

Perspective Population medicine

With the crush of over-population making itself all over the world, and with mankind seemingly determined to populate itself right off the face of this planet, the cries of mandatory population controls are becoming more frequent and more boisterous.

This past weekend at the University of Oregon Medical School, for example, a Conference of Doctors, Nurses and other Health Professionals heard from Dr. George Denniston of Seattle, a self-styled advocate of "Population Medicine." Denniston calls for immediate legislation to force people in this country to limit the size of their families. He also seeks to have rules governing contraceptive use—specifically the "pill"—relaxed so that greater numbers of people will "Benefit." To this end, he says, he would like to see the Medical Profession get out of the pill business; he feels the pill is safe enough for use without prescription.

Dr. Denniston insists his population control proposals would affect everyone equally rich and poor, black and white.

Were it not for the past history of Racial callousness in this country his proposals might seem sound.

Most thinking people today agree that steps must be taken to curb population growth. But it is imperative to remember that we have, since World War II for example, had very detailed Laws on the books dealing with the Draft; Laws that were written in such a way as to allow the Economically Advantaged to avoid the Draft entirely through the use of deferments and through knowledge of Draft-Exempt occupations.

The point is, the Draft Laws never did work equally for everyone in this country; that in actuality they worked to the acute disadvantage of Blacks and other minorities. For example some estimate put the number of Black Combat Infantrymen in Vietnam as high as 20% of the Combat force; at a time when Blacks comprise only about 11% of the total U. S. Population. (Most of those who are serving first time hitches in Vietnam are Draftees).

It stands to reason then that those with money would find ways to circumvent any Laws which would seek to force birth control.

Of course it might be argued: if a way were found to ensure equal Application of the Law the Law would be good. On a Universal basis maybe. All countries must take steps to limit their populations if man is to survive.

But here in 1971 America we are faced with an even more pressing and immediate problem: that of the Human and spiritual deaths caused daily by racism.

It goes without saying that Black Americans do not in any way "enjoy" their minority status. It is becoming increasingly evident that whenever there is a concentration of Blacks, changes in the social order are being made with alacrity...even in the South. It is also axiomatic of conditions today that where Blacks are fewest in numbers their demands are most often ignored. For example demands for Black Cultural Studies were listened to and responded to by predominantly Black College long before colleges such as Portland State even thought of the need for them.

So numbers can have meaning, and for Black People the weight of sheer numbers often



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means social change.

The Black experience in this country has taught Afro-Americans that almost any plan advanced by white America "for the benefit of all" must be viewed with more than just a little grain of salt. Cries of "GENOCIDE" are continually raised in minority communities whenever population control programs are advanced and for good reason.

Where Blacks are few in numbers their complaints are systematically ignored. Where they are in abundance their pressure to remedy intolerable conditions often results in positive change.

It's too bad it has to be this way. After all, a terribly high percentage of grievances by Blacks represent legitimate complaints against a system that has fostered racism as an institution.

If whites are really so interested in saving the Ecology and in population controls "before it's too late" they had better set as their first priority the regaining of a lost trust—a trust they lost when they began the slave trade in this "free country" and which, I am sad to say, they have done sinfully little to regain.

The continued war in Southeast Asia does nothing to regain this trust. The subversion of "Food for Peace" monies into use for instruments of war does nothing to regain this trust. The denial of equal living working and pleasure opportunities to minorities does nothing to regain this trust.

In short, the efforts at subjugation and dehumanization, practised so adroitly by much of white America today, do nothing to regain this trust.

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The poet's corner

Evening tidings

By Gerald White

Purple haze flounders
on florence beach,
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and I repeat the ocean smell
moving from pain to music,
neon acoustics persuade the
bell bottom thighs, like foot-
prints
to be denied and washed away
in evenings tide.

SIX O'CLOCK

by Gerald White

Six o'clock in the morning
and the noise is gone
people are gone with it.

Buildings hide behind the sky
and I hide behind them
The buildings are fast asleep
People sleep within their
sleep.

I am alone
the only thing left
for me is to count the empty
spaces
in the sky which were once
filled
with stars.

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