



This is historical material, "frozen in time."

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Population Issues

History of the U.S. Population Issue

The notion that America's best interests may not lie in continued population growth has been widely discussed only since the 1960s. Before then, population growth was generally viewed not only as necessary and inevitable but desirable.

In the 1960s, people began to examine critically the notion that all population growth is desirable. Several public interest groups were established and population issues joined environmental and social issues on the public agenda.

In 1969, President Nixon issued to Congress a "Message on Population." Referring to the expectation of the time that the U.S. population might exceed 300 million by the year 2000, he said:

This growth will produce serious challenges for our society. I believe that many of our present social problems may be related to the fact that we have had only fifty years in which to accommodate the second hundred million Americans. In fact, since 1945 alone some 90 million babies have been born in this country. We have thus had to accommodate in a very few decades an adjustment to population growth which was once spread over centuries. And now it appears that we will have to provide for a third hundred million Americans in a period of just 30 years.

THE CREATION OF TITLE X

One result of Nixon's message was passage in 1970 of Title X of the Public Health Service Act, providing family planning services for low-income women and men. Another was the creation of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, chaired by John D. Rockefeller III, which released a multivolume study of U.S. population growth and its impacts in 1972.

The Rockefeller Commission's most widely cited recommendation reads:

Recognizing that our population cannot grow indefinitely, and appreciating the advantages of moving now toward the stabilization of population, the Commission recommends that the nation welcome and plan for a stabilized population.

When President Nixon transmitted his message to Congress in 1969, U.S. families averaged between two and three children—the total fertility rate was 2.5—so that parents more than replaced themselves, and generation numbers were growing ever larger. By the time the Commission released its report in 1972, the total fertility rate had fallen to two children, or replacement level. The following year, it fell below two children per family, where it stayed until 1989.

FORMATION OF THE TASK FORCE

Between 1972 and the 1994-95 work of the Population and Consumption Task Force of the PCSD no sustained official conversation about U.S. population growth has taken place. Most citizens- and most government officials-assumed incorrectly that below-replacement fertility automatically means immediate zero population growth and that U.S. population is no longer growing.

In contrast, immigration has received considerable attention. Several national commissions have reviewed immigration issues, including illegal immigrants and refugees, and published reports and recommendations. The most recent effort, which was chaired by the late Barbara Jordan, is the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform. Its work is still under way.

THE CAIRO CONSENSUS

The Plan of Action negotiated in September 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo is grounded in a comprehensive, woman-centered commitment to health, development, and empowerment. It recognizes the complex context in which decisions about childbearing are made.

Nations at the Cairo conference reached broad agreement that development (poverty alleviation, education, basic health care, and economic opportunity) and family planning each are important for reducing population growth rates-but that they work best when pursued together. Similarly, the

consensus recognized that population growth is not the only driving force behind environmental concerns, and that consumption patterns also play an important role. Finally, it was widely agreed

important role. Finally, it was widely agreed that family planning should be provided as part of broader primary and reproductive health initiatives, and that population policy should encompass economic opportunity for women and the elimination of legal and social barriers to gender equality.

The United States actively participated in the Cairo process, provided important leadership, and is part of the broad consensus that now exists worldwide for this approach to stabilizing world population.

CENSUS BUREAU PROJECTIONS

The U.S. Census Bureau projects that if current mortality, fertility, and immigration patterns persist, U.S. population will reach 350 million people by the year 2030 and nearly 400 million people by 2050, continuing to grow indefinitely. (This is the "medium projection.")

If fertility and immigration fall slightly, U.S. population will still increase until about 2030, when it will reach about 290 million people. In another decade, a slow decline in numbers would begin. (This is the "low projection.")

The opposite assumption-involving rises in fertility and immigration -would produce 500 million Americans by the year 2050, with continued growth inevitable and no stabilization in sight. (This is the "high projection.")

Continued population growth in the United States, particularly on the scale envisioned by the medium and high projections, has enormous implications. Coupled with the technologies and resource consumption patterns that underlie the U.S. standard of living, population growth in America produces an environmental impact unparalleled by any other country at this time.

The Rockefeller Commission examined several aspects of the relationship between population and prosperity in its 1972 report, comparing the effect of an American population with a two-child family average with that of a three-child family average. Essentially, the Commission analyzed the difference between a growing and a stable U.S. population. "The nation has nothing to fear from a gradual approach to population stabilization," the report said. "From an economic point of view, a reduction in the rate of population growth would bring important benefits." The report also cited the testimony of the chair of the Atlantic-Richfield board of trustees, who testified at a hearing convened by the Commission:

There is a habit of thinking in some segments of the business community that population increase is something essential to the maintenance of vigorous demand and economic growth, just as there is an instinctive reaction against any new cost factors being added to the processes of production and distribution. But our economy has already, and in many ways, shown its tremendous adaptability to new social demands and necessities. I have not the slightest doubt that it can meet this new challenge.

Support of research by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Agency for International Development, the two principal federal sources of funds for contraceptive research, has waned significantly. Analysts identify political factors and the withdrawal of federal support during the 1980s, as well as standards of legal liability for harm from contraceptives, as leading causes of the decline.

Special programs are also required to reach young men, before they become sexually active, to build the skills and strategies required for sexual health and responsibility. ***Reducing unintended pregnancies in the United States will require the empowerment and participation of both men and women;*** special programs to improve men's participation are an integral part of achieving this goal.

CONCLUSIONS ON POPULATION ISSUES

The Population and Consumption Task Force's findings have led it to a number of conclusions. To enable individuals to make responsible fertility choices, it seems particularly important to focus on the following goals:

- Elimination of unintended pregnancies and births by means of expanded access to comprehensive family planning services, including information and education, particularly for the poor, teens, men, and other underserved populations;
- A broadened range of contraceptive options, including emergency contraception;
- Carefully framed programs aimed specifically at teens and designed to postpone sexual activity and childbearing; and
- Use of the media and advertising to promote sexual responsibility.

The two most important external conditions affecting fertility decisions appear to be poverty and the specific features of women's low status that inhibit access to reproductive health care and meaningful economic opportunity.

The Population and Consumption Task Force developed the following goals, which in turn shaped the specific policy recommendations designed to implement the goals.

GOAL 1: Stabilize U.S. population as early as possible in the next century as part of similar worldwide efforts, by providing universal access to a broad range of information, services, and opportunities so that individuals may plan responsibly and voluntarily the number and spacing of their children. These include: high-quality family planning and other basic and reproductive health services; equitable educational, economic, social, and political opportunities, particularly for women; reduction of infant mortality; and the increase of male responsibility for family planning and childrearing. This goal also entails targeted actions to eradicate poverty. While fertility is the largest contributor to U.S. population growth, responsible immigration policies that respect American traditions of fairness, freedom, and asylum will also contribute to voluntary population stabilization in the United States.

2: Achieve a geographic distribution of U.S. population consistent with the long-term ability of environmental, social, and economic systems to support those populations. This requires policies which respect the right of individuals to live and work in the community of their choice. It also requires that the private sector and government at all levels take into account the symbiotic relationship of economic development strategies and population distribution and movements.

GOAL 3: Reduce the amount of primary materials (including energy) used in the U.S. economy by constantly and significantly improving the efficiency of materials use in extraction, production, and manufacturing, while simultaneously reducing the environmental risks associated with consumption of materials and the generation of wastes.

GOAL 4: Achieve patterns of consumption, savings, and investment that will contribute to long-term economic prosperity, environmental protection, and greater social equity.

GOAL 5: Provide consumers with the information, services, and opportunities they need to make informed choices in their selection and use of goods and services, base understanding of the environmental, economic, and social implications of their choices.

GOAL 6:

Every American will contribute to sustainable development by understanding and upholding ethical principles that recognize each individual's ability and responsibility to conserve resources while pursuing individual and societal goals. Public awareness of the relationship between consumption and quality of life will be widespread, acknowledging that while it is important that all Americans be able to meet their needs, more is not always better. It should be understood that this is especially true those at the upper end of the distribution of goods and services, and that non-material factors, particularly quality of life, are essential determinants of individual and national progress.

GOAL 7:

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Cleaner, more efficient technologies necessary to reduce material throughputs achieve sustainable development will be commercially available, competitively priced, and accessible to all Americans.

Information and Services to Prevent Unintended Pregnancies
Governments at all levels should increase and improve educational efforts and public outreach related to contraceptive methods and reproductive health, and expand access to and availability of the services individuals need to freely and responsibly decide the number and spacing of their children.

ACTION 1: Title X of the Public Health Service Act. Congress should fund Title X sufficiently so that funded programs may enhance information, education, and outreach capabilities, particularly for populations not currently reached, such as men and rural residents. Similarly, sufficient funding is needed to ensure that all women and men, regardless of income, have physical and financial access to the full range of contraceptive options and related reproductive health care services.

ACTION 2: Medicaid

ACTION 5: New Contraceptive Technologies. The federal government should develop procedures to ensure expedited approval of all medically sound methods of contraception, such as appropriate contraceptives for emergency post-coital use. Organizations and educational institutions responsible for training physicians, nurses, and reproductive health providers should also educate these individuals in the use of new contraceptive technologies, including oral contraceptives and other methods for emergency contraception.

ACTION 8: Public Education Messages.

The federal government should fund public education efforts, including the development and marketing of public service announcements (PSAs), to create awareness and provide information on sexual responsibility. These PSAs will be developed for a broad audience—adults as well as adolescents—and should therefore cover topics including abstinence, contraceptives, unintended pregnancy and STDS, the importance of responsible sexual behavior, and the responsibilities of parenthood.

ACTION 4: Service Availability. The federal government should sufficiently fund programs that provide family plan- services to adolescents, including Title X.

ACTION 5: Educational Environment. Educational providers should be encouraged to improve the educational environment of adolescents through innovative partnerships focusing on improving gender relations and on eliminating violence, sexual harassment, and drugs in schools. In addition, efforts should be undertaken to develop creative programs where teens can continue their education during and after pregnancy.

Improve the Conditions Affecting Individual Decisions

The public and private sectors should work in partnership to reduce poverty and provide greater economic, social, and political opportunities for all Americans, particularly women.

must address these factors.

ACTION 7:

Development

Assistance. The United States should adopt the United Nations' humanitarian aid target of 0.7 percent of GNP/GDP each year, targeting these funds at long-term job creation and income-generation activities. The focus should be on women who would otherwise rely on remittances, and on men in rural areas who would otherwise migrate to urban areas or other countries.

ACTION 8: Trade

Policy. Active measures should be adopted to ensure that U.S. trade and investment policies result in a decrease, not an increase, in rural poverty and landlessness, since these are two factors that directly contribute to emigration.

ACTION 2: Phasing Out Harmful Subsidies. The President should propose phasing out subsidies with aggregate effects that distort economic efficiency and damage the environment, while preserving subsidies that promote overall social welfare. Specifically, consideration should be given to eliminating subsidies that cannot clearly be shown to benefit society so much that the net additional benefit is substantially greater than the cost of the subsidy.

ACTION 3: Preventing Deceptive Claims. The Federal Trade Commission and other appropriate federal agencies should establish the necessary means to prevent deceptive environmental marketing claims and ensure the integrity of a national eco-labeling program.

ACTION 1: Guidelines.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should accelerate the process of developing guidelines for products that are or can be made with recycled goods, pursuant to Section 6002 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

ACTION 2: Recycled Products. Each agency of the federal government should purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, recycled products in the 26 categories already established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ACTION 1: Formal Education. The U.S. Department of Education should review curriculum requirements to incorporate elements that demonstrate how individual choices affect natural and community environments and other elements of sustainability.

ACTION 2: Mass Media. The media industry-through innovative partnerships with government, business, and the nonprofit sector-should be encouraged to incorporate sustainable lifestyle practices into storylines and advertisements.

ACTION 3: Advertising Responsibility. To ensure that consumers are receiving accurate information on which to make informed sustainable choices, the print and television advertising community should be encouraged to adopt an ethic that insures the accuracy claims regarding the environmental impact of products

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