

In Case of Insomnia — Overpopulation: The case for birth control

By Storm Kauffman

In the past two weeks, *The Tech* has run several articles dealing with the possible development of worldwide food shortages. The basic problem is the same for this and all of the other deficiencies with which the US and the world have begun to be afflicted: too many people.

The population boom is a well publicized event. In fact, it was the US crisis of the late sixties (just as energy and inflation are the crises of the early seventies). Much of the interest in the US died off when the Census Bureau reported (misleadingly) that the American fertility rate had dropped to the replacement level (2.1 lives births per woman is the rate necessary to maintain a stable population level).

However, even in the US (where the fertility rate is now down to about 1.98), population growth has not ceased. At present, there are roughly twice as many girls entering the child-bearing ages (at about 13 years) as there are women leaving (at about 40). This means that if every woman continues to replace only herself and her partner, the population will grow to approximately 320,000,000 (half again as many as in 1974) in the 70 years before zero population growth (ZPG) is reached. Thus, to achieve a stable population it will be necessary to maintain the fertility rate at about the replacement level for the next 70 years (forever, actually).

As a result of our apparent success at limiting births, much of the research into improved contraceptive means has been curtailed. But a look at the growth figures for the rest of the world will show why work must continue to find a safe, foolproof (doesn't require any bookkeeping to take) method of contraception.

According to Tomas Frejka (*Scientific American*, March, 1973), the prospects for worldwide ZPG are not good. Most developed countries can reasonably be expected to reach replacement fertility within two decades, but in the less developed areas Frejka places a 50 year minimum on attainment of low fertility. Result: minimum world population of 8 billion in 2050 (now about 3.7 billion).

While North America has a growth rate of 1.2% per year (the population increases by this factor each year), other areas (Asia 2.3%, Africa 2.6%, and Latin America 2.9%) have much higher rates. Only Europe and the USSR are lower with 1.0%.

The reason why under-developed areas have high birth rates is that they also have high mortality rates. Parents have many children in an attempt to guarantee that several will survive into hardy livelihood and be able to support their parents in old age. There is also the general (bullshit) status symbol of having "many strong sons" or proving virility (male) by fathering many children.

Developed nations and the governments of over-populated countries must make an effort to convince these people of the importance and the advantages of reducing the size of their families. At the same time, an easy method of birth control must be available to be given to those who wish it.

As for those who are prohibited by their religions from practicing birth control, their only hope is that their religious leaders realize the importance of population control and ease the restrictions.

The difficulties lie in convincing people that birth control is not genocide, in altering living conditions and mortality rates so that large families are not used as old age insurance, and in developing a workable method of easy contraception.

Now is the time to get busy.

Nixon: lots of people cheat on taxes

By Norman D. Sandler

For those of you who did not see President Nixon's news conference Monday night, take heart; you missed very little.

Many persons tuned in early, expecting — or wanting — to see a fierce confrontation between the President and the press corps he avoids. However, the confrontation never really took place.

Although he stumbled several times during the delivery of his prepared statement and looked gravely ill, Nixon handled himself well during the 30-minute Q-and-A session with White House reporters.

He was right up to par, dodging questions, holding his temper and stressing the fact that he was the president, and would continue to salvage the presidency from the stigma of Watergate, regardless of the consequences.

The big slip of the evening, as many people learned later, was when Nixon defended taking tax deductions for the donation of his vice presidential papers to the national archives.

Other people, he said, have taken tax deductions for the donation of their papers, including MIT President Jerome Wiesner and Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith. Both are well-known Democratic liberals and Nixon obviously chose the occasion to show that Republicans aren't the only ones who cheat on their taxes.

However, the White House staff had slipped up. Prior to every news conference, the President is extensively briefed by his staff on issues which are expected to be raised by reporters. "Rehearsals" are held, during which questions are posed to Nixon, and his responses formulated by staff researchers.

This time they were wrong. Digging through a Scripps-Howard article published in December, the Nixon staffers found that Wiesner had indeed donated his papers from 1961-64 to the Kennedy Library, and assumed he had taken tax deductions in exchange.

But the White House was called in its poor research work at Tuesday morning's regular press briefing. CBS correspondent Dan Rather asked deputy press secretary Gerald Warren about Wiesner's comment that he had taken no such deductions for his papers, and Warren was forced to admit the staff had fouled up adding that the President "regretted the error."

Besides the Wiesner incident, there was very little other news to come out of Monday's session. The President said (as expected) that he differed with the House

Judiciary Committee's definition of impeachable offenses, not that the House has been waiting for Nixon's direction on the matter.

Nixon managed to ease himself through Monday's news conference, but by the end of the week, he again stood as a President sitting on the brink of political disaster.

Last week, an obscure Democrat — Richard F. VanderVeen — scored a stunning upset over the Republican favorite in winning Vice President Gerald Ford's congressional seat. The seat has been held by Ford for 25 years, and has belonged to the Republican Party since 1912.

VanderVeen — campaigning on Republican involvement in Watergate — took a majority of the vote cast in Michigan's fifth congressional district, and in doing so has sent the Republican Party into a state of panic.

The GOP leadership realizes that VanderVeen won the seat largely due to Watergate. It takes little imagination to expect that other Democrats will pick up on the VanderVeen strategy in November, tying their GOP opponents to the scandal-ridden Nixon Administration.

Nixon met with top Republicans last week after the Michigan vote, and will certainly be under increasing pressure to resign to save the party as the November elections approach.

Nixon said Monday night that he did not expect to be impeached, and told the American public he felt evidence of criminal activity was necessary before the House could impeach him.

However, the House Judiciary Committee, which is looking into the matter for the entire House, doesn't agree with Nixon's interpretation of the Constitution, and it's the Committee's interpretation that really counts.

Staff counsel John Doar and Albert Jenner have presented the Judiciary Committee with a 49-page report which essentially gives it the authority to determine what constitutes an impeachable offense. The staff report offers a definition of impeachment which will allow the Committee to consider a wide range of charges against the President.

In addition, the Committee is beginning to gather its own evidence. The first official request for evidence has been submitted to White House lawyers, who are currently bargaining with Committee lawyers to determine what type of documents will be turned over for the impeachment inquiry.

For some reason, many Republicans are having trouble reading the Commit-

tee's subpoena authority. Members of the GOP leadership and White House lawyers talk of turning over documents they feel are "necessary" to the investigation, even though the Committee's charge mentions nothing of a condition that evidence must be necessary.

The White House will attempt to limit the Committee's investigation as much as possible. However, armed with broad authority to subpoena White House documents, Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino, D-N.J., presently has the leverage to force the President and his attorneys to cooperate on a limited basis.

If Nixon doesn't comply with the Committee's formal requests and subpoenas he can be held in contempt of Congress. He knows that, and he is not going to be enthusiastic about being slapped with a contempt citation that itself could lead to impeachment or help push the articles of impeachment through the House.

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Of comets, "Oort's Cloud," and other celestial things

By Fred H. Hutchison

Who erased the comet?

What happened to Kohoutek, the "Comet of the Century," the fiery ball which would "outshine the moon and stars" and spread its glowing tail across a "full sixth of the evening sky?"

A friend of mine claims that Kohoutek was entrusted to the White House where the President's personal secretary may have accidentally erased five days of it while answering phone calls.

Gilbert T. Schmidling, Chairman of the Optical Division of the Amateur Astronomers Association says that NASA wanted to "Keep space in the news," and raised the public's hopes for "celestial fireworks" too high.

I tend to think that the comet was handled by the same people who did the

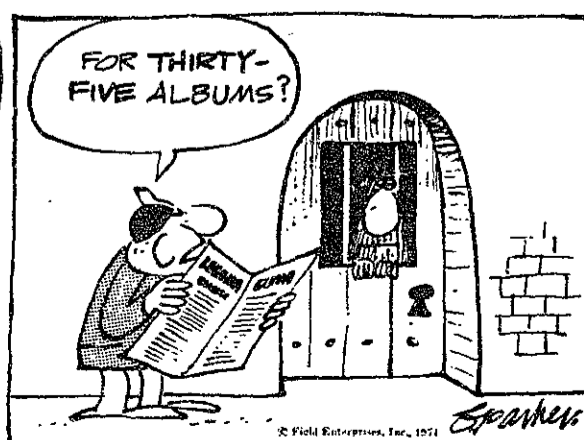
world's largest, er... I mean the giant yo-yo, and we all know what happened to that...

While these three hypotheses are interesting, they're based on little scientific fact. To obtain a more sound explanation as to why Kohoutek fizzled, we need to turn the clock back almost a full year to when the comet was still some 400 million miles away from the sun.

It was last March that Dr. Lubos Kohoutek of the Hamburg Observatory in West Germany was the happy victim of a double irony. In 1971, Kohoutek was searching a section of the sky for the remnants of Comet Biela when he discovered a covey of asteroids. Now he was looking for his group of asteroids again — and photographed a comet.

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