

## EDITORIAL

### POPULATION CONTROL METHODS

Control of population has been attempted from the ancient days although the case for such a control were made on quite different grounds. The ancient Egyptian Pharaoh regarded it necessary for the Israelites because he saw in their rising numbers a threat to the Egyptians.

“And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the Children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.” Ex. I: 9, 10.

The method of control through killing of life was also practised under similar circumstance:

“And he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill then: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.” Ex. I: 16.

Thus was visualised the justification and practice of the control of the population in face of increasing numbers, and no doubt the act of infanticide was moralised over as being either an unavoidable and necessary act for the good of Egyptian men, or that infants being different from adults, infanticide was not murder!

The attempt at control has also been exercised against individual families, and Onan was said to be the earliest man on record to practise coitus interruptus. One of the wives of a Han emperor regularly exterminated her pregnant colleagues to ensure that none of them would produce a male heir and so threaten her own future. Many were the occasions when kingly orders were sent out to exterminate the entire family, men, women and children including chickens and dogs, so that the seed of rebellion might not remain. Thus population control is not new in imagination, nor is the practice of killing modern in concept. What is new, however, is that society has now come to consider its own multiplication a risk, and suggests killing of its own members as a way to solve the problems. The ancients did it to their enemies, but we would consider it for our children! The approach remains the same and we too have moralised that a foetus before quickening is

not life, therefore abortion is not murder; an unfertilised ovum is not life, therefore a prevention of fertility is not an inhuman act, and so on. It must appear that at least for some of us, the thinking is that those already in existence are at war with those to be born, and that our unborn children constitute a threat to our well-being—an interesting psychological attitude of Oedipus complex in every sense of the word, for in the legend too, the father of Oedipus was in fear of his new born son!

Whether population control is a noble idea that will save countless millions from a life of misery, or a selfish design that merely aims at eliminating the unborn in order to safeguard the comforts of the modern man remains debatable, and it is not the intention here to begin a controversy which can easily become emotional because so many selfish interests including that of personal comfort and perhaps survival is at stake. But it is well to be aware that even if we accept population control as a good thing, we must be careful in the choice of techniques lest in achieving population control, we run into risk of other kinds.

The primitive tribes maintained their population in check and kept it vigorous by eliminating the unfit, and their old and sick were often left to die or be eaten up! The bees eliminate their drones when it is apparent that food and accommodation are getting scarce, and their contribution is no longer required. Modern advocates of population control propose birth control as the panacea of all ills, and some would like to extend to abortion, and have in fact succeeded in doing so in several countries. Of abortion as a means of control, much has already been said, and it remains to see whether the medical profession in the future will be led by its ethics or be swayed by social preference. Regarding birth control, however, it seems profitable to enter into some details so that an erroneous idea may not result in the face of the present enthusiasm.

To begin with, it is an error to think that a consideration of the population on the earth is confined to the numbers of man. There exists an interrelationship of life-forms in that birds, insects, bacteria, virus are mutually dependent so that a change in one population may endanger the other. Man is not an exception in this cycle of life. Unless we know definitely how the populations of other forms of lives are get-

ting on, and what is the effect of them on the human population, it is illogical to talk about the control of population of man, for we may have to see the planet extinct of man even if we were egocentric enough to think that we have achieved complete subjection of all other forms of lives! Man as such has to contend with insects to safeguard his food, and with virus and bacteria to ensure his health. His knowledge has enabled him to do pretty well at present in this perennial struggle which is by no means over. Stop the immunisations and antibiotics, and the virus and bacteria may take over in widespread orgies of killing. Delay the extermination measures, and we may find ourselves run out of our homes and fields by ants and locusts. Facing such odds, if we lightly undertake also to be our enemies, we may in fact change the delicate balance of life against man if we set our aim on a static human population without due regard to the changes in the other populations.

Secondly, a population maintains its vigour through eugenic measures, and the basic principle in eugenics lies in the elimination of the unfit and the promotion of new healthy breeds. The animal breeder kills the sick and weakly, and experiments with lots of births in order to pick out the sturdy. In this way, he rids the

farm of the encumbrances and ensures desirable offsprings. It is believed that two supernormal children are present in every 100 births and that 10% of new born babies will be substandard in wit. Our experience has told us that a genius can bring benefit for thousands of people, whereas an idiot at best is a burden to a small number of the community. The present advocacy of birth control and medical care would mean that we increase our population ratio of old and weaklings, and reduce the births so that we will have less new blood. Thus the population gets older as is happening now, and simultaneously for every 100 births we prevent we lose ourselves two potential geniuses who may give us more wealth and plenty for thousands just in order to have 100 mouths less to feed! If we breed some pedigree dogs on what we are advocating for man, namely, keep the old as old as possible and the weakling as long as he can with the aid of medicine, and reduce the birth rate so that the newcomers will be only enough to replace the dead, that is below 0.1% for Singapore in the case of man, it does not take a wise man to predict disaster to our breeding venture.

Yet we are seriously advocating all these for ourselves — MAN!

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