

we be endowed with intellectual or manual attributes, we are all at a hub of relationships and activities within society, but that is no reason to consider that we should ignore our rightful personal interest in order to do our duty with fitting dedication.

In any case, we have no choice. The risk of being unable to care for the sick properly is not a vague threat looming on the horizon: the danger is upon us, affecting almost every hospital. We must, therefore, in our opinion, face the situation by making the effort it demands and improving considerably the earnings of nursing personnel. The crisis will not be averted by this alone, as needs are enormous, but it will be attenuated if reinforcements can be led to the profession and, more especially, induced to stay.

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION

The March-April 1967 issue of the Food and Agriculture Organization's magazine Freedom from Hunger¹ contains a leading article entitled "Warnings on Rising Population". It is well known that this is a problem of concern to a wide variety of circles in many countries and one which the Red Cross cannot ignore. In May 1966, we published in this connection an article on the action undertaken by the Red Cross of West Pakistan in the "Family planning" field.

By way of information, we give below the opinions of two senior officials which were published in the FAO magazine.

United Nations Secretary-General U Thant and FAO Director-General B. R. Sen on separate occasions recently have issued calls for action to counter the alarming increase, both actual and potential, in the world population.

¹ Rome, March-April 1967.

MISCELLANEOUS

In his first official statement on the need to moderate population growth, U Thant chose Human Rights Day (10 December) to declare that "the size of the family is a fundamental human problem which must be based on the decisions of responsible parents concerned with the dignity and well-being of their children."

Pointing out that "rates of population growth are very much higher in the poor two thirds of the world than they are among the more privileged countries," the Secretary-General of the United Nations said: "Over the two or three decades immediately ahead, when present worldwide efforts to raise food production will not have yielded the fullest results, the problem of a growing food shortage cannot be solved without, in many cases, a simultaneous effort to moderate population growth."

Dr. Sen—citing "the danger of large-scale famines in some of the most densely populated underdeveloped areas of the world"—spelled out his views on overpopulation at the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the Planned Parenthood Movement in New York last fall.

Paying tribute to the late Margaret Sanger, founder of the movement, Dr. Sen recalled with gratitude her "pioneering work in my own country, India, in the twenties. . . She found valuable support for her ideas in India's poet, humanist and social reformer, Rabindranath Tagore. His letter to her published in the "Birth Control Review" of September 1925 has a historic as well as topical interest.

"'I am of the opinion,' he wrote, 'that the birth control movement is a great movement not only because it will save women from enforced and undesirable maternity, but because it will help the cause of peace by lessening the number of surplus population of a country scrambling for food and space. . . To wait till the moral sense of man becomes a great deal more powerful than it is now and till then to allow countless generations of children to suffer privations and untimely death for no fault of their own is a great social injustice, which should not be tolerated. I feel grateful for the cause you have made your own and for which you have suffered'.

"Today", Dr. Sen went on, "an altogether new dimension has been added to the problem which confronted Margaret Sanger in those early years of her crusade. . . At present about one half of the world's people are underfed or badly fed, or both."

Dr. Sen noted that the governments of several countries, particularly in the Far East, have now made population stabilization a matter of public policy " without impairing the ultimate individual responsibility and choice."

" In India ", he said, " more than a million women are being introduced to birth control techniques each year, and in Pakistan almost half a million, and the number is rising each month by approximately 110,000 in India and 40,000 in Pakistan. The United Nations Advisory Mission on Family Planning estimated that in India 9 million births could be prevented in the next decade with the help of a vigorously promoted national crusade. Continuation of such a program could bring the growth rate down to 1 percent per annum before 1985. But before the Indian Program can achieve this aim, many local problems will have to be overcome. Shortage of trained medical staff needs immediate attention. Mobile medical units, equipped with surgical boxes and capable of negotiating village tracks, are badly needed in sufficient numbers to ensure that every village is visited once every four to twelve weeks. The question I have raised on many platforms is why the developed countries in a position to help are not going all out in the case of at least India and Pakistan, which between them contain one sixth of the human race and where the problem of food supply is so acute? "

Noting the threat to " individual liberty and human dignity " if the world population continues to grow at the present drastic rate, Dr. Sen said there is a very immediate danger of large-scale famines " and this is a danger that must be averted at all costs."

" If peace is indivisible, so is hunger ", he said. " And all our energies must be devoted, through co-operation between the rich and poor nations, to achieving a stable balance between our numbers and our needs. Only thus can the economic and social causes of war be eliminated and an enduring basis laid for world peace and security " .
