

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

WORLD POPULATION SOCIETY CONFERENCE

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Throughout history, man has struggled to have enough food in the face of an ever increasing population.

The average annual population increase throughout most of history was about one-tenth of one percent. But after World War II, this figure increased to one percent. And today, the earth's population is increasing by about two percent per year.

The major population increase is in the developing world where food supplies are tight. It is estimated that 90 percent of the world's population increase during the rest of the century will take place in these countries.

The world's population today is approaching four billion people. And it is likely to reach between six and seven billion people by the end of this century.

By that time, eight out of every ten people will live in the developing world.

We must ask ourselves whether we want to be an island of plenty in a sea of poverty. It would be well to recall the words of Aristotle, "Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime."

There are a number of factors relating to this population explosion.

First, as a result of medical advances, more infants have been enabled to survive.

Second, in recent decades we have seen extensive trading of food supplies throughout the world. In earlier times, a food shortage in one country or locality might lead to starvation in that area. Today, famine or drought can be met by commercial imports or humanitarian assistance.

Third, the aspirations of the developing world have been awakened to the knowledge that there is a better life. While the required steps may not be clear, this is a new political reality which relates to food, population, trade, minerals and energy.

And fourth, these rising expectations have extended to other more affluent countries in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This additional demand on the world's supply of food and fibre has meant that developing countries must pay more for energy, minerals and food. And it has meant delays in development programs.

Many observers have looked to the future with the gloomy words of Thomas Malthus that man would breed himself into a corner by increasing his number beyond his ability to feed himself.

In spite of this pessimism, a great deal of work has begun to address these problems.

The World Population Conference

The convening of the World Population Conference in August, 1974, was itself a remarkable achievement. It was the first time that a world conference had been held on such a scale and on this sensitive subject.

U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, in opening the Conference, recalled the sixth special session of the General Assembly of April, 1974, when he identified six primary issues requiring immediate attention: mass poverty, food supplies, the utilization of energy, military expenditures, the world monetary system, and "an unprecedented rate of population growth."

There was a great deal of controversy surrounding the conference and especially in relating population growth to social and economic development, curbing population growth rates, and setting targets for birth-rate reduction.

The United States was particularly disappointed that the Plan did not include target dates for specific population goals rather than merely including the concept of quantitative goals.

The World Population Plan of Action adopted at the Conference made numerous recommendations including the need for better data and analysis, research on population problems (including unemployment, starvation and poverty), and the development and evaluation of population policies.

Major propositions in the Plan of Action include:

- Deciding the number and spacing of one's children is a basic human right.
- Governments should provide individuals the information and means to exercise this right.
- Governments should include population policies and programs in their development planning.
- Quantitative goals and timetables for reducing population growth and mortality are desirable.
- Improving the status of women will help to reduce population growth.
- Reducing population growth and promoting socio-economic development are mutually reinforcing and together lead to a higher quality of life.

The Conference also passed resolutions supporting increased food production, the development of new food resources and the more effective utilization of existing sources.

The World Food Conference

There was a strong recognition of the correlation between food supply and population growth at the November, 1974, World Food Conference. There, governments and people were urged to make every possible effort to grow and equitably distribute sufficient food so that all human beings might have an adequate diet.

The resolutions of the World Food Conference recommended the establishment of international machinery to respond to the world food problem, including the following:

- Creation of a World Food Council to coordinate U.N. policies and actions.
- Creation of an International Agricultural Development Fund to finance agricultural projects in developing countries.
- An international food reserve system based on a system of nationally held stocks.
- A world warning and information system on food and agricultural production, stocks, prices, exports and imports.

-- A target of 10 million tons a year in food aid until agricultural production is increased.

Twenty-three days after the World Population Congress adjourned, the President of Mexico proposed amendments to three articles of that nation's Constitution, thereby incorporating three specific recommendations on the status of women from the World Population Plan of Action.

Following the approval of the Population Conference actions by the General Assembly, the Population Commission held a session in February, 1975, and the Economic and Social Council held meetings in May. It asked the Population Commission to monitor the World Population Plan of Action, giving special attention to population trends and policies.

In addition to the meetings of the Population Commission and ECOSOC, a series of intergovernmental consultations were held in five regions throughout the world.

One of the most active bodies concerned with population in the United Nations is the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Although the number of requests received have nearly doubled, it has been unable to respond to all of them because of limited funds. The Fund's budget for this year should be increased from \$80 million to between \$120 and \$140 million to meet the requests.

Progress since the World Food Conference also has been slow. The World Food Council held a stormy inaugural session in June and adopted a report containing proposals on short-term food needs, food aid, world food security, fertilizers and pesticides.

The Council is seeking \$1 billion a year in contributions to the International Fund for Agricultural Development. This would represent a 60 percent increase in foreign investment in the agriculture of developing nations.

At a fall meeting of countries interested in the proposed fund, contributing members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) indicated their intention to help meet half of the initial target of \$1 billion for the new fund.

The United States restated its intention to seek Congressional approval for a contribution of \$200 million to the Fund, provided that the \$1 billion target is met.

The Council also has the task of establishing a world food security system based on the target of 10 million tons in food aid. For 1975-76, 8.9 million tons already have been pledged, of which over half would be provided by the United States.

The International Wheat Council's Preparatory Group, established in February of this year, has been the principal forum for discussions of a reserve system. At its meeting in London on September 29-30, the United States introduced a proposal including the following major points:

-- The establishment of a 30 million metric ton reserve -- 25 million tons in wheat and 5 million tons in rice.

-- Each participating nation would be responsible for holding an equitable share of the reserves.

-- The cost of the reserve would be the responsibility of each participating nation.

-- Production rather than price indicators would determine the build-up or release of reserves.

-- Shortage situations would be met by a two-stage response: first, in a warning stage, participants would consult on what action is warranted; and second, should a shortage stage be reached, participants would be obliged to make their reserve stocks available.

Action Needed Now

We will need to follow carefully the work of these two world conferences. But at some point in the near future we are going to have to stop talking and organizing and start helping the hungry people in the world.

We have nearly completed the work on our U.S. bilateral foreign economic aid legislation. And while our assistance has been focused mainly on agriculture and food for the last two years, much work remains in terms of effectively implementing these programs.

What is needed is a development program designed to increase the security of people in the developing world. This means not only more food, but also improved educational and health opportunities.

Nations such as Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Thailand have population growth rates ranging from 2.6 percent to 3.3 percent. And almost half of their people are under 15 years of age.

This means that the governments will have to spend increasing sums to fight illiteracy, disease and malnutrition.

Our assistance should be targeted on the rural areas and primarily on health, nutrition and family planning, extension and training, improving transportation, increasing fertilizer availabilities, and improving irrigation and water management.

The United States has made great contributions in the area of agricultural research. Further work, **especially** through the international research centers, is needed to improve the existing seed varieties in order to increase their nutritional value and their resistance to disease.

A greater effort also is needed to bring these new high-yielding seed varieties to the small farmers, along with the required inputs such as fertilizer and water. I am especially encouraged that the Philippines, which has pioneered in the new rice varieties, has reported a bumper rice harvest this year.

We also must increase our efforts to bring rural electrification to Asia, Latin America and Africa. This will provide increased irrigation and industrialization in the rural areas and improve communications.

We have before us a challenge of awesome dimensions. The World Conferences have given us a blueprint, but the work is still ahead.

We have reached the stage in world development where interdependence not only is a motto but the new reality.

In the future, we will be dependent upon many of the developing countries for valuable resources. In our own common interest, we must join with these nations in a concerted effort to reduce ignorance, poverty and disease.

A policy of triage -- which recommends ignoring the most needy nations -- makes no practical sense, and it is morally reprehensible.

Ultimately we will develop a new balance in terms of population, food and world resources.

The question comes back to the kind of balance and the sort of world we want for the future. Your organization can play an important leadership role in advancing new ideas and alerting nations to the implications of rapid population growth.

The philosopher Descartes has stated "there are two things which make life bearable, ignorance of the future and hope in the future."

We need a certain optimism and daring to pursue the programs needed to shape the future of the world. And we will need a long term commitment no less ambitious than our program to conquer outer space.

William Faulkner said "I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail."

We all need to dedicate ourselves to this challenge.

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