

SOCIETY

Short Is Beautiful

"Short Beautiful" by Thomas Samaras, in *The Futurist* (August 1978), World Future Society, P.O. Box 30369, Bethesda Branch, Washington, D.C. 20014.

The ever-increasing stature and size of North American and North European people has long been regarded as a good thing—a result of prosperity, better diet, and superior medical care. However, in ecological terms, human bigness is unquestionably bad.

So writes Samaras, a California systems analyst. Short people require less food, oxygen, water, clothing, and other vital resources. A 5-percent increase in stature, for example, generally results in a 16-percent increase in body weight, requiring roughly 16 percent more food. An increase in stature of 5 percent also results in a 10-percent increase in surface area, meaning 10 percent more cloth and leather to cover the body and feet. American men of all ages now average 5'9"; and 18-year-old males average about 5'10". Adult males in Revolutionary times averaged 5'6".

FAMOUS SHORT PEOPLE

Science	Military	Haile Selassie	Athletics
Albert Einstein	Napoleon	George Wallace	Nadia Comaneci
Marie Curie	T. E. Lawrence		Bobby Riggs
Buckminster Fuller		Business	Mario Andretti
Margaret Mead	Politics	Andrew Carnegie	Juan Rodriguez
	John Adams	Aristotle Onassis	Sammy Lee
Arts	James Madison	Henry Ross Perot	Pelé
Pablo Picasso	Benjamin Harrison	Armand Hammer	Joe Walcott
Toulouse Lautrec	David Ben Gurion	Harold Geneen	Phil Rizzuto

The economic impact of increasing stature and weight is staggering, says Samaras. For example, if one compares two future American populations of 500 million people with a one-foot average difference in height, the estimated costs of clothing, food, shelter, furnishings, personal items, and transportation would be more than \$500 billion per year greater for the taller and heavier population.

From a study of height, weight, and age data, Samaras concludes that shorter people live from 6 to 20 percent longer than tall people, depending on their profession; are disproportionately stronger; have greater endurance; and are equally intelligent and creative. Many shorter-than-average people have excelled in sports (Olympic gymnast Olga Korbut), business (Aristotle Onassis), the arts (Picasso), and politics (James Madison).

Nevertheless, Americans tend to admire tallness (starting salaries of college graduates over 6'2" are 12 percent higher than those of shorter job applicants); and the average height of Americans has been increasing by about one inch every 30 years. Samaras argues that it is time to discourage the adulation of bigness and to determine, through research, both the best average human size and the factors that are causing Americans to grow taller.