

FACT SHEET 7. WHO GAINS FROM POPULATION GROWTH?

IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, both governments and commercial interests seek continual growth of mass markets, continually increasing consumption, a prosperous building industry, rising prices for real estate, and docile pools of labor. They fear supporting ageing populations (See Fact Sheet 8). It is at present political inexpedient for governments to encourage lower rather than higher birth-rates. However, Government funding of babies is most likely to encourage fertility at the welfare-receiving end of the socio-economic scale, where larger families may not receive a fair chance in life.

Western nations' pronatalist policies for their own countries is scandalous in face of soaring distress overseas of overpopulation beyond resources. National pronatalism is economically wrong because even with the most open of doors, the West could not contain the rising tides of economic refugees from the South. Imagine Australia taking in the overflow of millions, not just a few hundreds or thousands, from Indonesia, PNG, East Timor, the Solomon Islands and other brimming islands of the Pacific. There are still more increasing millions in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the smaller nations of the Indian subcontinent.

VESTED INTERESTS may promote complacency about economic refugees because they can become low-paid labor in developed countries, including as seasonal workers, laid off when not wanted.

NATIONAL PRONATALISM is also politically wrong. The West cannot promote family planning for poor countries while paying its own nationals to have more babies, without being seen as horribly hypocritical and arousing cries of 'genocide'.

IN THE WORST HOTSPOTS OF THE WORLD, populations are soaring, in spite of failed statehood, social and economic chaos, wars, massacres, AIDS and famines. Throughout history and folklore, the poor have been burdened with more children than they can raise, as well as with the distress of having no children.

WHERE THERE IS NO SOCIAL SECURITY AND CHILD DEATH-RATES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HIGH, it makes sense to have many children, in the hope that some at least will survive to help support their parents. Increasingly states as well as families are depending on remittances from their children working abroad (as with Tonga, raising 70% of its GDP from expats sending money home, and the Philippines are also reliant). And children can be the greatest joy in life – and they may be the only joy the poor can have. Where women have access to education and family planning, they show their desire for smaller families, the size they can cope with.

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL RIVALRIES WITH INTERESTS IN OUTBREEDING OTHERS. Religious dogmatism overlooks that the commandment of their God to increase and multiply is the only divine commandment that has now been fully obeyed. Now it is time to obey the other commands, about loving neighbours and so on. Religions and politics that foster outbreeding their rivals increase the hate and fear in the world as well as the scandal of using breeding more children as 'our weapons'.

Influential American fundamentalism agitates more strongly for the unborn embryo than for the living child, and cares insufficiently for their earthly future.

There is also the mistaken logic that when something is good, more must be better still – so no limit to children. And the further mistaken reasoning that only God should decide conceptions and so contraception is against God's will, but not admitting that other human actions also decide reproduction. Yet religions now welcome other human inventions and interventions in health measures as obeying God's will to be compassionate

PROVIDING FOOD AID AND POLICING for poor nations may even serve the interests of donor nations and aid organizations. This too is a problem that must be faced. It is becoming increasingly clear, especially in Africa and among Australia's neighbours, that however generous the aid and the policing, they will be unable to solve population growth, or even keep up with its increasing needs.

One of the two sanest things that humans could do to try to save the planet would be to redirect financing of armaments to the education of women, supplying access to family planning, and helping all states to become economically secure. (The other sane thing is to reducing the heavy 'footprint on the earth' that currently accompanies rises in standard of living.) What are the forces that not only prevent this, but actively prevent such campaigning?

CAPITALISM has raised living standards through the whole world. Even the poorest now wear T-shirts, not rags. But our economic system must find a way to operate without requiring continual growth and consumption, seeking growing mass-markets and cheap labor.



It's quite obvious which carries the most weight