

the concise, historical summary and the exposition of the possibilities of future development.

A valuable selected bibliography is appended.

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PUBLIC HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY IN THE FAR EAST¹

THE reviewer finds it an unusually congenial task to comment on this report. Seldom has he found himself in such complete accord with what he regards as the more significant views expressed by a writer (writers) in a field with which he is familiar. In addition, he considers an understanding of the views set forth here as of first importance not only to the welfare of the more than half of mankind that still lives in the pre-industrial era but to the peace of the world and the welfare of all mankind. It is a pleasure, then, to try to present a few of the leading ideas in this report to the reader who may not have time to read the entire report. But since the report is well organized, and drastically pruned and with only a few exceptions, chiefly to be found in the chapter on Japan, is written in plain straightforward English it is to be hoped that most readers will drop this review and secure the report itself. It is so full of meat that the reviewer is unable to do it justice.

“The survey (on which this report was based) was made primarily in the interests of The Rockefeller Foundation and the full report submitted to the Foundation included recommendations for its consideration in connection with the policy and program of that organization.” (P. 2) It was intended to serve administrative purposes rather than to lead to a publication of findings for the general reader. However, with the elimination of matters of interest only to the trustees and officers of the Foundation the remainder has been made available to the public. The Foundation is certainly to be congratulated on this decision.

¹ Balfour, Marshall C., Roger F. Evans, Frank W. Notestein and Irene B. Taeuber: *PUBLIC HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY IN THE FAR EAST*. New York, The Rockefeller Foundation, 1950.

In the reviewer's opinion the most important theme running through the report is that the problems involved in increasing the welfare of the peoples of the Far East cannot be solved merely by improvement in production. The data presented indicate clearly that the effects of a better health service and of an increase in the productivity of the economy of these Far Eastern countries on the growth of population may make any increase in the general welfare of these peoples an extremely difficult matter. Thus: "Substantial efforts [at economic development] have been made there [India and Java], but the results are more evident in the increased numbers of people than in higher levels of living and better health. . . . Most expressions of optimism concerning the problems of growth appear to be based on somewhat abstract calculations as to what might be feasible under ideal conditions. Probably population growth would not be a critical obstacle to the attainment of higher levels of living in the Far East if capital were abundant and its owners enterprising, and if the popular education, the skills, the social organization and the political stability were those of rich and technologically developed societies. But under these conditions, the demographic difficulties would never have developed." (Pp. 7-8) "Any solutions of the problems of population growth in the Far East will require simultaneous efforts to raise the levels of living for growing numbers and to reduce human fertility so that growth can be kept to the least dangerous level possible. We are not certain of the outcome, and we are distrustful of those who express certainty either of inescapable disaster or of Utopia near at hand. . . . Experience shows that reproductive behavior can be modified. [But] Neither will the difficulties disappear as an automatic by-product of the march of science." (P. 11)

In the final chapter the difficulties inherent in raising the level of living in a densely settled area where agriculture is by far the chief support of the population is again stated: "Birth rates are resistant to change and high enough to give growth even when death rates are very high. Under these circumstances, there is danger that gains in production will be largely consumed by increasing numbers and that the processes of population change will function, like the governor of a machine, to

keep the system in a stable equilibrium of poverty and ill health. It is because of this danger the Far Eastern problems of human welfare may be said to come to their sharpest focus in the problems of population change. Of these problems those of the reduction of human fertility are at once the most difficult and important." (P. 111)

Everyone would probably agree with the view of the authors that the decline in the death rates is one of the best and simplest indicators of improved welfare. But not all people realize, as the authors so clearly point out, that a decline in the death rate generally precedes by some decades the decline in the birth rate and that this means an increase in the rate of population growth in the early decades of the development of a modern economy, in fact, until such time as the birth rate begins to fall faster than the death rate. This situation raises two basic questions which must be considered if the welfare of peoples of unindustrialized and densely settled areas is to be increased: (1) Can economic production be increased faster than population will grow during the early decades of the industrial and agricultural revolutions essential to the increase in production? and (2) Is there basis for rational hope that the birth rate will decline *pari passu* with the death rate at an earlier stage in this economic revolution in the Far East than it did in that of the West? The phrasing of these questions is the reviewer's but in so stating these points he does not believe he is doing violence to the content of the report. The authors very wisely do not attempt to answer either of these questions. They point out in the chapters relating to different areas that there are important differences between them. Hence, there can be no one answer. They also make it clear that we cannot know how rapidly economic productivity can be increased in any given area, but, and this should be marked well, the potential population growth in a country like India is certainly far above the 1.5 per cent annual increase that actually took place between 1931 and 1941 and is fully as great in all other parts of the Far East. Indeed, a very modest increase in the general welfare of these peoples will certainly bring to realization an increasing portion of the very large population potential, again, until the birth rate also comes under control.

As was just said the authors do not think of the Far East as a homogeneous unit, but in the reviewer's opinion they are fully justified in proceeding on the assumption that there are enough similarities between these countries, both demographically and economically, to permit of treating the Far East as a unit in making such a general statement as the following:

"There is in the Far East a general, indeed a zealous, conviction that the path to health, wealth and power lies in technological modernization. It is much less generally realized that the attainment of these ends by means of advanced technology also requires profound changes in social and economic institutions and in deeply laid social values. Recognition of the need for such changes, and of the fact that without them population increase may be a major obstacle to success, is virtually limited to a few specialized scholars with Western contacts. Yet such recognition appears to be essential for sound action." (P. 111)

The reviewer finds it almost impossible to compress further many of the conclusions of this report he would like to quote since the authors have already done such an effective job. But he must try at the risk of inadequate coverage and even of unfair emphasis. There is great need for doing something about the population situation in the Far East but there is danger that action unless preceded by careful study may do much harm. This antithesis is considered unrealistic if it leads to a do-nothing attitude for "It is through the careful observation and testing of a wide variety of ameliorative efforts that much of the most useful knowledge is to be obtained." (P. 112) The Far East is in more need of the application of social knowledge already available than of new research. Population change in this region will best be studied: (1) by investigating the relationships between them and other aspects of a changing culture, such as those, in health, in social organization, and in economic techniques. (2) by studying the factors governing fertility in a relatively stable culture, the motives which may lead to reduced fertility in such a culture and the means suitable for this purpose under the existing conditions.

The function of outside private agencies should not be to develop action programs but to encourage "teaching, research, experiment and demonstration to increase knowledge and ulti-

mately to foster its wide dissemination. Study should be emphasized as opposed to direct ameliorative action." (P. 112) There should be concentration of study in relatively small selected areas which are believed to present typical problems.

"Finally we want to re-emphasize the importance of balanced development. Confessedly, we know much less about the nature of 'balance' than about the risks of its absence. We have seen the terrible vulnerability, when outside contacts are cut, of a population built to huge density by Western government and economic management as in Java. Such populations are exposed to the risks of disruption that complexity and specialization entail without the protection of wide margins for retrenchment and of depth in skills that usually accompanies complexity where it develops indigenously." (P. 121)

Suggestions looking towards "balanced" development are:

"a. Effort at development should be many-sided, technological, governmental, economic, social and educational in order to touch as intimately as possible the lives of the people so that adaptation to change can proceed simultaneously. (P. 121)

"b. Indigenous responsibility for constructive effort is essential. The complexity of the problems of social change will baffle human understanding for an indefinite future. A sound test of balance in the process of change is the extent to which the system is self-sustaining in terms of skills, organization and interest." (P. 121)

The last quote referring to "indigenous responsibility for constructive effort" is noted at a number of places in the body of the report and is especially emphasized in the chapter on Japan. In the opinion of the reviewer this is an extremely important point in the present conjuncture of world affairs. The Western World, as representing colonial power not yet entirely abrogated, is widely suspect throughout the Far East and any assistance Westerners may offer in studying population questions should be given in such a way that there can be no doubt of their disinterestedness. No people will be convinced of the need for population control and certainly no large proportion of the people in any nation will take personal action to control the size of their own families until they are convinced that it is to their own interest, as well as that of the nation, to do so. I fully

agree with the authors that assistance in spreading the knowledge of the facts regarding the inter-relation between population changes and other changes in the culture of peoples is the most effective contribution we can make to the solution of the population dilemma which now faces these peoples.

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