Malnutrition lowers incomes

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...children as a prime cause of lowered resistance to disease and high child mortality in countries which are short of food. This high child mortality, which may be from 10 to 40 times that in developed countries, makes it difficult for parents to accept family planning.

He explained that parents must depend on their children for support when the parents grow old; therefore the health of the new-born baby attracts birth control because they fear that none of their offspring will rear children.

Widespread underdetected malnutrition was also cited as an insidious problem in third world countries. In a study done with rubber plantation workers, who were paid solely on an incentive basis, it was found that the workers with the highest salaries also had the highest levels of iron in their daily diet. In an iron supplementation experiment the per capita increase in iron among malnourished workers was as high as thirty to forty per cent after receiving the supplement.

Scrimshaw said that the cost of iron supplementation is "negligible." When asked why such a program had not begun, Scrimshaw replied that the reasons were purely political. He also emphasized that the tragedy of blindness due to vitamin A deficiency is also "totally unnecessary."

Although the Green Revolution — the application of genetics to development of faster-growing crops and the use of current technology in farming — has been applied to the three main food supply crops, wheat, rice and maize, little has been done to improve farming methods for the twenty other major crops.

The hearings drew a large crowd and attracted the testimony of several well-known scientists from throughout the U.S. After around eight hours of testimony the Council voted a three-month moratorium on P3 and P4 research in Cambridge, and named a panel to study the safety of recombinant research.

The Cambridge Laboratory Experimentation Review Board heard testimony from many experts through the summer and into the fall. The Board requested an extension of the moratorium in October so that it would have more time to complete its work.

The Board's final report, released January 5, came out in favor of allowing P3 work in Cambridge, but also specified several other safety measures beyond the NIH guidelines. The report was praised by representatives from both sides of the issue, although opponents such as Associate Professor of Biology Jonathan King, still disagreed with its conclusion — that recombinant DNA research should be allowed in Cambridge.

Scrimshaw warned, however, that the Green Revolution only "buys time," during which population growth must be brought under control. An example in Mexico, a country which reached self-sufficiency in food production in 1970 after the application of science in agriculture for over two decades. Mexico is no longer self-sufficient because population increased in direct response to the growing food supply, thus creating a potential disaster in the future.

Other remedies for the world food shortage presented by Scrimshaw were processing of trust fish (those which are commercially unattractive), processing of Arctic cull (a type of shrimp that whales feed on), and the development of oil seed protein and vegetable milks. Also mentioned were "single-cell protein" products which could be produced by large-scale culturing of bacteria.

To underscore the importance of world nutrition problems Scrimshaw stated that the world is approaching a socio-economic discontinuity of similar proportion to that which occurred at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.