

- ✦ The human deluge poses a serious problem of birth and death controls.

THE MENACING POPULATION FLOOD TIDE

In biblical days, man was supposed to receive a divine order to grow and multiply. The earth was then a vast open space, much of it empty. But during the centuries that have elapsed since those early times, the increase of the inhabitants of the earth has been continuous and rapid. About 150 years ago a studious and observant Englishman was quite alarmed at seeing the growth of the population practically in all countries. He was the Rev. Thomas Malthus who pointed out the tendency of population increasing at a rate faster than could be provided with the supply of food that could be produce. And he warned that if allowed to continue unchecked it would result in widespread misery and even starvation. While the statements of Malthus set men to thinking about the population problem most people paid little, if any, attention to his ideas.

The eminent scholar and scientist Julian Huxley tells us that as late as the 1930's it had been quite customary to ridicule Malthusian fears. He said: "For one thing, the opening up of new land to agriculture, coupled with the introduction of better agricultural methods, had allowed food-production to keep up with population-increase, and in some areas even to outdistance it. For another, attempts were being made to impugn the whole basis of Malthus' argument. It was pointed out that he was incorrect in saying that food-production tended to increase in an arithmetical progression, as against the geometrical progression of population-increase: food-production during the nineteenth and early twentieth century did actually increase in a more than arithmetical progression."

But Huxley now tells us that "the nineteenth-century

spurt in food-production was a temporary historical incident: it cannot be expected to continue at the same rate, and indeed must slow down as it approaches an inevitable limit; and secondly that, though Malthus' particular formulation was incorrect, there is a fundamental difference between the increase of population, which is based on a geometrical or compound-interest growth-mechanism, and of production, which is not."

Among primitive peoples some kind of control on population growth has existed as a result of famine, sickness, and war. At times infanticide, or abortion, or sexual abstinence over long periods are also practiced by them. But in more civilized countries there had not been any socially accepted system of population control until quite recently when the immense increase of population and the growing difficulties of securing a sufficient and substantial means of support have started some studies to discover more acceptable methods of birth-control.

The problem has become very pressing as a result of

the report on the survey of the population of the world which was first undertaken by the United Nations Conference on World Population held in Rome in 1954. The UN statistics tells us that the world's population today stands at the 3-billion mark. In the 1920's, it did not yet pass the 2-billion mark; and in the mid-eighteenth century, it was still in the 1-billion mark. Huxley writes that at about the time of Christ, the world population could not have exceeded one-fourth of a billion or about 250 million.

But this increase in absolute numbers is not the only significant fact. What is even more impressive is that the rate of increase itself has kept on increasing almost by leaps and bounds. Human numbers have tended to grow not only by geometrical progression, as Malthus estimated, but by compound-interest rate. The prospect is, therefore, quite alarming.

Population growth has not, however, followed a constant acceleration. The increase has taken place in upward jumps depending upon new discoveries in physiology, hy-

giene, and scientific medicine which have cut down death rates. Where these scientific discoveries are fully applied, the expectation of life at birth has more than doubled.

In the days of the Roman Empire, the life expectancy was only 30 years. In this day this has gone up to 70 years in some countries in Europe and in the United States; and even in some less-developed countries this increase in life expectancy is noticable.

Now that new methods of birth-control are discovered and being more widely used, the population problem is no longer solely a race between population and food-production, but between death-control and birth-control, Huxley says. But the case for birth-control has been made difficult by the opposition of the Roman Catholic church and coincidentally by Russian Communism specially during the Stalin rule. Catholic authorities have taken the stand that artificial birth-control is immoral, to say the least, and the Communists have ridiculed the notion of overpopulation call-

ing it an invention of the imperialists and the colonialists. But those who consider this problem of population objectively cannot disregard its serious aspect.

In the Philippines today, the population is more than 28 million. This represents an increase of more than 3 per cent a year.

If this rate continues in 15 years or in 1977, the population of our country will exceed 50 million. With better means of production, improved methods of manufacturing, farming land utilization, and scientific exploitation and use of our forests, fishing, grounds, and other natural resources, the Philippines may still have enough room to support that size of its population. But with that figure, a continued increase at a geometrical ratio will mean a population with a size sufficient to bring down the standard of living of the people. Without birth-control, the nation may have to face serious difficulties in meeting not just its food and other physical needs but also its educational, social, and cultural needs.

It takes a Britisher, Mr. Gerald Wilkinson, who is a prominent businessman in Manila, to bring to the attention of our public the menace of population explosion to the Philippines as it is already felt in the other countries of the world. In a speech before the Manila Rotary Club about three years ago, Mr. Wilkinson made these statements:

"The fact that most of Asia is in a worse plight does not reduce the urgency of the Philippine problem. For what is this mounting wave of population going to expect? The same standards of living as in the past? Are the children of today going to expect to have more or less things than their grandparents?"

"If the Philippine population was under communist control, I suppose that coercion, brain-washing and regimentation might for a time induce our acceptance of lower standards of living, which in turn would curb the strain upon the economic apparatus of the Philippines.

"But under our democratic processes, with a free press, competitive political promises

for a better life for everybody in every election campaign, and with commercial advertising, the radios, the televisions, the magazines, the movies and the billboards, all stimulating to everybody, everywhere, to expect the luxuries of yesterday to become the necessities of today, surely the people of the free world including the Philippines are being stimulated to demand more and not less things per person than they now obtain."

A large, steady, and rapid increase in population is bound to result in the expansion of the areas occupied by barrios, towns, and cities. More people require more residential sites, more business and industrial centers. Recreational places, playgrounds, parks, and other spots needed for cultural activities will be either sacrificed to give way to the need for space for food-production or maintained at the expense of health and other material necessities. Julian Huxley puts this question in this manner:

"The space and the resources of our planet are limited. Some we must set

aside for the satisfaction of man's material needs — for food, raw materials, and energy. But we must set aside others for more ultimate satisfactions — the enjoyment of unspoilt nature and fine scenery, the interest of wild life, travel, satisfying recreation, beauty in place of ugliness in human building, and the preservation of the variety of human culture and of monuments of ancient grandeur.

"In practice this means limiting the use to which some areas are put. You cannot use ploughed fields to land aircraft on, you cannot grow crops in built-over areas, you cannot permit exploitation or unrestricted "development" in national parks or nature sanctuaries. In the long run, you cannot avoid paying the price for an

unrestricted growth of human numbers: and that price is ruinous.

"It is often asserted that science can have no concern with values. On the contrary, in all fields of Social Science, and (in rather a different way) wherever the applications of Natural Science touch social affairs and affect human living, science *must* take account of values, or it will not be doing its job satisfactorily. The population problem makes this obvious. As soon as we recall that *population* is merely a collective term for aggregations of living human beings, we find ourselves thinking about relations between quantity and quality — quantity of the human beings in the population and quality of the lives they lead: in other words, *values*."

WHAT IS SELFISHNESS?

Selfishness is the satisfaction of desire at somebody else's expense, so that the one's gain is the other's loss. It may be supposed that everyone, at some time or other, has done things of this sort; but no one can be a Machiavellian unless he makes such a behavior a rule of life.