

## Howard Chapman

Prior to this century, most people saw population growth as a sign of health. It meant that society was becoming stronger. As the Bible says, 'A large population is a king's glory.' However, people in cities sometimes thought the world overcrowded, as did the ancient Greeks for instance, at a time when the world's population was less than five per cent of today's.

*Howard Chapman has had 20 years' involvement with pregnancy centres and is part of the support team for CARE confidential. Population control is a special interest area.*

The population control movement really gained impetus from eugenics and the early campaigners for birth control like Marie Stopes who was concerned that 'the lowest and worst members of the community produce innumerable tens of thousands of inferior infants, a drain on the resources of the classes above them.' Also Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood and IPPF in London, saw birth control as a means to 'create a race of thoroughbreds.' In recent years the target for the population planners has been the poor nations of the world and it now seems to be more about racism, imposing Western values and maintaining economic dominance.

Population controllers have used issues like women's rights, concern for the environment and the needs of the poor in developing countries to enable them to impose draconian measures and establish a world view that sees people as a pestilence and children as a curse rather than a blessing.

### What is population control?

*Population control and family planning are not the same thing.*

**Family planning** is the decision taken by couples, in the light of their own beliefs and circumstances, as to the number and spacing of their own children.

**Population control** is the decision taken by governments or other agencies that couples should have no more than a certain number of children, followed by measures to enforce this.

Panic over population has been fuelled, in part, by Paul Elrich's book, *The Population Bomb*, and two major government reports, *Limits to Growth* (1972) and *Global 2000* (1980). Myths have developed about the consequences of population growth. For example, more people means more poverty, starvation, sickness, overcrowding, or we will run out of water, oxygen, land, food, or the planet will be destroyed, etc. Most of what has been said has proven to be wrong yet vast funds have flowed and the whole process has taken on enormous momentum, encouraged by the UN and periodic world population conferences.

The fears generated have led to calls for drastic action, Paul Elrich, for instance saying, 'We must have population control, by compulsion if voluntary methods fail. We can no longer afford to merely treat the symptoms of the cancer of population growth: the cancer itself must be cut out.' But the truth is that population over the last 1,000 years has grown from a few million living at subsistence to a few billion living well above subsistence, whilst life expectancy has also risen dramatically (one of the main causes of increasing population). These are clear signs of success in economics, agriculture and public health.

### Consequences of population control

- 1 Abortion and infanticide** World wide, over 55 million deaths each year. Liberal abortion laws around the world encouraged by population planners.

- 2 **Destruction of girls** At least 52 million 'missing girls' in China and India for example, caused by population control measures coupled with cultural preference for boys.
- 3 **Euthanasia** Governments discussing ways of dealing with an increasingly aged population, itself partly a consequence of current population control programmes.
- 4 **Coercing the poor** Either directly, eg China's forced abortions and sterilisations or indirectly, eg aid linked to population control programmes.
- 5 **Sex education / contraception** The imposition of a Western 'value-free' sex education and contraception programmes worldwide, overriding local cultural, ethical and religious objections.
- 6 **Attacking Christianity** Christianity is viewed as the major obstacle to population planning. Population control fuels, finances and underpins the attacks on traditional Judeo-Christian ethics, as well as other religious value systems.

### Christian response to population control

God created this world for people, His special creation made in His image. The planet is not a god, to be worshipped at all costs. God gave us this planet properly to steward its resources and He talks about justice, about caring for the poor and needy. Susan George, in her excellent book, *How the Other Half Dies*, looked at the real reasons for world hunger and contends that popular myths about overpopulation and food shortages are just a smoke screen. She demonstrates that we have all the physical resources and technical skills to feed the world. As she states, 'World hunger is a scandal not a scourge.' We need to share our wealth and knowledge so that the world's poor has clean water, shelter and security. We need to see children as valuable resources, especially in developing countries.

Population control is also a symptom of a fundamental desire for control: 'We shall be as gods,' rather than faith in God's control over His creation. We need to question the eco-babble and population time-bomb myths, the panic that permits us to accept drastic action that involves destroying human life and coercing the poor to do the same. Our generation seems addicted to death and this needs to be challenged. We need to support godly initiatives that enable us, through good stewardship, to share in the bountiful provision in this world that God has created.

### For further reading

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| The War against Population                          | Jacqueline Kasun, Ignatius Press         |
| The Ultimate Resource                               | Julian Simon, Princeton University Press |
| Prospects for Growth: A biblical view of population | E. Calvin Beisner, Crossways Books       |

### For further information

CARE, 53 Romney Street, London SW1P 3RF

SPUC, 5/6 St Matthew Street, Westminster, London SW1P 2JT

Committee on Population and the Economy, 13 Norfolk House, Courtlands, Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW10 5AT

Population Research Institute, PO Box 2024, Baltimore, MD 21298-9559, USA