

Abortion Rate Exceeds Births in Japan; Labor Shortage Results

By ROBERT METCALFE
United Press International
TOKYO (UPI)—Japan's unique method of birth control through mass abortion has shown such dramatic results that the problem now is to persuade people to have more children. But small families are becoming more and more popular.

Japan is starting to find itself with an abundance of old people and a looming shortage of youthful labor power.

Abortion is so quick and cheap that the unmarried mother is a vanishing phenomenon. The abortion rate is higher than the birth rate; more than two million abortions every year.

The irony is that birth control through abortion was never a goal of national policy. The express aim of the abortion law is simply to protect the mother's health and economic well-being, and to prevent the birth of children with hereditary diseases.

The complaint is that Japanese women are having abortions at an alarming rate to prevent the birth of unwanted children — while official government policy is to control births by more conventional means of family planning.

A debate now rages among legislators, women's groups, doctors and sociologists over new demands that abortion laws be made more strict so they can't be used for trifling reasons.

Nearly three-quarters of the women who have had abortions say they are bothered by conscience, according to a recent survey by the Population Problems Research Council of Tokyo's Mainichi newspapers.

More than 40 per cent of 3,000 married women polled by the survey (many declined to answer) have had abortions. One woman had had eight.

Japan's population is about 96 million. It has increased at an average rate of a million a year since 1950.

There were about 1,600,000 babies born in 1962 for a slight increase over the 1961 birth rate of 16.8 per thousand population.

In 1940, there were 72 million Japanese in the mainland islands, and 30 million counting Japanese residents in Korea, Okinawa and Formosa, which then were included in the census. In those days Japanese militarists encouraged large families.

After the war Japan was poverty-stricken. Birth control was one way to make sure every mother and child got proper food and medical care at a time of hunger and few resources.

But today Japan is prosperous. She needs more productive people. Industries are booming and there is little unemployment. She is almost self-sufficient in most basic foods. Excellent medical care is available through group-insurance plans.

Age Increased

The Japanese are healthy. They are physically stronger and taller (by three inches) and they can expect to live 18 to 22 years longer (72 for women, 68 for men) than they could 20 years ago.

Today Japan's infant mortality rate is only seven out of every thousand, on a par with Europe's. Fifty years ago, the rate was 21 per thousand.

Only 17 years ago, at the height of a baby boom when soldiers were home from war, 34 babies were born every year for every thousand population. Today the birth rate is 17 per thousand, again on a par with most of Europe.

Now that safe birth and healthy babies are the rule, family planners would like to see a few more come into the world.

But most Japanese couples now are happy with only two children and the trend becomes more entrenched each year, according to the newspaper survey. It found:

Only 22 per cent of those with two children want another child; 90 per cent of those with three children want no more; half of those with one child would like to have only one more; and most of those without children want only two.

Only 12 per cent of Japanese families have four children; 21 per cent have three children; and 35 per cent have two children. Many families are kept small, the survey found, largely because parents want to be able to give their children the best possible education. Only 12 per cent of the persons questioned said they practice birth control out of economic necessity—the main reason given two years ago.

Japan's birth rate is the lowest by far in Asia. Over-populated India has more than 35 births per thousand people every year; Korea has more than 40. Communist China's population is estimated at more than 700 million and about 15 million Chinese reportedly are born every year.

Birth rates in other countries have been reduced — Puerto Rico's from 41 to 30 per thousand since 1949; Singapore's from 43 to 30 since 1957; Hong Kong's from 38 to 34 in two recent years. But no reduction is so spectacular as Japan's.

Literacy Rate High

Japan's high literacy rate (nearly 100 per cent), the easy availability of information on birth control and permissive abortion laws have made the sharp drop in births possible.

In most western countries, a woman who seeks an abortion must, unless she can prove extreme medical grounds, risk her life outside the law at the hands of abortionists who may operate under unhygienic conditions and charge exorbitant fees.

Fifteen years ago one out of every 500 Japanese women died under induced abortions. Today the death rate has been reduced to one out of every 14,500 operations. Western women have come to Japan for abortions because of the skill acquired by Japanese doctors.

But they must do so in secret—as Sherri Finkbine, an Arizona housewife and tele-

vision intervener, discovered in her much publicized quest to end a pregnancy because she had taken thalidomide pills and feared her child would be deformed. She was denied a visa to Japan because the reason for her trip was known. She got an abortion in Sweden instead.

Illegal Abortions

Most abortions in Japan are illegal. Japan's criminal code still provides penalties—a year in prison for the woman, up to five years for the doctor — for abortions performed outside the provisions of the eugenic protection law.

That law, enacted in 1948, makes exceptions under the criminal code to prevent children being born with hereditary mental and physical diseases, and to protect the life and health of women (abortions can be obtained up to the last day of the seventh month of pregnancy, though 93 per cent are performed within three months).

However, it is difficult to make distinctions between legal and illegal abortions in Japan, since the exceptions have virtually become the rule.

The prosecution of illegal abortions is unheard of.

A woman in good health, for instance, can have an abortion on the grounds that her financial state would worsen and ultimately affect her health if she had the child.

One result of freely practiced abortions is that unwed mothers are rare in Japan.

Doctors usually perform abortions in secret to conceal income, but they do so as well because many women don't want their abortions known.

Abortions, which are not covered by health insurance plans, are the main source of income for many doctors who run small clinics. Some perform 100 abortions every month. The fee is up to 5,000 yen (\$14) in Tokyo and other major cities, 3,000 yen (\$9) or less in smaller centers.

Criminal abortionists in North America charge as much as \$200 to \$1,000 or more.

Japan is an "abortion paradise," admits Dr. Atsushi Hanabusa of Tokyo's metropolitan Ebara hospital.

"It is regrettable," he said. "Many women ask for an abortion on the sole grounds that it is 'too early' to have a baby."

He said more than half the 1,500 expectant mothers who are treated in the Ebara hospital every month have had previous abortions.

Any doctor who is qualified to perform an abortion can decide if a request for one should be granted.

Opponents of the law argue that two physicians should make the decision and the economic-reason clause should be struck out. There are periodic re-appraisals of the law when abuses are disclosed, and there have been some attempts to change it. One major argument for keeping the law as it stands is that without free-and-easy abortion, Japan could not have brought about the spectacular drop in its annual birth rate.

Regret It Later

The newspaper survey, which reported that abortion is practiced at the rate of one out of every 2.2 Japanese women, also found nearly 70 per cent said

they regretted it or later felt bothered by their conscience. Sterilization operations that do not remove reproductive glands are also permitted by the eugenic protection law. At most all of Japan's annual 35,000-odd sterilization operations are performed on women on their husbands' orders.

Family planners have been arguing before women's groups that it is far better that men have the operation so healthy women don't lose their ability to bear children.

Oral contraceptive tablets are not yet legal in Japan because the Health Ministry is not sure they are safe. Some women have complained of headaches after experimenting with oral tablets.

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MEDFORD TRIBUNE
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RESTS FROM FILMING—Actor Richard Burton, who seems to have weathered the trip from Cleopatra's Egypt to modern-day Mexico City, takes time out from filming a movie for a chat with actress Sue Lyon, who won fame for her starring role in the movie "Lolita." (UPI)

Season of Year Said To Have No Effect on Ulcer

By DELOS SMITH
UPI Science Editor
NEW YORK (UPI)—Statistical proof is now offered that the season of the year does not influence a man's ulcer. The medical scientists who produced it hoped it would kill a common belief among ulcer men and even their physicians that there are seasons when ulcers get worse.

Drs. Syed Z. Ahmed, Martin Levine and Rodnan B. Finkbner solved the difficult measuring of when a peptic ulcer is worse by using only the ultimate worsening. That is hemorrhaging or perforation, and when either happens it is too grave to allow for statistical error.

The scientists work in the gastrointestinal research laboratory of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia. With punch cards and a bookkeeping machine they analyzed 411 completely documented cases of hemorrhaging or perforation treated in the hospital during the 10 years from 1949 to 1958.

Existence Was Proven

In each case the presence of an ulcer crater in either the stomach or duodenum had been proved either by x-ray or in surgery or by autopsy. The season of the year of drastic worsening was established in the hospital records, of course.

Autumn was taken to begin Sept. 21, winter, December 21, spring, March 21, and summer, June 21. Statistically 29 per cent of the worsenings occurred in autumn, which was the highest. In summer 21.6 per cent took place.

But the occurrences in winter and spring were 24.6 per cent and 24.8 per cent respectively.

No matter what statistical checking formula you apply, there is no statistical significance in those differences and the scientists were emphatic in saying so.

In the morbid chit-chat among the high-pressure ulcer men in American life, the belief is that spring and autumn are the "ulcer seasons" and summer is the season when a man is least likely to have a flare-up.

Not only did the over-all statistics disprove that, it was proved again when the scientists broke the statistics down for year-by-year analysis in the hope of demonstrating regular cycles if such cycles existed.

Summer Was Worst

In two of the 10 years summer had the highest incidence of severe worsening and it had the lowest in only three years. Autumn had the lowest incidence in one year and was tied for lowest in another year.

Spring had the lowest incidence in two years and the highest in two other years. Winter had the lowest in three years and the highest in one.

"The seasonal variation in peptic ulcer is very slight and variable from year to year," the scientists said in their report to the American College of Physicians. "The concept of spring and fall exacerbation of peptic ulcer has been exaggerated."

They blamed the mistaken support medical science has previously given to the "ulcer season" theory on the difficulties of measuring. Their method eliminated many of the variables responsible for false conclusions, they said.

Interstate Herd Hearing Subject

YREKA, Calif. (UPI)—Legislative committees from California and Oregon opened a two-day meeting here today to discuss possible ways to bolster the interstate mule deer herd, which apparently was hard hit by the 1959-61 drought.

The hearing will move to Klamath Falls, Ore., Friday.

The lawmakers specifically were scheduled to discuss the practicability of establishing an interstate commission to regulate the mule deer that winter in California and summer in Oregon. Along with that, the legislators were to talk over possible ways to improve the deer range.

Track counts of interstate mule deer have dropped from a high of 17,625 in 1954 to a low this year of 7,191. Likewise, the buck kill by both states in the interstate herd has fallen from a record 6,003 in 1959 to only 2,801 last season.

Seven Counties Affected

An interstate compact, as tentatively suggested, would cover the California counties of Modoc and Lassen and portions of Siskiyou and Shasta, and the Oregon counties of Lake and Klamath and the southern portion of Harney.

Right now, the California fish and game commission regulates all deer in this state, taking advice from the department of fish and game. The same system works in Oregon.

At the root of the whole issue for California is a hot hassle over deer management. And one person in the thick of the battle is assemblywoman Pauline Davis, D-Portola, chairman of the California committee at today's meeting.

She basically disagreed with the California department of fish and game's deer management policies, which include balancing the herds through controlled hunting of antlerless deer. Mrs. Davis maintains that hunting pressure is largely to blame for the lessening deer herds, while the department puts the finger on environmental conditions.

Meeting jointly were the California Assembly legislative interim committee on fish and game, and the Oregon special interim committee on deer.

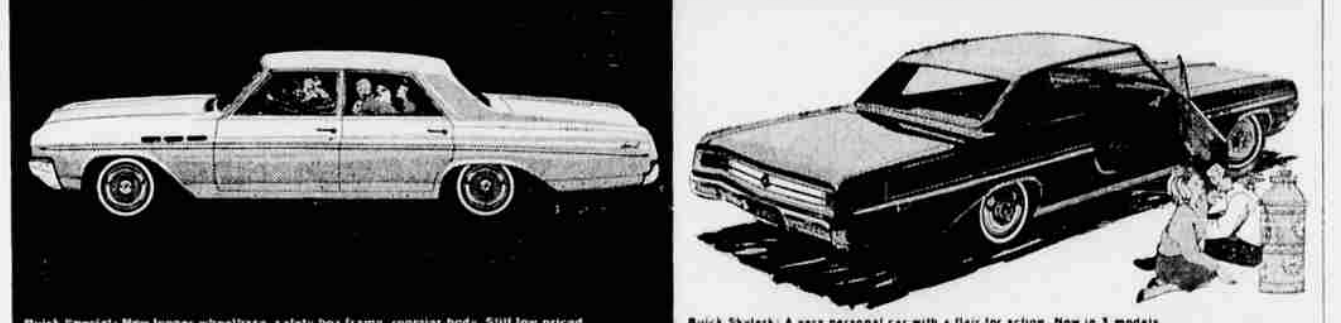
SALTY

NEW YORK (UPI)—A 17,300-ton mountain of rock is piled up in Port Newark, N. J. When it snows, it pours—on streets and highways in the New York area to keep traffic moving. Diamond Crystal Salt company, owner of the pile, said it is large enough to fill 400 freight cars.

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