

future be much greater than at present, the result might well be a further stimulation of childbearing. At present, people over 62 number 25 per cent of the adult population (between 21 and 61). If by magic the numbers of children born were to decline by 100,000 in each of the next ten years, then 30 years from now the adult population of the United States would be five million less than if the number of births were constant, with the result that the proportion of people of retirement age would increase from 26 per cent (on the most conservative projection) to 33 per cent of the adult population. The economic consequences of changes like these are not lightly to be shrugged off. Just as there may be serious economic consequences of rapid growth, so too the consequences of too rapid a decline of population may be hard to stomach.

The other side of this coin also needs to be described. Although the commission on population is certainly right in saying that rapid growth is not at present desirable, the policies which it advocates entail some penalties. Thus a declining population is necessarily an ageing population, and one in which there are fewer opportunities for young people to supersede their elders in positions of responsibility. In other words, one of the social changes implicit in the commission's recommendations is that the United States will be less able in the future to exploit the energy and talents of young men and women for the transformation of organization in government and in industry. Most probably, with an ageing population, the United States will also be less able to extend its influence abroad by what amounts to the colonization of overseas industry by armies of highly trained managers. It remains to be seen whether the luxury of early retirement will be as easily come by at the turn of the century as it is at present. And there are clearly all kinds of social hazards in a situation in which there will be one retired person for every three or four productive adults. Will the retirement cities of Florida and California be the ghettos of the future? At this stage, nobody can tell with any certainty whether the compassionate forces in American society will stand up to the ageing tendency which has not set in. What does, however, follow from the commission's perceptive analysis of the American problem is that there is no point in asking questions about population optima.

Women at the Top

IN spite of growing agreement that women can be extremely successful in highly responsible professional positions, there is pathetically little evidence of efforts to stem the complex forces which favour the progress of their male counterparts. A study by the research organization, Political and Economic Planning (PEP), of women in top jobs has just culminated with a broadsheet recommending a broadly based attack on the attitudes and traditions prolonging such a situation (*Women in Top Jobs: The Next Move*, by M. P. Fogarty with Rhona and Robert Rapoport, PEP broadsheet No. 535, £1.00). The evidence gathered during the four years of the £75,000 project suggests that the banner waving of some proponents of women's liberation will be less successful than quiet manoeuvres behind the scenes within individual organizations.

There is, however, also a recommendation for political action. The authors of the broadsheet conclude that there should be established, probably within the Departments of Employment and Productivity, and of Health and Social Security, specialized units to stimulate and direct the changes needed in family life and in employment practices. Once the necessary policies were set up, such units would fade away or be reduced to a secretariat with no more than a watching brief.

Anti-discrimination legislation also has a role to play in strengthening efforts at education and persuasion, but the broadsheet advises against an over-legalistic approach. The problems to be tackled do not usually arise from simple cases of sex discrimination. More often it is a matter of altering selection techniques and time tables to take advantage of the particular qualities women have to offer and to allow for their commitments to their families.

The PEP researchers find that it is not only attitudes towards women in top jobs that must change. Men in managerial positions are showing increasing signs of rating their families as equal or superior in importance to their work. Such a balanced approach to life has traditionally been associated more with women than with men, who have been supposed to pursue their careers relentlessly and ruthlessly above all else. This trend, combined with a growing reaction against what the broadsheet calls "the cult of overtime", should increase the professional opportunities for women. But one problem which will probably prove exceedingly difficult to solve is the need to break through "the fog of mutual misunderstanding by each sex about the interests and capabilities of the other".

100 Years Ago



We have received the seventh Annual Report of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was established on the principle that all the studies and exercises of the first and second years should be pursued by the whole school. At the beginning of the third year, each student selects one of the following special courses of study:—1. A course in Mechanical Engineering; 2. Civil and Topographical Engineering; 3. Geology and Mining Engineering; 4. Building and Architecture; 5. Chemistry; 6. Science and Literature; 7. Natural History. These courses differ widely, but certain general studies are common to them all. It is intended to secure to every student, whatever his special course of study, a liberal mental development and general culture, as well as the more strictly technical education which may be his chief object. The course in Science and Literature, and the course in Natural History, differ from the others in having a less distinctly professional character. The former offers a sound education, based on the sciences and modern literature, and furnishes, with its wide range of elective studies, a suitable preparation for any of the departments of active life, or for teaching science. The course in Natural History affords an appropriate general training for those whose ulterior object is the special pursuit of Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, Zoology, or of Medicine, Pharmacy, or Rural Economy.

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