

POPULATION - A WORLD CRISIS

Norman E. Borlaug

The past several decades have seen a growing polarization of the world into the affluent and the poor nations, and into the have and have-not peoples. While one third of the world's population today lives in a luxury inconceivable a generation ago, half of the globe's total human population often lacks even adequate food, the first necessity for life.

The affluent nations in most cases also draw heavily on many of the "non-renewable" resources of the underdeveloped nations, for their continued economic prosperity. The affluent nations thereby inadvertently, also contribute to widening the gap between rich and poor nations. It is, therefore, obvious that the affluent nations cannot continue to remain aloof and isolated from the problems of the developing nations.

The basic moral and survival issue for mankind for the next several generations is to find a way to assure that all who are born into this world will have an opportunity to acquire the basic necessities for a decent life. Unless this is achieved, there will be increasing national and international social and political disorders on a worldwide basis - with world civilization in jeopardy - as biologic man competes for the basic necessities of life. There will be no peace.

It should be obvious to all educated people that the first step toward providing a decent standard of living to all who are born into this world is to slow the increase in human numbers to manageable levels, and to stabilize populations as soon as feasible. Certainly to do nothing and to rely on the Malthusian principle to stabilize human numbers through starvation is immoral. Moreover, it is both irresponsible and unnecessary, considering

that man, unlike other species, has a brain and mind which can analyze our present population predicament and project ahead and see the consequences for man and his civilization of continued reckless, irresponsible increase in human numbers.

Many studies in recent years involving wild species of animals, birds and fish, in both artificial and natural habitats, have shown that there are natural laws which restrict growth of the populations long before shortage of food and starvation limits increase. The natural device varies from species to species. Undoubtedly man's increase in numbers, before he acquired his present cultures and civilization, was governed in part by one or more of these natural laws. In the process of the development of his religious, ethical and humanistic philosophies which in turn contributed to the development of his cultures and civilization, these devices have been made ineffective. This has resulted in our present population dilemma.

Man must today face up to the multi-faceted, many headed population monster if he is to avoid disaster. Exploding human population growth first threatens the survival of many other species but, moreover, it also threatens civilization and eventually survival of man himself.

We must avoid seeking a simple answer to the many complex inter-related problems resulting from astronomical increase in human numbers, as we have done in the past. It is unwise to continue to develop noisy, emotional, imbalanced attacks on single aspects of this complex problem, as has been done by some ardent environmentalists in the past. All too often this approach has led to alienating some segments of society - especially the underprivileged low income groups - in both the U.S.A. and the developing nations. The noisy

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campaign by privileged people living in non-malarial areas of the world to ban the use of insecticides - including DDT - for controlling this disease is both questionable from an ethical and tactical viewpoint, until other, methods of control are available.

Instead we must, with broad balanced programs - and the right order of priorities - in both the developed and developing nations - attack this multifaceted monstrous problem on the food, housing and clothing, health employment opportunity, educational, energy, transport, recreation, crowding and stress, and environmental fronts.

On the food production front we can hold the line for the next 30 years - while hopefully population growth can be slowed - if agriculture is given the proper priority and support.

If the world is to be fed, however, more rather than less agricultural chemicals - including chemical fertilizers and pesticides - will be needed. To deny the developing nations their use is to abandon them to hunger and disorders. It goes without saying they should be used judiciously, just as with medicines.

It should be recognized that an efficient agriculture and animal industry reduces the land area needed for food production and leaves more of the world land resources available for other uses, such as forestry, wildlife and recreation.

If we are to conserve nature and preserve for posterity as many wild species as possible then we must, above all, curb the human population pressure on their habitat. The first step toward that goal is to reduce the growth in human numbers. The second is to expand the research effort to conserve and propagate wildlife species by adopting and modifying techniques

that have been found effective in both animal and human reproductive biology.

Time is late and there are many obstacles which must be overcome in order to solve the multiplicity of problems which confront mankind. But when one looks back over the short span of 10,000 years since man first cultivated plants and domesticated animals, which made possible the development of modern civilization, one must be amazed at the progress. The tremendous progress achieved in this short period of time was made possible by man's aggressiveness, creativeness, resourcefulness, and positivism -- and his striving to improve himself. There is, however, no time for complacency and preening over past achievements. Instead man must face up to the many growing problems caused by the wild increase in human numbers.

I have the feeling that if the people of the world are given the facts concerning the seriousness of the population problem man will show that his specific name Homo sapiens was not ill-chosen, and he will build a better world - but this will never be achieved on negativism, pessimism, and doomsaying.

Norman E. Borlaug

Article submitted to
Mr. Lawrence Keegan
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