? No white-tailed deer, no cougars, only tracks from squirrels and raccoons. As far as the cougar is concerned one of my neighbours saw tracks around his house a couple of days ago, but as cougars roam far and wide I was not particularly worried the following morning when I took Kyra out.

# Banker's Hours

by Don Graham

I have never been a banker, but that expression offends me anyway, since it suggests that the only work people in general (not just bankers) do is what is in the public eye. I remember once walking past a bank around 5 a.m. and seeing a bleary-eyed man inside working away at a computer terminal with a stack of paper beside him. Those are the *real* bankers' hours, not to be confused with banking hours.

When new owners moved into the house across the street from us, I used to see the wife seated behind a desk at an upstairs window, working late into the night. I guessed that she was either self-employed or a teacher, since I could think of no-one else who would work those kinds of hours at home. I later learned she was a teacher, and seemed to be working even more than the 55 to 60 hours a week normal for that profession. Doubtless there are others, working long hours not for extra pay, but to get the job done. Few people have much respect for politicians, but I cannot *begin* to comprehend the conflicting pressures they work under, so that no matter *what* they do, they are going to get crap for it from somebody. *Nothing* could persuade me to run for public office.

Think of the work done by volunteers, who work for no pay at all, and extreme volunteers, who devote their entire lives in the midst of grinding poverty in disease-ridden countries to helping the suffering people there. I don't have that kind of dedication.

Some people attribute the work these people do to altruism. Perhaps in some cases it is, but sooner or later altruism will break down, since it is motivated by guilt or an intellectually-driven philosophical position. The real work is done by people who are motivated not by altruism, but by compassion, since that comes from the heart, not the mind. Guilt is fear of disapproval, and is not to be confused with remorse, which results from violating one's own moral principles.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri reserved the ninth and last circle of Hell to traitors of various kinds, the very centre being for those whose treachery is to God. Like all the most significant religious scriptures, this doesn't make much literal sense, but at a deeply symbolic personal level, where "God" represents the very essence of who you are, it means those who deny even their own remorse.

Hell isn't a place you go after you die.

It is at the core of your own being while you are still alive, and until you have gone there and faced your personal demons, you will never be fully alive. If you fail to make that journey, you will be plagued, depending on what you have been hiding from yourself, with symptoms such as headaches, nightmares, digestive problems, depression, anxiety, addictions, physical illnesses, or eating, sexual, or other behavioural, thought, mood, or personality disorders. The list goes on. Suppress one symptom, and another takes its place. (Remember that old saw: "The cure for dipsomania is religiomania.") "Stress management" techniques that operate by diverting your attention from the stress are self-defeating. The only real way to deal with these symptoms is by facing each demon as it arises, and staying with it until it loses its power; it is never easy, but if you deny it, it gets cumulatively worse the longer you postpone it, until the load becomes so great that it crushes you.

Heaven, like Hell, isn't in some kind of afterlife. It is here and now: the exhilaration you experience followed by the peace of mind you achieve by knowing you had the courage to make that descent into the deepest, most terrifying regions of your psyche, and having thereby learned that the only way to live with yourself is with absolute honour and integrity.

What is the real significance of Easter? At the community level, it is essentially a spring equinox festival, comparable to similar festivals in other religions, but at a deeply symbolic personal level, what do you think it is *really* all about? The Christian doctrine that Jesus made the descent into Hell and back so you wouldn't have to is for cowards. You *have* to do it yourself.) ☹

## Mountain (Continued)

A few days ago it was nice and sunny but cold - 10C and I had a visit of a skunk at my backdoor. Now it has warmed up and we're getting more snow. I still can't see the road for the snowbanks. Instead of having a meter of snow outside my door the snow had started to melt a few weeks ago, but then it turned cold again. Although the snow outside my door is probably only 30 or so centimeters tall it was disappointing to see more snow come down. I had hoped to see the bare ground soon and a few snowdrops coming through the dirt. They must be there under the snow.

My husband and I moved to Nelson from Vancouver almost 18 years ago. Despite a long winter

## Mountain (Cont.)

- it starts in November - I have not regretted it one bit. I love it here, it is beautiful and quiet. By the end of March I am a bit tired of carrying wood in for the fire, and I think of the relative ease of heating with gas or oil as I did in Vancouver. But then I think of driving to work in Vancouver with traffic coming to a stand-still because of snow, and I feel happy that the snow I have to deal with here is very different from the snow there and here everybody has snow tires. Driving in the snow is not as scary.

By the time this little update on life in West Kootenay will be published, it's bound to be spring even here and I look forward to it.

*Birthe Wilson Achtner, Nelson, BC*



# Financial Crisis or Resource Crisis?

by Royce Warren

...we have a resource crisis. It is manifested in debt but caused by population growth and rising expectations. There is no technological fix and incentives and economic stimuli will only exacerbate the problem. To see why, one must first understand the concepts of exponential growth and physical limitations.

Our planet is a finite system. That is **the** fundamental fact of life. There are limits to everything. To function, our economies depend upon a variety of physical inputs, including oil, water, basic metals and biomass. If any of these essentials is exhausted without efficient substitution, the system will fail.

The petrie dish is an example of what happens to a living colony during exponential growth. If a single bacterium is placed in a petrie dish that includes all the essentials for life, it will feed and divide into two, then four, then eight and so on. It will continue to grow and divide until it runs out of one – only one is needed – essential nutrient. The overpopulated colony has now exhausted a critical resource and will collapse completely. Even if its population growth rate drops to zero, the colony will still exhaust that nutrient. In a petrie dish nutrients are not replaced naturally. Fortunately for us, there is moderate replenishment of renewable resources on earth. To avoid the fate of the petrie colony, our material demand must be lower than – not **at** – the rate of renewal.

Another example of exponential growth, more related to the economy, uses a chessboard with 64 squares. If we place one grain of rice on the first square and double that on the second, doubling that on the third and so on, by the time we reach the 64th square, we would need more rice than is produced in the entire world. The 16 grains on the 5th square, for example, would equal more than all the previous squares of rice added together:  $1+2+4+8$ . This is the key to exponential growth – each square is a doubling and the 64th square doubles everything that came before.

The doubling time is our growth rate. Conversely, adjusting the growth rate governs doubling time. The formula is approximately  $70/x$  where  $x$  is the growth rate in percent (Wikipedia explains this fairly well under 'Doubling Time'). A meager 1% annual growth rate is still exponential



and has a doubling time of 70 years. The Chinese economy has averaged about 10% real economic growth for the past 30 years, doubling each 7 years. Its aggregate resource use doubles at the same rate. Western nations, at a more sedate 4%, have a doubling time of 17.5 years. **Any** growth is exponential growth if measured as a percentage over time. Further, since it is grounded in population growth and rising expectations, these two factors will ultimately exhaust the resource base. It must! Our collective delusion that growth can continue forever will not change that reality. Dr. Albert Bartlett thoroughly examines this issue in a brilliant video presentation entitled Arithmetic, Population and Energy that one can find on YouTube.

Doubling the real money supply has a similar exponential effect and means that all the inputs and outputs of an economic system double over time. It is not just a philosophical construct that economic growth is exponential growth. There are real and frightening implications for the use of oil, water, fish, soil, and fertilizer. And it also means that outputs, such as waste and pollution, including carbon dioxide, double at roughly the same rate and are also exponential.

Now, apply the concept of exponential growth to a real situation - Peak Oil. Some analysts suggest that we may have reached peak oil already. Even if we haven't, we'll be there soon. It means that we may have reached the maximum productive capacity of the planet's oil fields, a limiting factor just as important as actual supply. Even so, resource depletion itself is a real issue. One cannot continuously eat jellybeans from a railcar full of jellybeans and still have the same number left. As of 2007, the annual growth

rate of oil consumption was about 4% per annum. If we have reached the halfway point of the world's recoverable oil, then the remainder will last only one more doubling until the last drop is extracted. We would be entering the 64th square on the chessboard. At a growth rate of 4%, there is an oil supply reserve of 17.5 years. However, **any growth rate is unsustainable**. As with the petrie dish colony, our economic system must contract, since oil is one of the economy's essential nutrients.

Substitution of oil as an energy source is not a solution. Exponential growth will see to that. Substituting bio-fuels for oil is a case in point. If the USA alone were to eliminate all petroleum consumption and use only corn-based bio-fuels, it would need twice the land area that the nation presently uses for **all** agriculture, including ranchland. There would not be a piece of dirt left in the US to grow an onion. Even the conservative Royal Society of Chemistry recognizes that bio-fuels are a 'non-starter'. It calculated that a single airline flight from London to New York, one way, would use the annual plant production of 30 soccer fields.

It does not matter if we use lithium-ion batteries, nano-batteries, solar power or any other power source. Every substitute has insurmountable problems that show up under exponential growth. Even if we assume zero economic growth, exponential population growth will mean that resource use will still rise exponentially and will be exhausted while we get poorer individually. It is like a snare: the harder we struggle to free ourselves, the tighter it gets.

Potash is another case in point. It contains the highest percentage of potassium of any natural substance and is crucial to growing food for the planet's rising population. China's imports of potash have risen from 2 to 10 million tons per year since 1998. Given its growth rate, China will need 20 million tons per year by 2015. India's growth rate has been even higher. Meanwhile, with world demand at 31.5 million tons in 2007, supply has become a major issue. Even *Forbes*, on July 8, 2008, described global supply as "well below sustainable levels". There is no natural substitute for the high levels of potassium found in potash, short of deforesting and burning the entire planet for ash. (continued on page 7)

# Financial Crisis or Resource Crisis? (Continued)

by Royce Warren

The economic downturn has affected the demand of both potash and oil. People are now simply unable to pay the price asked for this crucial commodity. The consequence is that less food is produced and at lower quality. Global food prices are already rising. With the world's population growing at 75 million per year, potash may be the most essential nutrient for life and the economy.

The efficient resource is either irreplaceable or will be replaced with the scarce and less efficient resource. This renders the substitute available to fewer and fewer people because of price. More importantly, the relative scarcities of essential inputs, where we do have choices, will eventually result in an absolute scarcity of all resources where we have no choices left. The point is that the world's economies are so gigantic that we cannot feed them resources indefinitely. Herman Daly, in his book *Steady-State Economics* (Island Press, 1991), deals with this issue at some length. Juan Martinez-Alier, Garrett Hardin, Culter Cleveland from Boston University, and a host of other economists and Sustainable Development specialists have tackled this issue with the same conclusions. All it takes is the loss of one essential input to cause an economic crisis, although a collective and oppressive shortage of many commodities is a more likely scenario. As the world's economies grow, shortages become inevitable.

Now lets look at debt and resource use. Debt is the artificial increase in the capacity of society to use resources in the present on the promise to pay them back in the future. Resources cannot be used now and paid back later. Only money can; but money is nothing. Borrowing is ultimately a resource issue, not one of finance. The whole purpose of money is to convert it into physical 'stuff' as George Carlin called it. Mortgages, regular or sub-prime, allow people to buy houses, renovate, use energy, buy vehicles, demand infrastructure and services and use equity to buy consumer goods.

The trillions of dollars in mortgages, derivatives, bonds, T-Bills and government and personal debt always come to earth as resource use. For example, investment brokers look forward to the 'Christmas Bonus'. Here is that moment of magical transformation where paper debt instruments, pack-

aged and brokered throughout the year, are converted into cash, where I.O.U's have their physical effect. As these brokers receive their million dollar bonuses, local high-end auto showrooms breathlessly prepare for the buying spree. Maseratis, Hummers and Porsches flee the stores by the thousands. The rest of us act similarly when money is available and extravagances become endemic. The effect of these collective expenditures is increased resource use.

The 2006 commodities boom reflected this situation. The more money that was available, the greater was the demand for commodities. Copper, zinc, lead, fish and timber products were flying, partly to support the housing boom and the sub-prime fiasco. Demand stretched output to the breaking point. Prices rose because of scarcity to the point where ever-more lenient mortgages and loans were needed to maintain the system. The rising price of oil may have triggered the present downturn, but many commodities were involved. The doubling rate of China's economy was finally catching up with the supply of resources. India and South East Asia lent a hand. Fueled by debt, demand exceeded supply everywhere.

Since debt uses resources at a greater rate than would otherwise be the case and since exponential economic growth demands increased debt to sustain the supply of goods, then debt must rise exponentially in order to maintain economic growth. This is precisely what has occurred. As happened under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan before, US real debt under eight years of George W. Bush rose more than the total combined debt of all previous US Presidents, mirroring perfectly the grains of rice on the chessboard example of exponential growth. Even this early, President Obama is on track to confirm the exponential nature of the growth of debt. It is easy to predict that he will incur more debt than even George Bush in order to keep the economic train on the tracks for the next four years. Canada's projected \$64 billion deficit over the next two years is another awesome example of government content to use the world's resources for the present. Halting growth is beyond any politician's mettle and therefore debt will continue to be a tool of governments as long as our economies still

have breath in them.

Without debt, material consumption may be only 20% of what it is now. Debt sustains exponential growth. Without it, the world's growth-based economies would stagnate. Today, the tightening of both credit and derivative-type instruments proves the role that debt plays in maintaining growth. Prices of many commodities have dropped due to reduced liquidity while we are seeing record increases in unemployment and the fracturing of business activity. China, for example, lives because of debt. Without debt, its economy will collapse, and this will create serious internal stress and chaos.

California may be the canary in our western coalmine. For the first time, senior officials in the State are publicly blaming the recession on population growth and excessive use of resources. Despite cash infusions by the Fed, the fundamental problems will remain until California's population and resource use drop to sustainable levels.

The recovery rate of the planet's renewable resource base is reasonably well known. The population that can be sustained is understood, assuming a living standard equal to a lower middleclass European. That figure is much lower than the present population and is declining yearly. We are indeed on the last square of the chessboard.

There are solutions to the dilemma but these will require constitutional change and the extraordinary courage of leaders. The basic, and only initial, elements of any solution are family planning, immigration control, increased foreign aid for educating women in other countries, a revamped tax structure encouraging smaller families and reduced consumerism, plus the adoption of steady-state economics over the present economic growth model. The problem, especially with population, first has to be recognized and accepted. We are facing the same phenomenon as an addict or alcoholic. No intervention can be implemented until we realize, understand and fully accept the problem. No matter how draconian our solutions may seem, they will pale in comparison to the Nature's cruel solutions. This act will play itself out through rising food prices, unemployment, loss of democracy, decline of the middle class, and the concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands – then it gets worse. ☹

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