

## Freedom is a Very Precious Thing

Twenty years ago, Dr. Arnold Toynbee wrote: "At this date, the limitation of the size of families by public policy had not yet become a live issue; but public restrictions on individual freedom in the economic and political spheres had already been multiplying and were still on the increase. "Now it has become a live issue. The Indian state of Maharashtra has decided to sterilize, forcibly if necessary, people who have more than two children. Everyone in the state will be encouraged to spy on their neighbours and report illegal pregnancies or births. Paid informers will be used to crackdown on lawbreakers. Exemptions will be rare and considered only in a few cases.

The foster father of this compulsory sterilization plan is Dr. Tattar Pai, a 48 year old father of two, grandfather of four; who is currently preparing a birth control blue print for Bangladesh. He said about this new law: "This is the greatest law today, which will determine the destiny not only of India, but all other nations. He said, "I used to believe in the high-flown democratic ideals but India is a growing democracy. Because we are poor and illiterate we might have to use different methods. The only way to ensure development in this country is to put a lock on fertility."

Many in India believe that this law would never have been passed if India had remained a democracy. Until recently India basked its ideals of democracy upon the British parliamentary system. It represented a synthesis of the most advanced thinking of Britain and Asia. Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of a state of emergency and her use of dictatorial powers, have destroyed, the very, basic structures of Indian democracy.

The Indian state, Maharashtra, may be far away, but the implications of the new law should be our concern. The new Indian law regulating the movement of population by means of artificial restrictions has dramatic consequences for the liberties of the individual and for civilization itself.

Population control by artificial means is not a new thing in itself. But restrictions were always a matter of free choice of the individual acting upon his own particular religious convictions. The inner domain of the family structure was left alone by governments.

The Lycurgean regime at ancient Sparta was exceptional in claiming and exercising the right for a government to refuse to let a baby live, regardless what the wishes of the parents might be. And in Plato's Republic we can find, long before over-population was seen as a problem, the proposal that only people within certain age groups were allowed to have children; children born out of those years were to be disposed of, if not previously aborted, – Plato's concern was not over-population, but the power of the state and its hold upon the individual.

In our modern Western world we also have advocates for government control of the population growth. Dr. William Bradford Shockley, Stanford University physicist, proposed, in 1967 in Hamilton, Ont. "a seeping birth control plan that includes temporary sterilization of all women and government approval for each baby." One of

the chief points of Shockley's birth control program was: "The public would first of all vote on the rate of population growth it wants. The Census Bureau would determine how many children each couple could have in keeping with the predetermined growth rate and certificates would be issued to them."

The problems of India are complex. There are no easy and simple solutions for the economic and social problems it faces. But if India is ever to raise its material standards, forced population control is not the solution. It must raise its own spiritual, moral and educational standards above anything else.

There is also a religious problem that needs to be overcome in India. Because of the Hindu unwillingness to kill animal life, India is overpopulated with animals which are crowding out man. The sacred cows are a familiar fact, but rats are said to number 2.5 billion and they consume more than 875 million bushels of cereal grain annually. Because of the injunction not to kill animals, meat eating is prohibited.

The Jains, a reformist Hindu sect, go so far as to forbid deep breathing, for fear that the intake of breath might kill insects invisible to the eye.

The question the Indian law presents is that of freedom. Freedom today is being driven from pillar to post.

Many nations have become dictatorships. Freedom must be guarded. We cannot become complacent.

No government has the right to interfere with the domain of the family. The family is the basic structure of society. The government's responsibility is the administration of public justice, protect the rights and liberties that belong to each individual created in the image of God, especially the oppressed and the needy.

The government has no right to take away the very liberties it is called upon to protect. The Bible says: "For he (the government) is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of justice to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

(Romans 13:4) Freedom is very precious! We still have it in our nation. Let us do our utmost to keep it!

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