

"Pressures of Too Many People"  
"Health and Social Implications of Rapid Population Growth"

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When I was invited to make a speech on this topic I carefully meditated how I should develop my speech.

In Korea, since 10 years ago, family planning has been carried out under a national policy in parallel with a long-range economic development plan. Participating in the family planning are staff members of medical colleges in Korea, but, in fact, those of Catholic Medical College to which I belong have remained out of the activities.

When family planning is discussed among medical college professors, I often make a joke this: "Many people have a misunderstanding that Catholics are opposed to family planning, but there are no people who are more faithful in carrying our family planning than Catholic Priests and Sisters.,"

Several years ago, Maryknoll Sisters who were operating a small hospital in country side in Korea visited me to discuss a method of family planning for poor farming families. The Sisters asked for my advice about their plan to set up an organization which would provide education and counseling to needy couples with regard to the rhythm method.

At a seminar sponsored by the Korean Catholic Hospital Association in early November, a discussion was made on how Church-related Catholic hospitals should participate positively in family planning.

Of various social issues arising from rapid population growth, the most serious will be an economic problem. The correlation between population trend and economic development is explained by per capita income. In a country where GNP grows at a constant rate, the per capita income will grow at a faster pace if the population growth is slow.

For example, compared with the per capita income in a nation where population and economy grow at similar pace, the per capita income in a country having a rate of population growth equivalent to half that of economic growth will grow about 50% in 20 years and about 130% in 40 years.

It is considered logical that the distribution of limited land for the production of food and natural resources— marine, mining, etc. — can be effectively carried

out by reducing population growth.

It is also common knowledge that natural resources, labour force, capital and technique constitute production factors for economic development.

Production requires now investment which is enabled by means of savings by the government, enterprises, and families.

Large support, viewed from the national and individual family standpoint, increases expenditure and decreases savings due to the expansion of population and family size, which in turn results in the reduction of investment.

Furthermore, it is said that decline of birth rate not only increases investment for industry, but also makes easier investment for the improvement of our quality of living such as education, medical care, water supply and sewerage disposal, transportation, electrical supply, etc.

School facilities for national education, for which the government is responsible, require a great deal of expansion every year with the increase of child births. As a matter of fact, in Korea two percent of population increase a year requires every year 10,000 new classrooms each of which is capable of accommodating 60 children. It is considered that if the high birth rate can be reduced to half, 10 years from now, the number of school children will be maintained to a constant level.

It is further believed that the decrease of birth rate today will cause shortage of labor population after 15 years when the new born children will reach their labor age, but this shortage can be off set by increase of woman labor force, technical renovation, and improvement of labor quality, and by doing so, the unemployment problem which is a serious matter in developing countries will be solved.

We agree to the aforementioned various points on the one hand, but on the other hand, we have to look at them from different angles.

One misguided conception is that the poverty in developing countries is caused by overpopulation. The present poverty in developing countries, however, results from their long history of backwardness in industries and technique, compared with those in developed countries, rather than from overpopulation itself.

To give an example, 30 years ago, Korea used to export rice to Japan, but the present Japan, in spite of its territorial curtailment, conversely exports its rice to Korea. Shortage of food is a problem that persistently exists in countries with

backward agricultural technique.

Although there are some people who are opposed to the opinion that population itself is national power, certain degree of population is a prerequisite for the development of industry, arts, culture, including publication.

It can not be said that the growth or decline of national economy is directly influenced by the trend of population, however, there is some opinion that rapid population growth can stimulate the enhancement of national economy. The government of the Republic of Korea announced that the harvest of a new type of rice this year has brought about an increase of 35% compared with the old type. It can not be said that the result is related to the population.

It may be wrong to consider human society only in terms of economy in the same way as we handle products in industrial plants.

It is true that our desire and the materialistic and utilitarian idea which is now prevailing in the world make us endeavor to raise our standard of living to the height of no limit. However, can the happiness of a human being be evaluated only by the size of per capita income? It is my opinion that we Christians must give a serious consideration to the spiritual side of human beings as well as to the problem of population.

Family planning workers hold that too many deliveries are harmful to the health of both mother and child. It is true that an excessive number of childbirths cause the mother to be exposed to danger at each delivery. In addition, the large number of children in such families are more liable to be undernourished and suffer from diseases.

However, the dramatic decrease of maternal and infant mortality rates in Asian countries during the past 20-30 years, which has been the cause of the rapid population growth, is not ascribable to the drop of birth rate, but is attributable to the development of medical care and preventive medicine. Accordingly, the basic method of improving maternal and child health depends on how the medical care delivery system and public health service can be suitably and effectively developed in each country.

On the other hand, I think we must be deeply concerned about the hazards that may be caused to mothers as the result of various contraceptive methods adopted in carrying out family planning and the danger to which mothers are exposed in artificial abortions that may occur in an increasing number as family planning is

expanded.

There will be no dispute with regard to the idea that reduction of a family size must be practiced for lightening the burden and enhancing the dignity of a mother who has a large number of children.

Let us come to the conclusion:

Rapid population growth exercises great influence on national and social development. All people, particularly Christians, are greatly interested in this problem.

Family planning is an urgent matter particularly for poor families. We must make efforts to find suitable solutions to this problem.

In dealing with population problems, we must always take into consideration the spiritual side of human beings as well their economic aspect.

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## 회원병원명단

(1973년4월현재)

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의무원장: 유 철 박사
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