



## IN THIS ISSUE

**T**RADITIONAL to our national life and history has been an ever-increasing population. Only by virtue of a favorable age-distribution, and a legacy of high birth rates in the preceding generation, do births now exceed deaths. With the aging of our present population, and barring liberalization of immigration laws, a stationary population is due in the near future. Students of population universally accept this forecast, but they are not unanimous in their interpretation of its significance. In the preceding issue of this *Quarterly*, Dr. O. E. Baker, Senior Agricultural Economist in the Department of Agriculture, gave a gloomy description of the possible repercussions of the dwindling birth rate on agricultural problems. A more optimistic interpretation is made in the first article, "The Significance of Imminent Population Changes in the United States," by Dr. Frank Lorimer, secretary of the Population Association of America and co-author of *DYNAMICS OF POPULATION*.

Promotion of better nutrition through education is one of the major problems of health agencies and the need to teach families the essential facts about proper diets and how to spend their income to the greatest advantage is receiving an increasing amount of attention from health workers. How the nutritional education program was combined with the general health supervision activities in the East Harlem Nursing and Health Service in New York, is described by Bertha B. Edwards, nutrition supervisor for the Service in the article, "Experiences of a Nursing and Health Service with the Nutrition Problems of a Community," on page 219. The apparent success of their work and the wealth of experience acquired during nearly fifteen years of work make the policies developed of especial interest.

The failure of maternal mortality to decline has led to a large number of investigations of this problem, most of which have consisted of de-

tailed analyses of maternal deaths. Recognizing that the investigation of deaths alone had definite limitations as a means of interpreting the conditions under which death occurs, the Fund has made several surveys to collect data for typical groups of women. One type of information obtained related to the frequency of abortion, as little is known of its true incidence, and from one-fourth to one-third of all maternal deaths are associated with pregnancies terminated before the last trimester of pregnancy. In the article on "Pregnancy Wastage in New York City," Dorothy G. Wiehl and Katharine Berry have brought together data from several studies indicating the incidence of abortion. Histories of pregnancies of living women show a pregnancy loss in the previable period of gestation of about fifteen per cent, a figure much lower than most estimates which have been made for New York City.

A physically healthy population is, perhaps, an unattainable ideal but an ideal toward which, few will deny, it is worth striving. Health is threatened not only by accidents and acute diseases in the control of which rapid progress is being made, but also by chronic ailments and defects broadly classed as "impairments" whose control in many respects presents a far more involved problem. Basic to any control program is a knowledge of the prevalence of the conditions to be attacked. With the understanding that such knowledge provides not only additional incentive but specific strategy for the attack, the Milbank Fund has made, or assisted in, several such studies in the past, the most notable being the series on the "Diseases of Adult Life" by Sydenstricker and Britten, and morbidity surveys of population groups such as those in Hagerstown, Cattaraugus, and Syracuse. The article on page 248, "Impairments in a Rural Population," by Dr. Ralph E. Wheeler, discusses the general prevalence of impairments found by the medical examination of a large group of rural people and shows how far short of the ideal this typical population is.

Inasmuch as marriage is the initial step in the establishment of a family, there is a close relation between marriage rates and population increase. A shortage of about one million births from 1930 to 1935 has been attributed to the subnormal marriage rate during the depression. In the article starting on page 262, "Recent Analyses of Marriage Rates," Mr. Kiser has given particular attention to several studies purporting to describe the impact of the depression on marriage rates in various popu-

lation groups. The reviews have been supplemented by his own analysis of 1925-1935 trends in marriage rates among selected groups of native whites, foreign whites, and Negroes in up-state New York.

The measurement of results of public health practice has been of interest to the Fund for several years, and since public health nursing activities form so large a part of health programs, analyses have been undertaken of the work which the nurses carry out in different types of communities. Studies of the various phases of public health nursing practice in Cattaraugus County and other rural areas, and in urban centers in Syracuse and New York City have shown the extent to which the people with different health problems have received nursing services, and the relation of various amounts of nursing service to the accomplishment of specific results. The last article in this issue, by Marian G. Randall, discusses "Family Composition and the Analysis of Home Visits by Public Health Nurses," and uses a sample of low-income families in the Bellevue-Yorkville district of New York City and the visits by health department nurses to illustrate the way in which health supervision services for children are extended to all children in the family, and the further administrative use of the family records.