

# ANNOTATIONS

## PLENTY OF PEOPLE

MANY people have become aware, through popular accounts, of the trend toward smaller families, of the aging of the population, and of our current immigration questions, but quite a number have yet to learn of "The World's Population Pressures, Problems, and Policies, and How They Concern Us"—to quote the subtitle of Warren S. Thompson's revised edition of *PLENTY OF PEOPLE*.<sup>1</sup> The essentials of these matters are presented concisely in this volume for the general reader. To accomplish this useful purpose, in a few instances the author had to forego a certain degree of rigor in the development, as in the discussion of the reproduction rate. The compensation, of course, is that the text is not overburdened with technicalities. Unfortunately, the charts and the tables are not clearly headed in several cases, nor are they always referred to correctly.

The first six chapters provide a background for the points at issue. Here is traced the population growth of the world since 1800, the trends and the factors affecting the course of the birth rate and death rate, the effect of war on population growth, and the future population of nations. The point is made that the rate of population growth of the Western World since 1800 has no parallel in the history of mankind and is a product of reduced mortality resulting from control of environment. However, this period of rapid growth for the West is now over. While its peoples are entering a period of stationary, if not declining, numbers, the rest of the world, already subject to the pressure of population against subsistence, is headed for continued growth as it follows the steps of the West in reducing

<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Warren S.: *PLENTY OF PEOPLE*. The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1948, Revised Edition, 281 pages, \$3.50.

the death rate faster than the birth rate. Therefore, "assuming also a diminishing differential between West and East in the efficiency of their economic systems, the center of economic strength, and with it the center of political and economic power, is certain to shift in the direction of the more rapidly expanding populations."

Apparently the shift in power does not mean relief from population pressure in the East. According to Thompson, the solution for that problem will have to be birth control. But this calls for changes in mores that can only come over a long period of time. There may be some relief meanwhile by improving underdeveloped areas, and also by a redistribution of population. However, the author makes his proposals in very general terms; concrete planning and action is not yet in evidence. Those who may wonder how the author's proposal to improve underdeveloped areas weighs against the gloomy forebodings of Osborn and Vogt<sup>2</sup> will find considerable comfort in the discussion on soil productivity by an agronomist, Professor Bradfield.<sup>3</sup>

The chapter on the political and economic implications of differentials in national growth is followed by two chapters on the distribution of population. The first of these chapters, which deals very largely with the rural to urban movement in the United States, closes with the warning that the concentration of population in large cities, where personal desires and ambitions replace racial and social values, leads to a productivity below the replacement level. The danger of such concentration is not only that it produces an ultimately declining population, but also that it has a high susceptibility to the hazards of warfare. In the second of these chapters, on the distribution of population by migration, the conviction is expressed that emigration from the densely settled areas of Asia will bring its peoples little or no relief from their poverty.

The social and economic effects of changes in the age composition of the population and of a slower rate of growth form

<sup>2</sup> Osborn, Fairfield: *OUR PLUNDERED PLANET*. Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1948; and Vogt, William: *ROAD TO SURVIVAL*. New York, William Sloan Associates, Inc., 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Bradfield, R.: Soil Productivity and the Potential Food Supply of the United States. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 33, January, 1949, p. 39.

the next topics of discussion. The basis for the author's treatment of the difficulties of maintaining an expanding economy in a slowly growing population might be improved. Instead of building his discussion upon a division of national income into a vague "consumers' income, that which is spent currently for living," and "producers' income, that which is available for or used for producers' goods," the approach might have followed current economic thought by being based upon a distribution of national product into consumer expenditures, private capital outlays, and government expenditures for goods and services. The latter, in years to come, will be increasingly affected by expanding services to meet the needs of our aging population.

In a brief chapter on the hereditary fitness of the population, the author points to the growing realization that intelligence tests measure the product of an environment rather than inherited traits. In other words, a weak premise is used by those who argue that the hereditary quality of the population is deteriorating because of the greater fertility of the poorer social-economic classes, who may show to relative disadvantage on these tests. The plea here is for a rise in standards of living and in opportunity for the full development of inborn qualities. The chapter on minorities, which follows, touches only on the situation of the Negro in the United States and on the problems in Europe.

The book closes with two chapters on population policies. After commenting on the population policies of a number of countries, with special attention to that of prewar Germany, it becomes evident that no one policy for the direction of population growth is generally applicable. Thus, with regard to birth stimulants, "It may be better for state aid to take one form in Sweden, let us say direct services to *all* children, but a somewhat different form in France, *e.g.*, larger cash allowances to the family, because of the different structures of the two societies and the different attitudes towards various kinds of aid which prevail in them."

In the final chapter, on a population policy for the United States, the author shows the place our land policy and our immigration policy had in influencing the nation's population

growth. The bases are laid for a population policy for the future. First, it is assumed an attempt will be made to maintain our numbers at a maximum which will be reached in about three decades. A second assumption is that our present democratic system will continue; third, that little can be done to change the hereditary quality of the people; fourth, that it is socially desirable "for practically all people to participate in producing the next generation on as nearly an equal basis as possible"; and last, that enough is known regarding the causes of the decline in the birth rate to permit a policy to be formulated. The author prefers that family assistance for the benefit of children in the United States be in the form of community services rather than cash.

That nebulous concept, the *optimum* population, managed to find its way into the book, even though it had to wait until the last paragraph. The use of the term has, unfortunately, encouraged some estimates of economic *optimum* which, though merely guesses, have been accepted by many as having the stamp of authority. Better than any such guesses are the author's concluding remarks, ". . . national population policies should take account of the different values which give life its meaning among different peoples. However, the *satisfactory adjustment* of numbers to resources is by no means the only important element in a population policy, although discussions of policy often leave the impression that this is the case."

MORTIMER SPIEGELMAN

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## POPULATION ANALYSIS

"I HAVE attempted to summarize what is known about the subject of population and to describe the methods and techniques by which that knowledge has been attained," states Dr. T. Lynn Smith in the opening paragraph of his book, *POPULATION ANALYSIS*.<sup>1</sup> While he admits that "the bulk of the data pertains to the United States" he also states, ". . . no effort has been spared to assemble comparable information

<sup>1</sup> Smith, T. Lynn: *POPULATION ANALYSIS*. New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1948, xiii + 421 pp., \$4.50.