

## INSIGHTS FROM THE 1972 REPORT OF THE ROCKEFELLER COMMISSION

- **Quality of Life Gains** - The diminished burden of providing for dependents, and for the multiplication of facilities to keep up with expanding population, should make more of our national output available for many desirable purposes: new kinds of capital formation, including human resources investment; public expenditures involving qualitative improvement and modernization; and greater attention to environmental and amenity objectives. Whatever the future problems of regions may be, we should have more ample per capita resources to attack them with a lower rate of population growth.

- **Freedom of Choice** - We should strive for the ideal of diversity in which it would be equally honorable to marry or not, to be childless or not, to have one child or two or, for that matter, more. Our goal is one of less regimentation of reproductive behavior, not more.

- **The Growth Ethic** - The growth ethic seems to be so imprinted in human consciousness that it takes a deliberate effort of rationality and will to overcome it, but that effort is now desirable.

- **The Risks of Just 'Coping'** - From the standpoint of resources and the environment, the U.S. can cope with rapid population growth for the next 30 to 50 years. But doing so will become an increasingly unpleasant and risky business — unpleasant because 'coping' with growth means adopting solutions we don't like; risky because it means adopting solutions before we understand them.

- **Population: the Amplifier in Ecological Decline** - Population growth is clearly not the sole culprit in ecological damage. ...But the overall effect [of frivolous and extravagant consumption that pollutes] is a product of numbers times styles of life taken together. One multiplies the other to produce the total impact.

- **The Diversion of Effort from Solving Social Problems** - Another price we pay for having to cope with continued population growth is the pressure to keep on postponing the solution of social problems. ...A large and perhaps growing fraction of our physical and intellectual capital is directly and indirectly devoted to these tasks — to finding ways to cope with the problems continued growth generates.

- **Growth Limits Options** - Continued population growth limits our options. ...With less land per person and more people to accommodate, there are fewer alternatives, less room for diversity, less room for error. To cope with growth, technology *must* advance, lifestyles *must* change. Slower population growth offers us the difference between choice and necessity, between prudence and living dangerously.

- **Growth and Regimentation** - Population growth forces upon us slow but irreversible changes in life style. Imbedded in our traditions as to what constitutes the American way of life is freedom from public regulation — virtually free use of water; access to uncongested unregulated roadways; freedom to do as we please with what we own. ...Clearly, we do not live this way now. Maybe we never did. But everything is relative. The population of 2020 may look back with envy on what, from their vantage point, appears to be our relatively unfettered way of life.

- **Political Overpopulation** - Representation at the national level is diluted by population growth. The constituency of an individual congressman has grown enormously since the size of the House of Representatives was fixed at 435 members in 1910. ...The size of the constituency is clearly not the sole factor in determining excellence in government ...But it cannot be denied that the individual's voice will be diminished under such circumstances. No increase of Congress's ability to communicate with constituents by mass media can disguise or make up for that diminution.

- **Population and National Security** - When the nation was young, her defense depended upon the number of people bearing arms. More people meant greater national security. ...Recent technology, including nuclear weaponry, has reduced the significance of massive armies. ...We can discern no threat to the nation's security from lesser future growth of the total population.

- **Fears of an Aging Population** - The age structure of a population is unlikely to be decisive in the forms of social organization which emerge. And as we have seen, there are many advantages of population stabilization which seem clearly to outweigh any fears of an older population.

- **Minorities' Suspicions of Population Curbs** - This feeling of powerlessness, of exclusion, has led some [minority] spokesmen to suggest that the only way to break in to the "system" is by growing so large in numbers that they can no longer be ignored. As we learned from a Spanish-speaking witness, "... what we must do is to encourage large Mexican American families so that we will eventually be so numerous that the system will either respond or it will be overwhelmed." The Reverend Jesse Jackson reminded us "... our community is suspect of any programs that would have the effect of either reducing or levelling off our population growth. Virtually all the security we have is in the number of children we produce."

- **Women's Rights** - ...it would seem good social policy to recognize and to facilitate the trend toward smaller families by making it possible for women to choose attractive roles in place of or supplementary to motherhood.