

ANNOTATIONS

PEOPLE: THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF POPULATION¹

PROFESSOR FAIRCHILD, in his book, entitled *PEOPLE*, has obviously written with the intent of making available to the general public some of the interesting findings of students of population. In this attempt, he is very successful, for by means of a wide variety of entertaining illustrations drawn from both plant and animal kingdoms, he develops the thesis that all population problems arise from the conflict of two forces, "hunger" and "love." Extending this principle to mankind, he discusses the work of Malthus and other early students of human population problems, and then proceeds to a clear and interesting presentation of some of the more modern work. In this connection he discusses the growth of population in relationship to birth rates, death rates, changes in the age composition of the population, true rate of natural increase, and available resources. While the author is skillful in introducing his reader to this material, there are times when he uses illustrative anecdote, quotation, and analogy in such profusion that the reader will have a tendency to lose sight of the thesis that is being developed at the moment.

As the book proceeds, it becomes clear that the author is not merely attempting a popular presentation of our present knowledge as to the factors involved in the population problem, but that he is concerned with the improvement of society through eugenics as "a sociological, not a biological, enterprise." This part of the book is not so successful. His treatment of "the optimum population" seems to show that in any given state of social organization some optimum does exist, but his discussion as to what this optimum is drifts off into a treatment of birth and death rates, both crude and specific. Similarly, under the heading "quality of popu-

¹ Fairchild, Henry Pratt: *PEOPLE: THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF POPULATION*. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1939, 315 pp. \$3.00.

lation” the author shows that we need and desire “better people” but that the definition of “better” is practically impossible and in general rests on emotional grounds.

The book urges positive control of population growth to prevent overpopulation, and ends with the idea: “It would seem to need no argument to show that the modern, the scientific, the human way is to fix upon some standards of social well-being, to discover a formula of population growth conducive to those standards, and then to regulate the actual reproduction of the community accordingly.” Since the author does not favor the control of human reproduction by a super-eugenicist, it becomes clear that such a plan could only be carried out on a democratic basis, that is, by individual action; and in this connection he adds: “Reflections such as these may help the intelligent individual, or married couple, to chart out a socially acceptable line of personal behavior in the matter of reproduction. Only the genuinely intelligent person, in the present state of scientific knowledge and social conventions, can possibly chart a sound program, and only a person with highly developed self-control and firmness can carry it out. Only one with a sensitive social conscience will even want to chart such a course or try to carry it out.” To the extent to which the book transforms its readers to members of this class, it will be a success.

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NEW YORK STATE PROGRAM FOR CANCER CONTROL

IN MAKING cancer and other malignant tumors reportable diseases, New York State has taken a step forward. According to Dr. Edward S. Godfrey, Commissioner of Health of the State of New York,¹ reporting should in the course of time make available to the medical profession accurate information instead of uncertain estimates on:

1. The true magnitude of the cancer problem.
2. The relative incidence of cancer in the various sections of the State and among various social and economic groups.

¹ Godfrey, Edward S.: New York State Program for Cancer Control. *New York State Journal of Medicine*, December 15, 1939, No. 24, pp. 2280-2283.