

The World Bank

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ABSTRACT: Most people familiar with the mission of the World Bank see it as an organization dedicated to rebuilding infrastructure in war-torn nations and to promoting economic progress in the developing world. And while it is true that the Bank does devote an enormous amount of its financial resources to the traditional areas of economic development, it has also devoted a very large portion of these resources towards population control programs over the last few decades. These programs ultimately provide money for sterilization operations, and the distribution of contraceptives all around the world. This paper examines how for decades the Bank has funded aggressive population control programs in the developing world; and how extensive the Bank's support for these programs has been.

DURING WORLD WAR II, the Allied Powers began planning for a postwar order that they would implement after they had finally defeated the Axis Powers. A critical component in these preparations was the development of a new international order based on liberal economic principles, manifested partly through the planned establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). This financial institution was to help in the postwar reconstruction by providing financial investment capital to areas that had suffered great destruction during the war. After the completion of the rebuilding occasioned by the war, the IBRD would continue in existence, so as to provide the developing world with the investment that it needed to grow economically and thereby finally join the developed world in enjoying a "First World" standard of affluence. In the late-1960s, however, the IBRD began to alter its conception of its missions to a population control agenda that was foreign to the original intent of the founders. New policies were promulgated in which aid and investment would be dependent upon the development of systems of

population control in benefitting countries. Institutional changes were made to further these new policies and the IBRD became politicized. This paper is the story of how such a degradation of an important international body actually came to pass.

First, I shall examine the reasons for the creation of the IBRD after the end of World War II. Then I will describe the “World Bank Group,” which is the set of international financial organizations that the IBRD leads. From this point on, I will show how former American Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was truly the force behind the Bank’s embrace of population control. Last, I will examine how the Bank’s promotion of population control grew after the end of McNamara’s tenure.

The Reasons for the Establishment of the World Bank

On 22 July 1944, at the U.N. Monetary and Finance Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, representatives from forty-four countries signed the “Bretton Woods Agreements.”¹ The purpose of the Agreements was to establish the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund. The introduction to the Agreements was titled the “Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.”² This section of the Agreements introduced the rules under which the World Bank³ would operate. The United States and its wartime allies created

¹ The forty-four countries were: Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yugoslavia. *World Bank Group Historical Chronology*, World Bank Website (June 28, 2006), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARCHIVES/Resources/World_Bank_Group_Historical_Chronology_1994_2005_.pdf.

² The Bretton Woods Agreements (1944), The Avalon Project Website (Nov. 30, 2005), <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad047.htm>.

³ The term “World Bank” was coined as a shorthand way of referring to the IBRD. Charles W. Kegley, Jr. & Eugene R. Wittkopf, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* (Belmont CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004), p. 150.

the Bank for the primary purposes of supporting reconstruction efforts following the end of World War II, as well as supplying aid for “the development of productive facilities and resources in less developed countries.”⁴ The Bank was to achieve this goal by providing its own financial investment capital, securing private investment through guarantees, and promoting international trade. The objective of all of this was to bring about the conditions necessary to secure the world’s economic development, and thus to avoid a recurrence of the economic environment that produced the fascist regimes in Europe during the interwar years.⁵

The Bank was part of a grand new design to overhaul the international economic system. This scheme called for reduced barriers to the free flow of trade and capital. The United States and its allies had learned a great lesson from the Great Depression.⁶ The application of liberal economic principles – as opposed to mercantilist, protectionist ones – was the *sine qua non* for the creation of an international economy marked by stability, predictability, and economic growth.⁷ The underlying belief was that capitalism and free trade produced incentives for peace. As economic interdependence accelerated, the cost of pursuing war would increase and therefore the probability of future wars would decrease.

A return to the *status quo ante* following the War was not seen as a viable alternative, particularly with the significant shift in American foreign policy from isolationism to internationalism that had occurred after 1945.⁸ The U.S. believed that its national security now relied upon

⁴ The Bretton Woods Agreements, *supra* n2, at Part A, art. I, § 1.

⁵ On just how economic chaos in Germany and Italy undermined those two nations’ willingness to abide by the Versailles Treaty that ended World War I and thereby led directly to the establishment of totalitarianism in those two nations under Hitler and Mussolini, respectively, see R.R. Palmer & Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (New York NY: Knopf, 1967), pp. 761-62, 800-11.

⁶ On how the democracies’ enactment of laws imposing tariffs only exacerbated the ills of the Great Depression, see *ibid.* at pp. 783-84.

⁷ Kegley & Wittkopf, pp. 201-04.

⁸ See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 3-24.

its direct involvement in international affairs. The Agreements explicitly addressed the issue of U.S. participation in the World Bank.⁹ Initially promoted by President Woodrow Wilson in his “Fourteen Points Address” to Congress, and then many years later by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Atlantic Charter, this plan of international trade, freedom of the seas, removal of economic barriers, and disarmament was essential for creating a safer environment in which the peoples of the world could prosper after the end of the two Great Wars of the first half of the 20th century. The plan would promote an international capitalist system, and likewise democratic forms of government. The byproduct of this system would be greater American security, thus reducing the probability of the U.S. being drawn into another global conflagration.

The World Bank Group

The “World Bank” was initially a shorthand way of expressing the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In 1960, however, the Board of Governors approved the establishment of the International Development Association (IDA), which became a new lending arm of the World Bank. Its main function is to provide interest-free loans to poor countries, where the GNP per capita (as of 2004) is under \$965, as of 2004. Eighty-one countries currently meet this standard. By 2004 the IBRD and IDA have lent over \$645 billion to its member countries for development projects. In fiscal year 2004 the IBRD lent \$11 billion for 87 new operations in 33 countries, and the IDA has commitments totaling \$9 billion for 158 new operations in 62 countries.¹⁰

Over the following years three more financial organizations were created under the mantle of fighting poverty and improving the living

⁹ The Agreements read, in part, “An Act to provide for the participation of the United States in the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.” The Bretton Woods Agreements, *supra* n2, at Part C. This part of the Agreements was added on 31 July 1945, after the initial signing of the accords (*ibid*).

¹⁰ Five Agencies, One Group, World Bank Website, 2005, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20122644~menuPK:278902~pagePK:34542~piPK:36600~theSitePK:29708,00.html>.

standard of those in the developing world. These organizations include the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Each of these organizations has over 140 members. The IFC promotes private investment in developing countries by providing finance to commercial investors in risky environments. The MIGA helps to encourage foreign direct investment by providing guarantees against non-commercial risks. In addition, the ICSID provides facilities for conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes between states and foreign investors.¹¹ Together these institutions along with the IBRD and IDA make up what is referred to as the World Bank Group and supply substantial amounts of funding to the developing world.

Toward a Population Control Agenda

The original mission of the World Bank was to assist in the reconstruction efforts that followed World War II. The delegates at Bretton Woods believed that the best way to pursue post-war recovery was to build roads, dams, bridges, factories, and other similar projects. As these tasks were completed, however, the Bank switched its focus to supporting the developing economies of the “Third World.” New nations were being created as a result of the dismantlement of the European empires, and these younger members of the Bank were more concerned with economic development than they were concerned with reconstruction.

As previously noted, the World Bank was part of a larger plan to construct a new liberal international economic order. The Allies wanted to establish a system based upon the principles of the free market and free trade, with the goal of avoiding the economic conditions that contributed to the rise of fascism. The Bank’s job was to provide loans (or to guarantee loans from other financial institutions) to member countries in order to achieve this.

But the watershed moment for the World Bank, when it began to shift its focus from its original purpose to the agenda of population control, came with the appointment of Robert McNamara as its fifth

¹¹ Ibid.

president in 1968. McNamara was the former Secretary of Defense in the Johnson Administration, where he was responsible for prosecuting the controversial war in Vietnam.¹² Upon his arrival at the World Bank, he immediately began to transform the organization. He increased borrowing by the Bank and proposed to accelerate its lending to countries and sectors in which it had not previously been involved.¹³ During his thirteen years as its president the amount of the Bank's loan commitments grew from \$1 billion to \$12 billion.¹⁴ He accordingly increased the number of staff at the Bank.¹⁵ Furthermore, the expansion of financial assistance into non-traditional sectors required strengthening ties with other international organizations. One of these non-traditional sectors was family planning.¹⁶

Right from the start McNamara made clear his agenda on population control. On 30 September 1968, as one of his first official acts, McNamara made his inaugural speech before the Bank's Board of Governors at the annual meetings held in Washington, D.C. In this speech he explicitly identified population as detrimental to economic growth:

The rapid growth of population is one of the greatest barriers to the economic growth and well-being of our member states.... The control of population growth is yet another area where the Bank needs to take new initiatives.¹⁷

In October of that same year he addressed the Inter American Press Association in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There he promised to double World Bank loans to Latin American countries and called on those

¹² *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2000* (Mahwah NJ: World Almanac Books, 1999), p. 104.

¹³ Mason & Asher, see n33 below, at pp. 100-01.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Family planning is defined as the "conscious effort of couples to regulate the number and timing of births." World Bank, *World Development Report 1984* (1984).

¹⁷ World Bank, *The McNamara Years at the World Bank: Major Policy Addresses of Robert S. McNamara 1968-1981* (Baltimore MD: The World Bank, 1981), p. 12.

governments to develop serious population control policies.¹⁸ A year later he delivered his famous speech at the University of Notre Dame in which he declared that the problem of excessive population growth was “the most delicate and difficult issue of our era[,] perhaps[,] of any era in history.”¹⁹ In this same speech he equated the destructiveness of high population growth to that of nuclear war: “Casting its shadow over all this scene is the mushrooming cloud of the population explosion.”²⁰ In fact, in this speech he succinctly declared what would become the World Bank’s policy towards population growth:

Let the developing nations know the extent to which rapid population growth slows down their potential development, and that, in consequence, the optimum employment of the world’s scarce development funds requires attention to this problem. Seek opportunities to finance facilities required by our member countries to carry out family planning programs. Join with others in programs of research to determine the most effective methods of family planning and of national administration of population control programs.²¹

In 1973 McNamara repeated this position in an address to the Board of Governors at their annual meetings held in Nairobi, Kenya. There he announced that the Bank would go on the offensive against rural poverty. In his speech McNamara outlined his quantitative goals *for population*. “Nairobi” became synonymous with McNamara’s population reduction five-year plan.²²

In December 1975 the Board of Directors at the Bank established an External Advisory Panel on Population, headed by Bernard Berelson, the former president of the Population Council. The Panel’s objectives were to assess Bank policies in the population sector and to advise it on how it could better assist client members in dealing with population

¹⁸ See supra n1.

¹⁹ *Pages from World Bank History: Bank Pays Tribute to Robert McNamara*, World Bank Website (13 July 2006), <http://web.worldbank.org/websiteexternal/extaboutus/extarchives/0,,contentMDK:20100171~pagePK:36726~piPK:36092~theSitePK:29506,00.html>.

²⁰ Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston MA: Little, Brown, 1993), p. 480.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.* at p. 510.

issues. It concluded that the Bank should continue to link its lending policies with population control because the Bank's participation in this area "is important in legitimating work in this field at the highest political levels and in locating it squarely within a development context."²³ The panel's report, the Berelson Report, gave twelve recommendations on how the Bank could improve its efforts on behalf of population control. It proposed that the Bank focus more attention on promoting local-level projects rather than operating through a country's health ministry. Robert McNamara seconded the opinions of this panel in a speech he delivered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1977. In his *Address on the Population Problem* McNamara devoted a significant amount of time to the topic of "Possible Interventions to Reduce Fertility." He noted that the range of possible interventions can be divided into two basic categories: those designed to encourage couples to desire smaller families and those designed to provide parents with the means to implement that desire.²⁴ In order to promote the desire among families for reduced fertility McNamara outlined a whole host of economic and social policies that governments can pursue:

Incentives can range from immediate cash payments to family planning acceptors, to elaborate programs for future payments, at the end of the childbearing years, for fertility restraint. Disincentives can limit the allocation of various public services on a graduated scale: more to parents with few children, less – or none at all – to parents with many children.²⁵

McNamara tended to favor incentive programs. He believed that they widened choices rather than restricted them, and they were less likely to penalize children. McNamara considered being born into a large family

²³ George Simmons and Rushikesh Maru, *The World Bank's Population Lending and Sector Review* (Sept. 1988), p. 3.

²⁴ Robert S. McNamara, "From an Address by Robert S. McNamara: Possible Interventions to Reduce Fertility," *Population and Development Review* (March-June 1977), p. 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.* at p. 171. McNamara describes disincentives schemes adopted by several countries. For instance, Malaysia made public assistance for the elderly available only for those parents with less than three children.

to be penalization enough.²⁶

On the topic of taking a coercive approach to population control, McNamara recognized that some countries were moving in that direction when he stated:

No government really wants to resort to coercion in this matter. But neither can any government afford to let population pressures grow so dangerously large that social frustrations finally erupt into irrational violence and civil disintegration. That would be coercion of a very different order. In effect, it would be nature's response to our own indifference.²⁷

Such talk about incentives and disincentives, let alone the role of coercion, opens the door for potential abuses. In 1989 the Bank released the working paper *Ethical Approaches to Family Planning in Africa* authored by Fred T. Sai, a senior population advisor at the World Bank, and K. Newman, of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. In this paper they noted that incentives and disincentives “may have a place in family planning programs, but they should never have discriminatory or coercive effects. By their nature, incentives and disincentives are aimed primarily at the poor, since it is mainly the poor who will be susceptible to them.”²⁸ Thus, even the World Bank population control advocates seem to have stumbled upon the fact that all these “incentives and disincentives” schemes necessarily result in unjust coercion.

Thirteen years at the World Bank was too short a time period for McNamara to achieve his goal. Afterwards he continued to speak and write about the serious “crises” posed by “excessive” population growth. In 1984 he published an article in *Foreign Affairs* with the title “Time Bomb or Myth: The Population Problem.”²⁹ This article was to be

²⁶ “But the fact is, of course, that disincentives or not, children born into large families in the developing world today are likely to be penalized in any case, simply by the pressures of poverty that the population problem has exacerbated in the developing societies” (ibid.). A further point: “From a child’s point of view there can be few benefits to having many siblings” (at note b).

²⁷ Ibid. at p. 172.

²⁸ F. T. Sai and K. Newman, *Ethical Approaches to Family Planning in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1989), p. 11.

²⁹ Robert Strange McNamara, “Time Bomb or Myth: The Population Problem,” *Foreign Affairs* 62 (1984): 1107.

expanded upon and distributed to the delegates attending the World Population Conference in Mexico City in August 1984.³⁰ In this article he provided projections of world population growth.³¹ He then proceeded to discuss its negative impact on human society in the areas of economic development and political stability: “Rapid population growth, in sum, translates into rising numbers of labor force entrants, faster-expanding urban populations, pressure on food supplies, ecological degradation, and increasing numbers of ‘absolute poor.’”³² McNamara’s solution to the problem was to demand birth control and other family planning services.³³

In an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1986, McNamara continued to express worries concerning the “population problem”: “[T]he imbalance of population growth rates on the one hand and social and economic advance on the other...leads to human misery.”³⁴ He noted disapprovingly that women in East Africa still expressed the desire to have “six or seven children.”³⁵ But this desire, he posited, would lead to a growth in population so horrendous that governments would then be forced to adopt repressive policies in order to reduce population. McNamara even conjectured that the “population problem” would eventually force parents into committing infanticide.³⁶ His solution to this nightmarish hypothetical problem was that the planet’s most powerful governments should begin supporting the distribution and promotion of contraception throughout the world.

He reiterated this position in 1992 in an article that he wrote for *The Futurist*. He acknowledged that in general economic growth led to a decline in birth rates in the long run, and then added: “But it is also generally recognized today that not all economic growth leads to immediate fertility reductions, and in any event, fertility reduction can

³⁰ Ibid. at p. 1107 n.

³¹ Ibid. at p. 1113.

³² Ibid. at p. 1119.

³³ Ibid. at pp. 1108, 1124, 1131.

³⁴ Rushworth Kidder, “Robert McNamara,” *Christian Science Monitor* (16 Dec. 1986), at p. 20.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

be accelerated by direct action to increase the use of contraceptives.”³⁷ His proposal to combat the “population explosion” included \$8 billion to expand family planning services in the developing world. He called upon the developed world and international financial institutions to help in this enterprise, and he pointed to the World Bank as setting the example. “The World Bank has already started on such a path, doubling its financing of population projects in the current year.”³⁸

Growth of the World Bank Population Control Programs

Robert McNamara’s tenure at the World Bank marked only the beginning of the Bank’s promotion of a population control agenda. Since then this phenomenon has progressed to the point where the Bank is currently considered to be one of the largest international contributors to aggressive population control programs.³⁹ McNamara came into the presidency of the Bank holding the firm belief that population control was crucial for alleviating world poverty. By 1970 he had established the Population Projects Department at the World Bank.⁴⁰ In June of that same year the Bank approved its first loan for family planning. “Loan 0690: Population Project” provided \$2 million to Jamaica to build maternity centers and train family planning personnel.⁴¹ From these early expenditures the World Bank’s population control programs grew. In this section I shall take a look at the three men who directed this growth, A.W. Clausen, Barber Conable, and Lewis Preston. As his

³⁷ Robert S. McNamara, “The Population Explosion,” *The Futurist* (Nov.-Dec. 1992), at p. 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ “The World Bank began working in population and reproductive health over 30 years ago and has lent more than \$3 billion to these issues.” *Population & Reproductive Health*, World Bank Website (15 July 2006), [http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/topics/exthealthnutrition and population/extprh/0,, menuPK:376861~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:376855,00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/topics/exthealthnutrition%20and%20population/extprh/0,,menuPK:376861~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:376855,00.html).

⁴⁰ Jennifer Prah Ruger, “The Changing Role of the World Bank in Global Health,” *American Journal of Public Health* 95 (2005): 60. In his address to the Board of Governors in Nairobi, Kenya, McNamara related that by 1973 this Department, while starting out with limited staff and resources, had signed agreements with seven countries including India and Indonesia. Robert S. McNamara, “Address to the Board of Governors, IBRD” (24 Sept. 1973).

⁴¹ See *supra* n1.

successors in the presidency of the World Bank, these men carried on and solidified Robert McNamara's work.

After McNamara's departure from the World Bank in 1981, Aldin Winship Clausen, former president of Bank of America, succeeded to the office and followed faithfully in McNamara's footsteps. At a speech before the German Society for Foreign Politics in Bonn, Clausen remarked:

Government attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa towards population programs stretch across a wide spectrum.... Most African countries are at intermediate points on the spectrum and they must be encouraged and helped to move steadily across it towards explicit programming. Otherwise the growth in per capita incomes will remain little or nothing. And the assault on poverty risks being overwhelmed by the sheer weight of the numbers.⁴²

A telling sign that McNamara's legacy was going to endure at the World Bank came in the form of the *World Development Report 1984*. This publication placed particular emphasis on population change and economic development. It was a blueprint for the Bank's population policies in the developing world. In the forward to this report World Bank President Clausen wrote:

Failure to act now to slow growth is likely to mean a lower quality of life for millions of people.... This Report concludes that in some countries development may not be possible at all unless slower population growth can be achieved soon.⁴³

President Clausen stated that the "problem" of population growth was the cause of financial crises and political disruptions all around the world, though he did not go so far as to use the nuclear bomb metaphor of his predecessor. Clausen called upon the international community for a greater commitment to meet "the great challenge of slowing

⁴² Quotations: A.W. Clausen, President of the World Bank, in remarks before the *Atlantik-Brücke* and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik*, Bonn (18 April 1983), *Population and Development Review* (September 1983), p. 573.

⁴³ World Bank, *World Development Report 1984* (1984), p. iii.

population growth.”⁴⁴ The *Report* made an extensive case for promoting population policies by analyzing current population statistics, projecting future population growth, and discussing the negative economic impacts of this population growth. The *Report’s* comprehensive population policy included:

- Data collection and analysis on the existence of rapid growth and its consequences.
- Securing political commitment from national leaders.
- Create proper institutions for the effective implementation of political commitments.
- Intensified support for family planning services.
- Formulation of national policies that offer wide-ranging incentives and disincentives to slow population growth.
- Birth quotas as an additional policy “step” over and above incentives and disincentives.⁴⁵

Echoing McNamara’s MIT address, the *Report* advised that governments should act by providing services, education, and financial incentives or disincentives to reduce fertility rates. The *Report* concludes by stating that:

The accumulating evidence on population change in developing countries underscores the strong link between fertility decline and the general level of socio-economic development, and the contribution that family planning programs can make to slowing population growth.⁴⁶

Thus, as far as the Report was concerned, “socio-economic development” must be spurred on by “slowing population growth.”

President Clausen often argued in favor of this population control

⁴⁴ World Bank President Clausen reiterated this message in a speech to the U.N. International Conference on Population in Mexico City in 1984: “He called on all countries to ‘work together in a renewed effort’ to control population.... The effort was critical to the drive to accelerate economic and social development. Otherwise...development would be postponed indefinitely.” He also called for a quadrupling of financial aid for family planning programs to \$2 billion. “Family Planning: Global Aid Urged,” *The New York Times* (8 August 1984).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

agenda. Writing in the *Journal of Economic Education* in 1985, he asserted:

Population growth and development is a subject of vast importance and undeniable urgency. The past hundred years have brought to this globe extraordinary economic and technological progress, and vast increases in population. It is time now to use our economic gains and our accumulated wisdom to better the human condition. We cannot and we must not bequeath to future generations a world in which the most spectacular growth has been in the number of people living in absolute poverty.⁴⁷

What is interesting about these words is that they show how Clausen was capable of recognizing the fact that population growth has often occurred *along with* economic development during the past century. And yet, despite this, the World Bank under A.W. Clausen still clung to the dogma that population growth and economic progress were almost mutually exclusive phenomena.

In 1986 Barber Conable, a former member of the House of Representatives, became Clausen's successor as President of the World Bank. This new president often "spoke with equal force in defense of...population control."⁴⁸ For instance, in September 1988 Conable addressed the Bank's Annual Meeting in Berlin and there he stated:

A vital part of the Bank's work involves development activities that have a strong impact on population – for instance, projects to improve economic security, income, and education for poor people, with a particular emphasis on women and girls. We are financing health and safe motherhood programs, and we will expand our direct support for family-related activities. Population issues will be prominent in our dialogue with governments.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ A.W. Clausen, "Population Growth and Economic and Social Development," *Journal of Economic Education* (Summer 1985) at p. 165.

⁴⁸ Barber Conable: *Seventh President of the World Bank Group, 1986-1991*, World Bank Website (2006), <http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/extaboutus/extarchinves/0,,contentMDK:20487104~pagePK:36726~piPK:437378~theSitePK:29506,00.html>.

⁴⁹ World Bank, *The Conable Years at the World Bank: Major Policy Addresses of Barber B. Conable, 1986-1991* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991), p. 67.

As far as Conable was concerned, “the societies in which population is growing very fast *must* accept that many – perhaps most – of these new lives will be miserable, malnourished, and brief.”⁵⁰ He expressed his alarm that many governments were failing to implement “sensible” population policies and that international assistance in this area was declining. He declared it “imperative that developing countries renew and expand efforts to limit population growth.”⁵¹ As president of the Bank, Barber Conable was perhaps an even bigger cheerleader for the population control agenda than either Robert McNamara or A.W. Clausen had ever been.

Less than a month after Conable gave his speech in Berlin, the Bank released a working paper that attempted to solve the difficult challenge of converting population policy into effective programs. The *World Bank’s Population Lending and Sector Review* was commissioned as a review of the Bank’s activities in the population control sector. The *Review* concluded that the Bank’s overall performance in the population sector “has been commendable” and its efforts in establishing policy dialogue with governments on population is the area where “the Bank’s impact has been greatest.”⁵² One of the important functions of the Bank was to help member states develop national population policies by establishing policy dialogue, issuing sector reports and pursuing policy-oriented research.

In November 1989 President Conable spoke before the International Planned Parenthood Federation in Ottawa, Canada. In his speech he made reference to the early nineteenth-century British economist Thomas Malthus. While Conable admitted that Malthus’s simple geometrical formula had been overcome through technological progress, his sense of urgency about population growth rates “derives, instead, from concern about the serious strains that more billions of people will impose on the earth’s environment.”⁵³ In other words, perhaps Malthus was right after all. But even more surprising than this

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* at p. 66 (emphasis added).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² George Simmons and Rushikesh Maru, *The World Bank’s Population Lending and Sector Review* (Sept. 1988), p. i.

⁵³ *The Conable Years at the World Bank*, p. 102.

revelation was Conable's divisive assertion that "having the information and means to plan families is a basic human right." Conable saw the recognition of this "basic human right" as a product of the numerous population conferences hosted by the United Nations, and furthermore viewed it as "a real step forward."⁵⁴ At the end of this speech Conable succinctly declared the World Bank's role: "The World Bank has a long-standing commitment to population. We will not forget this commitment, even when new initiatives clamor for our attention."⁵⁵

Lewis T. Preston, the eighth president of the World Bank, seemingly took Conable's advice and pressed for sharp increases in loans for family planning. He reiterated the Bank's support for population control at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo:

*The stakes are too high. Pulling it bluntly: if we do not deal with rapid population growth, we will not reduce poverty – and development will not be sustainable.... Population in developing countries will increase more during this decade than ever before.... Who will feed them and house all additional numbers? How will they be educated and employed? And what will be done to relieve the inevitable stresses on the environment?*⁵⁶

Preston vowed to keep population issues "at the forefront of the policy dialogue." This dialogue would not take place exclusively within the internal workings of the World Bank, but in the Bank's negotiations with client countries that were applying for development loans.

Even more evidence of population control advocacy by the Bank under Preston's stewardship can be found in the 1994 report *Population and Development: Implications for the World Bank*, which emphasized the following plan of action to promote a population control agenda around the world:

- Working with borrower countries and other donors to mobilize public and private sector financing and other resources required to meet the growing

⁵⁴ Ibid. at p. 104.

⁵⁵ Ibid. at p. 109.

⁵⁶ Lewis T. Preston, "Slowing Population Growth and Accelerating Sustainable Development: A Call to Action" (Sept. 1994), U.N. Website <http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/una/940913120427.html>.

demand for reproductive health and family planning services and to expand educational opportunities.

- Assisting borrower countries through their own strategic investments, emphasizing appropriate infrastructure, institutional capacity, and effective management of social sector activities.
- Coordinating the mobilization of resources as much as possible with the effort to supply the core package of essential health services called for in the *World Development Report 1993* and applying that report's guidance on health finance and management in working with borrowers on reproductive health projects.
- Strengthening its skill mix in needed technical areas, applying its available capacity for financial and economic analysis in the sector, and working collaboratively with other donors and specialized agencies that have complementary skills and capacities.
- Using its analytical capacity and supporting research to broaden the scope of population policy through better understanding of the linkages among population change, reproductive health, and the Bank's broader human development and poverty alleviation agendas and recognizing more effectively in country strategies and other analytical documents the interconnections between population dynamics and successful achievement of those agendas.⁵⁷

In all their years of leadership, A.W. Clausen, Barber Conable, and Lewis Preston expanded upon the population control advocacy that Robert McNamara had started at the World Bank. As a result of their efforts, population control policies are now an integral part of the operations of the Bank. Because of them the Bank continues to operate under the assumption that there is an empirically justified general consensus in the world “around the idea that rapid population growth exerts severe constraints on countries and regions at low levels of socioeconomic development.”⁵⁸

World Bank Programs in Family Planning & Population Control

Any discussion of the effects of the World Bank's population control advocacy on specific nations must start with a discussion of the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Population and development, world Bank Website (16 October 2006), <http://web.world-bank.org/wbsite/external/topics/extheearthnutritionandpopulation/extprh/0,,contentMDK:20341152~menuPK:650489~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:376855,00.html>.

major programs that actually fund this advocacy. This section will take a look at the most egregious of these programs: the World Bank's Department of Health, Nutrition, and Population (DHNP). It will then examine the push for population control in the Philippines, in Bangladesh, in India, in Senegal, and in Kenya. The effects that these programs had on these countries represent Robert McNamara's legacy at the World Bank.

The DHNP's mission statement currently states that its purpose is to "assist clients to improve health, nutrition, and population outcomes of poor people and protect people from the impoverishing effects of illness, malnutrition, and high fertility."⁵⁹ In 1997 the Bank published the *Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Strategy Paper*. This report was an attempt on the part of the Bank to assess its efforts in the DHNP sector. This paper outlined three major goals:

- Improve the health, nutrition and population outcomes of poor people and to protect the population from the impoverishing effects of illness, malnutrition, and *high fertility*.
- Enhance the performance of health care systems by promoting equitable access to preventive and curative health, nutrition, and *population services* that are affordable, effective, well managed, of good quality, and responsive to clients.
- Secure sustainable health care financing by mobilizing adequate levels of resources, establishing broad-based risk pooling mechanisms, and maintaining effective control over public and private expenditures.⁶⁰

The DHNP overtly states that it views "high fertility" as a problem that needs to be corrected. In fact, to the DHNP such "high fertility" is almost a kind of disease, for it is literally equated with "illnesses." At no point in reading this Department of the World Bank's literature does one run into a humble willingness to consider, or further investigate, the possibility that more human beings are not only more mouths to feed but

⁵⁹ *Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP)*, World Bank Website (15 July 2006), <http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/topics/exthealthnutritionandpopulation/0,,menuPK:282516~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:282511,00.html>.

⁶⁰ *Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Strategy Paper* (1997), emphases added.

also more minds to think of answers to a developing nation's problems and more hands to perform the hard work of agriculture.

The Philippines is exactly the kind of developing nation that population control advocates in the West think needs to adopt their philosophy in order to be able to progress economically. In 2005 the government of the Philippines applied for a loan from the Bank for a "Second Women's Health & Safe Motherhood Project." In the project appraisal document for this loan, the following account of the strategic context and rationale for this project appears:

A wide range of family planning methods have been made available to most women of reproductive age, raising contraceptive prevalence from 36% in 1988 to 49% in 2003. Women, however, are still having on average one more child than they intended, with an estimated 20% of all women of reproductive age with unmet demand [for contraception]. Although abortion is illegal, data from various studies indicate that there are around 16 abortions for every 1000 pregnancies. An unusually high population growth rate of 2.36% ... [for the period of] 1995-2000 is yet another consequence of low contraceptive prevalence.⁶¹

This appraisal document clearly indicates that the Bank was judging Philippine governmental policy towards contraception as it considered whether or not to make this loan. And the evidence that the Bank coerces support for population control from its Philippine debtor does not end there. The *Manila Standard* reported that shortly after the Philippine government endorsed a program to distribute free contraceptives, the World Bank announced its approval of the Second Women's Health & Safe Motherhood Project.⁶² The loan agreement does call for the establishment of support systems for the Women's Health & Safe Motherhood Package. This support comes in the form of logistical and procurement planning, subsidized financing and free distribution of contraceptives, and the expansion of social marketing

⁶¹ "Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of US\$16.0 Million to the Republic of the Philippines for a Second Women's Health & Safe Motherhood Project" (2005) at p. 1.

⁶² "WB Okays \$16M for Family Planning," *Manila Standard Today* (25 April 2005). The legislation permitting the free distribution is H.B. 3733, "Responsible Parenthood and Population management Act of 2005."

initiatives for contraceptives.⁶³ This six-year project now promotes spreading the use of contraceptives. The World Bank cited, as the need for this push for more contraception in the Philippines, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) phase-out of contraceptive donations to the Philippines.⁶⁴ Evidently, the World Bank will see to it that contraceptives get into the Philippines one way or another.

The supporters of population control at the World Bank have also been interested in the very populous (more than 100 million inhabitants as early as 1990) nation of Bangladesh.⁶⁵ In the mid-1980s, high ranking Bank officials, such as Vice President W. David Hopper and President Barber Conable, took up the fight for population control where Robert McNamara had left off.⁶⁶ During this period Hopper himself wrote to a senior minister of state in Bangladesh, months after the Bank had begun to officially pressure the government to do things like create a "National Population Control Board" and begin to offer individual Bangladeshis rewards for sterilizing themselves, inquiring as to whether Bangladesh would meet its "population objectives...on time."⁶⁷ In foreign aid dependent Bangladesh, the rewards that the Bank wanted the government to offer really acted as coercion, not added bonuses, to get Bangladeshis to sterilize themselves. In fact, the coercive nature of these rewards was so objectionable that even generally pro-contraception governmental actors such as Sweden and USAID eventually disassociated themselves from the Bank's population control plan for Bangladesh.⁶⁸ Worst of all, as one *leftist* abortion-rights advocate has been willing to admit in an important American left-liberal journal of opinion:

In many countries, the World Bank has urged governments to make population

⁶³ World Bank, "Loan Agreement (second Women's Health and Safe Motherhood Project) between Republic of the Philippines and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development" (30 June 2005), p. 25.

⁶⁴ *Manila Standard Today* (25 April 2005).

⁶⁵ Betsy Hartmann, "Bankers, Babies, and Bangladesh," *The Progressive* (Sept. 1990), p. 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

control a higher priority than basic health care. It has also pressured them to relax prescription guidelines for contraceptives and aggressively push those considered most “effective” – intrauterine devices, pills, injectables, and now the implants – in the absence of adequate screening and treatment for side effects, which can be serious and even life-threatening.⁶⁹

In 1995 the World Bank reported success in “curbing” fertility in the country. The fertility rate declined from seven births per woman in 1975 to four births per woman twenty years later. While the Bank officials were enthusiastic about this, they still saw the need for increased efforts: “Even under the most optimistic conditions of fertility decline the population will probably reach around 150 million by the year 2010. These expected population figures confirm that we should further and faster reduce fertility.”⁷⁰ Yet, despite such a rapid decline, the Bank still had to admit in this report that Bangladesh’s overall economic system had neither improved nor worsened. So, in essence, the Bank has helped to sterilize countless numbers of people, possibly coercively, possibly ruining numerous lives, and there is no real economic benefit to show for it. And still the Bank continues to push its population control agenda forward, regardless of its moral and societal disruptions. Thus, one can truly say that the Bank’s myopic focus on population control as the only way to improve that condition of the developing world has led to more sickness and misery, and not less in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh’s neighbor India has also been a primary target for the World Bank’s population control promoters. India first came into the international spotlight in this respect during the second half of 1976 when it pursued its infamous sterilization program. Widespread abuses

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 18. It is important to also note that the Bank deliberately associates and coordinates with organizations that have a history of radical support for population control, such as The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood of New York City (a.k.a. the Margaret Sanger Center). See “Civil Society Partnerships,” World Bank Website (16 July 2006), <http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/topics/exthealthnutritionandpopulation/extpr/0,,contentMDK:0584517~agePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:376855,00.html>.

⁷⁰ “Bangladesh’s Family Planning Program: ‘A Model Fighting Against the Odds,’” HNP Website (21 June 1995), <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hddflash/issues/00092.html>.

were reported involving individuals who were being forced to “volunteer” for sterilization operations.⁷¹ In the midst of this program, Bank President Robert McNamara took time to visit the Indian Health and Family Planning Minister to congratulate him on popularizing family planning in India.

The World Bank’s first population project pertaining to India was issued in 1972. The Bank committed \$21.2 million for supporting the Family Welfare Program (FWP)⁷² in eleven districts in the states of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh and for establishing two population centers. The Bank declared that this project “was the foundation for the government’s subsequent accelerated program of family planning....”⁷³ This first project was followed by a further eight projects initiated between 1980 and 1994 with total credits in the amount of \$597.8 million. Population control was often a major focus in these projects. More recently the World Bank has given support to the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Indian politician Chandrababu Naidu, who governed this state in 2001, actively promoted sterilization projects. Over a five-year period the number of sterilizations reached the peak of approximately 800,000 per annum. Over half of married women have had their tubes tied, the highest rate in India. Naidu’s population strategy is heavily driven by sterilization quotas, limiting the number of children, and providing incentives for low fertility.⁷⁴

In the 1992 operations evaluation report *Population and the World*

⁷¹ Henry Kamm, “India State Is Leader in Forced Sterilization,” *The New York Times* (13 August 1976), p. 8. When confronted with evidence of these abuses, Dr. D. N. Pai, Bombay Director of Family Planning, stated: “If some excesses appear, don’t blame me.... The excesses occurred in all fields. You must consider it something like a war. There could be a certain amount of misfiring out of enthusiasm. There has been pressure to show results. Whether you like it or not, there will be a few dead people.”

⁷² The FWP’s main concern is family planning, placing particular emphasis on sterilization as the method of choice.

⁷³ “The World Bank and Population and Reproductive and Child Health in India,” World Bank Website (2006), <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/a22044d0c4877a3e852567de0052e0fa/0a1a904791c49c728525687b0062dca8?OpenDocument>.

⁷⁴ Celia Dugger, “Relying on Hard and soft Sells, India Pushes Sterilization,” *The New York Times* (22 June 2001).

Bank: Implications from Eight Case Studies, the Bank examined its activities in several countries in the population control sector.⁷⁵ The findings of this illuminating report demonstrated that Bank's support for the population control agenda in Africa. For instance, in Senegal the Bank noted its efforts in helping the government to develop a comprehensive population policy.⁷⁶ This population policy "was implemented, among other ways, by making development of such a policy statement [by the government of Senegal] a condition of the structural adjustment loan."⁷⁷ The report continued by stating that this "strategy may be especially important in Francophone Africa, because of its pro-natalist colonial heritage *that had to explicitly and publicly broken with* [in order] to *legitimize family planning activities* [there]."⁷⁸ Kenya was confronted with a similar situation. The Bank noted some resistance on behalf of the Kenyan government in implementing population control and family planning policies after Kenya had already taken some Bank funds in the past.⁷⁹ To counteract this, Bank officials once again resorted to threats to withhold the money. The Kenyan government was persuaded to establish "an inter-ministerial coordinating agency" for population control as a condition for a structural adjustment loan.⁸⁰ Population and the World Bank even admits that Bank officials pressed the Kenyan government "fairly strongly" on the issue of population control in these negotiations.⁸¹

It is shocking enough that the World Bank would loan funds to some of the most unethical population control programs in the world, such as those in India. But in those instances at least, the governments receiving the funds seemed to have come to the conclusion on their own that the population control agenda must be implemented. Instead, here

⁷⁵ "Population and the World Bank: Implications from Eight Case Studies," World Bank Website (20 October 2006), <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/B55E8659BF698B38852568160058FCAD?opendocument>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁷⁸ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

with respect to Senegal and Kenya, there is evidence that the Bank actively uses its financial power to pressure poor nations into adopting its population control outlook. Therefore, it is not unjust to say that the Bank forces the population control agenda on the developing world.

Conclusion

The World Bank was founded with high hopes at a time when the world needed international institutions that were based on cooperation and the willingness of the United States to spend more of her capital on the progress of the whole world, and not just on the parts that were considered to be directly beneficial to America. Over time, much of this mission was completed. The world rebuilt after the end of World War II. But the World Bank did not disband at that point, nor should it have. Men and women could reasonably have concluded that the problems in the developing world one day might metastasize into violent conflicts that would then drag the nations of the developed world into war once more. In fact, that is exactly what the leaders of the World Bank did conclude. They turned their attention to the developing world, and they have not turned away from looking at its problems and how to solve them since.

But at roughly the same time, led by a population control extremist, Robert S. McNamara, the Bank decided to change not only the *focus* of its efforts, but the very *definition* of what those efforts would be. Along with McNamara, Barber Conable, W. David Hopper, Lewis Preston and those like them came to the conclusion that not only did the developing world lack many of the same things that Western Europe lacked after 1945 but that the *very people* of these nations were often part of the problem. Leading a once great philanthropic institution, they came to the misanthropic conclusion that the people themselves would need to be cut out of the picture. For decades now, the World Bank has used its significant wealth and power to try to push the developing world into cutting its own future citizens out of that picture. It has done this even though there is no clear evidence that population control is needed for development and despite the fact that it is very controversial, while traditional development in sectors such as infrastructure and education is not. Even with changes in Bank leadership, one cannot help but conclude that the Bank is still staffed by numerous population control

advocates who engage in policies that offend large numbers of people all around the world. Many of these people are voting, tax-paying citizens of the wealthy member countries that provide most of the funds that the World Bank uses. Hopefully, with the aid of the information found in this paper, they can exercise their democratic rights in the future in a way that will make the Bank more accountable to the people who actually make its work possible.