COMMITTEE II
The Value of Human Life

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# SUMMARY OF BIRTH CONTROL AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

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#### SUMMARY

**OF** 

## BIRTH CONTROL AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

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The population of the world has grown tremendously since the termination of World War II. Its growth is mainly attributable to that of developing countries, including the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand. The rapid growth of population in the developing countries in high density and predominantly agricultural situation gives no promising prospects for boosting economic and social development, raising the level of living, and enhancing quality of life inasmuch as any surpluses from agriculture are depleted by the increase in population from high fertility. High density, overcrowding, poverty, squlaor due to rapid population growth without economic development do not permit the people in most of the developing countries to live the life of human decency and dignity, thus prohibiting the opportunity to enhance the value of human life. Under the present circumstances in most of the developing countries, the fertility decline through birth control or family planning is considered to be the essential element for promoting the value of human life.

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On the other hand, in the developed countries, one of the most important population problems is the problem of extremely low fertility and subsequent process of population aging. Total fertility in Europe and Northern America is mostly well below the net replacement level, that is to

say the current fertility level cannot replace themselves and future depopulation is imminent if the present low fertility will continue. Although every government in the developed countries is keenly aware of the adverse effects of shrinking population and population aging, they are in a difficult position to promote pronatalist population policies inasmuch as their people mostly do not want the government's intervention. The recent feminist movement for the equity of right and the enhancement of status of women like men and concomitantly ongoing trends of women's participation in the labour force, certainly promote separation of women from the activities of childbearing and rearing and from domestic chores to which they have been until recently all destined to devote their entire life. At the present, at least to the view of the present author, it is difficult to reconcile the individual aspiration for raising the quality of life and for gaining the sense of worthiness by their contributing to work outside home, on one hand, and the government's wish at least to thwart the population decline and to increase the size of population, on the other.

#### Birth Control and Value of Human Life

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#### 1. Rise of the Population Concern

Since Thomas Robert Malthus published his celebrated Essay on the Principle of Population, the threat of population growth has become the concern of social scientists, government administrators and political leaders alike in both the developed and developed countries. However, the question of population had been subdued for more than 100 years in between during which time the Western world underwent the historically unprecedented and profound economic and industrial transformation called "industrial revolution", accompanying technological innovations in the fields of manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, and communication. During the period of industrial revolution, food production had increased tremendously and, in spite of the substantial population growth which followed, the levels of living in Europe and Northern America (U.S.A. and Canada) had been increased on an unprecedented scale. Accordingly, the population issues had been regarded as "solved out", and furthermore population growth had been considered not only no menace to the nation, but also an essentially positive element for thrusting economic development and increase in nation's well-being.

Nevertheless, the ghost of Malthus has not completely disappeared from the world. It did start haunting again in the third world after World War

<sup>1/</sup> Thomas Robert Malthus, An Essay on the Principle of Population, London: Johnson, 1798.

II, taking a different guise. Immediately after the war, the third world consisting of Asia. Latin America, Africa and Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, experienced spectacular population increases. increases were unprecedentedly large in the number and relative intensity (in terms of growth rate). In 1950 the world population was 2.5 billion. In 1960 it became 3 billion, in 1975 it increased to 4.1 billion, and in 1985 it has reached 4.8 billion. During the 19th century, the world population had grown at annual average rate of only 0.5 percent. During 1900-50, the annual average rate of growth increased to a modest rate of 0.8 percent. But in 1950-55 the rate of growth of the world population jumped to 1.8 percent and in 1965-70 it increased to an unprecedent rate of 2.0 percent per annum. Although in the most recent 10 years of 1975-85 the rate has been reduced to 1.7 percent, each year the population approximating that of the country of Mexico or 77 million, has been added to the world population. According to the most authoritative United Nations population projections made in 1985, the world population would reach 6.1 billion by the year 2000, 8.2 billion by 2025, and 10.1 billion by 2100. It is very important to note that, between 1950 and 1985 for 35 years' time, the population growth of the third world countries accounts for 85 percent of the world population growth. In 1950, the percentage share of the third world was 67 percent or two-thirds of the world population. In 1985 it has increased to 75.7 percent or three-quarters. In the year 2025 it would become 83 percent or five-sixths. As far as population numbers are concerned, the 21st century will be predominantly a century for the third world, particularly for Africa and South Asia. On the other hand, East Asia and Latin America are having deceleration of population growth.

The rapid population growth in the developing countries after the termination of World War II has been called the "population explosion" or the big bang of population bomb. The rapidity and enormity of population explosion are simply historically unprecedented. But, why had such phenomena appeared in the third world after the war? Was this because of substantial gains taken place in the third world countries in the area of food production and enhancement of level of living accompanying gains in nutritional and caloric intake? The answer is very qualified yes, and that was certainly not the main reason. Some developing countries might have experienced expansion in food production and increase in the level of living, but many did not gain much in both the food production and level of living. The population growth in the third world took place by the reduction of mortality without accompanying reduction in fertility. main reason was the mortality decline attributable to the import to the third world of the essential outcomes of the development of medical sciences and advancement in technologies attained in the developed countries of Northern America and Europe immediately after the war, and particularly attributable to that of anti-biotics, insecticides and other public health measures, innoculation and immunization, purification and sterilization of drinking water and milk, etc. In a country like Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) killing of mosquitos by spraying DDT, cleaning-up of ditches, drying-out of water ponds and swamps had resulted in reducing malaria causalities on a big scale, hence having led to a tremendous reduction in mortality. Between the periods 1936-46 and 1950-52, the crude death rate of Ceylon had declined from 21 to 12 per 1,000 population.

To summarize, the enormous reduction in mortality in the third world has been made by the implantation of the Western medical scences and public

health technology and did not necessarily accompany substantial improvement in the level of living and in nutritional and caloric conditions. It is important that in the third world countries the reduction in mortality occurred mostly alone, without concurrence of fertility reduction. In Europe and Northern America on the other hand, fertility started declining with a time lag of a few decades after mortality had started falling in the late 18th century or early 19th century. As the general historical trend in the demographic transition, the mortality decline is normally followed by the fertility decline. We shall explain the reasons later in this paper.

The population growth is the balance between births and deaths, if we do not consider migration. Obviously, the recent population explosion in the developing countries means that mortality has declined substantially, but fertility has not equally declined. It should be noted, however, that in the very recent years, as already mentioned, the rate of population growth for the developing countries has become declining. In 1965-70 the rate of population growth for the developing countries was at 2.5 percent; in 1970-75 it declined to 2.4 percent and in 1975-80 it was further reduced to 2.1 percent. In the latest quinquennium of 1980-85, the same rate has become 2.0 percent. In spite of the fact that mortality has continuously and appreciably been curtailed down at the same time, the reduction in population growth rate means that there has been a notable decline in fertility or birth rate in the past two decades. The demographic statistics amassed by the United Nations Population Division tell us that the recent decline of fertility in China has played a big role of bringing down the birth rate of the developing countries as a whole, accounting for its 55 This can be imputed predominantly to the bold planning and successful implementation of the one-child population policy therein.

The next question will be concerned with the conditions for fertility decline in the third world which is necessarily related to birth control and its underlying philosophical thinking towards practice of birth control, or family planning in a more current usage. We shall first review reasons why fertility has declined in both the developed (including Japan which is the sole industrialized country outside of European-descent countries and culture) and developing countries; then we shall make assessments of the role of family planning played in the reduction in both the developed and developing countries; and finally we shall discuss some ethical questions relating to birth control and population control in a more widely conceived frame of reference.

#### 2. Conditions for Fertility Decline

Table 1 indicates the trends of fertility in the world by the more developed and less developed regions and by eight major areas, namely Africa, Latin america, Northern America, East Asia, south Asia, Europe, Oceania and U.S.S.R. according to the United Nations classification. Two measures of fertility are used, one is crude birth rate and the other total fertility rate. Crude birth rate is the simplest indicator of fertility which is obtained by dividing the number of births by the mid-period or the mean population in the period concerned. This is a useful indicator since the balance between this and the corresponding crude death rate signifies the rate of natural increase, but its drawback is that it does not take into account of difference in population composition: if the population is young and relatively plentiful of the female population aged 20-29, like the

Table 1. Trends of World Population Growth by the More Developed and Less Developed Regions and by Major Areas

Regions	Crude Birth Rate				Total Fertility Rate			
	1950 <b>–</b> 1955	1960 <b>–</b> 1965	1970 <b>-</b> 1975	1980– 1985	1950 <b>–</b> 1955	1960 <b>–</b> 1965	1970 <b>–</b> 1975	1980 <b>–</b> 1985
World	37.3	35.3	31.6	27.1	4.94	4.95	4.44	3.52
More Developed	22.7	20.3	17.0	15.5	2.80	2.66	2.17	1.97
Less Developed	44.4	41.9	37.2	31.0	6.12	6.07	5.40	4.06
Africa	48.3	48.2	46.8	45.9	6.47	6.59	6.50	6.34
America	33.8	32.5	27.1	25.3	4.63	4.69	3.63	3.14
Latin America	42.5	41.0	35.4	31.6	5.86	5.94	5.01	4.09
Northern America	25.1	22.8	16.5	15.9	3.43	3.31	1.95	1.83
Asia	42.7	39.5	34.9	27.2	5.87	5.72	5.06	3.54
East Asia	40.8	35.5	29.4	18.8	5.68	5.32	4.37	2.34
South Asia	44.6	43.2	39.8	34.1	6.04	6.08	5.67	4.59
Europe	19.8	18.7	16.1	13.9	2.56	2.59	2.16	1.88
Oceania	27.6	26.7	25.0	20.7	3.78	3.89	3.15	2.65
U.S.S.R.	26.3	22.3	17.8	19.0	2.82	2.54	2.44	2.35

Note: Both crude death rate and total fertility rate are the annual average for five-years.

Source: United Nations, <u>World Population Prospects</u>: <u>Estimates and Projections as Assessed in 1984</u>, 1986. (Made available in the form of computer printout)

population of the Philippines, then the population tends to have a higher birth rate. On the other hand, in the case of the aged population like Sweden where the female population aged 20-29 is not plentiful relatively speaking, the crude birth rate tends to be lower even though the average number of children that a couple bears is the same as in the Philippines. In contrast to crude birth rate, total fertility rate does not have the bias created by age composition. It is calculated by summing up all the age-specific birth rates each of which is obtained by dividing the number of births occurred to a female population of a particular age x by the corresponding female population aged x. In other words, the total fertility rate is the standardized birth rate (standardized by age in order not to have effect of different age composition), provided that the weight of population for each age is unity, that is one.

So much for the explanation of the two measures of fertility and let us look at table 1. The first observation to make is the marked contrast in the level of fertility between the more developed and less developed regions. In 1950-55 the crude birth rate for the more developed regions was at 22.7 while that for the less developed was at 44.4, almost being twice as high a rate as for the more developed. In the 1980-85, although both the regions underwent considerable decreases from 1950-55 to 1980-85, their relative positions are the same to each other: The less developed regions show twice as high a rate as the more developed ones do. If we turn to the total fertility rate, the contrast is even more prominent. In 1950-55 the total fertility rate for the less developed is more than twice as high as that for more developed. In 1980-85, their relative positions to each other remain much the same; fertility has declined substantially in the less

developed regions, but the substantial decline has also taken place in the more developed regions.

Looking into the differences in major geographical areas, contrasts are even more conspicuous. In terms of total fertility rate, in 1980-85 Africa indicates 6.34 whereas Northern America, comprising mostly the United States of America and Canada, signifies only 1.83. By the way, in terms of total fertility rate, the level of 2.1 is the cutting-off point in terms of net replacement of population in next generation for the developed countries where mortality is low and the life expectancy is high. If the rate is below 2.1 the population will eventually decline if not in immediate future. Since there are some demographic inertia involving people already born, the population may grow even when the total fertility rate is below 2.1. If the rate is well above 2.1 the population will continuously increase. depends to some extent on the level of mortality as was already implied. mortality is high and the life expectancy is high in the developing countries, then the total fertility rate of 2.5 or 2.6 is the cutting-off point to have the net replacement level. It is also noted that among the four major areas of less developed countries, namely Africa, Latin America, East Asia and South Asia, there are considerable variations in the level of fertility. If we take total fertility rate, we note that East Asia shows a most rapid decline between 1950-55 and 1980-85, being reduced to less than a half of the original level of 1950-55. On the other hand, in Africa, fertility rate has virtually been the same. Latin America and south Asia are in-between and exhibit each a moderate extent of decline. This means that the less developed regions or the third world countries are not the solid, unitary rock, but of diversity and multitudinous variety.

At any rate, the important question remains as to why the less developed regions tend to show a higher fertility while the more developed regions are prone to express a lower fertility. The common sense dictates that this is utterly upside down. Because of its being rich in per capita income and hence of economic capability the more developed countries, should have had and could have had a higher birth rate, whereas because of its being poor in per capita income and hence of economic incapability of having many children relatively speaking the less developed, should have had a lower fertility. But the reality is completely reverse and one may be forced to think that there must be some good but complicated reasons behind the scene why the more developed have a lower fertility and the less developed have a higher fertility.

The trend of low fertility among the more developed countries dates back to the industrial revolution, when the level of living was enhanced because of the increase in manufacturing and agricultural productivity and when the processes of urbanization, secularization and literacy proceeded. The combined forces of the increase in the level of living, urbanization, secularization and the spread of education particularly to women, did first reduce mortality and then at the same time left the people some idea of practicing fertility control. Reduction in mortality which particularly cut down infant and child mortality, generated some over-population in each household and community, thus creating a population problem therein. But the very philosophical thinking which promoted mortality decline tended to push fertility also. We may refer to a kind of rational way of thinking evolved in urban-industrial settings, in consonance with the desire for providing decent, clean and orderly life and in consonance with a philosophical thinking that a decision of individual behavior and action

remains in the domain of human choice. Some people already knew some premodern techniques of contraception by coitus interruptus, douching, and by
use of rudimentary condoms and intra-uterine contraceptive devices, though
these methods had not been well disseminated among the people. Still, there
existed taboos and inhibitions which regarded something related with sex as
vulgar and profane. It is argued that in the process of secularization and
urbanization, the people would have come to realize that controlling their
fertility was not against the prevailing religious belief and folkways and
mores.

Again, there are many reasons why the fertility is high in the developing countries. First of all, the people there do not have access to an idea that family planning can generally be accepted and a good thing to the society where they live; and besides the people do not have access to the knowledge and know-how of methods of controlling fertility. According to Himes, the human beings have been practicing contraception even from the very ancient time, but the point is that the knowledge on method of how to do it had not been much democratized to the general public.

Another dimension of thought is relating to the utility and cost of raising children in the rural and agricultural setting. In the developing countries where agriculture is a predominant form of economic activities, the value of children is very high. First of all, children are useful as labour force at the time of planting seeds and harvesting crops. Secondly, in such agrarian societies of the developing countries people lack social security system so that when parents get aged, children, particularly male children are supposed to be the future main source of social security for

Norman E. Himes, Medical <u>History of Contraception</u>, New York: Gamut Press, Inc., 1963.

the parents. After all, when the parents get aged and incapacitated or bed-ridden incapable of economic activities, their sons are supposed to be the supporter in providing livelihood for his parents. In addition to it, in the premodern agrarian setting, mortality, particularly child mortality is high, hence the parents have to have an enough number of children out of whom at least one remaining son would support the life of parents after their retirement from economic activities. On the other hand, we should consider the cost of raising children to adulthood. In the premodern agrarian societies, the cost of raising children to adulthood is relatively small. In the agrarian societies, education is generally not required, and if it is required, it is often limited to the grade school level as compulsory education beyond which children seldom proceed to a higher education. Hence the balance between the value and cost of children becomes positive and substantial and there are good reasons for having high fertility to ensure the community's and own family's survival.

With the advent of industrialization, urbanization and secularization, the value and cost of children have changed dramatically. No longer has the value of children been appreciated in the industrial and urban settings. In the urban and industrial societies, there are no rooms where children can contribute to economic activities of their parents and households. There are no farms where children can work on harvesting crops and there are no blacksmith cottages to which they can bring bales of water and fire logs. Besides, with the arrival of compulsory mass education, children have to go to school in the daytime and even if parents want to use them for domestic chores and economic activities in household, children are absent from home and are simply not available to parents. On the other hand, in the context of industrialization, children are required to have higher education through

high schools and colleges and universities in order to get decent and high-salaried jobs in office and factory. The expenses for educating their sons and daughters are rapidly increasing, therefore the balance between the value and cost of having children becomes negative instead of positive and quite substantial. If the net balance between the utility and cost of bearing and rearing children becomes negative (less utility and more cost), then there would be only limited room to have children. If parents still want children, it is because they want only psychic pleasures of sweet home with children.

One of the most leading demographer of our time, Ansley J. Coale has suggested three general prerequisites for a major fall in fertility particularly in marital fertility in the developing countries.

(1) Fertility must be considered a matter for rational choice. Couples must both be aware of the possibility of controlling family size and find it an acceptable form of behavior; (2) reduced fertility must be seen as advantageous within the context of the perceived social and economic circumstances; and (3) effective and acceptable techniques of birth control must be known and accessible.

In many developing countries, the condition (1) does not exist. In such countries, children are considered the gift and blessing from the god or heaven and the controlling fertility is blasphemy to the god and is sacrilegious act. The very concept that the man can have the right to control own fertility and can technically do so is not known to many people. At the same time, the condition (2) does not take place in most of the

<sup>3/</sup> A.J. Coale, "The demographic transition", International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, <u>International Population Conference</u>. Liege, 1973, Vol.1, pp.53-73.

people living on agriculture in the developing countries. Again in those agrarian villages, children are producers and at the same time consumers and their services in household mean important additions to the household labour force to promote production. Secondly, children is the source of the parents' social security in the future. On the other hand, in the agrarian settings the cost of raising children is often minimum, hence the net balance is definitely advantageous for having more children than having less.

And thirdly, on the basis of the above-mentioned conditions, many developing countries promote the import of modern contraceptives such as the pill and IUD from the developed countries in addition to traditional methods of using condom, diaphragm, jelly, tablets, douche as well as coitus interuptus, etc. As a matter of fact, most of countries in South and East Asia and Latin America lift bans to free access to those contraceptives among the general public. Mauldin and Lapham demonstrated that the Government efforts have played a big role is reducing crude birth rate in the developing countries. The availability of contraceptives and attainment of good population education generally create considerable differences in the actual practice of family planning and it has been demonstrated in many cases in the developed countries. We will also discuss this in next section.

The aboue-mentioned are the main reasons why fertility in developing countries has been kept high and why the people there usually resist to or are not subscribed to the idea of fertility control and family planning in

W. Parker Mauldin and Bernard Berelson, "Conditions of fertility decline in developing countries, 1965-75", Studies in Family Planning, Vol.9, No.5, 1978.

spite of high population growth. In order to have the ball rolling, industrialization and urbanization certainly help to facilitate breaking up the necessity of high fertility in the developing countries. It certainly limits the opportunity of having child labour. But, Government's provision of old-age-security would also discourage high fertility there, along with the general increase in health among the aged. If health is strengthened among the aged through various preventive medical measures, then most of the aged would not be incapacitated and can work longer at farms and other work place. For example, JOICFP, Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning reported that in Asia and Africa practically 100 percent of people in rural areas are infested with parasitic worms, thus having frail vitality in the old ages. If parasitic worms are eradicated, for, example, health is restored, then vigor is regained and old people can work more, thus decreasing appreciably the need of getting security.

### 3. The Situation in the Developed Countries

On the other hand, fertility in the more developed countries is low because the economic activity of children is very low and the cost of raising and giving proper education is very high. As already mentioned, in the urban industrial settings of the developed countries, there is no place at home for children to assist their parents' gainful work in as much as the greater majority of the parents work outside home as operatives, office workers and service-rendering workers. Besides, children have to acquire education beyond the compulsory education in the developed countries since educations is the ticket to enter and get a higher status in the occupational ladder of stratification. On the other hand, getting a higher education nowadays becomes so costly that parents cannot afford sending not

more than two children to universities and polytechnical higher schools. Furthermore, the movement towards liberation of women and provision of equal status for women as much as men has become the sweeping and irreversible trend, seen practically in every country in the developed regions. The labor force participation rates have risen remarkably in those countries not only for unmarried, but also for married women in the recent years, and the women who relinquished their gainful work in order to bear and rear children must have had high opportunity cost.

In this connexion, one has to mention about hostile environment to childbearing in cities and metropolitan areas in the developed countries. It should also be mentioned that the urban setting, which is characterized by barren monoliths of concrete apartments, by high crime rates and by lacks of green spaces and playgrounds for children, is inhibitive to the very existence of children and something incompatible with childbearing activities.

In addition, as already referred to in the previous section, emphasis should be laid upon the availability and widespread of highly effective contraceptive technology. The technology of fertility control has improved tremendously in the past 20 years and has widely been diffused throughout the population and among countries. The introduction of the oral pills and IUD around 1962 throughout non-Socialist Europe is considered to have been highly conducive to the synchronized precipitous declines in natality in Europe in 1964. In the United States, it was reported that the introduction of pills had made contraceptive revolution by reducing considerably the unwanted births among the couple. It is interesting to note that such a contraceptive revolution occurs even in a country like the United states where aspirations are high and the means of contraception are thought to

have already been widely available. Together with liberalization of induced abortion and availability of safe sterilization, the advent of contraceptive revolution played an important role in fertility reductions by eliminating virtually unwanted births in the West.

Finally, mention is being made of the recent change in marriage and the family which is also highly related to fertility decline. In recent years, a number of developed countries have been experiencing a revolution in respect of the incidence and timing of legal first marriages. The causes of this revolution are as yet unclear. According to the United Nations 1980 Monitoring Report, however, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that responsible factors include the youth revolution, changes in status and role of women and, not the least important, the radical changes that have occurred in the efficiency of contraceptives, the easier access to them and far wider incidence of their use.

Indeed, in the United States, starting about 1962, the annual rate of divorce rose sharply; it jumped from 9 per 1,000 population in 1960 to 22 per 1,000 in 1979. In Sweden, according to Jan Trost, out of every 100 couples, 15 were unmarried in 1978 and one of the three children was born out of wedlock. In the Federal Republic of Germany, between 1965 and 1978, crude birth rate nearly halved from 17.7 to 9.4 per 1,000. Of this decline, about 40 percent is attributable to the marked decline in nuptiality and the remaining 60 percent is accounted for by the phenomenal decrease in marital fertility, particularly among the couples with three or more children.

<sup>5/</sup> Charles F. Westoff and Norman Ryder, <u>The Contraceptive Revolution</u>, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>6/</sup> Jan Trost, "Dissolution of cohabitation and marriage in Sweden", <u>Journal</u> of <u>Divorce</u>, Vol. 2 (Summer 1979), pp.415-421

If the above-mentioned aspirations for freedom and enjoyment of the adult-oriented life, revolution relating to marriage, and low-fertility syndrome and the causes for the current low fertility in the developed countries were taken for granted, then it would be a very difficult effort for the governments to introduce pronatalist policies to increase fertility in the developed countries. It might look a futile effort unless such a philosophical tide and such a life-style change could be thwarted and reversed. It is symbolic that despite the rising concern about the current low fertility situation. France is the only major country in Northern and Western Europe which has been implementing pronatalist population policies with some success.

## 4. Consideration of Human Values in Relation to Birth Control

Population growth can be reduced in only three ways: raise mortality, promote migration, lower fertility. The first is, of course, unacceptable and the second infeasible. Hence, lowered fertility has become an intermediate goal of the development policy in many developing countries. According to the resolutions of past United Nations conferences, all married couples in the world today have the "human right" to have the number of children they want, subject to some appropriate languages about parental responsibility, and moreover, have the legal right as well. However, if a country lacks sufficient land, resources and capital accumulation, it is difficult to have an economic take-off, and the sky-high birth rate creates a menace and threat to their capital accumulation at the initial stage for launching industries and for increasing people's overall well-being and welfare. In other words if the country is caught in a Malthusian trap in

which any increase in agricultural production is eaten up by an everincreasing number of new-born babies, then the government does not have much
choices besides taking some policies to curb a runaway birth rate and
besides making efforts to disseminate to the people the idea of family
planning and the knowledge and methods of practicing family planning.

Although as will be cited later, Julian Simon argues that the ultimate resource is human beings and the increase in population gives a boon to the humanity, this idea may be largely applicable only to the United States, Canada and Australia where there are sufficient land and natural resources, but not pertinent to the country like Bangladesh where the threat of population increase is great and easily offsets the advantages to be gained from the population growth. At least as a matter of exigency, the fertility control can be justified in Bangladesh as well as in recent China, the latter of which has been well known for making efforts of implementing the one-child policies. In these countries, the national interests may be considered to reasonably override the individual right of freedom and choice. Yet, it should be pointed out that in fact they have been paying serious attention to avoid as much as possible coercion and suppression. It is understood that considerable debates, persuasion and guidance were taken place on the fear of the imminent catastrophe unless action were to be taken immediately. Imagine that the population growth continues at a rapid rate of nearly 2 percent and the world population will soon reach 50 billion, 100 billion or to the point where not only amenity in life is lost, but also food shortage, energy crisis, pollution are in the offing and would soon

Julian L. Simon, <u>The Ultimate Resource</u>, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

dicimate the population. The facts that the earth has the limits in availability of natural resources and the limits to growth are obvious vis-à-vis population and other forms of economic activities. Are we still capable of talking about human right and entitlements in this kind of situation? the answer is yes though we actually wish to make the answer in the qualified yes.

Coming back to the case of Bangladesh and similar countries in the developing countries, the government should recognize the reasons why some households still tend to have a number of children. They tend to have a number of children (1) because child mortality is high thus parents should provide a spare person (2) because there is need for youth labour inasmuch as agriculture requires a lot of labour-time at the time of busy seasons of planting and harvesting and (3) because there are no public security system for the aged. If the government must introduce the national population policies, the administrators must consider the above demographic needs, hence they must lay down important preparation to give securities to each household that ensure the well-being of the old-aged, and must teach the need of family planning and need of reducing the number of childdren, not by coercion; but through educational explanation of the nation's needs and people's welfare and well-being, quality of life and enhancement of human value. If the national interests override the individual interests, first of all the length of period during which time the application of crash programme measures is made should be limited to a minimum and the government should give much education and incentives, if necessary, so that individual could be at last motivated to follow the national family planning movement.

The recent Chinese policy has been criticized by many quarters of the world. We all remembered the sense of puzzlement when we heard the news

that China had launched to one-child policy. We were certainly at first bewildered at their launching of the population engineering type of activities and at the abruptness and extremeness of their policy. But, no Chinese actually likes the one-child policy and it is obvious that they planned and implemented as a matter of emergency measure. If the population growth rate as seen in 10 years ago would continue, China's population would have increased to much more than one billion, and the nation would have really fallen into the Malthusian trap. Furthermore the great famine would recur again in China under the state of isolation from the rest of the world as the worst one had occurred last in China in 1958-61. The only thing that is regretted now is that they should have realized it much earlier than today before the Marxian industrialism prevailed, emphasizing heavy manufacturing industries in the backyard of each home instead of developments in agriculture and light industries and instead of the urgency to curtail their fertility.

#### 5. What We Should Do about Value of Human Life?

In 1972, the Club of Rome published celebrated book entitled The Limits to Growth and its doomsday conclusions gave tremendous impacts on the intellectual community of the world. The tenets of the book have been badly criticized by many scholars since they were alleged to ignore the vast ability and promise of science and technology, and were alleged to underestimate the resilient forces of intellectual power of the humankind. It was asked that time when the catastrophe is approaching, would the people

<sup>8/</sup> Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III, <u>The Limits to Growth</u>, New york: Universe Books, 1972.

just sit around and wait for their downfall without really trying something to alleviate or defer the end of the world? In its review of the book, the Task Force of the World Bank states:

"Can we really believe that most of the population of Detroit could succumb to persistent pollutants without the rest of humanity making any adjustments in its producer-consumer behavior? humanity faces these problems one by one, every year in every era, and keeps making its quiet adjustments. It does not keep accumulating them indefinitely till they make catastrophe inevitable. One does not have to believe in invisible hand to subscribe to such a view of society. one has merely to believe in human sanity and its instinct for self-reservation".

In 1981 Julian Simon published his controversial book entitled The Ultimate Resource. This book is coloured by the author's unique optimism in contrast to pessimism expressed in The Limits to Growth. According to Simon. There are virtually no limits to natural resources, even to energy resources which have been considered most exhaustible. When there are advancements in science and technology, humankind will not face the resource scarcity and population problems. Population increase promotes economic growth. The necessity is the mother for innovation and new devices. He concludes that for most of the relevant economic matters he has checked, the trends are positive rather than negative. And he doubts that it does the troubled people of the world any good to say that things are getting worse through they are really getting better.... The major fuel to speed our progress is our stock of knowledge, and the brake is our lack of imagination. The ultimate resource is people - skilled, sprited, and

<sup>9/</sup> Princeton University Press, 1981.

hopeful people who will exert their wills and imaginations for their benefits, and so, inevitably, for the benefit of us all.

The philosophy of Julian Simon seems bright, rosy and very promising. It seems to us, however, that it depends on a type of country where you live. If you live in a country like the United States, Canada or Australia where resources and land are plentiful, then you can certainly exert your wills and imaginations to generate better living conditions and the more population may mean to promote economic development. It is true in the human history, population expansion generally pushes further economic development. But, what are about Bangladesh, Philippines, India, Korea, Cost Rica, Panama, and even China today? The mere heavy man-land ratio and the lack of natural resources together with the lack of capital and traditional society stiffle any imagination. Imagination alone cannot promote economic development and prosperity. The extreme poverty, filth, and overcrowding due to the lack of natural resource, heavy population density and the fatalistic way of looking at the world reflecting such geodemographic situations, simply suffocates the people's will to strive for a better life. The value of human life, though it is very important in abstract sense, becomes often meaningless and worthless under the extremely severe and poor circumstances. The human dignity and human value can only be restored by economic development through curving population growth.

It is true that the Club of Rome report on the Limits to Growth is certainly overpessimistic and it underestimates the role to be played by science and technology and human volition. One can ask that since science and technology cannot control street crimes, traffic jams and accidents, housing shortages, stagflation, how can we cope with the increasing population and deteriorating environmental conditions in the world -

dissertification, soil erosion, acid rain, increase of carbon monoxide in the air, etc. Nevertheless, we still believe that science and technology can at least postpone considerably the arrival of catastrophe, in some case for several hundred years instead of only two or three decades implied in The Limits to Growth.

But, then, after all the resources contained in the earth are not unlimited and in the ultimate future they will be depleted and exhausted. The earth is the limit. To repeat it, science and technology can only postpone the arrival of the end of the world, but cannot eliminate the prospect of catastrophe. If the present rate of consumption continues to grow along with the population growth, it must finally face resource depletion and exhaustion even though fertility is rapidly declining. Human society might survive for 500 years, but probably not beyond that. To the Spaceship called the Earth, the rapid population growth cannot continue on forever, but it must cease at some point and sometime. Although each additionally born child may be the blessing from the god to the parents it is not necessarily sure whether a newly born baby is always welcome by his surrounding world and represents a strong case of human value.

#### 6. Concluding Remarks

It is very difficult to think about the value of human life in many developing countries. Extreme poverty, filth and down-graded human conditions in these countries represent a kind of human pollution and infamy of the human kind. It is difficult to conceive the human dignity in an extremely crowded and poverty-stricken situation. In the morning rush hour time in Japan, the people are packed in suburban trains or subway cars just like sardine and there are only masses of human flesh and bones, not human

spirit. There can be no human dignity for the people who do not even have a standing space under foot in the train. And, in a country like Bangladesh, an enormous population increase simply aggravates the living conditions of the people and gave no prospect of increasing their level of living, if not decreasing. But, worst of all, the people have accepted and acquiesced such a kind of situation by saying that what else they can do besides.

The present writer believes that such is a good case of emergency or crisis circumstances and some kind of fundamental measures should be made almost immediately. Family planning movement is perhaps the way to emancipate the humankind from hunger, misery and indignity, infamy and to restore the value of human life.

The fundamental measures thus mentioned include two avenues. The first avenue is a crash-programme like measures and this is for the governments to support and spread rapidly birth control and family planning to the general public. If people lack the idea and knowledge of family planning, the idea and philosophy of why women have to resort to using it, should be emphasized and teaching and persuasion instead of coercion should be employed. Prior to persuasion and guidance, population education in school is important to lay down the foundation for efficient implementation and practice of family planning programme. The other avenue is economic development, increase in the level of living and enhancement of education and elimination of illiteracy. Certainly, development is often considered better contraceptives. But its drawback is slowness; often you cannot wait another fifty years to attain low birth rate and low growth rate of population. Some quick and exigency measures, are required. Nobody wants to take bitter pills, but under the present circumstances of many developing

countries, fundamental and far-sighted measures, though cautionsly to be done, are needed to recover and establish firmly the value of human life.

We believe that use of contraception, not abortion, under no circumstances of coercion, would enhance and enrich the value of human life. However, abortion should be avoided inasmuch as it kills foetus and gives irreversible and severe damages to the physical and mental health of the women who get abortion.