Why Is the Birth Rate Constantly Declining?

Results of an Inquiry Conducted in England by National Council of Public Morals, Which Seeks to Regenerate the British Race

STUDENTS of sociology have for many years been reflecting attention to the decline in the birth rate. Many of the broad facts are fairly familiar to people in general. But the war has given a new impetus to the whole inquiry, its tremendous toll in human life altering the conditions and subjecting them to a new period in the next few years. More than one nation will attack the problem on the theory that neglect of the cradle may be even more dangerous to a country than neglect of the sword.

There is a popular interest and timeliness in the report of the present inquiry just issued by a commission appointed in 1916 by the National Council of Public Morals in England. The body was not a Royal Commission, but was instituted, with official recognition, by the National Council, twenty-seven members of which were appointed to study the problem of birth control. The commission’s report is by no means a religious or moral, sociological, and physical, and philosophical inquiry. It is a physiological one, a study of the process of life itself and the influences that affect it.

The report claims that the birth rate has declined by the rate of approximately one-third within the last three years. The report claims that this was caused by a series of factors, including the war, the depression, and the general economic condition.

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The report concludes that the decline has been caused by a series of factors, including the war, the depression, and the general economic condition. It is a study of the process of life itself and the influences that affect it.

The report makes several recommendations for improving the birth rate, including increasing the availability of family planning information, decreasing the cost of contraception, and increasing the availability of social support for families.

The report also recommends that the government should take a more active role in promoting family planning and reducing the birth rate. It suggests that the government should provide funding for family planning services, increase funding for research into fertility and contraception, and implement policies that promote family planning.

The report concludes by stating that the decline in the birth rate is a result of a series of factors, including the war, the depression, and the general economic condition. It is a study of the process of life itself and the influences that affect it.

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lee. Statistician to the Medical Research Committee under the Insurance act, and Dr. A. E. Chalmers, Medical Officer of Health at Glasgow, pointing to the occurrences of cyclical variations in the birth rates of individuals, and the difficulties which would be involved in the attempt to meet the growing demands of population for a long time to come, the commission asserts, adding that of general concern to all of us, is the absolute sense of the term there is no evidence. In the matter of quality of population, of the sort of men who are increasingly to people the earth, the principal question arises: "Have we any reliable criterion of desirable in respect of races and race blends? Is there any evidence that a man is as much at home in the Old World as in the Old World, in the sense of a refusal of higher and intrinsically fitted races to multiply, while lower and intrinsically less fit peoples are spreading more numerously over the earth?" On these matters the commission says:

The mere limitations of our knowledge about human qualities and their relative values for the civilisation of the future, as well as our racial and patriotic biases, render it impossible to give a definite answer to these vital questions. There is evident evidence to indicate that the supposed differences in inherent racial qualities are much smaller than has been alleged, and that the economic, social, and cultural environment explains the greater part of what were considered ethnical differences.

Regarding the effect of war upon the quality of the population, it is generally admitted, says the report, to exercise a selective power that is dysgenic. For it exposes to the risk of death a larger proportion of the more virile, the physically stronger, and, so far as the voluntary method of settlement prevails, the more public-spirited of the male population, reducing their contribution to the stock of the new generation. Certain witnesses maintained that there is no sufficient reason to conclude that the recent reduction in Great Britain's birth rate has so far been inimical to the well-being of the nation. Others maintained that, if a higher birth rate or a check upon further reduction of the birth rate be deemed desirable, or if an improvement in the character of the birth rate is to be obtained, such reforms would be facilitated by certain social-economic changes.

Those who hold the latter view believe that greater security and regularity of income, with adequate insurance against unemployment among all ranks of workers, would be of material assistance. On the other hand, statistical evidence that is available for establishing a comparison of the birth rate among the different social and pecuniary grades of England's population indicates to the commission that the more prosperous classes restrict still more the size of their families, and that even among certain of the wage-earning classes the birth rate varies inversely with the income.

Proposals, many of them of an economic character, are forwarded for consideration. They include a living wage, bonuses for families under certain conditions, relaxation of the income-tax arrangement, increased facilities for good education, adequate housing accommodations at reasonable rates, and measures to encourage the full development of natural sources both at home and in the dominions beyond the seas.

The evidence on the housing question was limited to London, and all points in one direction—that children are crowded out of the houses.