

SCIENCE TO LEAD THE WAY

It is particularly important for the scientific community to take the lead in demanding that attention be given now to these urgent problems, for it is science and technology that have made possible the growth of world population to its present levels. A recent UN report indicates that, while world population increased by 50 per cent in the 30 years from 1930-1960, it will increase by about 115 per cent in the 40 years from 1960-2000, giving a population of close to 6.5 billion at the end of the century. Without the discoveries of modern medicine, disease would have been an important factor in restraining population. Without the successes of scientific agriculture, famine would by now be widespread. Without modern technology, the high material standard of living of the industrialized nations, with its attendant rapid consumption of resources and production of waste, would not be possible.

When we look carefully at the present predicament of the world, it is quite clear that science and technology can do much to devise "technological fixes" which would provide symptomatic treatment for the day-to-day ills of our society and thus put off the day of reckoning. We can increase the world's food supply, reduce population and resource-use by the recycling of waste, and begin to reduce the rate of growth of world population by contraception. All of these actions must be vigorously pursued if world living conditions are not to deteriorate even for another generation. However, we must now face the fact that they are only means for buying time until we take more effective action to permanently stabilize world population and control resource-use.

If the human race is to have a tolerable future on planet earth, the whole of our social organization must be drastically revised within a very few generations....

SPECIAL INSTITUTE PROPOSED

But what are we to do in the face of impending catastrophe? I would like to advance a proposal that Canada establish an institute to conduct studies, research and critical analysis of the future, as a Canadian contribution to the search for solutions to global problems. The institute would study the present mechanisms in our society, define future problems, outline alternative solutions and try to outline actions that should be taken today, tomorrow or within a few years in order to achieve defined objectives in the more distant future.

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...Alternative behavioural strategies must be proposed, a well-informed national debate must be stimulated, and governments must be urged to decide on actions which, taken in the short term, will contribute in the long term to creation of the kind of future sought by Canadians.

I would, therefore, propose that the Federal

Government immediately begin to plan for the establishment of a Canadian institute to conduct studies of long-range policies.... If it is the wish of the Government, the Science Council would be a very suitable mechanism for organizing the studies needed to produce a specific plan for such an institute. However, while the Science Council might undertake such preparatory studies, it should not undertake to operate the new institute.

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GOALS FOR CANADA

Thus far I have framed my discussion of population and of future policies in a global context. However, these problems do have real significance for Canada's domestic actions in the future. It is difficult for Canadians to get excited about the problems of population pressure, since we live in one of the most thinly settled countries in the world and seem to have endless room for expansion, and so a real debate on this issue is rare in Canada. Nonetheless, nearly all the internal problems that concern us now would be much more manageable if our population growth were less rapid. Even in our vast country we must immediately begin to set goals for total population, rate of population growth and distribution of population. It will certainly be many years before we can achieve effective action toward changing population growth and distribution to meet such targets, but the sooner we start, the sooner we will make useful progress.

There are many Canadians who fervently believe that Canada's problems can be cured by our having a much increased population, and they cite as advantages factors such as the increased domestic market for our products which would result. There are others, however, who would argue that nearly all our urgent problems are being aggravated by our rapid growth of population, the rapid growth of our labour force has exacerbated the problem of unemployment, the growth of our urban populations has contributed to a deterioration in the quality of urban life, and the growth in our total population has increased our rates of consumption of resources and of generation of waste.

Immigration has always been an important source of population-growth in Canada and so a clearly articulated immigration policy will be an integral part of a Canadian population policy. While it would be unwise for Canada to end immigration entirely, it would be foolhardy to believe that a solution to the world's population crisis, with population increasing by more than 70 million a year, can be found by the adoption of an open-door immigration policy by Canada.

DISTRIBUTION PROBLEM

While population-growth provides us with one set of problems, changes in population distribution are giving rise to others. For example, migration to the