

of economics and food supply, the brutal reality is that the world will eventually run out of space to hold a population that keeps doubling at the present rate. General Eisenhower, an *opponent* of family planning aid during his Presidency, has this to say today: "... since the Earth is finite in area and physical resources, it is clear that unless something is done to bring an essential equilibrium between human requirements and available supply, there is going to be in some regions not only a series of explosions but a lowering of standards for all people, including our own."

I am equally aware that there are many political, legal, social, moral and economic issues involved in Government-sponsored birth control programs and policies and that there have and will appear before this committee eminently more qualified and adept people than I to discuss those issues.

Therefore, I will address myself solely to some of those issues that surround the most widely used method of birth control in the world today—abortion.

Alice S. Rossi, in an excellent article in the July-August 1969 issue of *Dissent* made this most cogent comment about the word "abortion":

"Free associations to the word "abortion" would probably yield a fantastic array of emotional responses: pain, relief, murder, crime, fear, freedom, genocide, guilt, sin. Which of these associations people have no doubt reflects their age, marital status, religion or nationality. To a forty-four-year-old Japanese or Hungarian woman, the primary response might be "freedom" and "relief"; to an unmarried American college girl, "fear" and "pain"; to a Catholic priest, "murder" and "sin"; to some black militants, "genocide".

There are many ways to avoid the negative associations and connotations that surround the word. We could, for example, borrow the term advanced by the British when they recently rewrote their laws—"pregnancy termination".

I believe that that would get us closer to the heart of the issue but it would still not be close enough.

Not close enough because the basic issue—and the only real alternatives for the pregnant woman who does not want the child—is abortion or compulsory pregnancy. If we view the issue in this perspective we are at what one might call "ground zero".

Does our Government or any other government have the right by which to force a woman to have a child that she does not want? In Hungary, Gyorgy Peters, the chief government statistician, has answered (presumably with backing from higher officials) with an emphatic "no!" He reportedly has said "the introduction of regulations with which the state would interfere with the freedom of the parents contradicts our political and moral concepts." What then must we, as representatives of a democracy, answer to the question?

The majority of family planning advocates would be aghast if our Government were to suggest laws *requiring* the use of any contraceptive, or, as in a recent case in California, legal sterilization.

Yet it has been Government policy in this country that compels pregnant women to carry a full-term pregnancy, often against the wishes of both parents.

Dr. Garrett Hardin has, perhaps rightly, equated this situation with compulsory servitude and has said "when we recognize that these (abortion or compulsory pregnancy) are the real operational alternatives (for the pregnant woman), the false problems created by the pseudo-alternatives disappear."

Gentlemen, if I may, I would like to now discuss some of the statistics that are pertinent to this number one method of birth control.

One: The safest method of contraception now known, if one excepts total abstinence, is supposedly the pill. But certain statistics

## ABORTION AND POPULATION CONTROL

**HON. SHIRLEY CHISHOLM**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 1969

Mrs. CHISHOLM. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I gave the following speech before the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare's Subcommittee on Health as part of their hearings on population control.

I am including these remarks in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to serve as a reference for any of the Members or private citizens who might be interested in the issue:

### STATEMENT BY MRS. CHISHOLM

For quite some time now I have been an ardent advocate of family planning. It seems to me quite obvious that whenever it is possible to do so, the limitation of the number of births should be accomplished by the utilization of contraceptive devices as a desirable method.

However, it is apparent that based on population growth statistics and the writings of many eminent demographers and scientists that the issue of overpopulation has become a most pressing one. A number of writers predict that as early as 1990 we will witness world famines whose primary cause will be linked directly population growth.

Lawrence Lader, now executive director of the national association to repeal abortion laws has written that "Beyond the problem

show that even when the pill is used properly there is a failure rate of approximately one percent. Consequently, if all fertile women in the United States were using this method of contraception properly there would still be some 250,000 unwanted births.

Two: At present there are approximately 245,000 babies born illegitimately in the United States each year.

We cannot say definitely that all of the illegitimate children born each year are either unplanned or unwanted but what is clear from a comparison with the first statistic is that the same number of births, patently unwanted, would be with us each year even if information and dispensing services about the pill (or any other method) were working at the optimum level.

It is further clear that with the present laws and policies in effect, at that point we would indeed be compelling pregnancy even though the woman had attempted everything within her power, except total abstinence to prevent the pregnancy.

Shall we take another look at the illegitimacy statistic? About 41 percent of the illegitimate births are to young girls under 19 years of age. What happens to these young ladies and their children?

Society's attitude seems to be "you've had your pleasure now pay the price!" which is more immoral, granting an individual, basic right or forcing a young girl—some as young as 14 or 15—to assume the responsibilities of an adult without the privileges, rights and the opportunities? What are we doing to the mother? What are we doing to the unborn child?

There is also the fact that if a white girl gives up her child for adoption there is a good possibility that the child will be adopted. This is not the case for black and other minority-group children. When they are given up they spend most of their childhood in orphanages, public institutions and foster homes. This is, I believe, one of the prime reasons that so many black girls choose to keep their babies.

That is only a small part of the moral cost that we pay for maintaining our present attitudes. There is another reason that might appeal to you gentlemen more.

Compulsory pregnancy costs money. For a moment I would like to continue to concentrate on the illegitimacy statistic.

The number of illegitimate children on AFDC has been rising steadily. As of 1967 there were 1,100,000 on AFDC. That was 28 per cent of all children on the rolls. About  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of all illegitimate children under 18 (and in 1967 there were 4.5 million) are on the AFDC rolls. There are at present over 70,000 unwed mothers receiving aid for dependent children.

The AFDC payments range from \$10.55 per recipient in Mississippi to \$64.65 in New Jersey. The national average per recipient is Jersey. The national average per recipient is \$44.30, for the District of Columbia it is \$42.40. Think about it, gentlemen, the total amount paid out for these children is about \$48,730,000 a year and unmarried mothers are the ones who find it most difficult to get off the Public Assistance rolls.

I have talked a great deal about illegitimacy today. I have done it purposefully because people tend to be squeamish and don't want to generally discuss the matter. I think we must discuss it and many more of the subjects that surround the abortion issue and come to grips with them. I do not believe in either sugarcoating or hiding the issues.

I would like to make one final point about illegitimacy for those of you who might be thinking about the immorality of women receiving AFDC. As I understand it, the largest increase in the AFDC rolls is coming not from those women who are now receiving public assistance but from those women who find

that AFDC is the only answer to the problem of compulsory pregnancy that they face.

Before you condemn their immorality consider that there is two sides to the coin and that the government policy that we as elected officials represent is the other side of it.

Three: one can hardly discuss the issue of abortion by pointing out the inadequacy of the pill or the number of illegitimate births while ignoring legitimate but unwanted births.

A recent survey by Dr. Charles Westoff of Princeton University's office of population research reveals that 22 percent of all legitimate births in the United States are unwanted by either the husband or the wife. This in-depth study also revealed that of all economic groups the poor were most anxious about this issue. Among the poor (as classified by the social security standards) 42 percent of all legitimate births were unwanted. The principal reason seems to be either financial or financially related e.g., crowded housing.

The plethora of studies, committees and commissions on poverty and its causes have shown beyond a doubt that there is a very high correlation between family size and the ability of the family to break the poverty cycle. The risk of poverty increases rapidly from 9% for one-child families to 42% for families with six or more children. Nearly half of the children growing up in poverty in 1968 were members of families with five children or more under 18; more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all families with four or more children live in poverty; the risk of poverty is two and one half times that for families with three children or less.

I do not want you to think however that I am asking you to consider this aspect of family planning solely as an element of what was known as the "war on poverty". If this were the sole reason, we would indeed be waging a full scale war on the poor themselves.

No, I am suggesting that we move away from the concept of a class-oriented family planning policy. I am asking that all of those family planning services available to the middle-class, rich and white be made available and accessible to the poor, black and brown. The primary one which is not available at present, under safe and sanitary conditions, is pregnancy termination; and abortion is, as I noted, the number one method of birth control.

Why do I say that this service is not equally available, under safe and sanitary conditions, for at least minority-group poor women? In New York City, for example, well over 90% of all therapeutic abortions are performed on white women, according to the association for the study of abortion.

In January of this year an article in the *Scientific American* estimated that the ratio of therapeutic abortions per 1000 deliveries in this country was 2.6 for white women, .5 for black women and .1 for Puerto-Rican women.

One must also note that in New York City from 1960-1962 the abortion ratio in municipal hospitals was only .1 per 1000 live births. Plainly and simply, this shows that legal abortions are not readily available to the minority-group poor, in New York City at least.

There is also the financial burden that even legal abortion can and does impose. The cost of a legal abortion, mainly because the uneven laws that now govern, may cost from \$500 to \$1,000. The fees vary from doctor to doctor, and from State to State, but average cost with hospital expenses could well be somewhere between \$500 and \$700. It is obvious that none of the poor can afford this luxurious method of birth control.

But nevertheless they are the ones who most often find themselves in crucial need of it. They, of course, seek out the illegal

abortionist or attempt to do it themselves. The financial cost may be as low as \$30, or the average cost of a year's supply of the pill.

But it is the other cost, the human cost, that is horrifying to contemplate. Edwin Gold's study estimates that of the deaths of women related to maternity in New York City, abortion was the cause of death for only 25% of the white women while it caused 49% of the deaths of non-white women and 58% of the deaths of Puerto-Rican women.

This is at least a part of my answer to those who say that family planning is a form of genocide. What could be more like genocide than what a comparison of these statistics I just gave you portray?

Further, in 1966, Dr. Carl Goldmark, Jr., president of the New York County Medical Society, estimated that about 80% of all maternal deaths were the result of criminal abortions.

But gentlemen, let us come a bit closer to home, to Washington, that showplace of the Nation. What is the situation here?

Well, Dr. Milan Vuitch, who was the central figure in Judge Gessell's recent ruling on the District's compulsory pregnancy law, estimates that more than 20,000 abortions a year are performed in the greater Washington area. He further estimates that only 25% of them are performed in hospitals. That means that there are more than 15,000 illegal abortions performed in or near Washington.

The municipal hospitals in the District have the same anti-black, anti-poor policies in effect that I find in the New York City hospitals. D.C. General, for instance, reports 80 therapeutic abortions for last year. That is roughly .016% for the legal abortions in the greater Washington area. That figure has even more impact, I believe, when one realizes that it is only .004% of the total abortions performed, both legally and illegally, in this area.

The impact multiplies dramatically when we consider that D.C. General also reports between 800 and 1,000 incomplete abortions. Incomplete means that the abortion was induced, either by drugs, instrument or naturally, but that it did not complete naturally . . . therefore it must be completed by a physician.

In short, they expended 10 to 12 times more effort on repairing botched, non-professional surgery than they did on performing medically safe, professional surgery. That is nothing short of complete absurdity. Botched abortions are the single largest cause of maternal deaths in the United States and it is evidently going to be Government policy to keep it that way.

There are no clear statistics on exactly how many illegal abortions there are each year in this country. Estimates range from as low as 200,000 to 1.5 million. One thing that is clear however is that if we repealed our compulsory pregnancy laws the incidents would be reduced.

There are many statistics from other countries that support my contention. But in the interest of saving time let me quote instead from an article about the new British law that appeared in the *Washington Post* in June of last year.

"Some doctors contend the only value of the bill is to prevent the harm done by secret abortionists. They say Hungary allows abortions for anyone who wants one, and illegal operations have reportedly faded away. Czechoslovakia has a 'social clause' similar to Britain and clandestine abortions have dropped to 4,000 a year instead of 100,000."

May I point out that if there are now 1,500,000 illegal abortions in this country, a drop of the same percentage would reduce the number of illegal operations performed to about 30,000; that is only about twice as many as are now performed in the District of Columbia alone.

Gentlemen, let us look briefly at some of the countries where the compulsory pregnancy laws have been weakened or, if you prefer, where abortion laws have been liberalized:

Experience in Sweden and Denmark have shown that as legal abortions increased the death rate associated with it decreased.

In 1967 in Hungary there were 187,000 legal abortions as against 148,900 live births. Similarly Czechoslovakia's birthrate has been reduced but not as drastically as Hungary's.

Romania, after substituting a more restrictive law in 1966, discovered that their birth rate almost tripled in one year, the previous rate being 13.7 per 1,000.

It would seem that the absence of compulsory pregnancy laws alone can contribute a great deal to the control of the population growth, especially when one considers that at least the eastern bloc countries mentioned do not widely practice the more modern methods of contraception.

Of course no discussion of abortion would be complete without discussing the politically volatile issue of religious and moral concepts.

Since we are already outside of the country, let's stay there momentarily to quickly inspect the abortion rates of a few countries with large Catholic populations:

The illegal abortion rate in Uruguay is almost two and one-half times the number of annual live births.

In Roman Catholic Chile, 27 percent of the women reported that they had had abortions at one time or another.

In Roman Catholic France, the annual number of abortions equals the annual number of live births.

Coming back to this country we find that in a poll conducted in 1967, no less than 72 percent of the Catholics polled favored abortion reform, as did 83 percent of the Protestants and 98 percent of the Jewish.

No lesser a Catholic luminary than Cardinal Cushing of Boston was quoted as having said "It does not seem reasonable to me to forbid in civil law a practice that can be considered a matter of private morality."

He was of course speaking of the less traditional methods of birth control, contraceptives, but it is my belief that logical extension to abortion is now in order. That is especially true if he did, in fact, mean "A practice that can be considered a matter of private morality."

Outlawing compulsory pregnancy laws, which some of you might still prefer to call legalizing abortion, would not be forcing any doctor or hospital to perform abortions against their beliefs. By outlawing these laws we would instead be honoring the basic and individual right of a woman to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

There are literally reams of other statistics that I might present to you gentlemen today in support of the repeal of the present compulsory pregnancy laws. However, time will not allow me to nor am I sure that it would accomplish more than muddying up the waters.

The basic underlying question in any discussion of compulsory pregnancy laws (which I choose, to use rather than the term abortion laws) is what should a woman who is pregnant against her will do and what should the professional and public response toward her be if she chooses to terminate the pregnancy?

If the underlying thesis of family planning is to reduce even the number of wanted pregnancies, is it not illogical then to continue to force women with unwanted pregnancies to have the child? I think that it is!