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## The Rich, the Poor and Population

Population problems should be viewed and understood as one aspect of the broader problem of relations between the rich and the poor. Population problems have a place in this relationship both between rich and poor nations and between the rich and the poor within a single society.

The terms rich and poor are deliberately employed rather than the euphemisms developed and developing which serve to mask important realities. Whether capitalist or socialist, the rich countries' absolute and relative superiority in material standards of living over the vast majority of mankind is steadily widening. Some of the poor live in countries that are experiencing some macro economic development and others in countries whose economies are stagnating or actually declining. The phenomenon of "growth without development" has also been observed in various poor countries where economic progress that does occur is largely confined to non-citizens and a tiny national elite. A similar process seems to be at work within certain rich countries, particularly the United States where economic growth largely leaves the poor behind.

Since the time of Thomas Malthus, it has been fashionable to ascribe excess fertility as one of the fundamental causes of poverty, whether among individuals or societies. One advantage of ascribing poverty to fertility is that it absolves the rich from any direct responsibility. As the Hammonds note in their study of town and country labour in England, "during the 19th century, all the social abuses - bad housing, bad sanitation, bad working conditions, could always be justified : if you did anything to improve the conditions of the poor, they would just have more children and, poor things, they would die of hunger."<sup>1</sup> Margaret Sanger, the crusading American founder of the birth control movement, started her career as a radical socialist.

However by 1920, as her movement began to be respectable and to attract support from the wealthy, she took the view that "the chief issue of birth control is more children from the fit, less from the unfit."<sup>2</sup> David Kennedy, the historian, notes that the U.S. birth control movement was converted "from a radical program of social disruption to a conservative program of social control."<sup>3</sup>

The belief that population growth is a basic cause of poverty plays a predominant role in the thinking and public statements of some of the most active proponents of population control policy - the commitment of governments to the deliberate reduction of the rate of population

increase. It is important to distinguish population control policies from those advocating the use of government means to permit individuals to practise family planning. Although lines are often blurred, advocates of family planning primarily argue that it should be a responsibility of governments to facilitate individuals deciding when and how many children they wish to have. Population controllers argue that the societies need to deliberately influence the choices of individuals about desired and actual family size in order to reduce fertility.

The United States government has provided funds to promote population control and family planning in other countries since 1965. Since 1967, substantial federal public funds have been committed to family planning within the United States, although the Population Commission appointed by President Nixon in 1970 in its final report carefully steered clear of endorsing population control based on zero population growth or any other specific goal for the United States.<sup>4</sup> Official thinking, as reflected in a State Department briefing, is that "the U.S. and other nations providing aid are disappointed because rapid population growth consumes and nullifies two-thirds of our aid. Improvements in standards of living we hoped to see in a reasonably few years are taking much longer. More aid will be needed just to maintain the present slow rate of progress. Congress and the public will be more reluctant to increase aid when so much goes to maintain more people at the same levels of poverty which now prevail."<sup>5</sup>

The private enthusiasts for population control are open and explicit in holding fertility responsible for poverty. Consisting largely of wealthy businessmen and industrialists active in the Population Crisis Committee lobbying for increased government spending at home and abroad on birth control, an imposing array of mostly very rich Americans have signed their names to full-page news-paper ads claiming that "Latin American Aid Nullified by Population Explosion" and that "America cannot long remain an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty and hunger. If corrective measure to check this human flood are not taken right here and now the resulting worldwide misery, strife, revolutions and wars will make our experience in Viet Nam appear minor by comparison."<sup>6</sup>

•There is of course another view of the causes of poverty. It is reflected in the reply of Ernest Hemingway to the remark by F. Scott Fitzgerald that 'the rich are different from us': "Yes, they have more money." The poor countries, and the poor within rich countries, are more inclined to explain their poverty as a consequence of the policies and practices of the rich. rather than their inability to limit their own procreation.

The growing confrontation between these two views is at the heart of present thinking about population. On the one hand rich donor countries have become increasingly disillusioned with foreign economic aid to poor countries or with internal economic and social assistance to the poor within their own midst. Such factors, as the decline of the Cold War; the Viet Nam tragedy; the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union, and China; the belief that the poor countries do not affect global balances of power; the frustration over the seeming lack of result from years of aid; and the resentment at namecalling and other less than grateful acts by recipients of aid; have combined to produce a steady deterioration in the qualitative and quantitative flows of assistance from rich to poor countries, particularly from the United States. One element of this deterioration has been the belief, expressed by Clark (a former U.S. Senator), that 'unless poor countries took measures to reduce their fertility, American aid would be poured down a rat-hole'.<sup>7</sup> So great is the disillusion with aid that Robert

McNamara, President of the World Bank, noted at the 1972 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development meeting in Santiago, Chile, that current and projected flows of official aid 'at less than half their stated target are wholly inadequate.'<sup>8</sup> When it comes to trade and an easing of the heavy external debt that cripples numerous poor countries, the rich have shown themselves to be even less generous. There is also a pervasive feeling in rich countries that middle class persons are being taxed to provide economic assistance to rich people in poor countries. This reflects the ghastly and often worsening income distributions in many poor countries. Some argue that the present trickle of aid helps to worsen those inequalities while being of no benefit to the ever fertile masses.

Similar attitudes and acts can be documented in the response to poverty in the United States. While support for programs intended to substantially raise incomes of the poor, whether through income transfers or jobs, dwindles, the President requests and Congress approves additional funds for birth control directed at the poor. Both at home and abroad, if fertility causes poverty then birth control is seen as considerably cheaper than economic aid or, spare us the thought, measures to redistribute incomes.

The relationships between population growth and economic development are complex and by no means clear or uniform for all societies. What can be safely generalized is that (1) lower fertility will in and of itself only slightly increase personal or family incomes unless differences are of the order of eight children per household versus four ; (2) lower fertility will mean fewer children entering school and lesser demand on education, and fewer adults entering the labour market and other government services ; (3) lower fertility may but does not necessarily increase national rates of saving and investment ; and (4) lower fertility has little effect on the short-run distribution of income within a society. High fertility is not a basic cause of poverty nor its reduction a *sine qua non* of economic growth. However, lower fertility together with a number of other measures may make national and personal economic betterment easier. One source of conflict between rich and poor is the belief among many rich that high fertility is in and of itself a basic cause of poverty and that in the absence of fertility reduction economic growth cannot occur. The poor are more inclined to see high fertility as one of many contributory factors to the persistence of poverty and economic growth as the outcome of measures other than fertility reduction.

As the poor countries struggle to cope with rising debts, protectionist trade practices restricting their access to the markets of the rich and a declining flow of aid for everything but birth control, their frustration mounts. It was aptly captured in an election poster displayed by the Communist Party of India in a recently hotly contested election in the state of Kerala. Attacking the Congress Party Government of India for pushing population control, including acceptance of external aid for that purpose, the posters read 'We want bread and they give us loops'.

"We want bread and they give us loops" is the essence of the present crisis and confrontation between rich and poor countries and between the rich and poor within countries. Psychiatrist Robert Coles quotes a Black American mother, "To me having a baby inside me is the only time I'm really alive. I know I can make something, do something no matter what color my skin is, and what names people call me... Even without children my life would still be bad-they're not going to give us what they have, the birth control people. They just want us to be a

poor version of them, only without our children and our faith in God and our tasty fried food, or anything."<sup>9</sup>

The paradox is that as the flow of assistance from rich to poor becomes a dried-up stream, funds for population control increase absolutely and relatively. Globally something of the order of 200 million was available from rich countries for birth control in poor countries in 1972; this figure has been increasing by 25 per cent annually since the U.S. government first provided funds in 1965. Population control has come to represent roughly 10 per cent of total U.S. foreign economic aid. At a time when U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) officials sweat out annually in Congress the survival of their agency and jobs, those in the population division accept an embarrassing largesse. During the last several years while the U.S. Congress has taken a meat cleaver to general foreign aid requests it has consistently voted as much, or more, money for population control as was requested.

The influential lobbyists of the Population Crisis Committee and other groups have done their job too well, earning for themselves the nickname of the "Population Mafia." Robert Black, an official of the Population Division of AID, admits that "we've let ourselves be trapped into a greedy acceptance of this preferred many millions from the U.S. Congress and paying the price of having it identified so nakedly as assistance for population programs only, knowing that this will inevitably create some negative reactions, particularly in the developing world."<sup>10</sup> AID has tried to spend some of the 125 million a year it receives for population on manpower, education, and health services. It is anxious to establish that its programs are concerned with human beings and not just their reproductive organs. The UN Fund for Population Activities, the World Bank, and the more than 30 other international organizations in the birth control business profess similar aims.

In spite of the relatively small sums of money involved, it is apparent to many observers that the population control donors outweigh the recipients in numbers and enthusiasm. Bernard Berelson, President of the Population Council, the prestige research organization in this area, underscores the differing views of donors and recipients. "At present, if I am not badly mistaken, there is a discontinuity of will between the donor and the recipient agencies: they do not fully share the common objective of population control. The irony is that, with a few exceptions on each side, the donors are more committed than the recipients; yet it is the latter who must do the job. One cannot substitute its will for the other's."<sup>11</sup>

Berelson has tried to bridge the bread vs. loops clash by proposing a one billion annual program to provide world wide comprehensive maternal health and child care services including post-partum family planning. Like others he has contended that unless and until infant mortality falls, couples in many countries will continue to want many children in order to ensure that some will survive.

It is significant that the proposal to link the birth control to global maternal health has won little support in rich countries. To those who believe in the population-poverty link it has the disadvantage of serving to increase rates of population growth in many countries for a generation or two by reducing infant mortality at the same time as creating some of the long term conditions for lower fertility. Nor have other proposals for non reciprocal trade preferences from the rich to the poor, easing of debt burdens, or providing poor countries with a limited

share of the special drawing rights created by the International Monetary Fund as a new global currency reserve, attracted much interest.

The world's wealthy nations, with 25 per cent of its people but 80 per cent of its wealth, have been susceptible only to the pressures of the handful of poor countries possessing reserves of oil and natural gas. Unfortunately, aside from heroin, opium, and marijuana, there are few other natural resources which the poor have and can use to extract more favorable terms from the rich. Nor has anyone come up with an effective way of assisting the poor without running the gauntlet of public and legislative opposition among the rich.

Whatever the actual or alleged advantage of multilateral as opposed to bilateral aid or trade, multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, are still ultimately dependent for funding on the governments and capital markets of the rich countries.

The net effect of this population overkill is that the phalanx of national and international donor agencies have got for too much money for population than they can efficiently or usefully spend in poor countries because most recipients want bread and not loops. - Unable to deliver more bread, or even markets for the goods produced by the poor, and insecure in their own jobs and careers, the donor bureaucrats can only suggest to the poor that taking the loops may help somehow to get more bread. There are of course some countries that are genuinely committed to population control and do want and need external aid in this area. There are many more who are willing to take the loops because that is what you have to do these days to have a chance to get other things. Often an interesting and complicated double entendre game is played between local elites in poor countries and officials of donor agencies. The local elites agree to see proposals and aid agreements drafted in such a way as to include some population control or family planning component wanted by the external donors as a means or condition of receiving other kinds of assistance the elites want.<sup>12</sup>

If and when accepting loops does not pay off in more bread, a new stage of confrontation between rich and poor may ensue. Just as more and more poor countries are openly or partially repudiating external debts which consume inordinate amounts of foreign exchange, so may some countries threaten to send back the loops (thus threatening the jobs of the donor agency bureaucrats).

We are beginning to realize that aid for population control is of a special kind. Foremost, it is an attempt on the part of rich countries, whether through bilateral or multilateral channels, to change the most sensitive and intimate personal private behavior of individuals in poor countries. There is a difference between providing a steel mill or a hydro-electric project and providing assistance for contraception with its direct effects on the sex life, family structure and daily behavior of millions. The most suitable analogy is that of peaceful religious conversion. Historical evidence would suggest that the sending of persons or supplies from one society to change the religious beliefs of people in another society has not usually been successful unless backed up by high and sustained degrees of coercion. Since voluntary reductions in fertility depend on countless individual decisions, these new missionaries must per force rely on local converts to reach the masses. This is almost entirely a function of genuine interest and commitment on the part of those converts and external assistance can play only a marginal role in bringing that about.

Like other forms of external aid, population assistance is often tied to the purchase of goods and services from the donor countries. This is particularly wasteful since the brunt of costs are in local personnel, communications and facilities. Lack of foreign exchange in even the poorest country is seldom a major constraint on effective programs and no amount of imported pills, loops, or other contraceptive devices will be used unless someone whom they trust tells local people in a language that they understand about their availability. Nor are there many governments, no matter how pro-American or pro-western, that are anxious to have on display contraceptives conspicuously marked "Gift of the American people" in several languages, a condition that Congress has attached to US material aid to ensure that the presumably grateful poor know to whom to express their gratitude.

Another problem is that what little aid that is available these days is primarily in the form of loans rather than grants. Although many of these loans are 'soft' with low rates of interest and long terms of repayment, repayment poses particular problems. The preventing of births, with or without external loans, does not generate new incomes or revenues. What it does is at best to permit possible savings to occur to individuals and, several years later, to governments as there may be fewer children entering schools and using services. However, the loans have to be paid back out of scarce actual revenues, whether or not the births they may have prevented actually contributed to increasing personal incomes or government revenues. It is at least possible that a substantial portion of the "savings" to individuals in poor countries from their having fewer children will go right out of the country to pay for more imported consumer goods from rich countries. If this happens, a government may find its foreign exchange situation and ability to repay loans worsening.

The tying of population aid to expenditures in the rich countries not only puts up costs and decreases the real value of that aid but also sometimes results in countries being saddled with expensive imported mobile vans, medical equipment and other material things which generate continuing local costs that aid does not meet. There are dozens of countries in which 50-90 per cent of the funds for birth control come from abroad as does most of the senior staff which requires housing, salaries, and equipment out of all proportion to national means.<sup>13</sup> The donor agencies need to demonstrate to the Population Mafia that they are providing material objects, especially contraceptives. Most of the time the real problem is to convince individuals to change their behavior to use these services, almost entirely a function of local costs and efforts.

Population aid is often also given to private organizations within recipient countries in addition to or as an alternative to aid to governments. In many instances, these private organizations have arisen in response to some local elites, primarily in the medical profession, perceiving that there was money available from outside if they set up an organization. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), itself the recent product of voluntary birth control movement of middle-class origin in North America, England and Western Europe, has given 'birth' to numerous recent affiliates in poor countries. Using U.S. government and other funds, IPPF shuttles funds into paper organizations to which national governments are often indifferent ; in all probability these governments are pleased to be relieved of the onus of accepting aid for contraception.

Finally, in many parts of the world the willingness of a government to accept population assistance on a multilateral or bilateral basis has become one of several tests of whether or not

it is pro- or anti-American, and/or pro- or anti-western. Attitudes towards population assistance has become one of the yardsticks to measure the foreign policies of particular governments, both within and abroad.

Not only do the population donors outnumber the recipients but sometimes donors stumble over one another in their haste to spend their funds. Tunisia is an example of a politically moderate, pro-western government committed to private enterprise with interested local elites and a national development plan that stipulates the desirability of population control. As a result there were in 1971 in a country, with a population of five million, fifteen national governments, international organizations, and private foundations engaged in the business of providing population assistance. Jamaica, with a population of three million and similar political attitudes, receives population assistance from 23 different sources.

Such is the shortage of takers that the population donor agencies with their excess funds exhibit a Pavlovian response whenever the grapevine indicates the likelihood of another population recipient. A competition ensues to see who can arrive first with the most contraceptives; in 1971 a small army of donors descended on the Philippines when President Marcos announced a population control policy and willingness to receive external aid. Taiwan, which has endorsed population control since 1964 and is one of the few countries where some of the fall in birth rate may be partly due to government programs, has had to develop an entire center just to handle international visitations from donor agencies.

Donor and recipient relationships in the field of population can be classified in terms of five categories. The first category is one in which primarily, but not necessarily, in response to the availability of external resources, individuals within a poor country establish a private organization to provide purely voluntary family planning, usually by private doctors in the major cities. This first category occurred in most of the islands of the Caribbean; in this case there was indeed a close correlation between the severity of winters in the eastern United States and the willingness of representatives of certain donor organizations to visit their Caribbean clients.

The second category which I call benign neglect is reached when the local voluntary private group begins to make limited requests\*for assistance from its own government such as dutyfree import licenses for contraceptives, permission to promote birth control on the radio or television, etc. Generally these requests are couched in terms of family planning rather than population control objectives, sometimes stressing combined programs of birth control and assistance to sterile persons wishing to conceive. Offering help to the sterile in societies where barrenness places a burden on women or families, especially in Africa, can make such a request much more palatable. Governments respond with benign neglect, purporting to ignore the activities of the voluntary group and their external donors. Unless and until basic political objections are internally overcome, countries may remain at the first or second category of policies and programs in which voluntary, private, family planning bothers no one but reaches only a few persons.<sup>14</sup>

The third category involves a formal public government commitment, usually in a national development plan, to the goal of population control as opposed to merely offering family planning.<sup>15</sup> At this stage external donors may be involved in assisting both governments and voluntary organisations. Often the donors are unable to coordinate their efforts since they

are themselves responsible to very different kinds of constituencies. There is consequent confusion, duplication, and chronic instability since the donors worry incessantly that a change of government will mean a new regime dropping population control and sending the pills or loops back.

Although there are roughly 30 governments in the world, primarily in Southeast Asia, with formal commitments to population control, in most instances it represents a much lower priority for them than for the donor agencies. Local elites have opted to play the population game with donors because it has become synonymous with the aid game in these hard times. Playing the population game usually means that the donor agencies descend, the government makes a formal commitment to population control, and a politically weak, hopelessly understaffed and underequipped Ministry of Health is given the job of birth control. Within the Ministry of Health a special department or agency is created, some local people get trips overseas sponsored by the donor agencies, and some interagency rivalries and jealousies may be created.

The external donors are able to go back to their respective constituencies and justify further funds for population aid since another country has requested it. No matter if external aid is expected to finance 90 per cent of the national program or if the clinics that are opened and contraceptives that are dispensed are almost entirely confined to urban areas and to middle-income families. Since more takers have been found for money to prevent births, there is at least no risk that the donor agencies will be accused of its going down a rat-hole.

A fourth category of population policies causes acute embarrassment for the rich donors. It is a category in which governments pursue population policies based on ethnic or racial differences, favoring increase in numbers of some groups and decrease by others; for example, the white minority regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa anxious to increase fertility and immigration of whites and to promote birth control among blacks. Since these two particular governments enjoy low reputations among their own black populations they have been particularly eager to have private, voluntary organizations spread the word of birth control rather than government agents. It is no credit to the IPPF that it has been willing to provide funds to such organizations under these circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, where politics are organized on tight ethnic or racial lines the key question has been which group is most likely to reduce its fertility and what will that do to the political balance of power. Only where governments have been convinced that their followers would remain more fertile than their foes have they been willing to accept external aid.

A fifth category is that of governments that have accepted the legitimacy of family planning as a basic human right of individuals to decide how many children they want, as well as the desirability of population control, and are seriously committed to a mass, national program to achieve both objectives. The seriousness of this commitment is reflected in the high priority given to the program at all levels of government, the willingness to commit scarce local financial and skilled manpower resources to the program, and the recognition that the fundamental problem is changing mass behavior which involves efforts beyond family planning and the confines of the Ministry of Health. Countries that are serious and in category five meet Berel-son's criteria of will, funds and time. The will is entirely internal, the bulk of the funding will also come from within although external funds may also be of use, and the time span will

require commitments going beyond those presently in power and a modicum of political stability. The evidence suggests that at the present time China, Barbados, South Korea, Taiwan, Trinidad, Singapore, and India are the only governments in the world, which are seriously committed to doing something about population control. Conceivably one of the features of category five behavior, as illustrated by the Chinese, is that the people and society, whether living under communist or capitalist regimes, are psychologically and socially moving towards the second stage of the historic demographic transition when fertility falls rapidly after mortality has fallen.

It is significant that category five governments display divergent ideological and political characteristics. In each instance elites have convinced themselves of the seriousness of national population problems and the need to act upon them. The Chinese, after ideological squabbles and administrative disputes, now seem firmly committed to reducing fertility although totally without external assistance of any kind.<sup>17</sup> Barbara Ward notes that "the only conditions under which strong governmental policies will be introduced...is the perception by developing governments themselves, that the pursuit of high population is as ultimately disastrous for the nation's well-being as a failure to try to increase productivity in farming or to introduce modern industries. No amount of rational or well meant advice and offers of assistance from other governments or agencies can be effective until this essential internal decision has been taken. It can be particularly unwelcome when it is given by countries who, with less than a third of the world's population, consume over 75 per cent of the world's income. But China and India are seeking to discourage large families in terms of their own self-interest."<sup>18</sup>

While the other four policy categories generally entail extensive external involvement and inputs to prod local people to take population problems seriously, countries with policies of the fifth category, I suspect, do not want foreigners messing around. John Lewis, former AID Director for India, writes that "what foreign aid donors can contribute to population control in India is usually over-rated by the donors. Foreign exchange has not been and is unlikely to be a significant constraint on this problem. Technical assistance projects of the traditional kind have a very limited future..... The government of India has repeatedly shown that it is not very receptive to donor 'leverage' on its policy choices in this complex and sensitive field. And the mandate the U.S. Congress has given AID to press funds on the government of India whether it wants them or not can be positively counterproductive in its impact on Indian program management."<sup>19</sup>

However in most poor countries, even where some people are willing to play the population game, the basic concern is with bread and not loops. Nor is inserting loops believed to be an effective short-term means of generating internally more bread. As long as the donors and recipients see the population problem differently and assign different priorities accordingly, their misalliance is likely to be sterile. The loops may be accepted but there is little prospect of national fertility being reduced as a result of their being used.

What elites in many poor countries are most worried about is massive urban unemployment of young persons already born. This is perceived of as the greatest single political and economic threat. With total populations comprising nearly 50 per cent of persons under the age of twenty and urban populations increasing at 6-10 per cent annually, it is no wonder that the politicians are frightened. What no one has been able to devise is a massive means of employing the unemployed either in rich or poor countries. Unless rich countries are willing on a

substantial basis to permit international migration of unskilled and semi-skilled persons, there are no kinds of population external inputs that are going to make a significant short term dent in the hundreds of millions of unemployed, semi-educated urban young people in poor countries.

It is an easy task to take present rates of population increase, age distribution patterns, and dependency ratios to scare the hell out of politicians in poor countries. After all, if there are not enough jobs, schools, or services for present populations what will happen if natural rates of population increase continue at 2-3 per cent per annum.

Politicians are often prepared to take population problems seriously, in addition to the trips abroad to attend conferences and meetings to discuss these problems. However, their concern is more jobs now, and the best that population control can offer is fewer children entering schools five years from now, and fewer job-seekers fifteen years from now. This time perspective is too long in countries where political longevity may be measured in days or months rather than years. If the present unemployed can overthrow or help overthrow a government, than the prospect of their numbers being doubled in 15 years unless births are prevented is of little relevance.

The relevant question for those in power presented with such scenarios is sometimes "what you think is going to happen to the American dollar", or "do you think that it is wiser to invest in Switzerland or Miami", or "where can I go if and when I am out?" Politicians in poor countries can afford to take population problems and policies seriously only if they 'Control their international environment to the point of being reasonably confident of remaining in power to reap some of the long term benefits, when the internal risks of such policies can be minimized through various strategies, or when external donors can promise and deliver bread and loops together.

The Population Mafia has oversold the US Congress and the general public that fertility is the cause of poverty, making birth control cheap substitute for tough concessions on foreign aid, trade, debts, and international monetary arrangements. The arguments used to get Congress to vote money for birth control are not the arguments needed to actually convince poor persons, whether in the US or elsewhere, to reduce their fertility. Indeed, where the poor come to hear of these arguments they may be counterproductive. Having used one set of arguments to convince Congress and other organisations to appropriate funds, the problem now becomes delivering the results wanted, usually measured in neat tables and columns of numbers of births prevented. Except in a few countries, like South Korea and Taiwan, which are already well advanced in terms of mass literacy, industrialization, and urbanization, the mere introduction of birth control services will not provoke widespread sustained acceptance. The determinants of human fertility are complex and interdependent but all the evidence suggests that in most societies a number of changes that persist over time must occur before rapid voluntary fertility change take place. This means investing on a long term basis in a number of infrastructure programs before people are willing to begin to think about having fewer children. It may mean that where infant mortality is still high (as in most of Africa) mortality must fall and rates of population increase go up before fertility behavior may change. Instead of charts showing births prevented, the only meaningful results may be charts of infant deaths prevented.

Just as the rich countries tired of economic aid once they realized that it had no specific short term end, so may they tire of population control when it looks like a long term and expensive funding program that will not provide results for years or generations to come. As the

numbers of prevented births fail to add up, the shrill voices may dismiss this program as "another rat-hole." So long as those poor people out there who breed too fast are not going to overrun us or drop nuclear bombs on us, or deny us their oil or natural gas, we rich folks are not likely to convince ourselves of any good reasons for helping them on a long term sustained basis. Humanitarianism is not enough, especially when they are poor because of their own fault. As long as it does not directly threaten our welfare, whatever political instability they may experience may leave us indifferent.

At one time rapid economic development based on generous foreign aid was held to be an essential prerequisite for something called political stability (a term usually denned as producing governments acceptable to the donors). Then it was discovered that economic development itself could contribute to political instability through increasing expectations, discontent, income inequities and other factors. The Population Mafia has argued that fertility causes poverty, crime, and instability and even international unrest, although the arguments and evidence they have provided are most dubious. Once we fail to prevent sufficient births and wars continue, will we retreat to our rich enclaves, taking steps to ensure that the poor can do us no serious damage?

The road back to population sanity involves a few simple, unpleasant truths. These are:

1. Fertility does not cause poverty, war, or social unrest although it can, combined with other variables, contribute to any or all of these occurring.

2. Reducing fertility may leave the poor just as materially poor as before unless other kinds of assistance are provided and changes made.

3. The task of reducing fertility will have to be done by members of particular societies and outsiders can only play a marginal role.

4. The determinants of fertility at the individual, societal or global level are complex and mutually interdependent and the problem is not primarily one of bringing to bear the heavy artillery of post-coital contraceptives.

5. We had better find some more meaningful reasons for helping the poor than fear of what they may do to the rich if we really wish to eliminate poverty.

6. Trade, aid, immigration, income distribution, and maternal health may have as much or more to do with reducing fertility than furnishing contraceptives. For instance, if we want to help some countries reduce their fertility we might start in the U.S. by not recruiting a majority of their trained medical personnel to solve our own medical shortage; accept as permanent immigrants some of their unskilled young (much as Europe's population problems of the 19th century were partly relieved by the export of more than 50 million unskilled young persons to North and South America, Australia and elsewhere); give poor countries a chance to sell us cheap manufactured goods which are labor-intensive, especially products which depend on employment of women, and be willing to pay more for their agricultural exports. It would be helpful if the Population Mafia with their ample funds for publicity would mention some of these or other measures in their urgent messages to the American public and leaders.

7. We concern ourselves with the real causes of poverty within our own rich countries and not rely on birth control as a form of conservative social control.

8. We do not ask others to do what we say rather than what we do. Until rich societies themselves adopt and take seriously population control policies they should lay off advising poor countries to do so. Instead they should wait for governments to take the initiative and keep external population inputs limited. The Chinese are in a better position, morally and materially, to convince Africans to take population problems seriously than we are.

9. We abandon the pursuit of coercive means of birth control. If we cannot, at home or abroad, help create conditions in which individuals will want to voluntarily reduce their fertility then we have no moral right to coerce.

10. We re-examine our own immigration policies so that we reduce the damage we are doing to poor countries through the brain drain. This primarily means creation of incentives to encourage the skilled to return to their home countries, enjoying regular opportunities to go abroad. Where possible (e.g. US in respect of the Caribbean and European Economic Community in respect of North Africa), we should pursue immigration policies permitting a regular permanent, legal immigration of young unskilled persons and their families rather than the present illegal and temporary male migrant patterns.

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