

percent, largely as a result of the rigorous birth control policy applied in China. However, the situation is different elsewhere in the Third World. In Africa the birthrate is higher than it has ever been and is double that of Europe in the nineteenth century. This means that the population of Africa could double in the next twenty years.

According to Professor Loxley, the population explosion is putting great pressure on the earth and its food resources. The situation in Africa is indeed reminiscent of Malthus. In the 1960s, population grew by 2.6 percent annually, whereas agricultural productivity only increased by 2.1 percent. The current figures are 2.9 percent and 1.7 percent respectively and as a result of this, thirty-four African countries are threatened by famine. Social and educational programmes are overwhelmed by this problem and it is women who suffer most from a lack of services. Unemployment or underemployment affects the majority of the population. The growth of the cities has been chaotic and deforestation and the erosion and impoverishment of the soil are threatening the environment. Finally, the disparity between the rich and the poor is constantly increasing.

Mr. Loxley warned his audience, however, against accepting the Malthusian explanation of population growth. It is, he said, poverty which leads to over-population rather than the reverse. It is natural for couples in the Third World to have large families since it is their children who will support them in their old age. In addition, population growth is closely related to cultural patterns; it is the reflection of a division of labour which limits women to having babies. Mr. Loxley also pointed out that the widespread inequality in the Third World is a further cause of poverty and social backwardness. History shows that a reduction in the birthrate normally follows improvements in economic security, a better standard of living and the emancipation of women.

Given the situation in the Third World, therefore, the current birth control programmes supported by the development agencies are unlikely to prove effective. A reduction in the rate of population growth will depend upon greater social equality (brought about by agrarian reform), improved economic security (through attaining self-sufficiency in agriculture) and a better lot for women (through such measures as an increase in literacy).