

mean that population always increases faster than food supply. Obviously that cannot happen, and the people who take great pains to show as much show little understanding. What is meant by "tends to increase" is this: extra children get born, but, in the nature of the case, the extra number cannot grow up. Where too many are born, so many the more must die, which is just so much needless misery all round. *Nett* population cannot increase beyond food supply, be the food good or bad, abundant or scanty, but in the *gross*, population is always going beyond it. Roughly speaking, it is killed off as fast as it passes the limit. The census returns show only the *nett* increase. The gross increase can only be got at by counting the excess of births every year over deaths. That is the skeleton record of waste of life and happiness.

It will be seen at once, then, that much of the talk against the "law of population" is in the air. To show, as some people do, that "wealth" increases faster than population, is the merest muddling. "Wealth" includes all sorts of increase in mere money values: if the total rental of a country rises, if the selling values of all old pictures rise, that is counted as an increase in national wealth. All this is delusive. To sustain life, there is needed food. That does not increase faster than gross population; it does not even increase faster than *nett* population; or if it does, it is only in the sense that unnecessary forms of food are increased in greater proportion than the necessary.

There are only two answers that are worth considering to the statement that too many children are born, and that there ought to be fewer. These answers are—

1. That plenty of food *could* be raised for all the children that are born.
2. That plenty of work *could* be found to employ to good purpose all available labor power.

Now, in the sense pointed to by the words italicized, both of these assertions are true. We all realize that much more food could be raised if only the nations set themselves to the task. And even those who reject Socialist principles and Socialist economics can realize that, if the nations set themselves to employ their labor-power, they could do so, at least for a time, to a much greater extent than at present. In short, society certainly wastes, in the sense of not using, natural resources and labor-power. But those of us who preach the law of population are just as anxious as anybody else to develop these resources and that labor-power. Many of us are Socialists, and hold that the anti-Malthusian Socialists, who deny that "there is any population question," have not fully learned the lessons of social science. The case may be thus put in a nutshell: There are too many people for the available supply of food; there are too many hands for the existing labor market. Which is the proper course: to go on producing multitudes of children who

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