

Henry George Newsletter

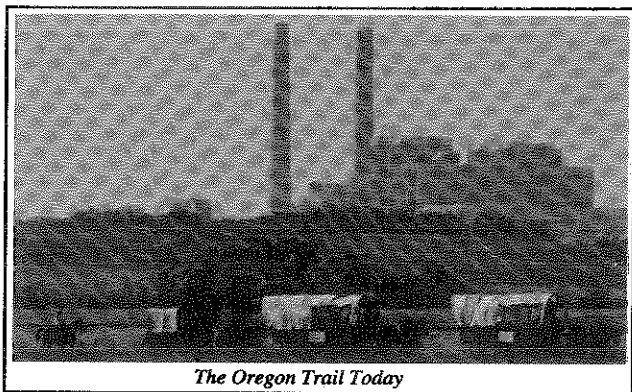
High School Edition



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WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

It is relatively easy to notice surfaces changes in the world, changes in trends and fashions. But beneath these stylistic changes there are often unperceived deeper forces at work that can catalyze events and accelerate change before we are aware of them. The changes that affect population shifts and the consequent pressure put upon the distribution of natural resources are often the result of those deeper, structural realignments. This article can be used with Land and Freedom series #8, *Malthus - Poverty and Population*, and with Economics #2, *Factors of Production*.



The Oregon Trail Today

FOLLOWING THE PIONEER PATH

While historic sites are often on the agenda of the average vacation traveler some people want the deeper experience of unravelling the past through some sort of historical reenactment. Such was the case with a group of people this past spring and summer as they experienced something of what it was like to have participated in the "Great Migration" of the mid-1800s. They travelled by foot, by horse and wagon-train and came away with a better understanding of the everyday hardships and practicalities of their historical predecessors. This article can be used with Land and Freedom Series #17, *The Closing of the Frontier* and # 14, *The Homestead Act*.

Tickets? Supply Meets Demand

By using an activity that many students understand - ticket scalping - the economic concept of supply and demand can be illustrated. In this story a scalper and some economists are interviewed, giving examples of how this practice might exemplify the free market. This article can be used with #7, *Supply and Demand*, in the Economic series in Land and Freedom.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

From time to time, as space permits, we offer ideas for student activities, similar to what we do in the Land and Freedom Series. The following activity is a summary of one that appeared in a recent issue of *Social Education*, entitled "Understanding Recent History Through the Television Medium."

Have students view television shows depicting the decades from the 1960s to the 1990s. Several programs are listed for each decade.

1960s

Leave It To Beaver
Father Knows Best
The Donna Reed Show

1970s

The Brady Bunch
All In The Family

1980s

Family Ties
The Cosby Show
Who's The Boss

1990s

The Simpsons
Roseanne
Full House

After each student has viewed one of the above programs or an equivalent, have them answer the following questions:

1. What are the roles of various family members - father, mother, children?
2. How close to reality does the program come?
3. Describe how this program represents the values and culture of that generation.
4. Discuss the language, themes and dress of the period.

After students have viewed and written about each of the programs, have them compare the changes occurring from one generation to the next. This same method can be applied to comedy programs, police shows, etc.



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World Demographic Shifts Signal Resource Crunch

By Peter Grier

History accelerates. Too often Americans focus on short-term change: change in taxes, change in budgets, change in first ladies' hairstyles. Meanwhile, deeper forces of change sweep past with less notice, faster and faster.

Consider these examples of global trends, all taken from recent international organization trends:

Land. The world is now losing an area of agricultural land almost the size of Ireland to soil degradation every year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

People. The urban population of developing nations is growing so quickly that by 2025 it will be 16 times larger than it was in 1950, the UN Population Fund says.

Health. Since 1953 life expectancy has increased more than it did during all previous history, according to the world bank.

The overall picture from these reports is one of growing pressure on resources, especially in the third world. And a large, restless third world population is becoming the whole world's problem. Migration "could become the human crisis of our age," states the UN population fund study.

The size of developing-nation populations is already overstraining the soil. Over the past 45 years about 11 percent of the world's arable land has suffered moderate or severe degradation, according to the FAO.

In both Africa and Asia, 4 percent of the land surface has seriously deteriorated. By contrast, in North America, despite the dust bowl of the 1930's, the figure is only 1.3 percent.

Overgrazing, deforestation and destructive practices such as poor plowing are the main causes of land deterioration.

One reason famines have struck Africa in recent years is that even good land is being depleted, lowering yields.

The African continent still has much land that could be converted to agriculture. But "few African countries can hope to achieve sustainable agriculture in the near future" because of land degradation, according to the FAO. Latin America and Asia are only mar-

ginally better off.

Meanwhile, people are leaving rural areas in droves. Every year, 20 million to 30 million of the world's poor leave their villages to move to the exploding cities of developing nations.

Mega cities such as Mexico City and Calcutta are new phenomena, according to the UN population fund. Their 16-fold predicted rate of expansion is unprecedented. In the period of fastest growth for developed nations, from 1840 to 1914, their urban population grew only five times.

Megacities are growing so fast they cannot provide housing and services to new residents. "The economies of many developing countries are ill-equipped to support urban growth on its present scale," notes the UN Population Fund.

Increasingly, migrants are spilling across national borders. There are about 100 million international migrants of all kinds, according to the UN report. That represents about 2 percent of the world's population.

Of these, just short of 40 million are refugees fleeing violence or drought. The rest are in search of a better economic life. Whether they will find it is problematic, as they are often the most exploited and vulnerable of workers. In addition, they also risk the backlash of resentment, such as the riots against foreigners in Germany and the growing resentment of illegal aliens in the United States.

Not all global trends are negative. Forty-three years ago, the life expectancy was forty years. Today life expectancy is sixty-three years. During the same period third-world child mortality rates have been more than halved.

Much of this health gain is attributable to simple practices such as the increased use of vaccinations, according to the World Bank's World Development Report for 1993.

A large health gap between the developed and developing world still remains. If child mortality were at first-world levels all around the globe, 11 million children a year would be saved.

And the developing world is still dogged by a mis-allocation of funds, according to the World Bank. It urges

spending less on high-tech urban hospitals and more on simple interventions such as AIDS prevention education and the provision of drugs for the prevention of such prevalent third-world diseases as snail fever.

"Government spending on health should be redirected to more cost-effective programs that do more to help the poor," the World Bank says.

-Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor

The World's Largest Urban Agglomerations

Every year, 20 million to 30 million of the world's poor leave their villages to move to the exploding cities of developing nations.

1950	Millions of people
New York	12.3
London	8.7
Tokyo	6.7
Paris	5.4
Shanghai	5.3
Buenos Aires	5.0
Chicago	4.9
Moscow	4.8
Calcutta	4.4
Los Angeles	4.0
2000*	
Mexico City	25.6
São Paulo	22.1
Tokyo	19.0
Shanghai	17.0
New York	16.8
Calcutta	15.7
Bombay	15.4
Beijing	14.0
Los Angeles	13.9
Jakarta	13.7

*projected

Source: UN Population Division

Questions

1. Why is there growing pressure on the world's resources?
2. Why is there greater danger in the developing countries compared to North America?
3. What is a megacity? Explain the major problems caused by megacities in developing nations.
4. State some global trends that are positive.
5. What conclusions can be drawn from the impact of migration on natural resources?

Following the Pioneer Path

O'FALLONS BLUF, NEB.

Thousands of American and foreign tourists are visiting the historic spots and important geographic landmarks along the Oregon Trail this summer: Forts and settlement sites, trail ruts several feet deep in limestone, rocks where pioneers scratched names that are still legible, new exhibits that give a sense of life on the trail and in Indian villages along the way.

But for some, the only way to truly experience the "Great Migration" of the mid-1800s across 2,000 miles of North America is to do it the way the first pioneers did - by horse, wagon train or on foot.

In early May, about a dozen wagons left Independence, Mo., heading for Independence, Ore., which train organizers plan to reach on October 20. Traveling about a dozen miles a day, they angled northwest through Kansas into Nebraska, where they followed the Platte River - "a mile wide and an inch deep" - west to Wyoming. Past Fort Laramie and Caspar and Independence Rock (named by fur trappers on July 4, 1824), they crossed the Continental Divide at South Pass, then dropped south to Fort Bridger, where they stayed a couple of days earlier in the week.

In some places the historic Oregon Trail is now a busy interstate highway, which this 20th century wagon train is having to parallel. But along much of the way, the full-trip group of five wagons and eighteen people (plus other wagons and individuals who joined up for part of the way) are on the actual trail.

"We're staying fairly close to the time schedule and staying in many of the same campsites," says trail captain Morris Carter, a rugged Wyoming native who looks like he stepped out of the 19th century.

By the time Mr. Carter's group finishes, they will have camped out in 135 different locations, shaded their eyes from the sun, "eaten dust", and smelled the sweat of hard working animals through six states.

They also will have been able to take showers in small town high schools now and then, had meals prepared and hay provided for their animals by farmers and ranchers turned out along the way to see them, and followed by a special wagon with two chemical outhouses. Which is to say, their trip may be more arduous than the one recently taken by a Monitor reporter and photographer (ten days in a rented Buick), but it won't be fully authentic.

Still, those making the trip are full of enthusiasm. "This is something you gotta do, just once," says Roy Katskee, a high school math teacher and coach from Omaha, Nebraska, who traveled the trail on horseback through his home state. "I tell you, it's something else. It's a cleansing of the soul."

"I grew up on the Oregon Trail, I grew up with this in my background. But I can see now how tough it was for them. You admire them a whole lot more after doing this for three or four days," he adds.

For Cookie Katskee, who's a junior high school principal, the trip is a reliving of family history. Mrs. Katskee's great-grandmother traveled by wagon train from Illinois to Nebraska in the 1860s when she was two years old. One of nine children, the girl was inadvertently left at a rest stop.

"One of the outriders caught up with the wagon train and said 'is this anyone's baby?'" says Mrs. Katskee.

The family's first home on the Nebraska homestead was a dugout in the side of a hill - the kind described in Laura Ingalls Wilder's book "Little House on the Prairie." "I'm having a great time out here," said Ray Tinker as he unhitched a pair of mules (Ann and Sue) after a hot and dusty day on the trail. Mr. Tinker is the wrangler for a group out of Aurora, Oregon, a town of 614 people that raised money to send a wagon built in 1880 back to Missouri for the trip.

A retired Army man, Tinker now restores furniture and drives a school bus. He enjoys talking with old-timers who come out along the trail to meet the travelers, especially those who farmed with horses and mules.

"I'm trying to create a historic event, a legacy that I can pass on to my children and grandchildren," he says. Many of those on the trip are educators, like Jan Christensen, who teaches home economics in Gothenberg, Nebraska, and expects to use her experience in the classroom.

"We're not as tough as we used to be," she says, decked out in bonnet and long dress (and sunglasses and running shoes) as she walks along the wagon. "Kids are told they have it rough today, and they do. But it will be good for them to see that every generation had its struggles."

Hans and Eva Messner are teachers from Trossingen, Germany, who spent a few days on the wagon train with their children, Volker and Inga. Mr. Messner spent the past year teaching at Fort Wayne, Indiana, on a Fulbright exchange program. Back home, he teaches English based largely on his love of United States Western history. "This kind of life has always fascinated me," he says.

For some, the trip is a way to see how the kind of life they live today had its roots 150 years ago. As managers of a ranch in Maxwell, Nebraska, Parley and Laura Smith spend much of their time on horseback, looking after 700 cows and 700 calves.

"We ride across pasture all the time," says Parley. "But we wanted to see the tracks and ride with the wagon train."

Farther west, the trail passes by Baker, Oregon, where a new historic interpretive center, built and operated by the US Bureau of Land Management, is drawing as many as 2,000 visitors a day.

Inside, replicas, artifacts, and video displays present a moving documentary of life on the trail. Outside Flagstaff Hill, which overlooks original trail ruts running through the sagebrush, a wagon camp has been set up.

Here, dressed in buckskin and fur, Bud Butts portrays "Festus Coopman", a guide of an 1847 wagon train. Although the character is contrived, Mr. Butts' expertise is not. His great-great grandparents came out by wagon train from Iowa. Traveling with seven children, John and Catherine Butts made it about this far before Mrs. Butts fell ill and died.

Friends looked after the children while John Butts worked as a road-building engineer and as a cooper (most professionals also adopted a trade) to make a home for his family in the Willamette Valley. Bud Butts weaves family history into his explanations of life along the Oregon Trail.

"I was always pumping my grandmother for stories," says Butts, a local resident retired from his job as a shipping foreman in Portland. "She was born in a sod house, and she remembered everything."

If they keep to their schedule, Morris Carter's wagon train will pass by the Interpretive Center in about five weeks. Here, they will get their first glimpse of the imposing Blue Mountains, the last major obstacle along the way.

"It's the same sight Jesse Applegate and the first major wagon train over the Oregon Trail saw 150 years ago."

-Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor

Questions

1. Explain the route taken by travellers along the Oregon Trail.
2. How did they try to make their trip as authentic as possible?
3. What are some of the reasons of the travellers making the trip?
4. How does the government provide activities to assist in the appreciation of historical events.
5. What was the "Great Migration"?

Tickets? Supply Meets Demand...

By John Tierney

Ticket scalping has been very good to Kevin Thomas, and he makes no apologies. He sees himself as a classic American entrepreneur: a high-school dropout from the Bronx who taught himself a trade, works seven nights a week, earns \$40,000 a year, and at age 26 has \$75,000 in savings, all by providing a public service outside New York's theaters and sports arenas.

He has just one complaint. "I've been busted about 30 times in the last year," he said one recent evening, just after making \$280 at a Knicks game. "I look at scalping like working as a stockbroker, buying low and selling high. If people are willing to pay me the money, what kind of problem is that?"

It is a significant problem to public officials in New York and New Jersey, who are cracking down on street scalpers like Mr. Thomas and on licensed ticket brokers. Undercover officers are enforcing new restrictions on reselling tickets at marked-up prices, and the attorneys' general of the two states are pressing well publicized cases against more than a dozen ticket brokers. But economists tend to see scalping from Mr. Thomas's perspective. To them the government's crusade makes about as much sense as the old campaigns against "profiteering". Economists argue that the restrictions inconvenience the public, reduce the audience for cultural and sports events, waste the police's time, deprive New York City of millions of dollars of tax revenues, and actually drive up the cost of many tickets.

"It is always good politics to pose as the defender of the poor by declaring high prices illegal," says William J. Baumol, the director of the C.V. Starr Center for Applied Economics at New York University. "When you outlaw high prices you create real problems."

The more interesting question, economists say, is why scalping is considered so abhorrent. Other businesses can resell products for whatever the market will bear. Airline executives do not get arrested for charging hefty premiums to customers who want the convenience of buying a seat at the last minute.

But state lawmakers have driven the ticket brokering business out of its capital, New York City, by limiting brokers' surcharges to either \$5 per ticket or 10 percent of the face value. The longstanding restrictions, which were strengthened last year, have sent most scalpers to two refuges: the black market and suburbs beyond the state line. The black market includes scalpers who operate out of their homes, using newspaper advertisements to sell tickets, and perhaps 200 regular street scalpers like Mr. Thomas. He said that he buys some tickets from the box office and licensed brokers, and some from players on professional sports teams and other insiders with house seats, but most often from fans on the day of the event. "There's always people with extra tickets," he said. "I work the sidewalks and parking lots."

Mr. Thomas said he made at least \$100 a day for three hours work. At a sold out event, he typically sells tickets for two to three times their face value. He said his most profitable work was the US open tennis championship, where he once sold a \$40 ticket for \$800.

"Scalping is a good living," he said, "but you got to remember that we take risks and provide better service than the box office. If you've got bad seats, we'll upgrade you to something better."

Some licensed brokers operate in New York, sometimes ignoring the state limit on mark-ups, but most brokers prefer the suburbs of New Jersey and Connecticut. There they have openly evaded New York's law, as well as similar anti-scalping laws in New Jersey and Connecticut by using mail services and messengers to deliver tickets to out-of-state customers. They insist that such interstate commerce is not subject to state regulations.

Even operating in Connecticut, Keith Levinson has not been safe from the authorities. This year New York and New Jersey independently began trying to enforce state laws against out-of-state brokers who sell tickets to their residents. Mr. Levinson's firm, the American Ticket Exchange, was one of 11 companies charged with violating New Jersey's law against marking up ticket prices more than 20 percent.

The cases in New Jersey were brought after an undercover investigator for the State Division of Consumer Affairs bought \$28.50 tickets to Bruce Springsteen concerts at prices ranging from \$50 to \$350. In a news release announcing the prosecutions, Attorney General Robert J. Del Tufo vowed to "bring the price of tickets to New Jersey events by stopping the unfair pricing structure caused by ticket scalpers."

Last summer New York Attorney General Robert Abrams announced suits against two brokers from New Jersey and Connecticut who were accused of illegally marking up sports and concert tickets. In October a similar suit was filed against another Connecticut brokers from Connecticut and New Jersey who were accused of illegally marking up sports and concerts tickets. In October a similar suit was filed against another Connecticut broker.

"Ticket scalping is a form of speculation," Dr. Shiller said, "and people oppose speculation without having thought about it very much. Economists know that speculators prevent shortages, and we don't see why the government should regulate ticket sales. I'd like to see more scalping. But to the public - and also to theater owners who want to control prices - it seems as if the speculators are disrupting things."

Politicians commonly argue that without anti-scalping laws, tickets would become unaffordable to most people, but California has no laws against

scalping, and ticket prices there are not notoriously high. And as much as scalpers would like to inflate prices, only a limited number of people are willing to pay \$100 a ticket.

And even if there were enough people or some events to fill a hall at \$100 a ticket, there is another reason that promoters or entainers would not allow all the tickets to be sold at that price. Economists call it the "goodwill" factor: A smart business person will not take a quick profit if it means sacrificing the long-term good-will of customers.

An alternative system that appeals to economists would be something akin to what airlines do: sell some tickets at "affordable" prices to customers willing to stand in line or order months in advance, thereby maintaining public goodwill and tapping the budget-minded market, then allow the rest to be sold at whatever the market will bear.

Scalpers would not have to worry about the law or paying fines. Nor would they have to rely on the complicated strategies they use for getting tickets: sending teams of "diggers" to stand in line, taking out season tickets under fake names, making clandestine purchases of house seats, or paying bribes - called "ice" in the theatre business - to box-office employees to sell them tickets.

Legalized scalping, however, would not necessarily be good news for everyone.

Mr. Thomas, for instance, fears that the extra competition might put him out of business. But after 16 years - he started at age 10 outside Yankee Stadium - he is thinking it might be time for a change anyway.

-Reprinted from the New York Times

Questions

1. What is scalping? How is it done?
2. How do some economists view scalping?
3. Why do you think scalping is illegal? Do you agree?
4. What are some of the economic benefits that speculators or scalpers might provide?
5. If scalping were made legal, what impact would that have on the price of tickets?

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