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THIRD WORLD WOMEN, WORLD POPULATION GROWTH:
A CASE OF BLAMING THE VICTIM?*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the provisions of the 1974 United Nations World Population Conference pertaining to the status of women, wherein it is assumed that if the status of women is improved and they are educated and employed, fertility will decline. It is concluded that these assumptions do not have very sound theoretical or empirical bases, and that the possibility and probability of implementation in the near future is slim. It is hypothesized that the Conference World Plan of Action will do little to raise the status of women or reduce population growth because it is a product of sexual politics.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1974, the United Nations (UN) held a World Population Conference. The subject of population growth and fertility control had come a long way since 1959 when President Eisenhower declared birth control is "...a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility" (Piotrow, 1973:X). By 1974 family planning and population growth were not only legitimate subjects of governmental concern, but during that time there had been an intellectual and ideological movement toward consensus about the interrelationships among population growth, family planning, and economic development.

Briefly, the consensus position (which I hold) begins with "...a frank recognition that population growth is not the only, or even the primary source of poverty, disease, illiteracy and gross inequality which now characterizes the world" (Teitelbaum, 1974:754). The solutions to these problems are thought to lie in true economic and

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social development, not contraception. Implicit in this view is the belief that development cannot occur without redistribution of power and resources within, if not among, nations. On the other hand, the consensus position also acknowledges that rapid population growth impedes economic development because resources necessary to raise the standard of living must be used to keep up an ever larger population, and because with continuous high fertility the burden of youth dependency continually increases while the proportion of the population which can be allotted to an adult labor force continually decreases. Consequently, it is essential for the success of social and economic development programs that governments educate the public about the significance of family size, provide the knowledge and means to control fertility, and remove all obstacles to their access. Finally, it is believed that fertility reduction and development interact, each helping the other to become more prevalent and more rapid.

The World Population Conference

It was hoped, even assumed by many, that the World Population Conference would start from the consensus viewpoint and begin working for the dual goals of lower fertility and a higher standard of living in the less developed countries (LDC's). Instead, the false issue of family planning or development was resurrected, and as one demographer has bemoaned "...every old ghost of the anti-Malthusian past...resurfaced, clothed in the new slick trappings of demographic chic" (Stycos, 1974:160). While no two nations presented the issues in exactly the same way, four general positions have been identified (Mauldin, Choucri, et al., 1974):

(1) Population problems are problems of inequality, and Malthusians who are urging "artificial" population policies such as family planning do so to direct attention from the true issues of development. Rapid population growth is a positive force for economic and social development, and fertility will eventually decline, but as a "natural" process resulting from development. This was the position of China, Albania, Romania, Cuba, Peru, Sub-Saharan Africa, Algeria, and Argentina. It is the most extreme position in that it is the only one to say that rapid population growth is beneficial.

(2) The position of the Eastern European countries (excluding Romania and Yugoslavia) is similar to the first but also states that each mode of production has its own laws of population, and that the problems of the Third World are a characteristic of capitalism and result from international colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism. Accordingly, there is no need for population policies, for in a properly organized society social and economic forces will make the proper demographic adjustments. Here again is the notion of a "natural" decline in fertility.

(3) The third position, held by India, Egypt, Mexico, Yugoslavia, Italy, and some Latin American countries, is similar to the first two in emphasizing the need for more equitable distribution of the world's resources, but it also stresses the need for effective population policies and programs as well as those for development.

(4) According to most of Asia, most of Western Europe, the Scandinavian countries, the British Commonwealth, Japan and the United States, rapid development as well as strong population policies and programs are necessary to raise the standard of living of the Third World nations, and neither is sufficient without the other.

It should be noted that while many of the Third World nations (positions 1, 2, 3) blamed the developed nations (position 4) for their plight and called for a new international economic order, few acknowledged that social and economic reform within their own borders might also be necessary. And, of course, the developed nations (MDC's) did not accept the responsibility for the condition of the LCD's.

The World Population Plan

Although it may be hard to imagine any agreement being reached, by the end of two weeks the 137 governments, four liberation movements, and nineteen agencies had adopted 21 resolutions, four recommendations, and a 109 paragraph World Plan of Action (all of which shall be called the World Population Plan or WPP). The WPP emphasizes the need for economic and social development and a more equitable distribution of wealth, and de-emphasizes family planning by citing such programs as being necessary more for human rights than economic development.

The provisions of the WPP receiving the most widespread and favorable attention are those pertaining to the status of women. The World Plan of Action urges governments to "...ensure full participation of women in the educational, social, economic and political life of their countries on an equal basis with men" (UN Centre for Economic and Social Information (UNCESI), 1974:19), while resolutions IV and IX, the only resolutions to be ratified unanimously, make specific recommendations for the improvement of the status of women, which are supposed to have demographic as well as humanitarian significance. Improvement in the status of women is supposed to lead to a reduction in fertility. Although de-emphasizing the importance of family planning programs, the WPP implies that fertility will decline when women become "modern," educated, and employed, i.e., with development, fertility will fall "naturally". Reinforced by the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City, this belief has become stronger and even more prevalent (as well as simplified) so it has almost become a truism--give the Third World women good jobs and they won't have so many babies (Errázuriz, 1974). The purpose of this paper is to examine the logic of this conclusion, and raise questions about the demographic and humanitarian significance of the WPP provisions for the status

of women. It approaches the problem from two points of view, that of a demographer and that of a feminist (I tried to keep these perspectives separate, but since I am a female and a demographer, I was not always successful).

THIRD WORLD WOMEN

It is difficult to make general statements about women from the diverse cultures of Africa, Asia, and Latin America which are collectively known as the Third World. I shall be referring primarily to rural women who vastly outnumber urban women and who bear the majority of the world's children, who, in turn, are the majority of the world's population (Sipila, 1974).

The most obvious assumption underlying the idea that employment will cause a reduction in fertility is that Third World women do not have anything better to do than have babies, but a few quotes should easily dispel this notion. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), "Rural women work in conditions of real hardship, with primitive traditional tools.... Drudgery in the fields is combined with household drudgery, multiplied by the lack or inadequacy of water and cooking facilities and the lack of child care facilities...(they) are seldom covered by social legislation of any kind and cannot even avail themselves of the usual maternity leave. Their work has no proper schedule and their total hours...are excessively long and irregular. Their activity is most frequently unremunerative and unrewarding" (ILO, 1975:67). Third World women commonly work 18 hours a day for zero net income and often in conditions "...which are not commensurate with the dignity of human beings" (Sipila, 1974); their lot is to be "...underfed, ill, uneducated and pregnant from the day of their first menstruation until menopause" (United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO), 1975). I have set up a straw person; of course these women do not have babies because they have nothing better to do.¹ Quite the opposite--they have babies in spite of long hours, hard physical labor, malnutrition, sickness, and minimal or no medical care. And while fertility in the LDC's is not under perfect control, it is important to realize that high fertility is deliberate and not just the result of unrestrained physiology (for example, see Simon, 1974).

¹This is a much more plausible explanation for child bearing where women are kept at home as symbols of "conspicuous leisure." In fact, fertility rates often increase in the early states of development for this reason and because families believe they can afford more children (Papanek, 1975; Populi, 1975; Simon, 1974)

Fertility, Education and Employment

The more likely premise underlying the notion that with development fertility will fall "naturally," is a belief that the experience of the MDC's will be followed. Thus, the WPP stresses the education of women and the removal of obstacles to their employment in the non-agricultural sector. In other words, it is not just work that is important, but non-farm (urban?) experience and/or employment that is entirely separate from family life. To assess the reasonableness of this premise, three questions will be addressed: (1) Is there much empirical support? (2) Is the theoretical basis sound? (3) Is implementation possible or probable?

Empirical Evidence

It is difficult to establish a causal link between employment and fertility. In the MDC's, women who work tend to have fewer children, but it is not at all clear if low fertility is the cause or consequence of employment. And as more and more mothers are entering the labor force, we may discover that this relationship is due as much to culture as biology. In addition, the strength of this relationship varies according to reasons for working and/or social status. The inverse correlation between fertility and employment is weakest for women of lower education who must work and for women in occupations labelled feminine, and the strongest for those with careers as professionals (Sipila, 1974; Dixon, 1975; Simon, 1974). In the rural areas of MDC's the correlation often disappears, and it has never been adequately established for the LDC's (Sipila, 1974).

Although it is hard to separate the influence of education from that of employment or income, education may be the most important factor for fertility reduction. First, because the type of employment and income are dependent upon level of education, but also because education seems to have an independent influence upon fertility. An educated woman is more likely to learn about the idea and means of family planning and to put them to use (Simon, 1974; Freedman, 1963). One study of 50 nations found an inverse relation between education and fertility that was much stronger for the education of the wife than the husband. But while literacy itself has a weak association with lower fertility, this relationship is strong only at levels of education attained by a tiny fraction of Third World women (Sipila, 1974).

Theoretical Basis

Micro-economic theory has been predominant in the study of fertility. Explanations are generally cast in terms of the economic and opportunity cost and benefits of children. Thus an inverse relationship between fertility and employment would result because of the cost of child care if the mother works and the opportunity cost of a job forgone if she does not

work. In either case the cost would increase with the status or salary of the mother's occupation, so the relationship would be expected to be stronger for career professional women than others. Neglected, however, in both theory and research, is the opportunity cost of not having children (i.e., the loss of social identity and status) and later it will be proposed that this factor is most important in LDC fertility decisions. In a thorough monograph on the relationship between income and fertility, Simon (1974) acknowledges that social norms and values are an important omission from the micro-economic theoretical framework. He argues that norms are intermediate, not independent variables and in the long run (50 or more years), they will catch up with economic effects and thus have a neutral effect on fertility. Meanwhile the current growth rates of most LDC's are high enough to cause a doubling of their populations within the short run, and a tripling or quadrupling within 50 years, which suggests that norms are as critical as economic variables for policy decisions.

Role conflict or role incompatibility, is the second most frequent explanation for the inverse relationship between employment and fertility. It is believed that a woman's work role conflicts with her role of mother, and the more mutually exclusive these roles are (e.g., if children cannot be at the place of work) the stronger the relationship will be (Dixon, 1975; Germaine, 1975). But this belief is not borne out by reality. The most obvious contradiction is the large number of mothers who work precisely because they have more children than their husband's income can support. Role conflict is at best only a partial answer (it may be important for women who are uncertain about working or having children), for women commonly bear the quadruple burden of being a full-time employee and wife/mother/housekeeper. These jobs may not be particularly compatible, and they may be mutually exclusive in terms of time, but instead of sacrificing employment, mothers who want to work or must work, sacrifice sleep, leisure, recreation and the extra hours needed for job advancement.²

Although a Third World woman may be pregnant during most of her child bearing years, "pregnancy, child bearing, lactation, and child rearing do not debar or deter her from work. Both economic and social roles are pressed upon her and she accepts them without question" (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 1975:9). Consequently, for employment to have a major impact on fertility it must become a legitimate

²The socialist countries do provide worktime child care, but since traditional division of labor at home has not changed significantly, women continue to do the housework, "leisure time" child care, and to stay home with a sick child or infant (ILO, 1975; Boserup, 1970). One study concludes that this overload is a major reason why employed wives in Eastern Europe and Russia do not advance very high or very rapidly in their jobs (Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971).

alternative to marriage and/or child bearing. Otherwise women will continue doing quadruple duty by following society's norms regarding the appropriate family size, and participating in the labor force whenever their help is wanted.³

The Possibility and Probability of Education and Employment

As far as education, employment, and income are concerned, rural Third World women have little to gain by achieving equality with men. Both males and females are undereducated and underemployed, although men usually have the advantage. If education and employment are to have a major influence upon national birth rates, women will not only have to catch up with men, they will have to surpass them. And unless the overall level of opportunity is raised dramatically, women will have to be given a disproportionate share. However, the prognosis is that the advancement of women will follow, not lead that of men (National Academy of Science, 1974).

In 1970, 60 percent of the world's nearly 800 million adult illiterates were women, and most were Third World residents. Illiteracy is also increasing more rapidly among women than men; between 1960 and 1970 the number of male illiterates increased by 8 million, while the number of female illiterates increased by 40 million (United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO), 1975). Even when education is available, daughters are often kept out of school to help their mothers, and if money is short boys are usually given preference. And so the daughters' education often consists of learning traditional female tasks and subservience (Boserup, 1974; UNECA, 1975; ILO, 1975). Girls in school do not fare much better. Over half the mass education offered to LDC women is concerned with "domestic science;" it rarely includes basic skills such as animal husbandry, kitchen gardening, or poultry keeping, and even less often agriculture (UNECA, 1975; ILO, 1975; UNESCO, 1975).

The ILO has reported that despite trends toward increased employment among women, the cultural norms of most countries other than the socialist nations remain ambivalent about the employment of women. Thus, when unemployment is high among men, it is very difficult to ensure a woman's right to work. Women workers are seen as "...a threat to men, as intruders in the male domain" (ILO, 1975:18). The statement of a delegate to a 1964 ILO conference is typical, "I firmly believe that it is a serious error of judgement for developing countries to ascribe high action priority to plans for encouraging women to enter the (labor) market, especially women with family responsibilities, when these same countries do not have or cannot create sufficient jobs for their male populations" (Boserup, 1970: 195). It is rarely acknowledged that many of these women are heads of

³See Griffith (1974) for evidence of the influence and clarity of norms for family size. For one discussion of the relationship between the unemployment of males and the employment of females see Bernard, 1974.

households (Sipila, 1974; Tinker, 1975), and never suggested that the husband could mind the home and children while the wife works.

Most Third World women who are employed are engaged in agriculture, cottage industries, and petty trade. In urban areas they are mainly employed in low status service work. Women in Southeast Asia and Africa also do heavy labor in mining, road building, and construction. In Africa men generally grow cash crops while women grow food for consumption or barter. Consequently, most female farm workers are not classified as employed or economically productive even though they do 60-80 percent of the agricultural work.

Regardless of the job, women are paid less than men and they are excluded from apprenticeships and other job training programs, agricultural extension services, and producer co-ops (ILO, 1975; UNECA, 1975). As one Bangladesh woman at the International Women's Year Conference explained, there is no reason for a woman to go out to work if the only job she can get is doing construction work for a handful of rice. She is better off learning to weave in her own home (Papanek, 1975).

There is another form of discrimination that is even more ominous. It appears to be a general pattern for economic development programs to have a negative affect on the position of Third World women. Women have been almost completely ignored in development plans, and are not allowed to learn or use the new manufacturing or agricultural technology (such as a plow). With mechanization and industrialization, manual labor is designated as women's work; the petty traders and craftspeople are forced out of business, but men get the new jobs (UNFAO, 1975; UNECA, 1975; Tinker, 1975).

Development and employment programs have also resulted in massive male migration. Often the men cannot or do not send money home, and the women are left with the entire responsibility for their families. Under these circumstances, "...it is a misnomer to say that women participate in development programs. Rather, development policy seems to imply the abnegation, sacrifice and submission of women to unacceptable living conditions" (UNFAO, -1975:15).

Summary

The premise that an increase in the level of education and employment for women will have a major impact on Third World birth rates does not have a very sound theoretical or empirical basis. The possibility of implementing such programs in the near future is very slim, and the probability of a large majority of women being allowed to participate in such programs is equally slim. But if the WPP is trying to recapture the experience of the MDC's, it may have put the cart before the horse. The birth rates of some developed nations began to fall before women became educated or career minded, and in others they remained high during periods

of industrialization when a large proportion of women were employed.⁴ What else is necessary?

PRE-REQUISITES FOR A "NATURAL" DECLINE IN FERTILITY

There was nothing automatic, or spontaneous or natural about the decline in the birth rate of the MDC's. Fertility was deliberately reduced when large families were no longer a biological or economic necessity and when children became an obstacle to social mobility instead of a source of status and power.

In many areas of the world, children are still an economic asset. They are part of the family labor force and the sons are counted upon by their parents for support in sickness and old age. In most of the Third World, infant and childhood mortality is still very high and to be assured of having several adult sons, parents will have a number of extra children. People do not consult life tables to figure the odds on a child dying; they behave according to their own experience and in many Third World nations, it is not unusual for one-third or even one-half the deaths to occur to children under five. (This is partially a statistical aberration, resulting from a high risk of mortality plus a large proportion of the population being in that age group, which in turn, is the result of sustained high fertility.) Consequently, even though mortality is declining, it might be difficult to convince parents not to have births in excess of the number of children they desire. These problems are recognized in fertility theory, development programs, and the WPP, but the last factor, children as a source of status and power, i.e., the opportunity cost of not having children, is generally ignored. In fact, this may be the key to understanding high fertility and the design of development or population policies.

The Social Status of Parents and Non-Parents

Ronald Freedman, among others, has made a convincing argument that fertility is so important to a society that its control is never left solely in the hands of individual couples. He concludes that even after LDC infant mortality declines, LDC fertility will not get substantially lower because social norms and institutions are such that people want more than a few children (Freedman, 1963; also see Bernard, 1974). Obviously, institutionalized pronatalism does not just affect women, but it has resulted in societies where a woman's primary, if not only, reason for existence is to be a wife and mother. There is no need to go into

⁴For example, fertility fell well before industrialization in France, but not until long after urbanization and industrialization in England. See Goldscheider (1972) for an explanation and a further discussion of the relationship between fertility and modernization.

details of the enforcement of these roles, they have been well documented. But as a reminder that Third World women are coerced to a degree far beyond what occurs in this country: Third World women are subjected to child marriages, arranged marriages, purdah, and polygamy. There are areas where an unmarried daughter is a disgrace to her family, where an infertile wife may be returned to her parents, where a girl may have to prove she is fertile to ensure a marriage, where widows are inherited and the practice of suttee has only recently disappeared. There are areas where the birth of a female child may be a cause for sorrow, where adulteresses are stoned to death and adulterers are congratulated, where female infanticide was once common and now females are systematically deprived so that even nursing mothers may eat only if there are left-overs. And in many of these areas women accept their condition without question and raise their daughters to be equally subservient and obedient.

The opportunity costs of not marrying and not having children are very high indeed, and without intervention, opportunity costs are not likely to change rapidly. Why? First, if Simon (1974) is correct, changes in norms about marriage and child bearing will lag way behind changes in the economic system. The second, and perhaps most important, reason is Third World men. It is not likely that they will permit a change in social relationships as long as their own status is derived mainly from dominance over women and the number of children they father. For instance, there is fairly consistent evidence that Third World husbands want more children than their wives do, and that male dominance in the home is associated with resistance among husbands to a wife using or even knowing about contraceptives (Dixon, 1975). Even in Africa where married women are commonly required to support themselves and their children, they are also expected to have lots of children (UNECA, 1975; Simon, 1973; Boserup, 1970). Thus African studies show a positive relationship between women's employment and fertility. In a study of literate couples in Nairobi, Kenya, approximately one-fourth of the husbands, but over one-half of the wives felt there is "...nothing good about many children," while two-thirds of the husbands but less than one-third of the wives believed: "A woman has a duty to her husband and his relatives to have as many children as possible" (Martin, 1970: 16,6).⁵ Furthermore, some family planning organizations in Africa, being dominated by men, have made a requirement that women must have the consent of their husbands to receive services (Ware, 1975).

Summary

The notion of a "natural" decline in fertility (and the corresponding "unnaturalness" of contraception and family planning programs) is very mis-

⁵With the weakening of tribal bonds, African men use Western justification to retain their position of authority by appealing to educational differences instead of tribal rights (Boserup, 1970).

leading. Birth rates decline when social and economic conditions are such that people want fewer children. Then they postpone sexual unions, contracept, abort and, if necessary, commit infanticide. If the history of the MDC's is any guide, Third World fertility will not fall until a constellation of conditions are met including reduced infant mortality, a decline in the economic value of children, and a change in the definition of status for both men and women.⁶ But the employment of women may only make a minor contribution to fertility reduction.⁷

CONCLUSIONS

By now a vicious circle should be evident: fertility will not fall until the status of women has changed, the status of women will not change until the status of men changes, the status of men will not change without a rise in the standard of living, and an adequate rise in the standard of living may not be possible without a reduction in fertility. Economic development is essential but, if it is to be successful, there must be direct intervention in fertility decisions in order to break the vicious circle. Along with development programs there must be an intensive effort to change pronatalist institutions and attitudes and to encourage and reward low fertility.⁸

⁶This is an area which requires more investigation, but it may be useful to make a distinction between the definition of status and the source of one's status. The onset of the fertility decline in the MDC's appears to have been tied to a change in the definition of status from family size to material well being. But since the status of women was measured by the status of husbands, a genuine improvement in the status of women, i.e., social equality, was not necessary for a reduction in fertility. Men still had control over women and reproduction. It is only recently that the identity and social worth of women has come to be measured independently of their marital state or husband's social status, and this may have contributed to more recent declines in fertility.

⁷Development planners are increasingly concerned that economic and social development cannot and/or should not follow the pattern of the capitalist and/or industrialized nations. They believe crafts, cottage industries, intermediate technology in farming and manufacturing may be more feasible and desirable than large scale capital intensive industry and agriculture (Teitelbaum, 1974; Schumacher, 1973). If so, women would be less likely to leave home to work, and children could be part of the family labor force. If this is the case, development might not reduce birth rates. This is not an argument against development; it is further evidence that a fertility decline may not be a "natural" consequence of development.

⁸To date, all birth planning or birth reduction incentive programs and proposals require the recipient to be married and to have at least two, and more often three, children.

If the preceding reasoning is correct, then the WPP will do little toward reducing population growth or raising the status of women. It confronts fertility only indirectly through the unrealistic proposals of providing women with high levels of education and employment, and provides absolutely no means or ideas for the implementation of these programs.⁹ It encourages freedom and voluntarism in family planning, while leaving the men primarily in charge of these decisions. It stresses the basic right of every couple to have as many or as few children as desired, but does nothing to directly reduce the social significance of marriage and children, or to reduce the power of pronatalist norms and institutions. To the contrary, the WPP declares the family (read at least husband, wife, and child) to be the basic and most critical unit of society. At the same time it minimizes the importance of family planning programs for fertility reduction even though an estimated 70 percent of the world's couples (and even more unmarried individuals) do not have access to birth control information and services (Planned Parenthood, 1974). How could this be? How could a World Population Conference formulate a plan that does not make demographic sense? Since the WPP also does not seem to do as much for women as it is credited, it might be of value to try to answer this question from a feminist perspective.

The obvious response might be that the conference was dominated by men, and Third World men did not realize that Third World women want fewer children and want greater control over reproduction. Women, especially Third World women, made these views clear at the UN International Women's Conference the following year. Family planning was given high priority (in fact it was a "demand"), and the resolutions on population and birth control were stronger than those in the WPP (Populi, 1975; UNCESI, 1975). And when some American women denounced family planning assistance to the LDC's as imperialistic, they were harshly rebuked by Third World women who "...gave dramatic testimony to their desperate need with compelling stories of constant child bearing and botched illegal abortions" (Zero Population Growth (ZPG), 1975).

But to say that men are stupid or insensitive begs the question and ignores the hypocrisy that dominated the World Population Conference. Is it possible that the WPP emerged as it did because it is a smoke screen to divert attention away from what is really happening in some countries, and away from the fact that many national leaders are not willing to do what is necessary to bring about economic development, to raise the status of women, and to control rapid population growth? While there may be many reasons for this reluctance (such as the creation of a new international

⁹To add a bit of irony to the unreality of the WPP: perhaps nowhere is the condition of women as low as in India, where, according to law, women are totally equal to men (Kapur, 1975).

economic order demanded by the Third World), it could be argued that a primary reason is that men do not want to lose control over reproduction. The necessity of maintaining control goes back to Freedman's argument that reproduction is much too important to be left in the control of individuals. Whether fertility is high or low, survival ultimately depends on its control. Furthermore, population size or growth is often equated with the political or military strength of a system, or subgroup within the system. Whoever controls fertility truly wields a great deal of power. While most of this control lies with women, they are not and rarely have been allowed to exercise it. Thus, while the World Population Conference appeared to be dominated by the politics of economic systems, it might be hypothesized that the WPP was the result of sexual politics; the dominance of women by men in order to control reproduction (Millet, 1970). According to Millet, at one time there were fertility cults and women were perhaps even powerful.¹⁰ But something happened (such as the discovery of paternity), which resulted in patriarchal societies and religions with the basic postulate of male supremacy, and the central function of validating the patriarchal structure. Today the chief patriarchal institution is the family; it enforces conformity to this system and socializes the young to this ideology (Goode, 1964; Millet, 1970). And from the patriarchal system we have gotten the "principle of legitimacy," a de facto or de jure law that a birth should not occur to a woman who is not attached to a man. Perhaps this is why the WPP stresses the supremacy of the family and why the WPP and other development programs only acknowledge the wife-mother and not the not-wife-mother, even though one-third of the world's mothers are not-wives (Sipila, 1974; Tinker, 1975).

Further indication of the possible unwillingness of men to allow women to control reproduction can be found in a portion of the UN Declaration of Human Rights which was included in the WPP. It states that all couples (not individuals) have the right to plan the number and spacing of their children. The WPP does state that individuals have the right to receive

¹⁰Other feminists such as Firestone (1970) believe women do not have social power because pregnancy and breast feeding are so debilitating, i.e., power was not wrenched from them by men. But a look at anthropological literature (see, for example, Kolata, 1974) or Third World Women should make one realize the cause of the disability is social, not biological. Silveira (1975) carries Millet's argument further, by suggesting egalitarian control over reproduction is not possible; a society on such a course would eventually become a matriarchy. She believes women's control over reproduction may be the best indicator of women's power and status. This may be true, but it is doubtful if women will have control over reproduction until they have enough power and status to control the means of controlling reproduction.

contraceptive services, but apparently the use of the term "individual" instead of "couple" was strongly contested and it appeared in the final document only through a "procedural fluke" (ZPG, 1975). In contrast, the delegates to the International Women's Year Conference generally accepted the right of individuals to family planning services (ZPG, 1975).

The patriarchal system serves men well as long as high fertility is important or at least not detrimental. But now that lower fertility may be essential, and the most reliable contraceptive methods are for females,¹¹ and women are the most motivated to reduce fertility, Third World leaders are finding themselves in an awkward position. Without further technological advances, the only way to reduce the birth rate without overtly coercive policies, is to change the system so the elites lose control over the majority of men (and the status of men rises) or so the men lose control over women (and the status of women rises). None of these alternatives would be appealing to the political elites of the world.

As a consequence, the participants of the WPP behaved in a hypocritical way, produced an equally hypocritical document, and governments around the world are behaving in the same fashion. For example, some of the countries which denied demographic realities and were loath to discuss birth control at the conference are now, "...expanding birth control programs with unprecedented haste" (Stokes, 1975:2). Meanwhile the United States, which stressed the importance of family planning programs reduced this part of its foreign aid budget, and Saudi Arabia banned the distribution and use of contraceptives. At the conference, China promoted the position that rapid population growth is good and family planning programs are "unnatural and unnecessary; and now China (which could have set such a good example) has the world's most effective birth reduction policies and programs. But India is certainly the greatest hypocrite of all. At the conference, India was one of a group of countries that was emphatic about the impropriety of fertility reduction programs that are even slightly coercive (Mauldin, Choucri, *et al.*, 1974). Shortly after a highly coercive (and often compulsory) sterilization program was initiated in India, and is said to have contributed to the downfall of Indira Gandhi.¹²

¹¹Condoms are almost as effective as the intra-uterine device or birth control pills, but only if the user is strongly motivated to use them consistently and properly.

¹²Newspapers have reported that Indira Gandhi blamed the "menfolk" of India for the lack of success of programs to reduce fertility in that country. Gandhi believes Indian women are interested in having smaller families but the men have created a stumbling block for the national campaign to limit families to three children. Here is further evidence that a reduction in fertility may not occur unless men are able to achieve status in ways that have nothing to do with the control of women or the fathering of children, or women are given full control over fertility.

There are other points of view from which to analyze the conference; certainly much of the rhetoric and hypocrisy stemmed from the desire to present the proper ideological face. Nevertheless, the feminist perspective raises some interesting questions which should be investigated. I will conclude with one further observation from this perspective. One consequence of patriarchal societies is that women have become victims of pronatalist institutions which have denied them control of reproduction. Another consequence was the shifting of credit for reproduction from females to males. Traditionally a woman has been thought to do nothing more than provide a growing place for the tiny person planted in her by a man. Even today in the Third World, a wife is blamed (and often cast aside) if a couple is sterile, but the husband gets the credit if the couple is fertile. This too serves men well as long as high fertility is desirable. If the WPP does nothing else, it allows men to retain control over fertility, and, at the same time, shifts the blame for continued high fertility over to the women.

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