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The State and the Stork: The Population Debate and Policy Making in US History

Derek S. Hoff

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From the colonial era to the present, the ever-shifting debate about America's prodigious population growth has exerted a profound influence on the evolution of politics, public policy, and economic thinking in the United States. In a remarkable shift since the late 1960s, Americans of all political stripes have come to celebrate the economic virtues of population growth. As one of the only wealthy countries experiencing significant population growth in the twenty-first century, the United States now finds itself at a demographic crossroads, but policymakers seem unwilling or unable to address the myriad economic and environmental questions surrounding this growth.

From the founders' fears that crowded cities would produce corruption, luxury, and vice to the zero population growth movement of the late 1960s to today's widespread fears of an aging crisis as the Baby Boomers retire, the American population debate has always concerned much more than racial composition or resource exhaustion, the aspects of the debate usually emphasized by historians. In *The State and the Stork*, Derek Hoff draws on his extraordinary knowledge of the intersections between population and economic debates throughout American history to explain the many surprising ways that population anxieties have provoked unexpected policies and political developments—including the recent conservative revival. At once a fascinating history and a revelatory look at the deep origins of a crucial national conversation, *The State and the Stork* could not be timelier.

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