

REPORTS

BIRTH RATE RISE FOR BRITAIN?

Caution is the keynote of the new population forecasts for Great Britain in a report* that concentrates on fertility variation as the dominant variable (rather than mortality rates or migration).

How many children will women born in the postwar era have? Will it be as low as the average 1.8 children per woman (for those women born around 1905) or will it be as high as the 2.4 children per woman, that was recorded for women born in the 1930s? The report plumps for an average fertility of 2.2 children per woman for its central forecast, with those women who were born around 1950 expected to have less than 2.1 children each (ie below replacement level). However, the report includes the other fertility figures (see Table 1) to give four population projections that between them include the range of fertility rates experienced in Great Britain in the last 50 years.

The period rate of fertility (see footnote to Table 1), is currently falling. In the central projection this is

* Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Variant Population Projections 1974-2011* (London, HMSO, 1975), 65p.

expected to level out at 1.8, and then to recover after 1978. This is because it is thought that the recent drop in the fertility rate is due to newly married couples postponing the start of their families.

The question of how one can best forecast population is still unsettled. The report says that the social and economic factors believed to be influencing current population trends were also studied, but it has so far proved impossible to precisely quantify their impact. There is also no generally accepted basis for relating variations in fertility, mortality, and migration. Neither does the report place much faith in trend extrapolation:

period fertility rates can reverse abruptly and at times when the previous trends and patterns appear to be well entrenched. This fact is overlooked in much of the discussion, which often unjustifiably presupposes that a trend must continue once it has lasted for a decade or so.

One positive note by the authors of the report is that, although they cannot state the probability of the actual outcomes being within the ranges given, they do feel more certain of the maximum probable population than of the minimum.

TABLE 1. FOUR POPULATION FORECASTS FOR GREAT BRITAIN

	Forecast			
	high	central	low	continuing low
Period fertility rate ¹				
minimum	1.9 (1975)	1.8 (1975-78)	1.6 (1976-79)	1.6 (1976-80)
rising to constant	2.3 (1980)	2.2 (1984)	2.1 (1984)	1.8 (1981)
Population 2011	62.25 M	59.68 M	57.32 M	53.54 M
Population change				
1974-2011	7.7 M (14%)	5.2 M (9%)	2.8 M (5%)	-1.0 M (-2%)
1974-2011 (0-14 age group)	0.9 M (7%)	-0.4 M (-3%)	-1.6 M (-13%)	-3.7 M (-29%)
1976-86 (5-14 age group)	-1.0 M (-12%)	-1.8 M (-20%)	-2.2 M (-25%)	-2.2 M (-25%)

Notes: ¹ Fertility in a given year (the period rate) is the sum of the fertility in that year of the different generations of women currently of childbearing age. The generation rate of fertility is the average number of children per woman to which any generation of women will in the end give birth. The period rate undergoes larger fluctuations because it is influenced by the timing of births.

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Variant Population Projections 1974-2011* (London, HMSO, 1975).

FUTURES STUDIES COURSE

A course on futures studies will be held at the Inter-University Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, located just outside the medieval city walls of Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, on 15 March–9 April 1976. The theme for the course, organised in cooperation with the World Future Studies Federation, is "Models for the future: domestic and global". Provisionally the first week (15–19 March) will be devoted to an introduction to futures studies, social change on a macro-level, social experimentation and social innovation, and futures studies for political decision making.

The second week (22–26 March) will cover macro- and micro-models including those developed by the World Order Models Project and by the Bariloche Foundation. At the micro-level, models based on specific social

experiments, eg the soft-technology communities and models of alternative life styles, will be studied.

The fifth world conference of the WFSF will also take place (28 March–2 April) in the IUC building. Those on the course will participate in the conference. The two main themes of the conference are to be "World alternatives: systems versus needs" and "The future of education and education for the future".

During the fourth week (5–9 April) a colloquium on ecodevelopment will take place. Professor Ignacy Sachs from Paris will be the programme director of the colloquium. Lectures and discussions will probably take place in the mornings (Monday–Friday). The afternoons will be given over to a discussion with the invited speakers or to a seminar.

The following people have been invited for the first two weeks of the course: Gerhart Bruckmann (Vienna), Göran Bäckstrand (Stockholm), Johan Galtung (Oslo and Dubrovnik), Lars Ingelstam (Stockholm), Robert Jungk (Salzburg), C. A. Mallmann (Bariloche, Argentina), Mihajlo Marković (Belgrade), and W. F. Wertheim (Wageningen, the Netherlands).

Saul Mendlovitz (New York) and Bart van Steenberg (Utrecht) will be the course directors of the first fortnight. Johan Galtung, the director-general of the IUC, will also help organise the course.

There will be no examination, but participants are expected to write a paper (eg by rewriting their seminar presentation) if they want a certificate of attendance. The course is held at a post-graduate level, but it is also open to particularly motivated students and others. A good working knowledge of English is essential as this will be the working language of the course.

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The course fee is only \$20 (the IUC runs on a minimum budget). Living in Dubrovnik is very cheap in early spring. A hotel room plus three meals a day will cost about \$10. Many universities are members of the Inter-University Centre and grants to attend IUC courses may be obtainable.

INSIDE *FUTURIBLES*

Futuribles recommenced publication this June with a double issue (No 1/2, 1975). Now called *Futuribles: Analyse-Prévision-Prospective*, the quarterly journal will be devoted to forecasting in the fields of economics, politics, society, and culture. The autumn issue (No 4, 1975, published in October) reflects these themes from both a philosophical and a topical standpoint—as can be illustrated by a brief description of the contents.

Jacques Durand, in “Forecasting, discontinuity and instability”, looks

Those interested in participating in this course should write with details to Inter-University Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, Frana Bulića 4, YU-50000 Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia.

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inward at the nature of forecasting itself with a self-questioning which, although not immediately applicable to the current series of crises, is nevertheless of interest to those engaged in forecasting which is heavily reliant on methodology.

Durand puts the recent vogue for models firmly in its place. He points out that the main shortcoming of these models is that they do not take account of discontinuities. History has shown that it is possible to use such discontinuities as a basis of forecasting, rather than to regard them as mere incidental disturbances in an otherwise smoothly running system. Moreover, if forecasting itself is understood as a kind of systems analysis, it comes up against the question of the stability of the very systems it studies. This throws new light on studies undertaken on the origins of systems, and on forecasting in particular, which must now seek out not only areas of discontinuity but also those of instability.

Frémont Félix, in “Energy, electricity and gross national product”, speaks out against the popular view of a system’s inevitability, the point being that human beings can change seemingly inexorable processes and avoid the paralysing effects of a “last judgement” syndrome. Frémont Félix applies this criticism to France’s present situation. Failure to take account of a self-regulating variable—in this case the decrease in *per capita* growth rate as manifested by decreases in the growth of GNP, and the consumption of energy and resources—was the basic



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error in the Club of Rome's apocalyptic conclusions. The author fears that such hypotheses of exponential growth are still prevalent. He feels that France is in a good position compared to the rest of the world and that, with her large commitment to nuclear power, France can look forward to a bright energy future.

Such optimism is tempered by a thoughtful backward glance in "Management of mineral resources and the crisis" by Claude Guillemin. He thinks we are now in a position to draw up a balance sheet of the recent crisis and to look again at our assumption about growth patterns in the consumption of mineral and energy resources. A doubling of present consumption rates is not expected to take place before the early decades of the 21st century, but this increase does not necessarily mean a rise in the standard of living in the developed countries. It is more likely to be accompanied by a doubling of the population in the poor countries. Claude Guillemin feels that the question of reserves and resources needs to be re-examined in the light of "positive" and "negative" aspects which will influence the future of humanity. These positive aspects he identifies as:

- the realisation of a need for a geopolitics of raw materials;
- the reduction of waste;
- energy considerations (costs and renewable resources).

The negative aspects are:

- the risk that aid to Third World countries will fall because of economic cutbacks in the developed world;
- the serious problems which will arise for future generations in France because of the decision to go for nuclear power;
- the widening gap between the developed countries and the countries of the Third World.

This last aspect is dealt with in an article by Jean-Paul Céron, Jean-Charles Hourcade, and Michel Schiray,

"Environmental policy and the future of relations between Europe and the Third World". The question is whether industrial activities should be withdrawn from or geographically redistributed to the Third World. This is Europe's last trump in the negotiations with producing countries. Withdrawal would be disastrous from the point of view of environmental policy, which favours a geographical redistribution of industries.

Environmental considerations would condemn such a massive transfer of industries to a few privileged countries; they call for a diversified redistribution based on the evaluation of resources.

Returning to France, and to a topic of immediate concern thrown up by the present recession, Marcel Rustant looks at "Employment and working hours—past and future". Analysis of employment patterns in France shows that, despite the health of the economy up to 1974, the increase in employment has not kept pace with the increase in the number of people available for work. Even before 1975 there was an increase in unemployment, despite a marked reduction in working hours.

The outlook is bleak, since economic expansion is probably going to slow down considerably, with the result that the number of unemployed (already high this year) will probably remain above the figure for 1973–74 as the number of people looking for jobs continues to increase.

This situation calls for new ways of dealing with a shortage of jobs. The author's view is that, bearing in mind previous experience, bringing forward the retiring age would be more likely to create jobs for young people than a reduction in weekly working hours.

These five articles give some indication of the spectrum of issues covered in the journal. *Futuribles: Analyse-Prévision-Prospective* is published by the International Association Futuribles, 10 rue Cernuschi, 75017 Paris, France. Annual subscription (4 issues) is F 120.