

# BIRTH CONTROL REVIEW

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## The Economic Significance of Population Trends

Second article in a series

Guy Irving Burch

## Family Planning Among Professional Men

## Facing A New Year

# BIRTH CONTROL REVIEW

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## Facing A New Year

The number of clinics approaches the 500 mark. Of the 478 now functioning, 158 are supported in whole or in part by public funds, as compared with 85 a year ago. State sponsored birth control service is successfully under way in North Carolina.

The birth control movement made important gains last year. But, with reliable contraceptive knowledge still inaccessible to millions of mothers, we face 1939 determined that progress shall be more rapid and far reaching. The *Review* makes four New Year wishes, believing that they will express substantially the hopes of every worker and member in the movement.

1 That enlightened public opinion will recognize birth control as indispensable to the intelligent control of population—both as to quantity and as to quality.

2 That, through public opinion, government agencies concerned with public health and maternal and child welfare will make birth control an integral part of their services, available to all mothers who want and need it.

3 That more physicians and social workers, through their organizations, as well as individually, will lend staunch and open support to birth control as a force for the protection of life and service of humanity.

4 That the positive ideal of the movement will be more fully realized through further encouragement of planned parenthood, and through cooperation with agencies in fields of eugenics and family guidance.

Encouraging advances toward these goals have been made during the past few years. Now we are enlisted for the final campaign, to secure general inclusion of birth control in tax supported public health service. A difficult task lies ahead, one calling for the full strength of the movement.

Only through concerted action by national, state and local units will our common objectives be reached and the hopes of all be fulfilled. As the year opens, a Joint Committee is completing its plans for coordination of all work of the national organizations concerned in the movement. In this united leadership lies assurance of greater achievement than ever before.

# The Economic Significance of Population Trends - II

By Guy Irving Burch

ABOUT one sixth of the population of the United States is on some kind of relief, and expenses for local, state and federal government are equal to about one fourth of our national income<sup>1</sup> Business men attribute these economic conditions variously to the World War, the business cycle, foreign loans after the war, the "do nothing" policy of the Old Deal or the "spendthrift" policy of the New Deal Perhaps all these views are right to some degree, but there are even more fundamental factors to be taken into consideration—the population factors

When business men do consider population factors, they generally come to the conclusion that the slowing down of population growth, caused by the restriction of immigration and the decrease in the birth rate, has contributed to our economic depression It is natural for them to believe this, because in the past a rapid increase in population has often been accompanied by economic prosperity, increased business activity and a higher standard of living

Such reasoning is misleading, however The prosperity and increase in standards of living in Western civilization, especially in the United States, during the nineteenth century, was not caused by a rapid increase in population Rather, both the prosperity and increase in population were caused by increased economic opportunity, made possible by two strokes of good fortune—the industrial revolution and the opening up

of a rich and practically unpopulated New World Any influence that population growth may have had upon the increase of prosperity was a by product of the economic opportunity made possible by these strokes of good fortune

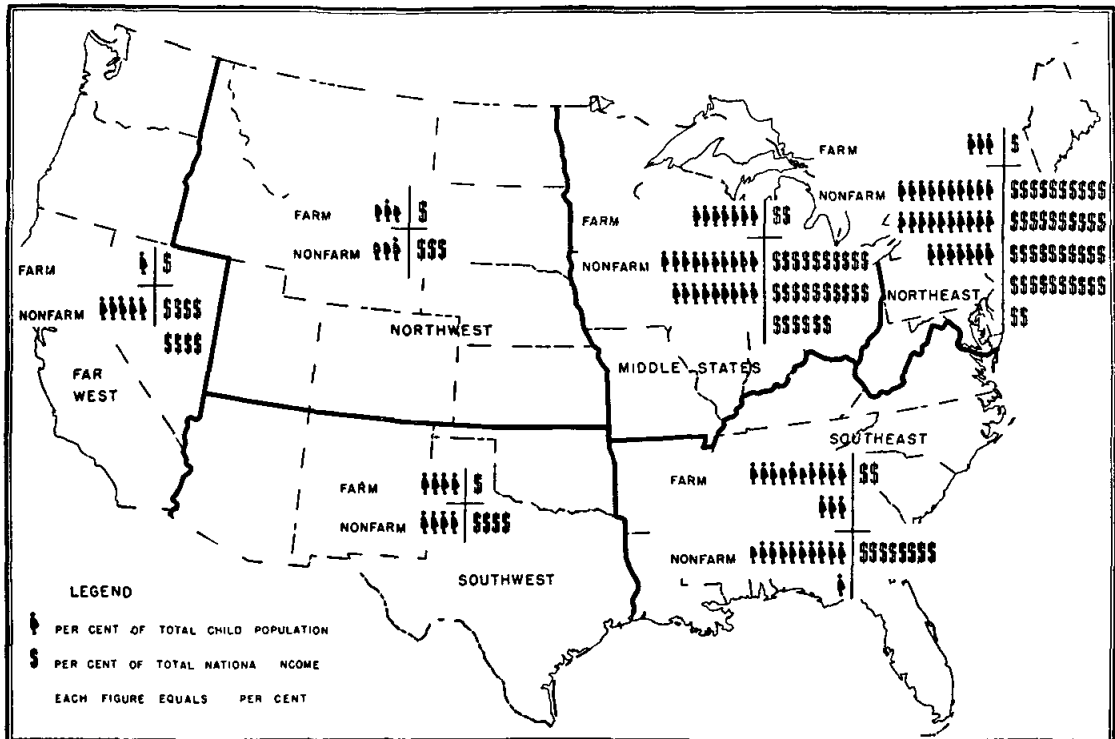
The population of the United States has increased from about 5,000,000 to 130,000,000 since 1800 By 1890, when our population numbered 63,000,000, our best agricultural land had already been settled and great herds of cattle and sheep were grazing throughout the Great Plains By 1910, when our population numbered 92,000,000, the Great Plains, already badly over grazed, had also been subjected to the plow of the "dry land" farmer When the World War broke out, plowing of our good and bad land alike was intensified and the United States "got rich quick" However, rapid depletion of soil and mineral resources has carved deeply upon our national life Among other things, we have been left with a gigantic problem of rapidly increasing erosion—a malady to which this country (unlike countries of Europe where rain is not so torrential) is especially susceptible

In the summer of 1938 the National Resources Committee published its report on population<sup>2</sup> One of its conclusions was "The transition from an increasing to a stationary or decreasing population may on the whole be beneficial to the life of the Nation"

This is essentially the conclusion reached two years earlier by the Report of the Study

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished estimate for 1938, U S Chamber of Commerce Figures for 1937, see *Facts About Taxes and Public Spending*, U S Chamber of Commerce, October 1, 1938

<sup>2</sup> *The Problems of a Changing Population*, National Resources Committee, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1938, p 7



Courtesy National Resources Committee

*Regional percentages of the child population and of the nation's income  
farm and nonfarm communities*

of Population Redistribution,<sup>3</sup> a non governmental Social Science Research Council project. Notwithstanding that these two exhaustive scientific reports drew their data from many scientists and from practically all the pertinent material available, it appears from various newspaper reports that the soundness of the conclusion quoted above is questioned by many people, who lament the possibility that our population may cease to increase twenty or thirty years hence.

Perhaps the most convincing warning of the dangers of population increase is found in the data available concerning the progress of erosion in destroying our most valuable natural resource, land. The total land area of the United States (exclusive of ur-

ban territory) is 1,903,000,000 acres. About 75 per cent of this area consists of mesas, canyons, scabland, bad lands and rough mountain land. On 37 per cent of the total area, mostly flat, gently undulating, or forested land, erosion has been slight, less than one fourth of the productive top soil has been lost. On 41 per cent, one fourth to three fourths of the original surface soil has disappeared. On 12 per cent the loss has been more than three fourths. And on three per cent of the total land area practically all of the productive soil has been lost, and the land is "essentially destroyed for tillage."<sup>4</sup>

Scientists of the Department of Agriculture have tested the rate by which erosion destroys soil in five different parts of the country. They report that where the land is

<sup>3</sup> *Migration and Economic Opportunity*, Report Study of Population Redistribution, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936

<sup>4</sup> *Soils and Men*, Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture, Government Printing Office, 1938, p. 6

subjected to continuous clean tillage, the time required for erosion to strip off seven inches of the more productive top soil (seven inches being about the average depth of such soil) is from 16 to 51 years

These scientists have worked out a program by which they think erosion and soil depletion can at least be checked. But two factors may interfere with the carrying out of this program. First, there is the factor of population increase. Many farmers are so poor that they need to till continuously every acre of their land, and it is generally these farmers whose families are so large that they double their numbers in one generation. If this group of the population does not learn how to control its birth rate, it will sink itself deeper into poverty, cause the most serious erosion of the soil, and endanger the economic life of the whole nation. (A somewhat similar conclusion might be reached concerning the high birth rate, unskilled group in our urban centers.)

The second factor which may prevent an effective soil conservation program is the expense. As long as the government can afford to pay farmers not to plow all of their land, to rotate and terrace it properly, and to feed it with fertilizers, some progress may be made in checking erosion. Then there is also the expense of building dams and reservoirs and dredging water ways of erosion debris, all of which fit into an effective program of soil conservation and flood control.

Water and wind erosion removes not less than 3,000,000,000 tons of soil from the crop lands and associated pastures of the nation every year, according to the Department of Agriculture scientists. This loss of soil also destroys annually about sixty times the amount of plant food that was used in the United States as commercial fertilizer during the fiscal year 1934. Yet we are told that already the farmers of the United

States spend more than \$200,000,000 a year on fertilizers.

Under the most favorable circumstances the expense of saving our most valuable natural resource is likely to be a considerable drain on our national wealth and a heavy burden upon the taxpayers. But if our total population continues to increase for any length of time, especially at the rate it is increasing among the farm population and the unskilled in our cities, the expense of saving our productive top soil will be increased greatly, if, indeed, it will be economically possible to carry out an effective program of soil conservation.

Many people also favor population increase because they imagine that we are suffering from an overproduction of goods from the factory and the farm. A study of recent government and non government reports<sup>5</sup> should do a great deal to dispel this illusion. These data indicate that we are not producing enough goods for an optimum standard for all our people, even if the goods we produce could be distributed evenly. But the goods cannot be distributed evenly or adequately because of the uneven and inadequate distribution of income. And this problem of inadequate distribution of wealth is being increasingly aggravated by the large families among those groups most in need of goods and purchasing power.

However, if by some miracle the national annual income could be distributed equally among all the families of the nation, each family would receive \$1,622. That sum is about \$400 less than the \$2,000 total income estimated by the Department of Agriculture to be necessary to purchase an "adequate at moderate cost" diet for a family of four, not to mention the \$4,000 total

<sup>5</sup> See footnotes 2 and 3. Also *Report on Economic Conditions of the South*, National Emergency Council, 1938.

income estimated to be necessary to purchase the "liberal" or optimum diet. These figures indicate that the American people are suffering not only from an inadequate distribution of income, but also from an inadequate amount of total income.

It should be evident that the spread of birth control to the lower income groups would help in a fundamental way to solve this problem. In certain cities of Europe, notably Stockholm, the democratization of birth control knowledge has resulted in the higher income groups having the largest families. This makes for a more even distribution of children among income groups, which in turn makes for a better distribution of wealth. The largest families are in the parts of the population with the greatest purchasing power.

The democratization of birth control will probably result in a stationary or slowly decreasing total population. Such a population, however, makes not only for a greater saving of a country's natural resources, but for a greater saving of capital. Likewise, it may be shown that, contrary to popular opinion, a stationary or slowly decreasing population has a larger productive capacity per capita than an increasing population. This is because there is a larger proportion of persons in the productive ages, 20 to 65 years, and a smaller proportion in the dependent ages, under 20 and over 65 years.

There is little foundation for the fear that our birthrate will decrease indefinitely or until we have "underpopulation." Mankind is so prolific that economic opportunity is all that is needed for populations to double in a single generation. According to Raymond Pearl, only one tenth of the potential childbearing capacity of the women of the United States is being used at present.

*(The third article in this series by Mr Burch will deal with the trends in the birth rate and in the quality of the population.)*

## Puerto Rican Verdict Awaited

A court test in Puerto Rico soon will decide how fully a federal statute relating to contraception applies to the territory. On December 16th indictments under this statute were returned against six directors of the Puerto Rican Maternal and Child Health Association, which has been conducting birth control centers. Facts in the cases have been taken under consideration by United States District Judge Robert A. Cooper, who will hand down a verdict without a jury. Those indicted are prominent physicians and social workers of the island.

Birth control clinics became legal in Puerto Rico through a bill passed by the Insular Legislature in May, 1937. Twenty-two clinics have been opened, some in hospitals and medical centers. Opponents of birth control pointed to a federal statute enacted in 1873, which prohibits the sale or gift of contraceptives in territories. The United States Attorney General last August held that this law applies to Puerto Rico.

A favorable decision in the test cases is essential to the solution of Puerto Rico's serious problem of overpopulation. The island has about 500 persons to the square mile and its population is increasing at the rate of 40,000 annually.

## Notice

The Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the American Birth Control League will be held at 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 18th, in Room 127, Hotel Biltmore, New York City. All dues paying members of the League are urged to attend and vote. The business to be transacted will be the election of directors and changes in the corporate by laws.

At 4:30 p.m., in Room 127, the Board of Directors will meet to elect officers. The full program appears on page 159.

## Family Planning Among Professional Men

PROFESSIONAL men and their wives are having families smaller than the three or more children that they would like to have, under ideal circumstances. Financial factors appear to be most influential in preventing them from attaining the size of family they regard as ideal. The most important factor is the expense of the higher education such couples find essential for their children. Costs of housing, of adequate insurance and child care, and consideration for the health of the mother also affect family size.

These conclusions were reached by Dr. John C. Flanagan of Teachers College, Columbia University, as the result of a study of the psychological factors related to fertility, which he completed recently under the auspices of the Pioneer Fund. Data was secured from 400 professional men and the wives of 300 of them. In all, about 1,000 separate items of information were obtained from each individual. The study had a new approach, differing from previous fertility studies in that it was an intensive analysis of a relatively small group and that it included many subjective or psychological factors such as attitudes, interests, preferences and values.

The average number of children born to the group during the first eight years of marriage was 1.27. However, in answer to a question asking for their opinion as to the ideal number of children for an American family, the response most frequently obtained in this group was "three." Some named a larger ideal family, bringing the average response to 3.2. It is interesting that this is identical to the average obtained for people throughout the country in all occupational groups, in a survey made by the

American Institute of Public Opinion. It also agrees well with the average of 3.3 obtained from women in answer to the Ladies' Home Journal poll on the ideal number of children.

About 92 per cent of the group, excluding those reported as sterile, indicated that they had made use of some method of birth control. A definite trend toward a larger proportion of planned children was shown. The men in the group who were over 40 years of age reported that only 20 per cent of their second born children were definitely planned. On the other hand, those under 40 reported that 49 per cent of their second born children were definitely planned.

"The opinion voiced by some, that the declining birth rate in this country is evidence of a general loss of virility due to the decadence of our national stock, gains little support from the reports of this group," Dr. Flanagan states. "In response to the question, 'If the pregnancy was planned, how many months after you stopped taking precautions did conception occur?', they reply 'Two to three months.' It is evident that, although even professional groups do not have complete control over the number of children which they shall have, these groups are approaching such a situation fairly rapidly."

The husbands and wives were asked to indicate the importance to them of a number of possible reasons for having children. The single item considered of greatest importance by a majority of both men and women was "A family is not complete without children." The least important reasons were reported to be those concerned with perpetuating the family name or providing advantages to the parents.

## News from the States

### Connecticut

An all day meeting of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Birth Control League was held at the Faculty Club in New Haven on December 5th. Mrs. A. Morgan Pease, president of the League, was chairman. At the round table discussion on finance, Mrs. Kenneth C. Brownell, finance chairman of the Greenwich Maternal Health Drive, described in detail the fund raising methods used by her committee. The discussion on publicity was led by Mabel Travis Wood, publications director of the American Birth Control League.

### Maryland

The Maternal Health Association of Talbot County opened in December a new clinic in Easton. Plans are progressing for the opening early in 1939 of a center in Annapolis by the Maternal Health Association of Anne Arundel County.

### Massachusetts

Another step forward in its plan of action was taken by the Birth Control League of Massachusetts, when, on December 19th, Dr. Ilija Galleani pleaded guilty in Norfolk Superior Criminal Court to a charge of unlawful sale of drugs intended for the prevention of conception, and paid a fine of \$100.

After the case had been ended in court, Mrs. Walter E. Campbell, chairman of the former Brookline Mothers' Health Offices, issued to the press a statement dealing with the case and the events leading up to it. The statement read in part, "The former Brookline Mothers' Health Offices has been convicted of giving to sick mothers who can not afford the services of a private phy-

sician the same medical assistance that is freely given in almost every other state and widely approved by the medical profession.

"The Mothers' Health Offices, of which Dr. Galleani was the physician in charge, was fulfilling a need which is met in other states by hospital and health agencies. The services of the health offices were at all times under the supervision of a highly competent physician and had the endorsement of other leading doctors."

All defendants in the cases before the Massachusetts courts have now pleaded guilty. It is expected that the new test cases described in the last issue of the *Review* will be introduced shortly.

Expressions of support for the program of the Massachusetts League have been pouring in to the *Review*. If you have not yet filled out and returned the form, "Let Massachusetts Know," which appeared in the December *Review*, will you do so now?

### New Jersey

At the conference of the New Jersey Welfare Council which met in Asbury Park, December 1st, 2nd and 3rd, the New Jersey Birth Control League had a booth and conducted a round table on "Planned Parenthood." The speakers were Mrs. Robert G. Illsley, president of the League, and Mrs. Martha Mumford, field representative of the American Birth Control League.

The League has just completed ten years of service, with ten clinics functioning throughout the state. Service for Warren and Hunterdon Counties in Southern New Jersey is being developed as an extension of the clinic in Easton, Pennsylvania, with the cooperation of the Pennsylvania Birth Control Federation.



## Pennsylvania

An increase of 25 per cent in attendance at clinics of the state was reported at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Birth Control Federation, held on November 28th in Philadelphia. Dr. James H. S. Bossard was re-elected president.

Hon. Roland Morris, president of the American Philosophical Society and former ambassador to Japan, was the luncheon speaker, on "Research in Population Trends." Miss Gladys Gaylord, executive secretary of the Maternal Health Association of Ohio, conducted the clinic meeting in the afternoon. Her subject was "Several Aspects of Public Acceptance."

The February Board Meeting of the Federation will be held in Philadelphia, while the Spring Board Meeting will take place in Pittsburgh. Also in Pittsburgh, the Federation will participate in the Pennsylvania Conference of Social Work, holding a meeting at 4:00 p. m. on February 14th or 16th.

## Texas

The El Paso Mothers' Health Center, situated in a community with 65 per cent of its population Mexican, has had 1,134 patients since it was opened in April, 1937. It is affiliated with various social agencies and is a member of the Central Council of Social Agencies. The medical advisory board of the clinic includes eleven physicians.

In view of the fact that there has been continued active antagonism toward the clinic from the start, its Board of Directors feel that a great deal has been achieved,

*"We have to take care of the ones we've got. Accompanied by four of her seven children, a mother talks with the nurse at the El Paso, Texas, Mothers' Health Center."*

writes Mrs. Charles A. Goetting, president of the Board.

An intensive educational program is carried on by the center, speakers being placed before as many groups as possible. A graduate nurse is employed on full time, and when not on duty at the clinic, does field work among the Mexican population. Literature for mothers is issued in Spanish. For Negro patients, sessions are held with a Negro physician in charge.

Patients often return to the center to express their gratitude for its work. So great was one Mexican mother's appreciation that she wanted to kiss the doctor's hand. She is suffering from epilepsy and has six children living and three dead.

An American mother, who was interviewed at the clinic, is reported by the *El Paso Times* to have said, "I am 29, and have had eight children in nine years. One of my twins died, but I have seven living. My husband is a WPA worker. We can't afford to have any more children. We have to take care of the ones we've got. I feel birth control is a very good thing, and I am grateful to the mothers of El Paso, who started this clinic."

*Courtesy El Paso Times*



## • BOOKS •

PRACTICAL BIRTH CONTROL METHODS,  
by NORMAN E HIMES, PH D, *with the  
medical collaboration of* ABRAHAM  
STONE, M D *Introduction by* ROBERT  
L DICKINSON, M D *Foreword by* HAVE  
LOCK ELLIS *New York Modern Age  
Books, 1938 254 pp \$ 95*

While this volume contains a card indicating it is "for the use of medical and allied professions," it is obviously produced for the purpose of employment by the laity. If it is written only for the former, it contains much that is unnecessary, and if it is written for the latter, much that is uncalled for. Thus, for the former, Chapter 10, "The Dangers of Feminine Hygiene," could obviously have been omitted, while for the latter, there would have been every reason for omitting a large amount of the space devoted to the discussion of abortions. Where the emphasis obviously should deal with contraceptive methods, the issue should not be complicated by a relation of the concept of abortion to the subject. It is far more important to emphasize the methods of preventing conception than to offer an opportunity for an association of the idea that control and conception involve abortion, which is the destruction of the product of conception.

This volume may, in a sense, be regarded as a manual of methods of protection against undesired pregnancy, whether for safe guarding of the health of women afflicted with various types of disease, or for the purpose of intelligent, controlled spacing of children. There is an advantage in supplementing verbal advice by the use of printed material such as this book offers. Much might have been gained had the content been reduced by the omission of con-

troversial material which the average lay man is unable to evaluate.

The chapter, "Who Needs Birth Control," is important, but the reviewer questions whether it was essential to devote so much space to the discussion of recent legal and medical victories. Part II, dwelling upon the medical aspects of contraception, is excellently prepared, thoroughly readable and clearly set forth, although even in this section there are phrases that are linguistically above the average reader's level of understanding.

The historical chapters are very readable and perhaps useful, but they add little to the subject matter definitely related to the title, "Practical Birth Control Methods." While their content is thoroughly interesting and valuable for those unfamiliar with the birth control movement through the ages, it is doubtful whether the history and personal references offer very much of significance or value to the general public, mainly concerned with the practical phases of contraception. The chapter, "What Are the Best Methods of Birth Control?" succinctly represents the gist of the whole book. It is brief, simple and understandable, and does not promise too much, while it clearly indicates the essentially individual phase of contraceptive methodology.

The book is concluded with appendices giving a list of birth control centers in the United States, and likewise a list of approved contraceptives. A reading list and an adequate index close the volume.

This book should have a wide range of usefulness under the recommendation of physicians, and it may serve advantageously as a manual designed for the education of an inquiring and interested married population.

IRA S WILE, M D

# EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

AMERICAN BIRTH CONTROL LEAGUE HOTEL BILTMORE NEW YORK CITY

## Wednesday, January Eighteenth

- 9 00 a m Registration
- 9 30 a m Annual Meeting New York State  
Birth Control Federation
- 12 45 p m Informal Luncheon (\$1 25)
- 2 00 p m New Projects for Volunteer Training  
Speaker EVELYN DAVIS  
Conducted by the New York State  
Birth Control Federation
- 3 00 p m Showing of the talking slide film Why  
Let Them Die? —Prepared by the Birth  
Control Clinical Research Bureau
- 3 00 p m Two Sessions conducted by the New York  
State Birth Control Federation  
  
Administration in Older County Com  
mittees  
  
Administration in New County Com  
mittees
- 4 00 p m American Birth Control League Members  
Meeting—(election of directors)
- 4 45 to American Birth Control League Directors  
5 15 p m Meeting—(election of officers)

## Participants

- CLYDE V KISER Division of Population  
Milbank Memorial Fund
- FRANK LOP  
IMER Professor of Population Studies  
Graduate School American University
- ALFRED J LOTKA Assistant Statistician  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company
- MRS ALVA MYRDAL President of the  
Swedish Federation of Business and Pro  
fessional Women
- FREDERICK OSBORN  
Research Associate in Anthropology  
American Museum of Natural History
- JOSEPH J SPENGLER Professor of Eco  
nomics Duke University
- 11 30 a m Annual Meeting New York City Commit  
tee of Mothers Health Centers  
(Open to members)
- 12 30 p m Annual Luncheon (Ballroom 19th fl \$2)  
Presiding DR CLARENCE C LITTLE
- Speakers  
MARGARET SANGER  
PROF ROBERT E CHADDOCK  
DR RICHARD N PIERSON
- 2 30 to Making the National Plan Work  
3 30 p m Conducted by D KENNETH ROSE

## Thursday, January Nineteenth

- 10 00 a m Symposium on Population Trends  
to
- 12 30 p m What is happening to our population will  
be discussed in non technical terms  
Some current fallacies will be dis  
pelled and information valuable to  
the birth control movement will be  
presented by outstanding authorities
- Moderator  
ROBERT E CHADDOCK Professor of So  
ciology Columbia University

## Friday, January Twentieth

- 10 00 a m Presentation of State League reports
- 12 30 p m Informal Luncheon (\$1 25)
- 1 30 to Continuation of State League reports  
3 30 p m
- 2 30 to Quiz Session on the new Manual of  
4 00 p m Standard Practice  
(For staff and volunteer members of  
state and local leagues)

Unless otherwise noted all sessions are open to all registered visitors

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"I feel the rights of the poor to this information to be a simple moral fact. I agree with many critics that birth control is a medical problem. But when has medicine ever been divorced from morality? Frankly, I believe in the moral right of the individual personality. To have children born under the most normal conditions possible is a moral obligation that is inescapable."

—The Very Reverend Arthur B. Kinsolving, II

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