

# How Birth Control Morphed into Population Control, via Margaret Sanger

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February 18, 2015



**From *Margaret Sanger: Pioneer of Birth Control* by Lawrence Lader and Milton Meltzer (1969) in a chapter titled “Population, Peace, and Plenty” pg 160-161**

Today the world has caught up with the crucial necessity for population control. Many political leaders consider it second only to the threat of nuclear war as the key issue of our time. World population is now growing at a record speed of seventy million a year. The terrible prophecy is that at the current rate of increase the world may double in population by the year 2000. Yet less than 5 percent of the world's six hundred-odd million women in the fertile years are using modern contraceptives. To Dr. Harrison Brown, one of the nation's leading scientists, it means “catastrophe appears a near certainty.”

Latin America, whose growth is faster than any other continent's, will almost triple its population in the next three decades. And less food is now produced and eaten there per capita than before World War II. India, kept from the edge of famine by wheat shipments from abroad, will add two hundred million more people by 1980. With this tidal wave of population goes desperate hunger. One half of the world's population and two thirds of its children go to bed hungry every night. General William H. Draper., head of a presidential study committee, has said that “the stark fact is that if the population continues to increase faster than food production, hundreds of millions will starve in the next decade.”

The United States has already added fifty million between 1950 and 1968, and our population may almost double by the year 2000. We may not face famine because of our highly mechanized food production. But the terrible overcrowding in the cities has already brought us the destructive problems of air and water pollution, traffic chaos, shortage of schools and houses, lack of parks and recreation space. The whole quality of American life is being badly damaged.

Almost everyone now realizes that Margaret Sanger's crusade for population control is the only way to enable living standards to improve substantially. International Planned Parenthood has already shown in many areas that populations can be kept in reasonable balance. In Hong Kong and Singapore, birth rates were cut almost 40 percent in ten years. Japan is the most

remarkable example of all. After the government approved legalized abortion in qualified hospitals, along with contraception, the country cut its birth rate more than in half between 1947 and 1961. The need has become so staggering that IPPF has been joined by new allies. First came the private organizations. The Population Council, headed by John D. Rockefeller III, has spent over thirty-five million dollars since 1952, the Ford Foundation many millions more.

But the money needed to spread birth control around the world goes far beyond private means. Hugh Moore's Campaign to Check the Population Explosion and the Population Crisis Committee in Washington soon realized that only vast help from the federal government could meet the crisis. With constant pressure on Congress, they were able to get the government to increase its population programs overseas to fifty million dollars in 1969. Family planning programs in the United States were given ten million dollars. Yet even these sums are only a tiny fraction of what it will take to meet the problem.

The message that Margaret Sanger stamped forever on this age was that human beings could consciously control the plan and purpose of their lives, and that out of this independence, they could raise society to a new level of dignity and beauty.