

DEMOGRAPHY

Old Man's World

Fewer Young People, More Aged, Decreasing Population, Are Scientific Predictions for the America of 1980

By WATSON DAVIS

AMERICA, symbol of youth for the world, phenomenon among nations for speedy population growth, is becoming an old man's world.

Already its increase in population is slowing down, already there are fewer children being born and more old men and women living to ripe ages, reaping the benefits of a scientific world.

This old man's world which America is becoming will differ in many important respects from the America that we know. Careful planners for the future in business and government are taking the long look ahead to see whence our population is traveling.

Since Malthus, the British scientific prophet of a crowded hungry world, wrote over a hundred years ago, there have been many intensive studies of the populations of the earth, ranging from the comprehensive decennial U. S. census to detailed analyses of the effect particular factors have upon the rise of peoples. Malthus, who was really not quite so gloomy a prophet as he has been pictured, foresaw neither the effects of birth control nor the added fruitfulness of agriculture that was to come from the advances of science.

Population Research Foundation

During the past decade one of the most active centers of population research has been at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, where the late E. W. Scripps, the newspaper publisher, founded a research inquiry into population problems. Drs. Warren S. Thompson and P. K. Whelpton consequently have been able to look into the future and to make scientific guesses as to what the censuses of future years will reveal.

This matter of population is more than a mere mathematical curiosity or a Chamber of Commerce pride in large numbers. The auto manufacturer who plans for the future decades must know whether he will need to make new cars to replace old worn-out ones only or whether there will be additional millions who will buy his product. Real-

tors want to know how many building sites their new subdivisions should contain. Educators need to know whether school and college enrollments will increase or decrease.

Uncle Sam's national family has grown enormously since he broke away from Britannia's apronstrings. From about 2,500,000 in 1776, the U. S. population has increased to over 122,500,000 in 1930, almost fifty-fold in little more than a century and a half. Since 1900 the population gained about 47,000,000 or nearly two-thirds as much as it did in the century and a quarter preceding.

Optimists reasoning loosely from the past, thinking with boom psychology, would deduce from this expansive past the idea that the U. S. A. will continue to increase in numbers of its citizens. Assuming that the numerical increase in the future will be about the same as it has been in recent decades, it is possible to arrive at the estimate that the population will be about 140,000,000 in 1940 and about 245,000,000 or about double today's population at the end of this century, 2000 A.D. More conservative is the logistic curve of Drs. Raymond Pearl and Lowell J. Reed of Johns Hopkins University which indicates a population of 185,000,000 in the year 2000 A.D.

But Drs. Thompson and Whelpton do not foresee such large increases in population in the course of this century. They set about 145,000,000 as the peak in U. S. population to be

reached in 1970. By 1980 the total population of this nation will be well on the down-grade in numbers.

The trends of birth, deaths and immigration, rather than the matter of the population change itself, are estimated in the Thompson-Whelpton prognostications of population. The births reached their peaks in 1921 and have been decreasing ever since then. The trend in deaths has been upward, the high point occurring in 1929. Net immigration has been lowered since the present quota laws went into effect and the additions to the country from the rest of the world are likely to remain at a relatively low level.

Population Will Decline

All of these factors point to a slowing down and a final actual numerical decrease in population. The birth rate has been declining for nearly a century and there is little reason to expect this movement to cease suddenly. While there has been a definite decrease in the death rates of persons in the younger age groups, particularly of children under one year of age, which has lowered the death rate in general and increased the expectation of life at birth, there is now a slight upward trend in the death rates at ages over 40.

Using such figures and their best scientific guesses, Drs. Thompson and Whelpton make the following predictions of future U. S. population:

1920 (actual)	105,711,000
1930 (actual)	122,536,000
1940	132,500,000
1950	139,800,000
1960	143,900,000
1970	144,600,000
1980	142,900,000

OUR CHANGING POPULATION

Age in Years	People in Each Age Group		Percent. in Each Age Group	
	1920	1980	1920	1980
0 to 20	43,633,000	37,300,000	41.0	26.1
20 to 50	46,328,000	61,600,000	43.6	43.1
50 to 70	13,378,000	34,500,000	12.6	24.1
70 and over	2,951,000	9,500,000	2.8	6.7
Totals	106,290,000	142,900,000	100.0	100.0



DR. WARREN S. THOMPSON

If, as they estimate, population growth slows up and finally ceases within forty years, the adjustments in our national life that will be necessary make the depression and the N.R.A. campaign look like a sprinkle before a cloudburst.

American business has heretofore had an expanding market due to an increasing population. It promises to take longer to come out of the present depression because of the slowing population growth. In addition to increase of purchasing power aimed at by the N.R.A. effort and the other governmental actions since March 4, it will be necessary to abandon the old business idea of always planning for an increasing market. Instead, business campaigns of the present and future must be based on the idea of a population nearly stationary in numbers.

More important than decline in mere numbers is the decreasing number of younger persons and the rapidly increasing number of older persons that will come with America's population stagnation. Compare the population of 1920 with the probable inhabitants of the America of 1980.

The percentage of those in their prime of life, from 20 to 49 years of age will be almost the same, about 43 out of every 100 of the total population. But the youth below 20 in 1980 will constitute only 26 per cent. of the population compared with 41 per cent. as now. For every person from 50 to 69 years of age in 1920 there will be nearly three in 1980, increase (*Turn Page*)

SOCIOLOGY

Young People Get the Jobs In This Old Man's World

ALTHOUGH older people are making up an increasingly large part of the country's population, their opportunities for getting work are not expanding to meet the need. On the contrary, restrictions upon the employment of persons past forty and fifty are tightening. The recent decision of the United States Civil Service Commission to restrict the examining of applicants for the stenographer-typist examination to those under 40 years of age is particularly significant because it is following, not leading, the practice of industry in this regard.

In 1930, when the depression years were just beginning, an official of the U. S. Department of Labor, pointed to the fact that employment was even then becoming increasingly precarious for women between the ages of 25 and 30.

"Paradoxical as it may sound, many a young girl of 29 in search of a job suddenly discovers that she is an old woman," she declared.

Employers of men as well as women have come to place a new value on intelligence, the eagerness of youth, adaptability to new ways, and training in modern schools. They are attaching less importance to experience, settled habits, dignity, and other attributes associated with older people.

Personality Important

Personality is also an important factor in the competition for employment. And the personality of youth is generally preferred to the personality of age.

A woman psychologist, who has done a great measure of productive research since she was retired from the faculty of her university because of age, has made a study of the objections employers make to aged people in industry. Here are the charges: They are too slow, too set in their ways, not inclined to learn the new, too talkative, too critical of both co-worker and employer, they lack initiative, and finally they are sensitive and inclined to feel always that they are being discriminated against.

Are these charges true? The psychologist, Dr. Lillian J. Martin, admits that in many cases they are. But the personality changes of age are not due

solely to the passing of the years, but to a mental slumping on the part of the aging individual and to the fact that the faults excused in youth become more objectionable in age. The talkative flapper is likely to be termed vivacious; the talkative woman of middle age is considered garrulous.

Old people do deteriorate mentally, it is true. But this deterioration is not nearly so rapid as has been thought. Differences between individuals at any age are more important than the differences between persons of 30 and persons of 40. Dr. Walter R. Miles, of Yale University, who has studied the waxing and waning of mental abilities of persons of all ages and all walks of life says:

"Age is usually one of the important factors which define physiological and psychological efficiency. No machine can last forever; action necessarily means the reaction of wear and tear. But there are distinct and measurable efficiency differences between individuals with chronological ages about seventy years, just as there are differences among people who are in their thirties or forties. The average for all who are older than 74 years, for example, may show a decrement of one-fourth to one-third from the general adult mean. But, on the other hand, one-fourth to one-third of these old people may still be as capable, in the functions tested, as the average adult, and to check them off just because they happen to have been born seventy or more years ago may be as unfair to the individual as to drop him because he was born of foreign parents."

Nevertheless, the problem is inescapable—what is to be done with people of the older age levels? It is undoubtedly true that there are not enough jobs for all, and that the younger men and women are preferred and should, after all, be given their chance to be financially independent.

But with the school period extended, and child labor laws gradually pushing up the age of first employment, man's productive years are being curtailed at both ends of life.

of from 12 out of each 100 of the population in 1920 to 24 out of each 100 in 1980. There will be some 6,500,000 more old men and women of 70 and over in 1980 than in 1920, a 1980 percentage of 6.7 compared with a 1920 percentage of 2.8.

Added to the economic troubles of a decreasing numerical population in 1980, there will be a world of more older people and fewer children. That is the kind of America in which our children and children's children must live. The changing age composition will bring innumerable changes, some of which are already being felt.

A More Conservative Nation

The United States will become a more conservative nation. Conservatism in government, business and other matters seems to increase after middle life. As the trend toward a nation of elders continues, the political parties will be more under control of older people, the average age of stockholders in corporations will increase and older men will run the businesses of the nation.

More culture and more support for the arts is foreseen in America's old man's world. Youth is concerned with forging ahead and making a place in the world, while later in life there is apt to be more reflection and interest in drama, music, science, painting, and the intellectual side of life.

As there will be about the same percentage of the population between the ages of 20 and 49 in 1980 as now, there will be little trouble in getting the physical work of the nation done since it can be done best during those ages. But the great increase in the numbers and percentage of those between

50 and 69, will create a great industrial and social problem. Employers do not like to hire those who have crossed the line of 50 years, or even those over 40 years. Either some scheme for keeping these elders at part-time productive work at good wages must be devised, in order that they may be self-supporting and good consumers, or the nation is likely to revert to a continuous state of low level of living plagued by a large group of dissatisfied, dependent elders.

The mere passage of old age pension laws or the development of pension, annuity or retirement schemes by industries will not solve this problem of supporting the older age groups of the future. Pension schemes that are planned on the basis of the age distribution of the present population will of course fail a few decades in the future if they have to support double or triple the percentage of elders that now exist.

Fewer Children to Depend on

Because many couples are childless now for economic reasons, and because other families are much smaller than they were a few decades ago, there will be less chance that children will take care of their parents in old age. The burden is likely to fall upon the state.

Every niche of life will feel the effects of an older population.

School buildings may be converted into homes for the aged. A decrease in the number of school children will help to relieve the school boards of the problem of obtaining adequate funds for buildings and may even allow better and more individual instruction. But there will be the problem of taking care of more elders and the school board may

find some of the plant and equipment they can not use requisitioned for that purpose.

There should be a decline in the demand for sporting goods and play equipment, except perhaps golf, unless we order our civilization so that all of us, the older people as well, have more leisure and are persuaded to use it in sports.

Since wear and tear on clothing decreases with age, the clothing stores are likely to sell less. It is the youngsters who like sporty styles and thus the call for standardized conservative modes is likely to increase.

The demand will be for apartment houses or family hotels in which the older people can live without the responsibilities of furnaces and other house cares. Thus realtors who live on development of new subdivisions will need to look for other means of livelihood.

Less food will be consumed because the older people will naturally require less than youths and they will need to pamper their digestions. Health foods and tonics will supersede some of the present demand for hotdogs and ice cream cones. This may even influence the agricultural situation.

More Sedate Amusements

Dancing and sports model autos will give way to more sedate amusements such as the talkies, radio and good books, magazines and newspapers.

The jazz party of 1930 with clink of glasses and high laughter will give way to a less lively scene. Pleasant groups will sit quietly about synthetic open fires, "reading" spoken books through their ears in order to save their tired eyes, enjoying chats with friends by long distance social telephones, sampling the radio symphonic concerts of the world.

Yet with such a picture of the older's world of 1980, it must be admitted that all the jazz of this age is not created by those under 20. Those over 60 in 1980 may be taking their second fling at youth and upset the calculations of the population prognosticators.

Science News Letter, November 11, 1933

The oriental moth, an importation from Japan which attacks fruit and shade trees, is active only at night.

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