

Chronological: Speeches, 1974-1995: Japanese American Citizens League 23rd Biennial National Convention

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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news from

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

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As some of you may be aware, I had been asked to speak to you tonight about U. S. -Japan relations. I understand, however, that several speakers who have preceded me and numerous panel discussions which you have attended addressed that topic. Accordingly, it would be somewhat repetitious for me to cover the same ground.

In discussing U. S. -Japan relations or U. S. relations with any other country, there is one overriding problem which is interwoven throughout every aspect of our foreign affairs. It exerts its influence in every corner of the globe. It may determine the fortune or failure of industrialized nations and the life or death of less-developed societies. It is a problem that affects us all. It is the problem of population.

The national and international troubles that have dominated our headlines and our dinner table conversations are directly related to population. When one speaks of inflation or energy, one is speaking about population.

I need not remind this audience of the overnight shift in Japan's foreign policy when the oil embargo was instituted. Japan's foreign policy shift was necessitated when it became apparent that her supply of energy would not be sufficient to meet the economic and personal demands of her population. The price of the bread on the table in front of us is determined by the growing demands of the world population for a wheat supply which is growing at a slower pace.

The population problem is undoubtedly the greatest single obstacle to world economic and social improvement. While it took our planet approximately two million years for the human population to reach four

billion, it may require only 35 years at present rates to add an additional four billion people. By the year 2000, the earth's population may increase by more than one billion persons every eight years.

What does this really mean? In numerical terms, if you became a parent today and your child lived into his seventies, he would know a world of approximately 15 billion people. Today's population is approximately four billion. Assuming a constant rate of increase, his grandchild would share a world of more than 60 billion. Obviously, one or more links in the chain of life would break before then.

Which link will break first is a matter of dispute between scientists, economists, demographers and doomsayers. Latter-day disciples of Malthus point to food as the most volatile link which threatens devastation and death for billions of people.

In the developing countries, close to one billion persons presently suffer from severe malnutrition or starvation. Twenty to 25 per cent of all children die before their fifth birthday. The life expectancy is 20 to 30 years less than it is here in America. With the developed nations' population now stable and the developing nations rapidly gaining additional inhabitants, this chaotic situation will worsen.

A profound moral and political test awaits the United States and other developed nations on the issue of food.

Recently, a well-known nutritionist at Harvard went to the heart of this problem when he stated, "The same amount of food that is feeding 210 million Americans would feed 1.5 billion Chinese on an average Chinese diet."

The older developed nations and numerous newly developed nations are constantly improving their diets. As the food supply in the world during any given year is relatively finite and fixed, this dietary improvement is often achieved at the expense of marginal diets elsewhere. Americans ate 50 pounds of beef per capita in 1950. In 1973, it was 119 pounds per person. Presently, an American consumes 2,200 pounds of grain -- most of it to fatten his animals. A Chinese needs only 400 pounds of grain to live on an average diet.

Simply averting our attention will not deny the link between the level of food production and consumption in the U.S. and other developed nations, and the ever-widening ripple of starvation throughout the world. In order to merely maintain the present inadequate diets, food production must double by the year 2000 to keep up with the population increases. At present, world food reserves are down from the 69-day supply in 1970 to less than a 30-day supply in 1974 -- the lowest level since the holocaust of World War II.

But food shortages are just one consequence of uncontrolled population growth. In poor countries, rapid population growth reduces the indigenous per capita supply of living space, fresh water, forest products, industrial raw materials and arable land. Poor countries, in fact, lead the world in population growth statistics. Mexico contributes more to the world's annual population gain than does the U.S. The Philippines adds more than does Japan. Brazil adds more than the Soviet Union. While mainland China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia together account for half the annual growth in man's numbers.

Countries, like Bangladesh, recognize the need for an active population control program, but their political and economic problems prevent them from taking the necessary actions. Other countries have poured millions of dollars into population control, but the problem is such a complex one that they have experienced only partial success.

When India announced a year and one half ago that she had achieved a decrease in her growth rate, it was hoped that the populations of less-developed countries might be eventually controlled. Now we know that not only did India not achieve the announced reduction, but her population, like much of the rest of the Third World, is still hopelessly out of control.

By the year 2000, the number of inhabitants of the developed and industrialized countries will scarcely change, but the populations of the developing and less-developed nations will at least double. Approximately 20 per cent of the world's population will then live in the developed countries. By the year 2040, this will drop to just 10 per cent and continue to decrease unless we can effect rather massive change in the world population growth pattern.

Often the nations least able to implement comprehensive programs need them most. Because these poorer countries cannot handle the additional strain on their food supply, and their housing and medical facilities, hunger, poverty and diseases are widespread. The birth rate is a deciding factor in the quality of life.

Many less-developed countries are discovering the population game is a vicious cycle. Factors, such as high levels of education, good health care, industrialization, and low infant mortality rates, are associated with low birth rates. Yet, providing these amenities to an increasing population puts a great strain on the national budget. Some nations must struggle just to keep their people from starving to death. Because few funds are left for use in these other areas, the effectiveness of the family planning programs is greatly diminished.

While Americans will agree that the less-developed countries have a population problem, many do not realize that we may not have reached a population panacea in the United States. We have achieved replacement level birth rate, which is two children per family. But it will be about another seventy years before zero population growth is reached, because a disproportionate amount of the population is under forty.

During this period, the growing population, coupled with the trend toward suburbanization will continue to tax our resources. New problems will arise in the areas of housing, transportation and the environment. We can also anticipate more inflation as the rapidly increasing demand for food, medical services and other goods and services pushes prices up.

An interesting problem already being faced by Americans is the shift in the need for goods and services caused by the recent shift in the birth rate. As the number of grade school children declines, grade school teachers find fewer children to teach and fewer teaching jobs. As the number of aged people increases the burdens of social security, medical care and the need for nursing homes, etc., also rise. These shifts often occur without full public or governmental awareness. The costs of correcting our misplaced priorities can be high, indeed.

The greatest obstacle in forming effective long-range family planning policies is the fact that population is people and people are unpredictable. Each individual brings to his or her decision on personal population

control, his or her social, cultural, religious, economic, psychological, yes, even political bias. Millions of individual decisions -- to procreate or not to procreate -- determine the growth of the world's population. Accurate predictions about population trends are understandably difficult to make. Past predictions have proven false. Future prophesies are given with trepidation.

Individual nations also perceive their population problems through the prism of their social, cultural, religious, economic and political heritage. India may see her problem as too many people, while the Soviet Union worries as to whether she has enough people to sustain economic growth. Indonesia is more concerned about the distribution of its people rather than the numbers -- with 70 per cent of her people living on Java and the rest spread over 3,500 habitable islands. Similarly in the United States, 73.5 per cent of our people live on 1.53 per cent of our land. The Philippines sees her problems in the ages of her population. About one-half of her citizens are either under 15 years of age or over 65 -- that is economically dependent upon the other half of the population.

Ironically, the global explosion in human growth since World War II is largely the result of the success of the poor countries, with assistance from the rich ones, in reducing their death rates. Without an accompanying effort at reducing birth rates, an imbalance had to occur. The success of medical and chemical progress in combatting fatal disease has not been repeated in medical or chemical progress toward a safe, easy, economical and accessible method of controlling birth.

The technological breakthrough which will revolutionize birth control has yet to be made. Scientific research toward that end must be pursued with all due speed. Still, even when the wonder of science opens its mystery to allow procreation to be efficiently and economically regulated, the problem of population will not be solved. The idiosyncracies of individuals and individual societies will remain as obstacles to rational and methodical progress on effectuating "optimal" birth rates for families and nations.

Among those idiosyncracies are very legitimate individual liberties. Few of us would countenance mandatory birth control programs led by government. Additionally, the ability of governments to break through religious, cultural, and other belief systems has been and will continue

to be difficult. We must face the fact that no matter how sophisticated technological methods may be, the success of voluntary birth control programs will be limited by the social environment and beliefs of each particular community.

I'm afraid that in the past, U.S. efforts have been less than effective, in great part due to a certain myopia which has characterized our approach. We have not been sensitized to the obstacles that cultural differences pose. We have not developed an adequate understanding of the factors which motivate parents to have children. If future efforts are to be more successful, we are going to have to become increasingly sophisticated in our approach to the non-biological problems of population control.

1974 has been designated as World Population Year by the U.N. and by President Nixon. During this year, a dialogue will be undertaken toward developing an international consensus on population. For the first time a gathering of governments will be convened on this subject. This event marks an international agreement that global population growth is a problem. It will be sometime before there is an international agreement on a solution to the problem. But the U.N. conference can allow an auspicious beginning for international research and understanding.

The United States has a special responsibility in assisting world efforts at population control. We have unequalled governmental and educational research and information-gathering facilities that can help to develop effective population control programs. In dealing with our own population problems, we can act as a laboratory for improved family planning systems. And, finally, because we control a third or more of the world's productive resources, we have a special responsibility to share our knowledge and treasure with our less fortunate sister nations who are struggling.

In the last fiscal year, only \$112.5 million in foreign assistance for health and population control programs was provided by the United States to the less-developed nations. Our effort was one of the most generous. Still, the bulk of our foreign assistance programs are directed toward military, rather than economic and humanitarian aid.

As chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, I believe we must reorder our foreign assistance priorities. John Kennedy said, "If we cannot help the many who are poor, we will not save the few who are rich." If current population trends persist, we few who are rich will have to face the reality that more and more poor people are in need of help and there just may not be enough to go around.