

# Population Control

## *a sinister ideology?*

**Greg Gardner argues that population control is a sinister ideology which Christians should resist**

*My interest in population issues was first kindled as a medical student when I heard Catholic Priest and writer Rene Bel talk about 'a conspiracy against the poor' in West Africa: a neo-colonialism based on contraception, abortion and sterilisation was being heavily funded by certain groups in the West who did not want to share the world with too many other people. Later I discovered the eugenics movement and found that the same organisations (and often the same people) were active in both fields.*

### **Eugenic Roots**

The Population Control Movement with its roots in Eugenics and a desire to control people's lives has a history of progressive and lasting damage to the social fabric in every nation in which it has had influence. Population Control is the decision taken by governments or other agencies that couples should restrict the number of children they have, followed by measures to enforce such policies. What lies behind this sinister ideology?

In the early years of the 20th century, the Population Control and Eugenics movements were indistinguishable. One of the early population activists was eugenicist Margaret Sanger who opened the first birth control clinic in New York in 1916. She wrote, 'The unbalance between the birth rate of the unfit and the fit is admittedly the greatest present menace to civilisation....The most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective.'<sup>1</sup> Change the wording from 'unfit' to 'poor' and you have a good description of modern population control.

### **Radical Social Engineering**

There has always been a debate within the Population Control/Eugenics movement about what degree of compulsion is necessary to restrict numbers of births. Kingsley Davis in an article in *Science*<sup>2</sup> in 1967 and Bernard Berelson at the Dacca population conference in 1969 proposed radical social engineering. Their idea was to change the structure of the family through a combination of tax measures, law and ideology. According to Davis, 'Changes basic enough to affect motivation for having children would be changes in the structure of the family, in the position of women and in the sexual mores.' Some of their ideas included: abortion and sterilisation on demand, payments to encourage contraception, the distribution of contraceptives non-medically, modifying tax policies to discriminate against married people, encouraging (or compelling) women to work outside the home, the postponing or avoiding of

marriage, altering the image of the ideal family and educating for family limitation. These ideas have been introduced, to some extent, in every country in which Population Control has infiltrated. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), to which the British Family Planning Association is affiliated, has advocated the provision of all forms of 'fertility control' to children from age ten without parental consent. This deliberate destabilising of the traditional family and its replacement by serial cohabitation and other alternatives leads inevitably to low birthrates.

### **Coercion of women**

Another key assumption of the population controllers is that there is an 'unmet need' for contraception and abortion - but this 'unmet need' is often generated by the population controllers themselves. A careful reading of their own literature reveals the needs of the population controllers to control the lives of other people. The International Planned Parenthood Federation has published detailed suggestions for disincentives for couples who fail to follow national population control policies.<sup>3</sup> IPPF (with British taxpayers' money), together with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), continues to help finance the Chinese one-child-per-family programme where forced abortion, sterilisation and female infanticide are common. 'Planned-birth supervision teams usually exercise night raids, encircling suspected households with lightning speed. If we do not apprehend the women themselves, we detain their family members until the women agree to the sterilisation and abortion surgeries.'<sup>4</sup>

UNFPA is a major donor to the Chinese population programme praising it for its 'high commitment' and has provided the funds for at least 600 vans, each one equipped with an abortion suction machine, a bed and clamps. That's right. The shackles are put on to the women who try to resist.

### **Harassment and Intimidation**

In Peru a brutal coercive sterilisation campaign carried out in often filthy conditions and causing at least 18 maternal deaths and much morbidity was started in 1990. One woman reported that her daughter's participation in a programme for low birth weight children was made conditional upon her acceptance of a sterilisation procedure.<sup>5</sup> Harassment, threats and intimidation were common. None of the women interviewed by investigators reported being offered anything resembling informed consent. In Kosovo the high fertility of the Kosovar people drew the wrath of various international Population Control agencies. Kosovar people smile broadly when told they have the highest fertility rate in Europe. They are happy with large families. UNFPA was invited into Kosovo by Slobodan Milosevic in

December 1998 at the height of his ethnic cleansing campaign. They gladly accepted his invitation. Abortion kits, IUD's and other contraceptives were foisted on the Kosovar people. Although Milosevic was forced to withdraw his troops, the continuing presence of UNFPA in Kosovo ensures that a kind of silent ethnic cleansing under the guise of 'reproductive health' will continue.

'Overpopulation' is an idea which dictators and despots from all parts of the political spectrum have embraced. The poor are convenient scapegoats for the misdeeds of politicians. The 'overpopulation' argument has been used in retrospect about the genocide in Rwanda. Yet authors such as Fergal Keane, Alain Destexhe and Philip Gourevitch who have studied Rwanda in depth give no credence anywhere to the idea of 'overpopulation' being even a contributory cause to the genocide, let alone the principal cause.



### Wrong Assumptions

Since the publication of Paul Ehrlich's book, *The Population Bomb* in the 1960s the Population Control Movement has argued that as world population grows, increased scarcity of arable land, food, raw materials and energy will inevitably develop. These assumptions are false. In contrast to popular belief the notion of a fixed supply of farmland is misleading.

If increasing population led to increased 'pressure' on land we would expect to see more people working on the land. The opposite has occurred in both rich and poor countries. The proportion of those working in agriculture has continually declined, and may well decline forever. In addition, the absolute number of acres each farmer cultivates eventually rises when income becomes high, despite increases in population.<sup>6</sup> In Sub-Saharan Africa, which is under populated, agriculture is inefficient. Population growth is actually necessary to force communities to abandon inefficient farming practices. Since Ester Boserup developed this theory in 1965, world population has doubled and yet food production per capita has continued to increase. As each set of arguments for restricting population becomes untenable, the population control lobby moves on to others. The latest one is the controversial global warming theory. This is based on computer predictions which some have criticised for their crudity - by contrast temperature measurements from satellites over the past two decades show a slight cooling of the earth.

### The Real Answer

The Population Control Movement in its attempts to reach into people's private lives has demonstrated its disregard for the ability of people to regulate their own fertility. In Kerala, India, lower birth rates followed on from higher female literacy rates (75% versus 30% in India as a whole), together with lower infant mortality rates. When communities see that their children are not going to die they usually decide to regulate their own fertility. Yet in Sub-Saharan Africa which is being wasted by AIDS and where life expectancy in some countries is down into the forties again, there is no let up in the campaign to deal with the population 'problem'. The main point missed by the Population Controllers is that population growth stimulates development over the long term. The Bible looks on population growth and large families as a blessing not a curse. Each generation inherits its own stock of knowledge and ingenuity which is then added to. The most effective long term way of augmenting that capital stock is through population growth and good education.

### Conclusion

The Population Control movement, as well as demonstrating scant disregard for human rights, has consistently attacked the institutions of marriage and the family. Its promotion of amoral sex education, free contraception and easily accessible abortion in country after country has had devastating results. The assertion in a recent BMJ editorial<sup>7</sup> that 'overpopulation leads to war, famine and disease' could not be more wrong. It is the destruction of the family and consequent fatherlessness which leads to such things as child abuse, crime, drug addiction, self harm, low educational achievement and a perpetuation down the generations of problems such as teenage pregnancy. Ask any resident on a heart-sink estate about the real problems affecting their lives (including especially violence) and the answer in some way will be related to family breakdown. The destruction of a nation's moral ecology has a far greater effect on people's lives than any putative effect of population growth on the physical ecology. Population Control with its roots in eugenics, its fear of people, its appalling human rights record and its antagonism to marriage is an enemy of the family and therefore of the Church.

### References

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**Greg Gardner is a General Practitioner in Birmingham**