News and Comment

Population Planning: 1963 Marked by Reduction of Controversy and Shift in Government Attitude

In the year now coming to a close, perhaps one of the most remarkable, and least noted, events was the virtual disappearance of anger and bitterness from the population growth issue.

Feelings are still tender from the prolonged and nasty controversy that surrounded anything associated with birth control, and, since cooperation and peace are essential and highly prized, no one is trumpeting victory. But it is probably safe to say that 1963 was the year when the efforts of population-planning organizations and the enormity of the population problem overwhelmed long-established and tenaciously held ideological positions, and opened the way for beginning substantial efforts toward turning down the world's population curve. It is true that conservative churchmen and timid politicians occasionally still utter the well-worn phrases of the past, and the consensus focuses on research rather than action, but the electricity has gone out of the issue, and energies have shifted from the polemics of birth control to the really tough part of the problem—the technology and social acceptance of birth control.

One of the most striking examples of the shift in mood and attitude took place in Congress last week when, without debate, and with scarcely any adverse comment from the Catholic press or hierarchy, both houses adopted a foreign aid bill which provided that "funds . . . may be used to conduct research into problems of population growth" of underdeveloped countries.

As originally offered by Senator J. William Fulbright (D–Ark.), the provision was stronger, calling for, in addition to research, "technical and other assistance to cooperating countries in carrying out programs of population growth."

But no one in the "population control" camp is showing signs of distress over this trimmed version, for a long memory isn't needed to recall the fears of holy war that long prevented all but the most politically insulated members from advocating federal support for any population planning effort. And, in the past, when similar measures were discussed, the congressional yen for muffling emotionally felt issues dictated that they never came up for legislative consideration.

This year, though, things were different, as was noted by Senator Joseph S. Clark (D-Pa.) when he took the floor last August to address himself to the political hazards of being associated with federal support for population planning. Said Clark:

No Political Liability

"I should like to suggest . . . that there is a great deal of undue political timidity in dealing with the problems [of population planning]. I suspect, particularly in the light of the position taken by so many eminent Catholic laymen and theologians, that one need not have any political timidity in advocating research into the problem of population control. When I ran for reelection in Pennsylvania last fall, it is true that I did not speak out with the same candor that I have since I have been given a new six-year lease on life. Nevertheless, my views on the subject were pretty well known."

Although "there is a rather substantial Catholic population in my state," Clark continued, "I received no adverse criticism of any consequence because I was advocating positive research and discussion in this area. Many of our colleagues who are inclined to hold back in that area need really feel no serious concern that what they do will have an adverse effect on their political life."

That the issue, approached with discretion, is not likely to affect anyone's political life appears to be pretty well established, for the chief source of fear, the Catholic Church, now seems to be in a state of liberalizing ferment over its position toward efforts to deal with population problems. The effects of this ferment are perhaps best illustrated by recalling the violence of Church reaction to the so-called Draper Report in 1959. The report, which grew out of a foreign aid study conducted by General William H. Draper at the request of the Eisenhower administration, concluded that population control assistance should be incorporated into the U.S. foreign aid program.

Church reaction came fast and strong in a statement from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, declaring that "United States Catholics believe that the promotion of artificial birth prevention is a morally, humanly, psychologically and politically disastrous approach to the population problem." The statement went on to say that American Catholics are dedicated to expanding resources and improving distribution to meet population growth, but warned that "they will not . . . support any public assistance, either at home or abroad, to promote artificial birth prevention, abortion or sterilization whether through direct aid or by means of international organizations."

A few days later, at a press conference, President Eisenhower addressed himself to the report's recommendation by stating: "I cannot imagine anything more emphatically a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility. This government has not, and will not make, as far, as long as I am here, have a positive political doctrine in its program that has to do with this problem of birth control. That's not our business," Eisenhower concluded. The effect of this statement by the Chief Executive was to put population planning out-of-bounds for government attention; thereafter, until a salvage operation was delicately undertaken by the Kennedy administration, any federal official who felt otherwise was well advised to keep quiet.

The success of that salvage operation probably qualifies as one of the deftest accomplishments of the late president, for in relatively short order, though moving extremely cautiously, he restored respectability to the subject and openly associated this government with efforts to assist population planning in underdeveloped nations.

Throughout, the Church was silent, possibly reflecting, in part, the hierarchy's reluctance to clash publicly with the first Catholic president; but this silence may also have arisen from the Church's realization that it has nothing to gain from the social turmoil that often attends uncontrolled population growth. Along the way, the change in public and Church attitudes was even accompanied by a reversal of Eisenhower's thinking. Writing last October in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the former president declared: "When I was president, I opposed the use of Federal funds to provide birth control information to countries we were aiding because I felt this would violate the deepest religious convictions of large groups of taxpayers. As I now look back, it may be that I was carrying that conviction too far. I still believe that as a national policy we should not make birth-control a condition to our foreign aid, but we should tell receiving nations how population growth threatens them and what can be done about it." This would seem to be an extremely realistic way of going about it, and is pretty much what is now going on, with more to come.

As has often been noted by persons involved with the economic development of the population-burdened nations, no success can come from white America's telling its dark-skinned friends, "There should be fewer of you." What has to be done is to convince these nations that uncontrolled population growth, in many circumstances, is a burden on economic development, and once this message has been absorbed by the national leadership, the means must be made available for achieving effective birth-control programs. With its thinking proceeding along these lines, the Kennedy administration began, first of all, to talk aloud a great deal about the effects of population growth, and then began to take steps to analyze and expand the amount of research going on in connection with fertility control.

Last December, for example, with the United States offering its support, a number of Scandinavian nations successfully sponsored a resolution calling for the United Nations to encourage international cooperation in population planning. Not long afterward, NIH published an inventory of fertility research, and Kennedy commented at a press conference: "As you know the U.S. government . . . gives assistance to research in the whole area of fertility and biological studies of reproduction and all the rest, which, I think, are important studies. . . . I think they're very useful and should be continued. . . . Can we do more, should we know more, about the whole reproduction cycle and should this information be made more available to the world so that everyone can make their own judgment, I think that it would be a matter which we could certainly support."

Once again, ears were tuned for reaction from the Catholic hierarchy, but none of any significance was forthcoming, nor, again, was there any potent Church opposition offered when John Rock, a Catholic physician, published *The Time Has Come*, which argues that progesterone oral contraceptive is theologically acceptable to the Church. The book, which also called upon the Church to reexamine its position on birth control, was found lacking in some respects by Cardinal Cushing of Boston, but the Cardinal only rapped the author's knuckles and went on to state, "In this book, there is much that is good. . . . Surely, Dr. Rock, and other physicians, have much to offer the Church and her teaching authority if medical men and theologians study together the complex problems of human reproduction."

Hornig Appointment Confirmed

President Johnson has approved the appointment of Donald F. Hornig to succeed Jerome B. Wiesner as the White House science adviser. Hornig, who is chairman of Princeton University chemistry department, was named to the post by President Kennedy. Johnson confirmed the appointment following a meeting last week with Hornig. Still to be settled, however, is when Hornig will take up his duties. At the time of his designation by Kennedy, it was announced that he would take office about 1 February. According to a spokesman for the Office of Science and Technology, there may be some delay in the changeover, but at this point it is not certain.

With the ideological battle apparently reduced to insignificant proportions, some of the difficult realities of the population problem are now coming into clearer focus. To some extent it was convenient to live with the illusion that the Catholic Church is the principal impediment to birth control in the underdeveloped nations, but the fact is that the Church has virtually nothing to do with the population problems of the Asian lands, while in Latin America the dynamics of population are so powerful that theology is only a small part of the problem.

Governments can and must talk about birth control if it is to be quickly accepted by the rural, impoverished and semiliterate citizens, but birth control is probably the most personal and nongovernmental thing known to humankind, and it is going to take a lot of education, skill, and science to get the downtrodden of the underdeveloped lands to adopt practices that were very slowly acquired in urbanized Western lands. It might be noted that India feels it has been making a good try in this direction since 1950, with 8500 clinics throughout the country, 25,000 medical and social workers trained in family planning, and a variety of planning and research activities supported by American foundations and the Indian government. Nevertheless, Avabai B. Wadia, president of the Family Planning Association of India, wrote recently that "despite all this useful activity and extensive coverage, the program has not yet succeeded in touching the core of the problem, which is to initiate a downward trend in the birth rate. Although a dozen years is perhaps too brief a period within which results can be expected, this fact is causing serious anxiety and concern, for it is imperative that the family planning program in India should succeed—and quickly—in effecting reductions in the birth rate, and not function merely as a useful welfare device. Measures therefore are now being sought whereby the normal pace of a massive change-over to this new, and in some ways revolutionary, practice can be steeply accelerated. It is obviously a race against time, if the nation is not to be tragically crippled by a soaring population in its advance toward a rising standard of living."

With Congress now having put its stamp of approval on U.S. involvement in population matters, the Agency for International Development (AID) is

planning to intensify its work in this area. Unquestionably, it could have done a great deal more without explicit congressional approval; and it was, in fact, getting itself more involved in population matters. But foreign aid is perhaps the most badgered and downtrodden of all federal programs, and within the agency there was little enthusiasm for any venture that might multiply its congressional problems. A reported effect of this timidity was that AID's foreign missions have been slow to realize that the climate has changed at home. As one AID official put it recently, "Many of the people in the field have seen so many shifts in thinking about foreign aid that they are naturally afraid to get mixed up with anything that has long been so controversial as birth control." One result is that, although Washington-based officials have announced that this country would consider requests for population-control assistance, none has been forthcoming. The reason for this, according to AID officials, is that foreign governments, mindful of this country's longstanding sensitivities on the subject, automatically look elsewhere when they seek birth-control assistance—for example, to Sweden or to nongovernmental sources. And AID officials abroad apparently haven't put very much zest into convincing them that things are now different in Washington.

Hopefully, this will soon change, for AID headquarters is about to acquire its first full-time personnel for handling population problems. In addition, NIH is expanding work on fertility research which is of crucial importance, since the development of a cheap, highly effective, and easily accepted contraceptive would go a long way toward solving the problem.

In any case, the events of the past year have left such old-time campaigners as Planned Parenthood and the Population Reference Bureau happily stunned with success. After years of shouting in the wilderness, their industry and perseverance have paid off in a way that might be characterized as the "end of the beginning." In line with this, Robert Cook, head of the Population Reference Bureau, which is an invaluable collector and disseminator of population information, commented last week: "If three years ago, I had predicted that 1963 would turn out as it did, my friends would have told me that I was crazy and I would have had to agree with them."

—D. S. GREENBERG

Education Legislation: Deadlock on Vocational Education Broken; Landmark College Aid Bill Passed

Until Monday of last week it appeared entirely possible that the congressional leaders responsible for the fate of education legislation might snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Then, on 9 December, House and Senate conferees on a major vocational education bill emerged from a meeting to say that they had resolved differences which had kept the bill frozen in conference since the end of October.

The next day, by no coincidence, a college construction aid bill providing $1.2 billion over 3 years, which had been in cold storage awaiting only Senate action, was brought to the floor and sent along to the White House by a thumping 54-to-27 majority.

On Thursday of last week the House passed, 300 to 65, the conference version of the vocational education bill, and the Senate followed suit on Friday by blessing the measure by an 82-to-4 vote.

Tacked onto the vocational education bill as amendments, and included in the final version, were a 1-year extension of the National Defense Education Act and a 2-year extension of the so-called impacted areas legislation, which provides federal payments of more than $350 million a year to public school districts enrolling substantial numbers of children of federal employees. The extensions would carry both programs to July 1965.

Passage of the college aid bill, which provides the first general aid for higher education in U.S. history, is, without exaggeration, an epoch-making event for federal aid to education. Counted in with a medical education facilities bill enacted earlier in the session (*Science*, 3 May) and the vocational education act which is also an innovating bill, it completes a trio of measures which give the Kennedy-Johnson administration an unsurpassed mark in education legislation. Enactment of the three new laws also adds to the legislative record of the 88th Congress a luster it has conspicuously lacked.

Now that the college aid bill has been passed there is reason to speculate on whether the perils which the bill survived were real or apparent, but it is worth noting that a number of legislators closely concerned with the question were convinced, for a time at least, that the measure was in mortal danger.

Since both the college aid and the vocational education bills had passed both House and Senate with sizable majorities and both enjoyed strong bipartisan support and firm administration backing, it might seem curious to the outsider that they should have mired down just short of final passage. Explanation of the impasse was to be found in differences between House and Senate versions of the vocational education bill, and less clearly—but equally importantly—in touchy House-Senate relations and a play of strong personalities which resulted in collisions of both pride and principle.

It is not easy to reconstruct the interrelated histories of the two education bills over the last two months—irritations and misunderstandings among conferees waxed and waned, and the assassination of President Kennedy and succession of President Johnson added a radical element to the situation—but it is of more than academic interest to try to recapture some of the essential points, since the same pressures and the same people will be involved in future debates over aid to education.

Attention in Congress began to focus on the education bill as October ended, because it was then recognized that work on the civil rights and tax bills could not be completed before Congress adjourned for Christmas and ended the session. Bills introduced in the first session of a Congress stay alive until the end of the second session, and the education bills could have been held over. But for the sake of the record, congressional leaders like to win a few secondary objectives before they lead their troops into winter quarters, and the education measures filled the bill.

In addition, it was becoming evident that time was running against the college aid bill. The active volcano of the church-state issue was rumbling and smoking again, and legislators close to the situation doubted that the bill could survive another eruption like the one in the summer of 1962.

In some ways legislative history seemed to be repeating itself. In the summer of '62 both houses of Congress had passed college aid bills and sent them to conference for a reconciliation of differences. The House opposed a provision in the Senate bill providing scholarship assistance for undergraduates, and the Senate was reluctant to authorize grants and loans for construction of academic facilities to private institutions as well as public colleges and universities. While the conference was in progress, the Su-