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# A Frustrated Consensus

Report on the Consultation  
on Population Policy  
Montreal, October  
12-13, 1973



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Co-Sponsored by the Canadian Inter-Church Project on  
Population and the Center of Concern, Washington, D.C.

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Rick Casey, editor



# Introduction

When governmental leaders from around the world meet in Bucharest at the United Nations World Population Conference this August, two things are essential. One is that they listen to voices from as wide a global spectrum as possible. The other is that questions of human values imbue all discussions, no matter how technical.

The Bucharest Conference has a formidable task. Trends in world population growth and distribution pose serious social problems which demand immediate attention and thoughtful action. But there is no policy question which has more potential for determining — for good or evil — basic elements of human life. The procreation and raising of children involve values that are subtle and pervasive. And whether population policy becomes an instrument of freedom or of tyranny will turn on questions outside the realm of demographic speculation.

As part of an effort to broaden the discussion leading to Bucharest and to raise questions of values, the Center of Concern and the Inter-Church Project on Population brought together more than fifty Canadian and U.S. government officials, population specialists and church leaders for a two-day Consultation on Population Policy.

Participants in the Montreal Consultation raised issues which we feel are basic to formulation of a just population policy. In that sense, the Consultation was exhilarating. But it was also challenging, emphasizing deep-rooted problems for which only approaches, not solutions, appear available.

In the following pages you will get a view of these problems and the debate over approaches to them. More importantly, we hope, you will get a sense of the need to confront the difficult questions which population policy decisions raise.

The Center of Concern is a Washington-based research and action group which attempts to generate questions of values in the debates around a variety of public policy questions. The Inter-Church Project on Population (ICPOP) is a coalition of Canadian churches, growing out of the inter-church "Ten Days for World Development" program in March, 1973. Represented in the coalition are Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and the United Churches, as well as the Christian Reform and the Canadian Council of Churches.

We would like to express special gratitude to the Ford Foundation, whose grant made the consultation possible.

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## A Frustrated Consensus

In August of this year delegates from around the world will gather in Bucharest to take part in the United Nations World Population Conference. Although population specialists have been taking part in international discussions for years, this will be the first time for governmental policy makers to face population issues in a common forum.

The Bucharest Conference will climax a year of preparations. Four seminars have enlisted specialists to prepare materials on population and its relation to development, natural resources and environment, social and cultural aspects of family well-being, and human rights. Regional conferences have been held, and participating countries have prepared assessments of their population situations.

The urgency of the situation is clear. At current growth rates, the 1970 world population of 3.6 billion would almost double by the year 2000. For many countries this would mean doubling the number of jobs, food, schools and other social services.

A major task facing delegates to the World Population Conference is the drafting of a World Population Plan of Action. It is a difficult assignment. At once the document must be general enough to achieve a consensus on the nature of the population challenge, and yet specific enough to offer constructive strategies.

But the success or failure of World Population Year and the Bucharest Conference will not rest totally on the World Population Plan of Action. The undertaking of such a large scale project, political by its nature, is a recognition by the United Nations that questions of population policy are so basic to the life of a nation that they cannot be left to specialists alone.

And so a major objective of World Population Year is to broaden as

**'Can one jigger around with fertility as, say, the central bankers jigger around with the bank rate?'**

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much as possible the forum in which basic population assumptions and policies are debated.

It was in an effort to become informed about U.N. World Population Year and to help contribute to its tone and direction that some 60 church and government leaders and population specialists met in Montreal last fall. Held in the somewhat austere quarters of the College St. Jean Vianney, the Consultation on Population Policy mixed Canadians with Americans who discussed not so much their differences as their common responsibilities toward developing countries. The Friday night and all-day Saturday discussion raised some of the basic issues that will confront the delegates to Bucharest.

To open the Consultation, Ralph Townley, acting director of the Office of the General Secretary of the U.N. World Population Conference and a key planner for Bucharest, outlined his expectations for the Bucharest agenda. Some of the issues he foresees are:

— Resources. "If Sven Svenson in Stockholm, when he goes through the university, uses 47 times as much of the world's resources as Yung Sing in Bombay, there is some question of social justice which will probably arise. And oddly enough, it is the Swedes themselves who are raising this particular question of resource allocation."

— Environment. Townley said two somewhat inconsistent points are emerging. One is that environmental overload is essentially a problem of concentration rather than sheer numbers. The other is that we may soon be approaching a population size which the earth is incapable of carrying at a decent level. "About this we need to know more," he said.

— The family. "This will doubtless be centered to some extent upon the enhanced role of women in society and also the greater participation of women in the work force."

— World Population Plan of Action. Townley expressed concern that the WPPA may stop at recommending more surveys, research and training. "The resources of the scientific community have been mobilized," he said. "Scientists naturally are interested in science and therefore often seek improved data, elaborate surveys and extensive training schemes in order to broaden the scientific base for their investigation. They have a good case, because much of the world is still a demographic desert. But the WPPA must go beyond these immediate needs." He raised two questions about the plan which are worth quoting at length.

The first was "whether the plan should start off with a statement

concerning human rights and the dignity of man and the welfare of humanity. This is not just a traditional blow-hard statement. It's very important because of the potentially dehumanizing effects of demographic policy on family well-being and welfare. Can one jigger around with fertility as, say, the central bankers jigger around with the bank rate? I don't feel my human rights are infringed by people playing around with the bank rate, although my mortgage might go up or down. But if one did this in terms of demographic policy, then quite clearly there are certain rights, as many of us have come to understand, which might well be in jeopardy."

His second question was "whether the plan should include other than demographic considerations. Is a plan meaningful if it does not deal with the problem of youth dependency? When the Conference opens, half of the population of the developing countries will be under 15 years of age. Is it meaningful if we do not deal with the question of unemployment and under-employment? Will it be meaningful if we do not deal with the question of urbanization and urban slums, when 25 per cent of our present population lives in cities or in urban situations? In the year 2000, when we have twice as many people as we have now, 75 per cent of the world's population probably will be living in an urban situation."

But while stressing that discussion of population must deal with non-demographic considerations, Townley raised a problem which became a major theme of the Montreal Consultation:

"We're anxious here, amongst all the real issues we need to discuss, not to discuss non-issues. Now one of the juiciest non-issues is that fertility control is a cheap substitute for development. We hope that we will be able to present papers in the kind of setting which will remove us from this kind of debate between the haves and the have-nots.

"One cannot ever get completely away from this in a United Nations setting, but at least we hope it will not dominate. But we must face up to the fact that many of the peoples in many countries see the expression of concern of the rich, white, northern half of the world with population increase as directed towards the not-so-rich, not-so-white, southern half of the world, which is the main area of rapid population increase. And this can certainly have undertones of racism. The word genocide occasionally is bandied about. It is an issue of great sensitivity and we must handle it with great care. One of the difficulties, perhaps, in approaching the Conference, is that those who are committed entirely to

'The word genocide occasionally is bandied about.'

one single point of view, which is to reduce fertility in the world, expose us all to this kind of criticism."

Real issue or non-issue? Everyone present agreed that it is not an "either-or" question — either population planning or development planning. Since there was a consensus that population policy must be set in the context of development goals, it was difficult to focus the debate clearly. But although everyone present was from "the rich, white, northern half of the world," a number of the participants clearly shared the apprehensions of those who are suspicious of the industrial world's concern for population growth in developing countries.

The apprehension was stated most baldly by Kathleen Livingstone, president of Black Women of Canada. Asking if the motivation for population control isn't, indeed, racist, she said, "I'm not talking of white racism in terms of hate. I'm talking about white racism in the area of control, of being the upper dog, of keeping what they have. We know that the European countries, England and others, were able to control the resources of the world through colonialism. That now is over. But is control of the population, and thus the control of resources, yet another way that white racism is now emerging? Is it because of our technology that it is necessary for us to make sure — not now, not in this day, but 20 years from now — that there is going to be enough left over for the Western and European world?"

If one point came consistently through the Consultation it was that the population problem is not a simple matter of showing poor people the need to have fewer children and providing them the means for accomplishing this goal. Many myths have grown up since population growth has emerged as a world-wide issue. Some were cut down to size at the Consultation.

Romeo Maione, the stocky director of the International Affairs Branch of the Canadian Labour Congress, lifted a copy of a pamphlet which had been among the materials distributed to Consultation participants. Prepared by the U.S. State Department, it was titled, "The Population Explosion, a Present Danger."

"The document we have here is essentially based on fear," said Maione. "It reminds me of the days of the yellow peril when they were coming, and we didn't know what place to duck into. It's just changed its name now to the population explosion.

"Fear really only begets more fear. It's not really creative. I think we discovered this in the smoking and cancer scare in England. For two years you just couldn't look around the subways because you saw yourself dead from smoking. It didn't help the anti-smoking campaign at all. People just smoked more because they got so darned scared about it all. Peddling fear is a thing that is not operative in our world."

Beyond the image of masses packed into small spaces are fears of what population growth will do to the environment, food supply and reserves of resources. These problems are, of course, more complex than sheer numbers would suggest.

Arthur Dyck, professor of divinity and population at Harvard, explored the relationships between population and these resources.

"There are data that indicate that per capita food supplies most likely increased between the mid 1930s and the mid 1960s, and throughout large areas there has been a sharp upward trend in the last few years," he said. "Surveying some of the best data available, Roger Revelle (director of the Harvard Center of Population Studies) has concluded that the proportion of the world's population which is seriously malnourished is probably less today than at any time in the Paleolithic. Bhatia's study of famines in India argues that, whereas in the nineteenth century famines were due to a genuine shortage of food, famines in the twentieth century occur because transportation is not adequate to get food quickly enough to the people who need it and/or people who need food cannot pay the high prices in a period of relative scarcity when their own crops fail. Although there would seem to be a limit to the production of food, and so of the number of people the earth can sustain, population growth as such is not, so far, linked to the creation of food shortages but rather to increased food production."

- Although he agreed with the data cited by Dyck, Philander Claxton, special assistant for population matters to the U.S. Secretary of State, was more pessimistic. Referring to a downward trend in food production over the past two years, he argued, "If you look at the entire trend for the 1960s, the first United Nations Development Decade, there was no per capita improvement in the Latin American area, and in fact a slight reduction in the per capita availability of food in the African area. We cannot look at the food and population relationship, I think, with any degree of calm or lack of concern. I personally am very concerned about it."

There is also intense concern at the U.N.'s Protein Advisory Group "over the growing food crisis in the poor society," said Richard Fagley, executive secretary of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches.

"It's primarily because of the superior ability of the affluent societies to drain off available food supplies for feeding cattle, for building up their own high protein diets," he said, reading a quote from a recent report by the Protein Advisory Group:

"In poor countries, which represent the majority of mankind, the per capita availability of grain averages about 190 kilograms per year; and, of course, it is much lower for those who are unemployed. Much of this is consumed to meet minimum energy needs. In contrast, the per capita utilization of grain is currently approaching one ton per year in the United States and Canada. Of this only about 70 kilograms are consumed directly in the form of bread and similar products, the rest being channeled through the plant-animal-man food chain. The annual per capita consumption of beef has risen in the United States from 25 kilograms in 1940 to 52 kilograms in 1972. The same trend is seen in many countries and much of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and Japan. As a result an increasing proportion of world grain and oil seed production is utilized for feeding animals to meet the demand for animal products in affluent societies.'"

As for pollution and resources, the relation to population is similar. Numbers have considerably less influence than lifestyle. Dyck noted that a major source of pollution is the production of electric power from burning of sulphur containing coal and oil. "This source of pollution increased fivefold between 1940 and 1965 while the (U.S.) population grew by 47 per cent," he said. He added that if we wanted to reduce U.S. power consumption to what it was in 1940, but provide each person with the same amount he or she used in 1970, we would have to reduce the population to 20 million.

The irony of the argument that lower birth rates will both increase affluence and alleviate pollution was not lost on Consultation participants. Said one: "If affluence is a major cause of environmental deterioration, given certain habits of consumption, it would seem foolhardy to argue that we should decrease birth rates in order to increase affluence."

Pierre Lanctot, director of the social medicine division at the Univer-

**'But is control of the population . . . yet another way  
that white racism is now emerging?'**

sity of Sherbrooke in Quebec, agreed and warned that "problems of differences between nations, in the area of the rapidity with which they consume or destroy the environment, is one of the factors which very quickly is going to strike us full in the face."

If understanding the effects of population growth is not as simple as it first seems, considerations of proper solutions provide no relief from complexity. In its most simplistic form, a popular myth about fertility suggests that people will have fewer children if only they know how to prevent pregnancy and are given the means to do so.

Dyck, who argued that non-coercive family planning information and assistance ought to be provided for the poor as a humane enhancement of their freedom, also questioned whether family planning programs have any significant impact on population growth. He cited a seven-year study in India, and a five-year study in Pakistan, which "appeared to demonstrate that gaining a very high proportion of acceptors of birth control techniques did not significantly affect birth rates." Part of the reason is that, according to attitudinal studies, people in many developing countries want large families.

The notion that smaller families should make sense to these people flies in the face of cultural and psychological factors, as well as harsh economic and sociological reality. And in ignoring these realities, the notion often brings about distrust and hostility.

Pierre Pradervand, senior advisor for the International Development Research Center in Ottawa, was emphatic on this point. Pradervand, who worked in West Africa on family planning and population education projects for the American Friends Service Committee, spoke of experts "who do not speak a single African language, rarely if ever eat African food, often ignore the most elementary facets of African life, live in sumptuous, air-conditioned houses, receive salaries which can attain five hundred times the average per capita income of an African peasant, . . . have not the inkling of what it means to be the third wife of a polygamous husband, and maybe deride African religion as superstition.

"What can such experts really understand about the popular African way of thinking? Very little indeed. I could give innumerable examples of botched-up family planning programs because they were organized by the Western experts who knew very little of the countries involved. This has led to a growing backlash against family planning in Africa. I think — and I say this in a most serious and considered manner — that Western,

'It reminds me of the days of the yellow peril . . .'

heavy-handed pressure for population control is now the greatest single obstacle to the diffusion of family planning in Africa today."

If such insensitivity is a greater danger for citizens of wealthy countries when they are in developing countries, it is not limited to that. One Consultation participant quoted the testimony of a black woman from the American South at a Congressional hearing:

"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, our faith in God, our tasty fried food, or anything."

Children meant emotional fulfillment and some richness in life to that woman. They additionally mean economic security to rural peasants in many developing countries. For example, one study of Indian villages indicated that more than 50 per cent of the women in the villages had three deaths among their live births. Yet parents needed to rely on their children as a source of labor and security in old age.

What can be done? To quote Dyck again: "Birth control by itself in an otherwise hopeless situation is a terrible thing to offer people; it is a wonderful thing to offer people along with some further tangible hope for a better life."

There are no simple solutions. As Pradervand noted, "Fertility is probably the most complex form of human behavior that exists today." Still there are some approaches that seem to be effective.

Not only from the perspective of justice, but also from that of efficacy, development seems to hold the key. Kathryn Horsley, staff associate for population education at the Population Reference Bureau, Inc., put it simply: "There are as yet no examples of populations in less developed countries that have managed to initiate a reduction in fertility by means of family planning programs. There has never been a population that did not reduce its birth rate after it acquired education and higher levels of living."

But to say that development will cut population growth hardly provides a solution. Noting a previous argument that a country can't have a population policy without a development policy, Eugene Carson Blake, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, said, "My experience would seem to indicate that you run aground on all development policies because you don't have any population control possibility. Every time your curves run into an impossible situation in so many

years ahead. They're related. Which of these is prior is a question which in the practical politics of an anarchic world is very difficult, and I have great sympathy for those who are running the Conference."

Michael Carder, program officer at the U.N. Fund for Population Activities, followed up: "The problem is not whether development or population comes first, but whether countries are in a low income trap from which they cannot extricate themselves unless they control population growth. I think that debate has been going on for so long it's like a record. It gets stuck in a groove. It's time to flick the needle. So we move on to a situation in which we see that the two are inter-related in the sense that one will not happen without the other; and your problem is how you integrate demographic factors into your development planning, how you make development policies responsive to population changes."

One of the sessions of the Consultation was devoted to discussing the roles of the two nations represented by the participants. In each case, a citizen made a presentation and a government official responded.

Kari Levitt, professor of economics at McGill University in Montreal and economic advisor to the government of Trinidad and Tobago, made the Canadian presentation. She was followed by Norbert Prefontaine, Assistant Deputy Minister, International and Emergency Branch, Canadian Health and Welfare Ministers.

Levitt made five recommendations for Canadian policy. The first was that Canada open its doors to unrestricted immigration. She said this would not have a large effect on world population, but would have a "most profound and beneficial effect in changing the cultural climate in Canada."

"I can think of nothing which a very rich and potentially wonderful country like Canada could do towards the basic human integration, which includes racial integration, than to accept millions and millions of people, if they wish to come here, particularly from non-European countries."

Secondly, she recommended that Canada nationalize its energy and mineral companies "before the concentration of (private corporate) power becomes so immense that no government can deal with it anymore."

Thirdly, she said, Canada "can deal with its own urbanization prob-

' . . . gaining a very high proportion of acceptors of birth control techniques did not significantly affect birth rates.'

lems, which are not nearly as horrible as that of other people, and are therefore more manageable."

"Fourthly, I think Canada can practice a policy of resource conservation. I mean serious resource conservation. . . . Market forces will bring about the most rapid use, exploitation and sale of resources. It is only public policy which can control this."

Fifthly, she said, "we can address ourselves to the rehumanization of life in this country." She said a particular effort should be made to educate young people to the knowledge and skills of interacting with the earth.

Lorna Marsden, professor of sociology at the University of Toronto and research director of the Population Research Group in Toronto, added a sixth suggestion: "Within Canada we have the opportunity to develop scientific knowledge, and social knowledge and information which may be useful to other countries in terms of understanding their own experience and developing their own policies. This we should make explicitly available to these countries in Bucharest."

The only one of these points which drew a negative response from Consultation participants was the suggestion that Canada admit unlimited immigration. Prefontaine argued against it, noting that it could lead to a belief that immigration is a matter of right rather than host country prerogative. Chris Taylor, professor of geography at the University of Toronto and president of Zero Population Growth there, suggested that Levitt's first and fifth points were at odds, since producing food for a great influx of immigrants would require an intensity of land use precluding a widespread "back-to-nature" movement.

A concern among some Canadians present was the machinery through which citizens could attempt to have an effect on the outcome of the Bucharest Conference. Bernard Daly, director of the Family Life Bureau of the Canadian Catholic Conference and an organizer of the Consultation, talked about the difficulties of even obtaining a copy of a draft of the World Population Plan of Action.

"I believe that one must be aware that we're talking about something that is being treated as a technical question that is going to be a way down the road before most people have any opportunity to share in it," he said. "The invitation to participate has to be seen in that light. I'm sure that it is a genuine invitation but the practical difficulties of democratizing the process should not be passed over."

Carder echoed Daly's concern: "That's the problem. Where is the machinery whereby the wishes of the people concerned, the people who are supposed to adopt these birth control devices, are going to make their views felt? How do we know what their views are?"

And Prefontaine spoke of the difficulties of citizen consultation even within one country. Noting that there weren't many months left till the Conference, he said, "What is to be hoped, and what is possible to do, is honestly to launch a dialogue with Canadians and heads of governments from one end of the country to the other so that those who have the wish to express opinions on the matter may do so."

But Marsden saw an obstacle to meaningful participation: "Until we provide a more comprehensible and comprehensive education program in the area of population, as opposed to the area of fertility, we are not going to get away from the problem of it being an elite topic of discussion."

The United Nations' Townley acknowledged that in addition to the technical problems of a world-wide consultation, there was historically an attitudinal problem as well.

"I remember Alistair Cooke wrote an article about the Economic and Social Council twenty years ago, and the title of the article was 'Bust-bodies of the World Unite,' " he said. "And this, I'm afraid, represents a little bit of the United Nations Secretariate's attitude sometimes towards concerned groups. They have a picture of Helen Hoakinson-type ladies with flower pot hats coming along and 'expressing interest.' Of course, this is not the case at all. We are now rapidly adjusting to the fact that there are highly articulate concerned bodies — professional, scientific, religious and other kinds — with lots to say and we would do well to heed what they have to say."

Surveying U.S. population policy, Harvard's Dyck found it based on the belief that rapid population growth undermines U.S. efforts to help development of poorer countries.

"It comes as no surprise, therefore, to see the resistance in A.I.D. circles to the suggestion that rapid population growth is much more the effect than the cause of failures in economic development and that only where economic development is sufficiently increased will high birth rates be reduced," said Dyck. "If A.I.D. would accept that argument, it would have no need, at least on economic grounds, for a separate and



additional effort to lower fertility.”

U.S. position papers stress that economic development assistance must accompany population assistance, but Dyck noted that A.I.D. “funds for economic assistance in general are declining and its funds earmarked for family planning and contraceptive research are increasing.”

Dyck also argued that U.S. population policy is “thoroughly infused” by the thinking of family planners, whose assumption is “that if there are few impediments to the widest possible choices of birth control methods, couples will on the average have significantly fewer children.”

Dyck commended U.S. policy for a new emphasis on providing family planning services as part of broader health services, but added: “At the same time it is discouraging to see continued large expenditures for birth control technology while the total funds for economic assistance of all kinds steadily diminish. I cannot help but wonder whether national security and human survival are not much more assured by just and humane policies than by the currently high expenditures for new weaponry and defense generally.”

And while lauding U.S. emphasis on voluntarism, Dyck questioned

**'They're not going to give us what they have, the birth control people.'**

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whether it is a reality for the poor, citing news reports of welfare mothers who have been coerced into undergoing unwanted sterilization operations.

Responding to Dyck, Claxton of the Department of State stressed that he sees population as only one aspect of development. "I certainly agree with him that there should be increased efforts of economic assistance. I greatly deplore the reduction in the economic assistance program of the United States over the past few years. I hope it will turn upward again with the ending of the war in Vietnam.

"But I do not agree in the least that there should be a diminution of the efforts for what comes under the general heading of population assistance in Title X of the A.I.D. Bill. And I do think that the increases which have gradually developed over the years should be continued for some time, in order that efforts to bring population growth rates into line with the general development effort can reach a point where they are in fact a part, and on a par with, the development effort."

A central contention by Claxton was that it would be unwise, as Dyck suggested, to concentrate only on development and presume that a slowing of population growth would follow.

"I do not think it is possible for the general process of development to bring about the desired results in developing countries which we are all seeking," he said. "I think rapid population growth itself would make this impossible."

Exactly why affluence seems to lead to lower fertility is not fully understood. But Consultation participants cited a number of conditions which, if achieved in developing countries, could be expected to cut population.

Among the most important is health care. One reason is that, as Pradervand observed, it is very difficult to provide birth control information and devices in areas like parts of Africa which have no medical infrastructure. According to several participants, a more basic factor seems to be the confidence among parents receiving improved medical care that their children have a decent chance of survival.

Education and employment also correlate with reduced fertility, although the precise connection is unclear. One explanation is that the more control a person has over his or her situation, the more likely he or she is to take active steps to plan the future.

The status of women is recognized as very important. When women

**'What we need most in the field of population is certainly not . . . the mythical ideal contraceptive.'**

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can find fulfillment in other than a maternal role in a society, the fertility rate is likely to decline. Townley noted, however, the tension between this goal and the goal of low unemployment in nations which already have far too few jobs to go around.

Horsley cited research by agricultural economist James Kocher indicating that income distribution is linked to fertility rates. This has immediate implications for development policy, as Horsley pointed out:

"As most of us recognize, economists have generally advocated a growth first, distribution comes later, approach. This approach was used during the development efforts of the 50s and 60s primarily. But again, as Mr. Townley hinted last night, we're becoming a bit more sophisticated and realizing that this isn't meeting ends, and that in fact, if left on its own, income will become more skewed if we concentrate more on rapid growth first and let distribution come as it will."

André Lux, director of the sociology department of Laval University in Quebec, agreed. "We should perhaps stop for a moment to think that it is not the creation of new motivations that is the fundamental problem, but rather the conceiving and the launching of a social system completely different from that which prevails at present in most Third World countries," he said.

There were two things cited by Consultation participants as needed which don't fit so easily into the jargon of social scientists. The first, in the words of Romeo Maione:

"It's nice when I hear a professor say we have to integrate development with population. But look at the political will we're going to need. Look at French West Africa, for example. Who has the political will to redraw the map of that area, to make it an effective economic unit? It is only when people sort of have a hope in the future that they can hope to control their population growth. Otherwise there is none."

The second need was articulated by Pradervand:

"I feel very strongly that in the field of population we are in the real danger of becoming bogged down in a very limiting form of materialistic, quantitatively-oriented, positivism of the worst sort. And for me the Club of Rome Report is an ideal example of this. What we need most in the field of population is certainly not new contraceptives, or the mythical ideal contraceptive. (And according to the latest sources, this ideal of a contraceptive tastes like strawberry shortcake, is nourishing, protects against influenza and the common cold, is acceptable to the Catho-

lic church and U.S.A.I.D. alike — which is quite a feat — and incidentally helps people to avoid unwanted pregnancies.) No, what we need is not new contraceptives, better administered family planning programs, more easily available abortions, or communication programs. What we need is new ideas. We need powerful, controversial, revolutionary, heretical ideas.”

Throughout this pamphlet, as with the conference, the word “development” has played a major role. Early in the conference, Pradervand questioned what this “development” was, that was going to slow population growth. Later he and others returned to the question. Here are three samples:

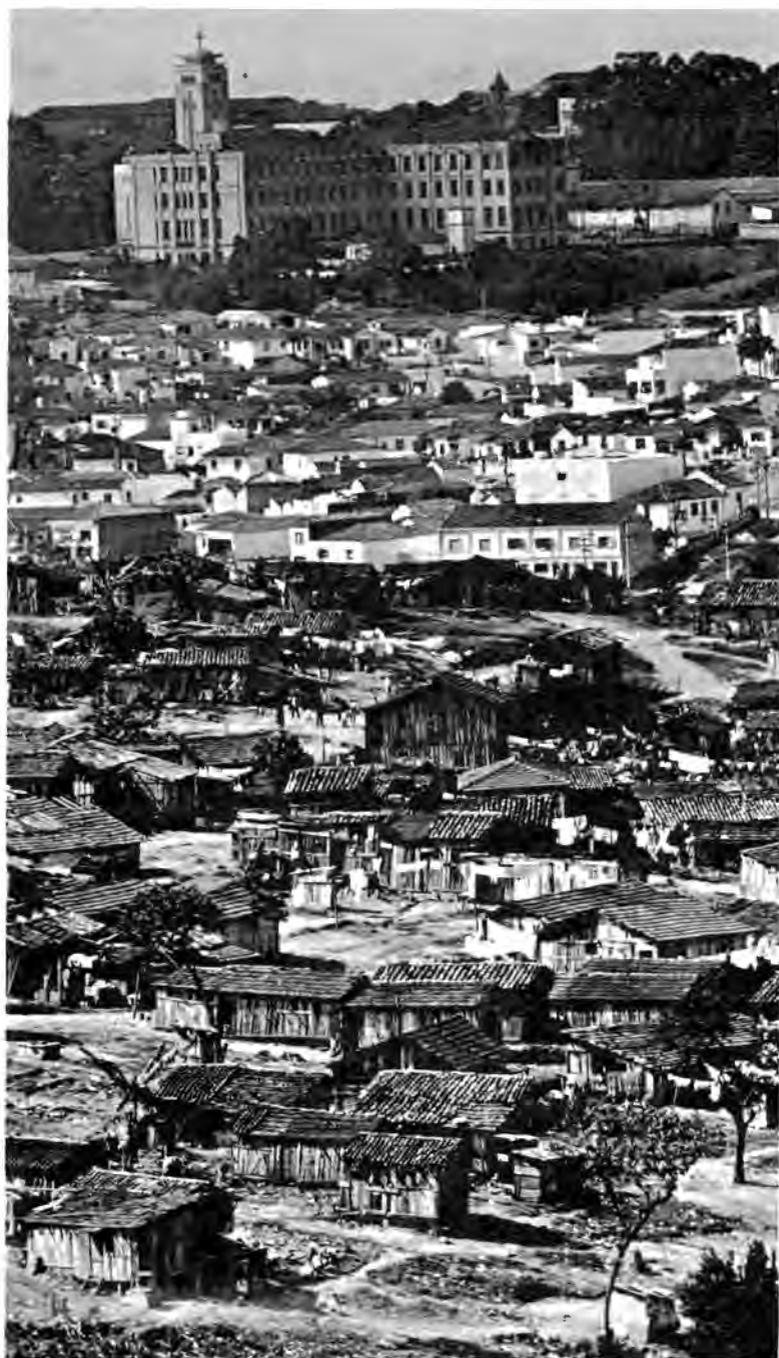
PRADERVAND: “What do we mean by development? Take the prestigious Pearson Report. In over 500 pages by the most highly qualified brains in the field of development you do not find one single definition of development. I find that rather startling for a document that is aimed at offering guidelines for development in the 70s. But when one looks a little closer it seems evident that what people mean by development is Westernization, or getting to a Western level of living. . . .

“On the plane today coming from Ottawa to Montreal I came across in an American publication a full-page color ad for the 1974 Pontiac. The ad said: ‘Obviously we’re out to make you dissatisfied with whatever you are now driving.’ Is this the development we want to offer to poor countries? Can we have no better wish than to want them to catch up with us? Catch up with what? Our crime rates? Our suicide and alcohol rates? Our poverty amid riches? Our sprawling supermarkets?”

LEVITT: “Now the pattern of development — and of this I feel very certain — which starts in the 16th Century and whose place of origin was Western Europe is now spreading in a cancerous fashion throughout the so-called Third World countries under the name of development. It cannot, I believe, possibly survive to the end of this century.

“If one wants to ring alarm bells, population growth is not the alarm bell that I would ring. It is a pattern of resource use which is quite insane. Not only do 10 per cent of the world’s people use 50 or 60 per cent of the mineral resources, but the rate of increase of the use of these resources is impossibly wasteful and unnecessary. . . .

“It is basically immoral that the Western civilization has proceeded on the premise that everything — commodities, labor, land, and every hu-



**'If one wants to ring alarm bells, population growth is not the alarm bell that I would ring.'**

man relation — can be subject to the calculations of the marketplace, can be bought and should be bought and sold, should be subjected to cost-benefit analysis. When population programs manifest themselves in the payment of cash for people to subject themselves to sterilization, I feel that is immoral. That is a kind of manifestation of madness, of a sort of collective death wish."

MAIONE: "In the last four or five years, when I look at the development debate, what do I see? I see Occidental Oil going to invest \$10 billion into the Soviet Union, into Siberia to procure natural gas. For whom? For the West Coast Americans and for the Russians, and nobody else is going to have anything to say about it. I look at petroleum industries that are going to need about \$100 to \$200 billion worth of capital in the next 10 or 15 years to produce synthetic oil. Who will this synthetic oil be for? It will be to increase the growth for the already developed countries.

"When we look a little further we see Europe, which has taken more capital to develop than we will pour into the developing countries in the next 50 to 60 years . . . I think it behooves those people who believe in development to really come out at the Bucharest Conference with a clarion call saying that development really hasn't been tried."

Basic to an understanding of the contentions of people like Dyck, Pradervand, Levitt, Maione and others at the Consultation is their belief that the prosperous are not guiltless of the plight of the poor. Most clearly put, they believe that people in developed societies are living off the deprivation of people in developing societies (and off the deprivation of the poor in their own societies).

Maione spoke of an "umbilical cord" tying the rich countries to the poor countries: "All you have to do is fly over the Atlantic and watch all of those ships pouring resources from Africa into Europe."

Arguing that Europeans and Americans are concerned about population growth at least partly because they are afraid it will make it more difficult to draw cheaply on the material resources of developing countries, Maione concluded: "Our economics of the Western world is based on the roots of a colonial economic structure which still exists today. We're not going to teach those people anything. In fact, I've got a feeling that to change the system we're going to have to get a little closer to chaos, by even a greater explosion of population in these countries, before the white world is going to understand what's going on."

**'I've got a feeling that to change the system we're going to have to get a little closer to chaos . . .'**

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Whether or not there is even "a greater explosion," population growth at its present rate calls for planning in more than just the contraceptive field. This was a concern for many at the Consultation, but perhaps Michael Henry of the Center of Concern expressed it most succinctly. "I would be a lot more comfortable," he said, "if the United Nations, the U.S.A.I.D., Canadian policies, if population policies in general planned for the provision of elementary dignity for the results of future population increase we know we cannot prevent, with the same enthusiasm as they are planning to stop it."

As a concrete example, Pradervand told the story of a friend of his, the minister of agriculture in Mali, a West Africa nation hit hard by drought and famine last year.

"In May of this year I was sitting in his home in Bamako at the height of the drought," said Pradervand. "And Mr. Conlibaly was telling me that he had drilling equipment for water wells waiting in Bonn for months, but he couldn't find an agency to fly it down to Mali. He wasn't asking for wheat. He was asking for the drilling equipment that they had already purchased. Now if he had asked for 10,000 gross of condoms or 500,000 pills, he would have gotten them in three or four weeks. I mean this."

So there was something of a consensus at the meeting: Population policy and development is not an "either-or" question. Population policy must be seen as an aspect of development.

But it was a frustrated consensus, and will continue to be so until it is clear that prosperous Western nations have a basic commitment to the equitable distribution of the world's resources that will be necessary for true development. Only then will there be development of which just population policies can be an aspect.

# Policy & Policy Making

Population policy is a concept that only recently is emerging into public awareness. The widening debate concerns not only what is involved in population policy, but the question of how a nation goes about making it.

The role of the Canadian Inter-Church Project on Population (ICPOP) has been to inject alternatives to conventional ideas in the debate on what population policy should be and how it should be formed. The alternative approaches put forth by the Project and its church representatives are not necessarily the official policies of member churches.

## Alternative Approaches to Population Policies

Family planning, in all its forms, has played an important role in population programs around the world. In recent years, however, serious questions have been raised about the underlying assumptions and value premises of population programs being promoted in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

One major area of challenge concerns the assumptions made about the causal links between population and development. Articulated in detail at the 1971 African Regional Population Conference in Accra, Ghana, this approach challenges the neo-Malthusian notion that birth limitation is a precondition for development, and argues that social and economic advances among poor people are needed before fertility rates can be expected to decline. This approach argues that low expectations of infant survival and other conditions of poverty are a significant factor in high fertility rates (number of births per woman).

The U.N. sponsored Ghana Conference was intended to consider a variety of demographic questions and information regarding Africa. But a group of participants took the position that a conventional demographic approach avoids some "real issues." The Conference became an occasion for debate of some major questions: (1) the unexamined biases and ideologies of population research which are covered up by the multi-

Although the Montreal Consultation was held to facilitate discussion of population policy among a divergent group, each of the co-sponsoring organizations is not without its own approach to the issue. Above is a position paper by the Canadian Inter-Church Project on Population. Following is a position paper by the Center of Concern, "Population is People."

plicity of demographic "facts"; (2) the conception of population growth as an independent variable, separate from other factors in the development process; (3) the neo-Malthusian assumption that societal problems are curable by control of population size; (4) the failure to consider the prevailing patterns of capitalism in which externally oriented production causes rural areas to stagnate, urban areas to overflow with cheap labor, and a country to be drained of its resources, to the benefit of rich foreign nations rather than to indigenous self-development; and (5) the narrow view of population policy that is limited to fertility control and emphasizes family planning for purposes of national interest rather than individual benefit.

This debate has far reaching implications for the World Population Conference in Bucharest. In developing a World Population Plan of Action, it is imperative that serious consideration be given to the objections posed by emerging Third World perspectives.

### **Alternative Approaches to Policy Making**

A policy is a course of action adopted and pursued for a given purpose or end. Whether for a private enterprise or a public body, immense social power rests with those who select a goal and line of action that make up a policy. Often in modern governments, policy making is defined mainly, if not solely, as a technical matter — an affair for specialists. A relatively small number of specialists is given or assumes the task of defining a particular problem and outlining a course of action. Their recommendations do not always become official policy, but the process typically begins with them. Often the majority of citizens who will be affected by a policy are excluded from participation or even awareness until the policy is well on the way to adoption and implementation.

ICPOP maintains that policy regarding the present and future of the population of the world or any country is not essentially a technical problem. It involves perceptions of human values and choices of social goals too broad to be left to technical population specialists. All citizens should have the opportunity to participate.

For the Bucharest Conference, this means that Canada's domestic Third World should have a major and effective involvement in determining this country's position. And Canada should take a leading role in promoting the effective participation at Bucharest of all poor and marginalized peoples in formulating a World Population Plan of Action directed to global justice.

# Population Is People

It would have been difficult to miss being confronted with at least one article or news item sometime in the last decade alluding to the worldwide "population explosion" and its dire consequences. If the article were reasonably representative, it would have attributed, at least in part, an enormous number and variety of social problems to the problem of "over-population." Crime, crowding, pollution, poverty, unemployment — these have all, at some time or another, been attributed to overpopulation.

The difficulty with such an interpretation is that it isolates one social variable and relates other social phenomena to that single variable. Thus a correlation is easily observable between population growth rates and crime rates, for example, since both are increasing rapidly in many areas of the world. And if you are writing about population, you of course relate other variables to it — population phenomena become the independent variables and other social phenomena dependent on them.

That such an approach is inadequate and misleading becomes obvious when we realize that population is people. Crime, pollution, poverty and unemployment are things people are involved in, but population phenomena represent people themselves. Birth rates are numbers of people born to other people — people like us with needs and desires. For example, the need for basic security is in many societies satisfied only by large families that offer financial and personal support for their members. When societies experience a socio-economic dynamic of development which makes realistic a hope in the future, large families are no longer imposed by external necessities. Births are the result of social interaction, and the motivation (or lack thereof) underlying a birth is primarily socially determined.

Thus population phenomena — births, deaths, and migrations — are in the main social products. That is, they are dependent rather than independent variables. To alter them one needs to alter the motivations which cause them. Therefore social policies which affect motivation with respect to births, deaths and migration are the only policies likely to affect population phenomena in the long run.

Social policies are most effective if made consistently in a perspective that maximizes progress towards a particular vision of society. If the society desired is to be characterized by lower birth rates than those presently existing, then social policies in areas such as the economy, education, employment, health and transportation should be made so that each in part promotes that society. But the end point of such social

policies will be a vision, a vision which will reflect the particular set of values and assumptions involved in the formation of those policies. For our part at the Center of Concern, the key value is international social justice. Our vision is a global society in which all individuals are free to choose between real alternatives in their lives, to pursue those social, economic and political goods which are their right, and to achieve a life of human dignity. Social policies are judged from our point of view according to the extent to which they promote that type of society.

It is clear that the vision of such a just society will not be realized in many areas of the world without much lower birth rates and much lower death rates. Both those demographic goals will be achieved more rapidly and effectively by social policies which aim to promote a just society than they will be achieved by policies which directly attempt merely to change fertility and natality patterns. Thus universal education, health services which include comprehensive family planning programs, and employment opportunities, must be combined in an integrated planning process for the total development of people.

To take such a position is not to suggest opposition to family planning itself. Rather it is to emphasize its importance by attempting to place it in perspective with relation to overall demographic phenomena. Family planning is a means to an end and its availability is desirable on many humanitarian, ethical, and utilitarian grounds. These programs provide a necessary service which will be used when the motivation for use exists — and that motivation will occur when societies offer their members alternatives that promise an improvement in their future quality of life.

This is what we mean, then, by speaking of population policies in a social justice perspective. The population policies which will be most effective, in our opinion, are those overall social policies which do most to promote social justice. With respect to developing countries, these are policies which directly promote economic, social and political development. Education, health, employment, women's rights, housing, trade, investment, aid, wealth distribution: these are areas of social policy which bear upon the quality of the development undergone in the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Attention to these wider policies, in conjunction with family planning programs, will be essential to realistic and effective population policies.

# Participants

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- Guy Bourgeault, Professeur, Faculté de Théologie, Université de Montréal.
- Andrew Brewin, Member of Parliament, New Democratic Party of Canada.
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- \*George W. Cadbury, Chairman, International Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada.
- George Caldwell, Acting Director, Social and Human Analysis Branch, Department of Regional Economic Expansion, Government of Canada.
- \*\*Michael Carder, Program Officer, United Nations Fund for Population Activities; co-author of The United Nations and the Population Question (McGraw-Hill 1973).
- Rick Casey, Freelance Journalist, Boston, Mass.
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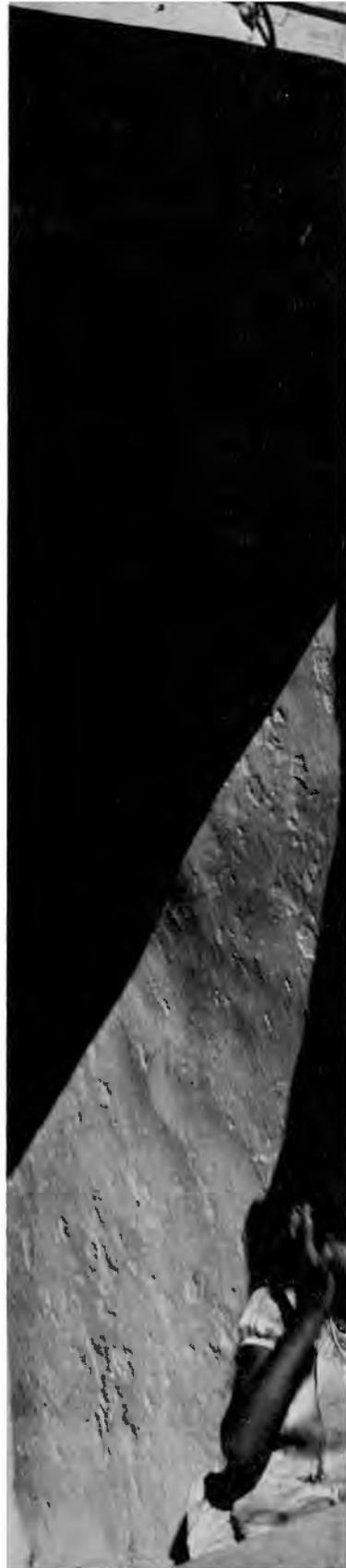
**Front cover: Mother and child on the island of Madagascar. (NC Picture)**

**Page 3: Communion class at Fort Rucker, Alabama. (Rick Casey)**

**Page 14: Children in village of Tjigugur, Indonesia. (NC)**

**Page 18: A view of Sao Paulo, Brazil. (NC)**

**This page: Girl in entrance of her home in working class section of Nagpur, India. (NC)**



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