I am a Quaker living in Stroud, UK, and I have been a Friend for about 50 years. My interest in population started at a precise point in 1958. During an economics course, the lecturer told us about Thomas Robert Malthus and his assertion that any population would grow until it absorbed all the resources available to it. My instant reaction was, "Of course: that’s absolutely obvious," so I was astonished when the lecturer went on to say that no one took any notice of that these days, and that events had proved Malthus wrong.

To learn more about the ideas of Thomas Robert Malthus, visit http://cgge.aag.org/PopulationandNaturalResources1e/CF_PopNatRes_Jan10/CF_PopNatRes_Jan108.html

I took the lecturer to task on this, but his answer was "But technology will always keep ahead, and besides, a growing population is good for the economy". However, he didn’t shift my conviction that Malthus was right, nor did he give me a good impression of the clear thinking of economists.

Years later, I became more informed about population, and, after I had become a Quaker, I brought this to the attention of my Local Meeting (Nailsworth) who recognised this as a Concern. Area Meeting confirmed this; and I and another Friend, Cherry Foster (she has the organising ability that I lack), were supported in our intention of taking it to Yearly Meeting as a Special Interest Meeting (SIM). Friends from other Meetings joined us and finally a team of six took on the task of running the SIM. Among our visitors was Judy Lumb, a QEW Friend from the United States.

Yearly Meeting this year took place in Bath University. I had asked Population Matters for a speaker, and was delighted when Roger Martin’s name was offered. He is Chair of Population Matters, and has had careers in diplomacy and in conservation. He is an excellent speaker.

The whole event aroused considerable interest. About 80 Friends attended to hear Roger, and much discussion followed, both after the meeting and at our stall which was there for two evenings. At the close of the meeting, Friends gave him an enthusiastic round of applause.

**Roger Martin’s Talk**
Roger spoke of the ethical consequences of ignoring population growth. In the end growth will stop, either from more deaths or from fewer births. Which outcome it will be depends on our reaction now.

The anticipated increases to between 8.3 and 10.9 billion in 2050 cannot be sustained in a world running out of natural capital. Consumption of all resources rises with population. He referred to the well-known equation I=PxAxT, where I=impact, P=population, A=affluence (consumption), T= technology.

In Africa, Nigerian population is predicted to rise from 168 to 443 million by 2050: Niger has the highest growth rate in the world yet can't feed 50 percent of its population: the Sahel is already in crisis and faces immense mortality.

The world faces insecurity of food, water, and fuel supplies. The UK’s former Chief Scientist, Sir John Beddington, warns of a "perfect storm" in the 2030s, brought about by population growth, climate change, and peak oil.

Only 2 percent of mammals by mass on the planet are wild: the rest are humans and their animals. In 1750, 88 percent of mammalian life was wild.

If we made provision for the 225 million women who have no access to modern contraception, we could be well on the way to resolving this problem: but world funds for family planning are only equal to 10% percent of Goldman Sach’s bonus budget.

These facts are greeted with total indifference. Few governments, NGOs, and conservation organisations will talk about it, although they know it to be true. But ignoring it is telling a silent lie.

Roger Martin’s full talk can be heard on http://www.jw34.net/temp/PCWC-Edited.mp3.
Considering the Consequences of Unchecked Population Growth

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