

DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES

Interviews with Presidents of the Population Association of America

Interview with John F. Kantner PAA President in 1982



This series of interviews with Past PAA Presidents was initiated by Anders Lunde
(PAA Historian, 1973 to 1982)

And continued by Jean van der Tak (PAA Historian, 1982 to 1994)

And then by John R. Weeks (PAA Historian, 1994 to present)

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JOHN F. KANTNER

PAA President in 1982 (No. 45). Interview with Jean van der Tak at Dr. Kantner's home in Bedford, Pennsylvania, March 22, 1988. Dr. Kantner revised the interview transcript extensively in April 1990, writing that, "I removed large sections and enlarged others where it seemed to me I hadn't said what I meant to."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: John Kantner was born in 1920 and grew up near Bedford, Pennsylvania. He received all three of his degrees in sociology: the A.B. in 1942 from Franklin and Marshall University, and the M.A. in 1947 and Ph.D. in 1953 from the University of Michigan. He taught sociology, including population, at the College of William and Mary from 1950 to 1953. From 1953 to 1960, he was with the Foreign Manpower Research Office of the Bureau of the Census. He was with the Population Council from 1960 to 1965, including two years as the Council's representative in Pakistan, based in Lahore. He then spent three years at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, where he was instrumental in introducing training and research in demography. In 1968 he went to Johns Hopkins University, where he eventually became Chairman of the Department of Population Dynamics within the School of Public Health and Director of the Hopkins Population Center. Since 1984, as a member of the Joint Career Corps of the U.S. Agency for International Development, he has served as adviser to AID on their population work in India.

John Kantner is particularly well known for his research and publications on fertility, beginning in the 1950s with his contributions to analysis of the Indianapolis Fertility Study. In the 1970s, he and Melvin Zelnik conducted three ground-breaking surveys of fertility-related behavior among U.S. teenagers, which were reported in a series of articles in Family Planning Perspectives and the monograph, Sex and Pregnancy in Adolescence (1982). While with the Census Bureau, he also published extensively on the population of the Soviet Union. [Dr. Kantner died in Bedford, Pennsylvania, in 2009.]

VDT: We are speaking in Jack and Jane Kantner's beautiful restored home from the late 1800s in the historic area of Bedford, Pennsylvania, surrounded by mountains. The sun is shining gloriously the day after some snow. How did you become interested in demography?

KANTNER: When I went to the University of Michigan for graduate studies [after serving in the military during World War II], I was interested in social theory. There I met Amos Hawley, who though not billed as a social theorist, captured the theoretical imaginations of students who were looking for a framework for viewing questions of social structure and social change. Human ecology as presented by Hawley cut across economics, geography, anthropology, and those areas of sociology that were not deeded to social psychology. It was exciting stuff and it took some of us a good many beer sessions to get it bedded down in our thinking. Amos, at that time, taught what limited offerings Michigan had in population. It was not until Ron Freedman arrived [in 1946] that these were expanded.

Ron, even then, had a good nose for research opportunities, which meant not only research ideas but the wherewithal--data and funds--to get something going. I have only the sketchiest idea of how it came about, but not long after Ron came to Michigan he let it be known that for those who might be interested, the data from the Indianapolis Study, a pioneering fertility survey conducted just prior to the war, might be available for analysis. Furthermore, it appeared likely that the Milbank Memorial Fund would put up some fellowship money for those who became involved. That was a fairly irresistible combination, even in the days of the GI Bill.

Some of us made a trip, a hair-raising trip as I recall, with Ron at the wheel--he borrowed his

brother-in-law's car--and Ron drove with part of his mind on some more elevated plane, so it was quite a trip. We went down from Ann Arbor to the Scripps Foundation [for Research in Population Problems] in Oxford, Ohio, to talk with Pat Whelpton and, to a lesser extent, Warren Thompson about the possibilities. Scripps in those days was an important center of demographic research. Between them, Scripps and the Office of Population Research at Princeton just about blanketed the field of U.S. demography. Throw in the Bureau of the Census, which in those days had an impressive stable of analysts, and that was most of it. The Milbank Fund, first with Frank Notestein and later with Clyde Kiser, was, in a way, the yeast for this mix. I leave out my own institution, Johns Hopkins University, for although Alfred Lotka spent some time there and Raymond Pearl held forth from there and Lowell Reed graduated from life tables to become a much admired president of Hopkins, by the late 1940s there wasn't much doing at Hopkins--although Reed and his biostatistical laboratory were the custodians of the Indianapolis data.

VDT: So it was Ron Freedman who put the bee in the bonnet about Michigan getting involved in analysis of the Indianapolis study?

KANTNER: Ron was certainly the midwife. Later on, Dorothy Thomas at the University of Pennsylvania generated some interest in students there, most notably Charlie Westoff, in the Indianapolis data.

VDT: And Jeanne Clare Ridley was in there too?

KANTNER: Very much so. At this time, Jeanne was working at the Milbank Fund in New York; later on, she went to Michigan for her Ph.D.

In the beginning, the original committee that designed the Indianapolis study was concerned about maintaining control of the data. It was provided, for example, that one of the committee members should appear as co-author on any articles that were published. And initially, we didn't have the data on hand, physically. The procedure, which must appear quaint if not unacceptable to a graduate student today, was to design the punch cards needed for your analysis and, after Whelpton or Kiser had a look at your layout and any constructed variables, send it on to Hopkins, where someone in Lowell Reed's establishment would enter the data. At first we sent our tabulation specifications to Clyde Kiser at Milbank and the tabulations would eventually arrive in the mail. Jeanne was a central figure in this operation, as was her colleague at the time, Nathalie Schacter. Some of the tabulations were produced at Scripps, beautifully copied on blue- and red-lined tabulation paper--in ink, at Whelpton's insistence! Subsequently, each analyst got his own set of punch cards, and except for the limitations of the old IBM record equipment, research proceeded much as today.

VDT: I'm not quite sure what the Scripps connection was with the Indianapolis study. I know that Milbank funded it.

KANTNER: Other than to say it was close, perhaps even parental, I can't say either. Thompson and Whelpton, two important members of the study committee, were at Scripps. One of the other members was a faculty member of Miami University in Oxford. Lowell Kelly was from the University of Michigan, just up the road, and Indianapolis itself was not far away. The other members, Notestein, Reed, and Kiser, were based at eastern institutions but were obvious collaborators, especially since two of them represented the distal end of the Scripps-Milbank axis.

VDT: That answers my first question on how you became interested in demography. My second question was how you picked fertility as your focal interest. Obviously, it had something to do with

your work with Ron Freedman and the Indianapolis study.

KANTNER: It is interesting to recall how professionally avant-garde fertility studies that inquired into contraceptive behavior were in those days. There was Kinsey and a few other studies around, but there was also a sense that we were breaking new ground.

VDT: There was some done before the war, but perhaps it wasn't publicized.

KANTNER: There wasn't much. There were studies of fertility differentials between particular populations. There were studies based on clinic records that provided some data on contraception. Interview studies of contraceptive behavior based on household surveys were a rarity.

VDT: The Indianapolis study [field work done in 1941] was planned at a time of low fertility. There was Enid Charles's book, The Twilight of Parenthood, and I think you referred in your 1982 PAA presidential address ["Population, Policy, and Political Atavism," Demography, November 1982] to that period before World War II seeming to be the "twilight of fertility." ["Parenthood was thought to be descending into a twilight zone."] What a shock the baby boom was!

KANTNER: A phrase purloined in modified form, as you have recognized, from Enid Charles. The Indianapolis study was premised on the notion that the transition of American fertility was coming to a close--one more frontier closing down. The future could be glimpsed, it was supposed, in the fertility of white, married, middle-class, middle-American, urban, Protestant, women such as those that made up the Indianapolis sample. This homogeneity, along with the crude measurement of some of the crucial variables in the study, eliminated much of the variance in the sample and thus some quite plausible hypotheses received scant confirmation. But that realization came later. At the time, this appeared to be a sensible way to discover the "social and psychological factors" that determined the fertility and contraceptive behavior of women who exhibited the characteristics toward which American society was converging.

In one sense, the Indianapolis study quickly became an anachronism, but it did give birth to a series of landmark studies over the following two decades which were able to track the baby boom. These studies, the first GAF study [Growth of American Families, 1955] and the Princeton Fertility Study, were designed, in part, to address some of the perceived deficiencies--theoretical and methodological--of the Indianapolis study. They were also concerned, since demographic trends were not behaving as predicted and population projections were turning out to be embarrassingly wide of the mark even on short trajectories, to see whether fertility intentions might be a dependable substitute for demographers' intuitions. The failure of the psychological variables in the Indianapolis study to explain much of such variance as there was to be explained was particularly galling to some social scientists. A major aim of the Princeton study was to do a better job of conceptualization and measurement in this domain. The results, again, were disappointing.

VDT: A notorious case.

KANTNER: Right. So that, in a roundabout fashion, is how I got involved in fertility research.

VDT: You did your Ph.D. dissertation with Ron Freedman, based on the Indianapolis data. What was that on?

KANTNER: The study was an attempt to look at social mobility in relation to practice of contraception, desired family size, and so on.

VDT: The difference between generations of the respondents and their parents?

KANTNER: Yes, essentially that.

VDT: Jumping ahead, since we're talking about fertility, what led to the famous studies you did with Melvin Zelnik in the 1970s of teenage sexual activity, contraceptive use, and pregnancy? I'll ask you later how you got to Johns Hopkins, but now I would like to know more about those studies, based on surveys in 1971, 1976, and 1979.

KANTNER: I was still in Canada at the University of Western Ontario when Mel Zelnik and I began talking about undertaking a fertility survey. Mel had an interest in the fertility of U.S. blacks, a population that had been rather slighted in national surveys up until that time. Another group that had been insufficiently studied was the unmarried, especially young never-married females. Our thought was to find support for a national sample survey that would provide adequate representation of both of these relatively neglected groups which on the basis of fragmentary evidence, largely attitudinal rather than behavioral, were certainly not marching to the same drummer as the good ladies in Indianapolis. After some preliminary negotiation, during which time we learned that Charlie Westoff and Norman Ryder were planning another round [1970] of the National Fertility Study, this time with an over-sampling of blacks, we applied to NICHD for funds for a study of 15-to-19-year-old females, with no restriction as to marital status.

This was to be a longitudinal study and, indeed, funding was forthcoming for such a study. However, the longitudinal design had to be abandoned after one year for lack of funding, the preference at NICHD being, on advice of their study section, for a series of cross-sectional studies which, it was argued, would do the job just as well. It was an unfortunate decision which, I believe, even NICHD came to regret after a while. We put a lot of time and thought into designing the follow-up procedures and were able to locate a high proportion of our respondents one year after the initial interview. Admittedly, persons of this age with changes in residence and marital status, which then, more than now, meant a change in name, present special difficulties for a longitudinal investigation, but I believe we could have carried it off. At least the bile would not have risen so high when in later days well-intentioned critics would sometimes suggest that we could have learned more about adolescent fertility had we thought to employ a longitudinal design. As it turned out, we were able to carry out three independent surveys between 1971 and 1979 [1971, 1976, 1979].

VDT: Those surveys were extremely influential. I think they had much to do with the emphasis on teenage pregnancy. There has been nothing like them since, except the National Survey of Family Growth, which ultimately included unmarried as well as married teenaged women. Do you think there should be continuing, longitudinal studies of teenagers?

KANTNER: I am not sure that I would give that high priority. I think by this time, we probably know enough about that area for most practical purposes. There are more interesting topics about. In any case, the subject should be treated in the context of studies of changes in major social structures, such as the family and the work place. It is commonplace now, but I recall that Mel and I were as impressed by the family history data that came out of the studies--the large proportion of young women, particularly blacks, who had not lived in a stable family for major proportions of their life--as we were by the sexual and contraceptive behavior of our subjects.

VDT: You never published a book about the studies, just a series of articles?

KANTNER: We published a very good book which provided an overview of the findings from all

three surveys. Unfortunately, the publisher did a poor job of promotion. Couldn't even get a copy on display at the PAA.

VDT: What's it called?

KANTNER: Sex and Pregnancy in Adolescence, by Zelnik, Kantner, and Kathleen Ford. Published by Sage in 1982.

VDT: I'm glad to know you had a book, because that bothered me. I think it's too bad when it's not all pulled together, and I'm sorry to know it wasn't promoted. Let's go back. What did you do at the Census Bureau? You were there from 1953 to 1960.

KANTNER: That's right--seven years, but for one year when I was on leave to work in Indonesia with a Ford-financed project run out of the University of California. Well, after three years professing sociology at the College of William and Mary, I joined the Foreign Manpower Research Office, then headed by Parker Mauldin. That office was concerned with making population estimates and projections for the countries of the Soviet bloc which, as you remember, published relatively little demographic information during those early postwar years--lots of information on FYP [five-year-plan] goals and "fulfillment" of Plan objectives, but little else. Stalin's purges in the 1930s had made population counts politically inflammable and the enormous war losses, had they been fully revealed, would have shown a nation much more badly maimed than most experts realized at the time. The U.S. as well as its allies "needed to know"--in intelligence parlance--more about the size, composition, and distribution of these populations than the countries themselves were willing to reveal. There were fragments of information around--old censuses, the odd number or distribution released in a technical publication, a newspaper, or even a radio broadcast. The Bureau had a staff of translators dredging and sifting this kind of material, as did the Library of Congress and other government agencies. Frank Lorimer had made what he could out of information from the last two prewar Soviet censuses and was free to say, in that burly manner of his, that those of us were attempting to estimate current and future trends on the basis of a few scraps of information and assumptions about demographic interrelations were "chasing our tails." He may have been right. When the first postwar Soviet statistical handbook containing demographic data finally came out in 1959, it appeared as if we had underestimated the demographic costs of the war by a substantial margin; we had overestimated their postwar population by about 20 million. Perhaps we should have received the Nobel Peace Prize! Overestimating Soviet manpower resources is tantamount to ceding them a goodly number of divisions.

VDT: Did you read Russian?

KANTNER: I worked at it. I was okay on reading statistical material, notes to tables, that sort of thing, and painfully slow on text of any complexity. I probably had the most overworked dictionary around the place.

VDT: Your interest in the demography of countries other than the U.S. began with your work on the Soviet Union, but the Population Council, your next stop, must have widened your horizons further.

KANTNER: I think that's fair to say, although the year spent in Indonesia, 1957, was also a turning point. Working at the Population Council with experienced, insightful, senior colleagues like Frank Notestein, Dudley Kirk, and Marshall Balfour was a marvelous internship.

VDT: And what did you do at the Population Council?

KANTNER: To answer that I should say a word about the Council in those days, which was a much different institution than it is today. Although the Council came into being [in 1952] because of concern in certain philanthropic circles with what were perceived to be the likely negative consequences of rapid population growth in backward areas, it was not eager to jump immediately into family planning. The watchword was caution, and the program emphasized research--demographic, social science, and biological research--and training, especially the training of foreign nationals in American universities.

Frank Notestein [second president of the Population Council, 1959-68, following Frederick Osborn] was extremely sensitive to any suggestion of imperialism. I recall him warning Warren Nelson and Shelly Segal of the Council's biomedical division that no trials of new contraceptive methods should be conducted using foreign cases unless and until tests had been carried out involving U.S. subjects. Or in the realm of economic analysis, Frank was supportive of work such as that of Coale and Hoover [Population Growth and Economic Development in Low-Income Countries, 1958], but when a few years later Stephen Enke produced his cost/benefit calculations to demonstrate the economic payoff of birth control [roughly, \$1 or \$5 spent on family planning is worth as much as \$100 spent on development aid], Frank was furious, expecting--correctly, as it turned out--to catch it from professional anti-imperialists like Mahalanobis and others. He would immediately demand to know whether "any of our money went into that." And, as most everyone knew at the time, Chris Tietze, though a highly respected colleague, was housed discreetly off the premises because of his enthusiasm for abortion.

To get to your question, I helped to process grants and for a while looked after the demographic fellowship program. Dudley Kirk covered Latin America and the Caribbean; Parker Mauldin and Marshall Balfour took on Asia and the Middle East, where they both spent time. Each of them spent a fair amount of time traveling in their regions to scout out the general interest in population and opportunities for research and training. Lord knows how many short-notice lectures they gave on the demographic transition. I generally stayed at home with various kinds of paperwork, commiserating with Dorothy Nortman about the lack of glamour in our professional lives. Dorothy later broke out of her role as statistical handmaiden and developed a well-deserved reputation of her own.

One of my tasks was to work up the language that was needed for the Council's annual subvention to the UN's two demographic research and training centers at Chembur, India, and Santiago, Chile. There could not have been a job description, except of the broadest sort, to cover what any of us did. One did what came to hand unless there was someone more competent around, with time, who would not be demeaned by doing it.

It was a fascinating place to work and a good time to be there. Perhaps the most important activity that the Council ever undertook is its fellowship program. Eugenia Gale and I developed procedures for administering the program and thought up reasons to prevent its being handed over, in the name of cost-effectiveness, for administration by the Institute for International Education.

VDT: You went to Pakistan while you were with the Council. How did that happen and what did you do there?

KANTNER: Again, some background. Around 1959, General Ayub Khan, who a year or so earlier had taken over Pakistan from its foundering civilian government, signaled his interest in doing something to slow his country's rate of population growth. Marshall Balfour, an old subcontinent hand, and Paul Harper, a pediatrician and head of Hopkins' department of maternal and child health, went to Pakistan to have a look. They returned with a plan, part of which was the establishment of two research projects, one in West Pakistan, one in the East, that would test the readiness of Pakistanis to use contraception. The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health and the University of California School of Public Health were given the task of designing and organizing appropriate

projects. It was also proposed that there should be some training in population. The Punjab University in Lahore was selected as the most promising site for such a training program. My assignment was to set up the training program and, since I would be in Lahore, to make myself useful to the Hopkins project, which was located there also. I was there two years.

The "Diploma Program" at Punjab University was, at last inquiry, still in operation. The Hopkins and Berkeley projects ended around 1972, each learning much but accomplishing little with respect to finding ways to generate demand for contraception under conditions then prevailing there. John Gordon and John Wyon and later Carl Taylor were to have a similar experience in neighboring Indian Punjab. Our friends in East Pakistan, with less of a public health and more of a social science orientation, fared little better. Was it not the right time or had we somehow botched the effort? Some of each, I fear. There was no lack of commitment at the highest levels of authority, but Pakistan, despite Ayub's plan for encouraging grassroots initiative through village level "basic democracies," failed to penetrate the local community the way successful programs in Indonesia and Thailand subsequently managed to do.

VDT: The World Fertility Survey showed just 6 percent contraceptive prevalence for Pakistan in the 1970s. The Contraceptive Prevalence Survey showed 8 percent around the mid-1980s. Pakistan seems to be a tough nut to crack. Let's jump ahead to your more recent experience in Asia. You recently spent two years in India and, I believe, you are still involved there.

KANTNER: Just about the time I stepped down as chairman of the Department of Population Dynamics at Hopkins, in 1984, the Agency for International Development announced a new program for attracting academics to spend time working with their foreign missions in a variety of fields. AID had been searching for a long time without much success for ways to improve its interaction with U.S. universities. Their new idea was an adaptation of the time-honored Interagency Personnel Agreement [IPA], which provides a mechanism for university faculty to spend time with government agencies working on projects of mutual interest. University demographers have used this device, for example, to work on special projects at the Bureau of the Census. The only thing new in AID's case is that the basic IPA legislation is being used to recruit academics to work in their missions overseas, with very loosely defined responsibilities. Collectively this group of academic sojourners is known as the Joint Career Corps. It's a sound idea, it seems to me, and is meant to be reciprocal, in that it is supposed to work in reverse, with AID personnel spending time at the Joint Career Corps' university. This side of the scheme has not been notably successful.

So with AID paying my salary to Hopkins, we left for India. After looking over the situation and discussing with AID officials their priorities, I settled on three major activities. One was to assist the Registrar General in getting U.S. funding for staff training and for modernizing his data-processing capacity. In doing this, AID was able to arrange for help from our Census Bureau and from the East-West Population Institute. My role, at most, was that of a go-between.

A second activity was to find ways of providing funds for India's population research centers, most of which lack many of the basic facilities and resources that one would expect to find in such places. The proposal that I drafted has passed through many hands and has still not been approved by all parties at the same time. All parties, both on the Indian and the U.S. side, have approved it at one time or another, but there is such a game of musical chairs among our bureaucrats and theirs that this proposal, like many others, has become something of an administrative greased pig. After I left, Warren Robinson, my successor in the Joint Career Corps, tried to wrap things up and even invited me back to revise the proposal. Warren too has now gone and still nothing has been finally settled. Nothing out of the ordinary in this, but it does take a love of foreign living to assuage the frustration.

Finally, I was invited to write a piece for the AID mission, essentially to describe the demographic situation in India and the measures that were being and had been undertaken to slow the

rate of growth. I produced a small report and am still at work on an expanded and updated revision with an Indian colleague.

VDT: Let's skip back to why you left the Population Council and why you went to the University of Western Ontario [in 1965], which seems to have been a sea change.

KANTNER: Foundation life is not for everyone, nor is it what some of us wanted for the long haul. Dave Yaukey, a veteran of the Pakistan campaign, had an office next to mine at the Council. We fed each other's sense of being displaced persons from academia. Dave left first, which only increased my determination to do likewise. Nothing strange about this. Dudley Kirk left a few years later, then Tom Burch, Allan Rosenfield, others. What is strange, perhaps, is that I went to Canada [as did Tom Burch]. But before I get into that, you should understand that some of us felt we were on the wrong side of the table. The scholars who came to the Council seeking funds for research--in those days, the Council was an important funding source--were those who were having the fun. We got our kicks, to the extent we did, vicariously--the satisfaction of having had enough sense to recognize a good idea.

When I left William and Mary for the Census Bureau, the idea that I would eventually return to academic life was merely postponed, never abandoned. I went to look at the opening at Western Ontario because the people there were both persistent and persuasive. I remember not feeling perfectly clean about the trip, because the possibility of accepting a position there, if one were offered, seemed so remote. Obviously, I liked what I saw: a strong economics department that wanted an equally strong program in population, there being no such program in population at the time in Canada except at the Universite de Montreal. The commitment from the university president on down appeared solid and the virtually carte-blanche opportunity had great appeal.

When I told Parker Mauldin I was leaving the Population Council and going to this place he said, "Oh, come on. Let's go see Frank," so we went to see Frank Notestein. Frank at that time was trying to give up smoking and he was nervous and fidgety and this was one more problem he didn't need. He looked out his office window up Park Avenue and said, "I hate see you leave, but I really hate to see you leave for a secondary place." I think he thought that would deter me, but I liked what I saw in Canada. We stayed there three years and would no doubt have stayed longer but for personal matters that were developing "South of the border"--as you Canadians sometimes refer to the U.S. And, of course, the opportunity to join some of my old friends in expanding the population program at Hopkins was an inducement.

VDT: Coming out of the cold Canadian winter . . .

KANTNER: Ah, yes. I went to look at the Hopkins job in the spring when the azaleas were in bloom, the boxwood getting pungent, and birds bouncing on the campus lawn. Back in London, Ontario, it was still slate gray--perhaps a few wild onions in the front yard.

VDT: Before we leave Canada, could you tell me more about the early development of the population program at Western. Being Canadian, I'm proud of what they've built up there, and you feel you had a hand in that?

KANTNER: I think I did. I was first chairman of their department of sociology. We started off as part of the department of economics while plans were going forward for a department of sociology, which was to be the primary home for teaching and research in population. Richard Osborn, now at the University of Toronto, was the first on the scene. Within a short time, there were four of us whose primary interests were in population: Osborn from Brown, T.R. Balakrishnan, a Keralian with a Ph.D. from Michigan, Jack Allingham from Australian National University, and myself from here and there.

Of that group, only Bala remains at Western. Allingham, who was priming himself to be a second Chris Tietze, went off to McMaster for a medical degree and was claimed by medicine--a real loss to the field.

The build-up continued apace: recent Ph.D.s and a few ABDS [all-but-dissertation] from U.S. universities: Carl Greinstadt and Peter Morrison from Brown, George Jarvis from Michigan, Charles Nobbe from the University of Washington, Ian Pool from New Zealand, and Ed Pryor from Brown. It was a sellers' market then; difficult to hire and to hang onto good people. We were extremely fortunate to be able to get such fine young--as they mostly were then--scholars. After a year, we lost Peter to Penn, which shortly lost him to Rand; Pool was lured off to Cornell; and, eventually, Nobbe and Pryor went off to Ottawa for jobs with CIDA and Statistics Canada. But the commitment and the opportunity were there and growth continued. We were at the same time trying to build a program in sociology so that the intake of new population faculty had to be balanced with broader requirements.

We received great support in our efforts from the head of the department of economics, who was a master at academic politics, and from that grand institutional impresario, Albert Trueman, who came to Western as dean from the Canada Council. After I had decamped for Hopkins [in 1968], the department continued to expand. Canada was going through a silly period of nationalism in the early 1970s, which made it difficult to hire American scholars trained at U.S. universities. I recall protesting this policy vigorously to the Canadian Anthropological and Sociological Association. I sent them what I regarded as a masterful letter, pointing out how American universities had been strengthened by European imports and European models. In return they sent me a dues notice! Nevertheless, Western was able to bring in some excellent people: Tom Burch from the Population Council, Kevin McQuillan and Rod Beaujot, authors of Growth and Dualism: Canada's Population [1982]. I can't take a lot of credit for the ultimate achievement, but I was there at the creation. Perhaps the greatest personal satisfaction came some years later when two Western graduate students received the Dorothy Thomas award at the PAA meetings in Washington [1981].

VDT: As I told you, I take a sort of maternal pride in it too. Rod Beaujot wrote the Population Bulletin on "Canada's Population: Growth and Dualism" [April 1978] when I was Bulletin editor at the Population Reference Bureau and then went on to become sort of "Mr. Canada Population" and wrote that book of almost the same title with Kevin McQuillan.

KANTNER: I should say a word about population research at Western. Since we were offering a master's degree, we needed to have some research going on around the place. Incidentally, as a Canadian you will remember the Robarts fellowships which the Ontario government provided on a very liberal basis for master's level training. Though a Ph.D. in demography is now offered by the department of sociology at Western, in the early years when there were just a few of us, we did not aspire that high. The strategy was to send our graduate students off to institutions south of the border with a solid grounding in the fundamentals of demography.

In any case, Allingham, Balakrishnan, and I sought and got funding for a fertility survey which was carried out in Toronto. As we note in the introduction to the book that came out of the study [Fertility and Family Planning in a Canadian Metropolis, 1975], the accustomed mode of demographic study in Canada had been the analysis of secondary data from official statistical agencies. Such statistics steer clear of the subject of contraception and neglect relevant dimensions of fertility such as birth spacing, desired family size, and the social and psychological context. Perhaps because Canadian fertility was falling in the 1960s and French Canada was declaring its determination to win "the battle of the cradle," the Canada Council bought the case we put up to them and awarded us \$67,000 to get on with it. When this grant was announced along with other Canada Council awards at a board meeting of the Canadian Anthropology and Sociology Association at which I was present, there were murmurs of surprise and whistles of incredulity. Small as that amount might seem today or even by

comparison with what was being spent even then in the U.S. on fertility surveys, it was then an unprecedentedly large amount for the Council to put out for a social science investigation. The eventual goal we had in mind was a survey of national scope, but as you know that took some years to arrange. It eventually did come about [in the mid-1980s] and Balakrishnan is one of the principal investigators.

VDT: Now let's go on to Hopkins, where you went in 1968. You say that grew out of the contacts you had made with the Hopkins project in Pakistan.

KANTNER: That was part of it. Paul Harper was chairman of a fairly new department of Population and Family Health, part of the Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. It is not easy to sell someone accustomed to the sheltered existence of a liberal arts faculty on the rough-and-tumble of a school of public health. Paul had been unsuccessful in his approaches to several well-known demographers to head up the demographic part of his program. Mel Zelnik was there handling the basic courses in population. His efforts were augmented by Margaret Bright, by Peter Newman who came over from the economics department to lecture on population economics, and most interestingly by outside lecturers, notably Frank Notestein and Irene Taeuber. In addition, some of the biostatisticians in Reed's old department considered one of their primary interests to be vital statistics. There was a good bit of basic demography in the introductory course in biostatistics, which virtually all of our students took. Population ecology was taught in the Department of Pathobiology and the Department of International Health dealt with the practical side of health delivery, including family planning. It was an interesting smorgasbord, but lacked the coherence and continuity needed for a serious graduate program.

After he got things reasonably bedded down in terms of staff and funding, Paul Harper stepped down as chairman. Henry Mosley, also a physician, was recruited to succeed Harper. Mosley stayed only a short time, being wooed away to take over as director of the Cholera Research Lab--now the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease--in Bangladesh. The search for a new chair dragged on for almost two years while I served as acting chairman, spending part of my time in Bud [Oscar] Harkavy's office at the Ford Foundation in New York. I was seriously considering joining the Ford Foundation's India program until a new, no-nonsense dean arrived at the School of Public Health, found our search committee in a state of stymie, and, in effect, gave me a battlefield commission as chairman of the Department of Population Dynamics; that was around 1976 or 77. There is obviously a lot more to any such story, but that will suffice. It was around this time also that we started the Population Center.

VDT: How is that distinct from the Population Dynamics Department?

KANTNER: That has never been easy to explain. There was certainly a great deal of overlap, but essentially the Center was useful as a device for melding the varied population interests found around the university: in sociology (Lois Verbrugge and, later on, Andrew Cherlin and Portes), in economics (Newman), in behavioral sciences (Bright), and in ob/gyn and urology, where there were researchers working in collaboration with the reproductive biologists in population dynamics. As I was told, it was Jim Coleman's idea to give all of this dispersed activity some greater collective concreteness through a university-wide Committee on Population--the forerunner of the Population Center. The Hopkins Population Center was one of the original group of NICHD-sponsored centers. All of the population centers established at schools of public health have had teething problems, some of melodramatic proportions. Ours were mild by comparison, but we were confusing to the outside world. When I finally left Hopkins for India, Jim McCarthy took over as director of the Population Center and Henry Mosley returned as chair of the Department of Population Dynamics. That perhaps clarified the

situation somewhat, as compared to the same person--me--with two hats.

Somewhat earlier, a potentially greater confusion was headed off when AID proposed setting up a "Population Center" to house Phyllis Piotrow's highly successful Population Information Program and the related Population Communication Services program. AID has a penchant for structures that mirror its own program categories, but these are often ill-suited to the way universities are organized and function. Most AID people know universities only from having been students; few have worked in them as faculty.

VDT: Before we get away from Hopkins, what about Raymond Pearl? He was a powerhouse at Hopkins and in the field back in the 1930s. What legacy did he leave at Hopkins?

KANTNER: So far as the current work in population is concerned, it's as if he had never been there. His measure of contraceptive prevalence is presented in courses dealing with the evaluation of family planning programs only to be dismissed for its deficiencies. During his time at Hopkins, he stirred up a lot of resentment, according to Elizabeth Fee, his biographer, for the way he used his prestige and reputation to leverage the allocation of university resources in his favor. Quite the opposite of his collaborator Lowell Reed, who is remembered with great fondness and respect, except perhaps by the students unfortunate enough to live in Reed Hall.

As a scientist, Pearl was out of the same general mold as his contemporaries, men such as Corrado Gini, Karl Pearson, and Thomas Huxley, who were captivated by biologicistic theories of behavior. This was--and in some quarters still is--a congenial scientific paradigm at a place like Hopkins where the laboratory sciences are the jewels in the crown. One shouldn't make too much of the Hopkins connection, however. Biological and evolutionary interpretations were in the "air" that the scientific community was then breathing. Some years ago, when I was introduced to the then chairman of the Department of Biostatistics at Hopkins, one of Reed's successors, he wore a white lab smock. While it undoubtedly spared the elbows of the mufti much as the rest of us wore, I believe there is a less functional interpretation. I suspect there was not only the scientific appeal of biological mechanisms, but also a certain mystique about them that appealed deeply to those born-again Darwinians. Pearl's logistic curve not only described the growth of confined populations of *drosophila* [fruit flies], but suggested a natural law to which--quite fortuitously, it turned out--human populations seemed to conform. The logistic curve looked pretty good as a predictor of the U.S. population during Pearl's lifetime.

VDT: May I ask about the leading influences in your career? Obviously there was Ron Freedman, and you also mentioned Amos Hawley and Frank Notestein.

KANTNER: There are, of course, known and unknown influences. I've often wondered about the unknown influences that might have operated either positively or negatively. But with respect to influences of which I am aware, Ron Freedman was certainly an important one. Ron was a role model back before there was that unfortunate term for someone that was worthy of emulation. I remember relatively little of what he taught me in a formal sense, but I have always admired his approach to things--his equanimity, his broad perspective, and overall judgment and good sense. At many junctures in my career, these qualities which I found in Ron have served as a touchstone in choosing a course of action or a response to a difficult situation.

Amos Hawley gave me an abiding idea of what the social sciences should attempt to be. Many others also appreciated Amos for his steady view of social organization and the proper business of the science of mankind, as witness his becoming president of the American Sociological Association [for 1978] on a write-in nomination.

Frank Notestein represented a bulwark against hucksterism in the application of knowledge to

societal problems. International population assistance as offered to the underdeveloped countries by this country would have had a less stormy time of it, certainly, and might well have been more influential had some of Frank's circumspection been observed.

Strange as it might seem, since in some ways his views were the antipode of Frank's, I have found Kingsley Davis a pivotal figure. I don't have reference to his work on India [The Population of India and Pakistan, 1951], although that has been of lasting value, but to the fact that he has been consistently sociological in his viewpoint. Even when he has been mistaken, as in my view he was in some of his conclusions regarding abortion and contraception, he works with a logico-deductive method reminiscent of the Durkheimian tradition. It is good to be reminded occasionally of the utility of sociological theory.

VDT: And yet, as you said earlier, it was not sociological theory or even intellectual challenge that led you to study teenage pregnancy.

KANTNER: It needed to be studied for a host of practical reasons. It is the kind of research that is a good fit to the mission orientation of a school of public health. Where Zelnik and I ran into difficulty was in trying to limit our involvement to the facts of the matter and not to become involved in advocacy or prescription. As we became known for having specialized knowledge of the sexual and contraceptive behavior of young American females, we were frequently expected to make policy recommendations or prescribe a program of action. We were, Zelnik and I, old-fashioned in our notions about the proper division between science and advocacy. I recall one conference we attended when our unwillingness to make the leap from our data to advocacy of abortion on demand for young women was decried as rank defection by some of our respected friends at the Alan Guttmacher Institute. Fred Jaffe, one of the best in the advocacy business, was, I believe, stunned by such public pussyfooting.

VDT: That's a perennial question at PAA meetings--the extent to which demographers should become involved in policymaking. There is more and more pressure in that direction.

KANTNER: As much as they please--is my answer. Only be clear about where the science leaves off and opinion takes over.

VDT: In your PAA presidential address of 1982 ["Population, Policy, and Political Atavism"], you were pessimistic about the status and support of federal demographic statistics-gathering in the U.S. at that time. That was early in the Reagan administration and there was a lot of budget-tightening. You also criticized the UNFPA for downgrading the gathering of statistics in less developed countries among its priorities. And you were critical of the revisionist view of population growth and economic development, à la Julian Simon, and this was before the 1984 Mexico City population conference, when the U.S., pushed by anti-abortion forces, turned around in population policy, declaring that population growth is a neutral factor in economic development, free-market strategies were most important, and eventually the U.S. cut off funding of the IPPF and UNFPA. What do you think about all that now?

KANTNER: On the whole, the Reagan and now the Bush administrations have not appeared as champions of the federal statistical system. One might suspect them of harboring the view that what you don't know can't hurt you. The intrusion of politics into government statistical policy appears to be every bit as bad as I had feared. A particularly telling case was the decision to chuck out the work that the Bureau of the Census had done on undercount adjustment in favor of a heads-in-the-sand policy. Democratic mayors of big cities versus Republican interests of the suburbs? Crude but credible.

On the other hand, we've gotten better organized on the other side. The PAA can take pride in the leading role it took in the founding of COPAFS, the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics. Under the able direction of Katherine Wollman, that organization keeps a weather eye out for torpedoes launched by OMB and other Luddite organizations. Awareness and protest help ward off some of the most flagrant attacks on the integrity of the system, but the ultimate solution has to be political, since federal statistics are part of the power game. It's not all undercount and ethnic representation in the U.S. either. You must remember AID's attempts to cook the data on the birth rates in some of the less developed countries where they had made large investments in family planning. Eternal vigilance is necessary, for the barbarians are forever at the gates.

The criticism of Simon's work [The Ultimate Resource, 1981] in my presidential address was unfortunate. It was too salient at the time to ignore on such an occasion, especially as the asserted "neutrality" of population in human affairs was being outrageously exploited by political opponents of international population assistance like Senator Buckley and certain political appointees in the State Department. To be silent on the matter went too much against my nature, but I could have handled it better. The shabby treatment of Richard Benedick later at the time of the Mexico City meetings didn't help my equanimity. [Benedick, Coordinator of Population Affairs in the State Department at the time, a leader in preparations for the Mexico City conference, and "an outspoken advocate of family planning programs and the need for the U.S. government to continue its leadership role," was not named head of the U.S. delegation as widely expected. Former Senator James Buckley was named instead, "largely on the basis of his personal (anti-abortion) views on the matter and his acceptability to right-to-life groups." From Jason L. Finkle and Barbara B. Crane, "Ideology and Politics at Mexico City: The United States at the 1984 International Conference on Population," Population and Development Review, March 1985.]

The argument is a silly one, in any case. Given the little that is known for certain about the interrelationships between population growth and social and economic change under the myriad conditions where this drama is played out, there are few fixed stars to set sail by. An open mind at Mexico City would have done credit to our delegation. Instead, when the astonishment passed, we became a laughing stock.

VDT: What do you think of the 1986 National Academy of Sciences study [Population Growth and Economic Development: Policy Questions], which came out very neutral?

KANTNER: I would regard it as balanced rather than "neutral." The word "neutral" is politically loaded. The point is not whether this issue can be settled in general or even whether it makes sense to try to resolve it in global terms--I think it does not. The real issue is one of political doctrine. Under Ray Ravenholt we had a doctrinaire position at AID [pushing U.S. family planning assistance to less developed countries] that General Custer might have admired; at Mexico City our position was again doctrinaire, but in the other direction. Banners need not be unfurled in setting policy for international assistance. An informed pragmatism will do to give it direction; there is sufficient decency, compassion, and altruism in the basic American value system to give it commitment. We should be done with false doctrines.

VDT: Yet the issue of "revisionism" stays with us and has overshadowed PAA meetings almost ever since it came up in the early 1980s. The NAS study was criticized at the time for leaning toward Simon.

KANTNER: Well, I have given my view on the merits of this issue. In my reading of scientific advance, issues of a general paradigmatic nature are rarely resolved; scientific interest shifts elsewhere. If I were teaching students these days, I might assign them an article I read the other day [in 1988] by

Hans Binswanger and McIntyre--this was in Economic Development and Cultural Change--that traces out in hypothetical fashion the intricate, non-recursive pathways between population growth and economic structure. I would then ask on my pop quiz whether, in view of what they had read, population growth should be regarded as negative, neutral, or positive--I would assign Ester Boserup too. I would give an A for laughter--extra points for a Bronx cheer--and would consider, from the less expressive, the equivalent of, "Surely you jest, sir!" In any case, all is forgiven since Julian Simon asked me, "How many supply-siders are necessary to change a light bulb?" The answer, which you've probably anticipated, is, "None. The market takes care of it."

VDT: Before we get onto PAA, let me ask what accomplishments in your career have given you the most satisfaction? You mentioned your pride in being in on the ground floor in the development of the population program at the University of Western Ontario. What else?

KANTNER: Well, I would have to mention my association with Mel Zelnik on the teenage studies. The topic as such was not one with great intellectual interest for me, but the challenge of getting dependable data on a problem of social importance had its own rewards. I was fortunate to have a colleague with the high standards of craftsmanship that Mel brought to the collaboration. Because of its social salience, it's an area that attracts what my Indian friends might call "premature-conclusion wallas." We were lucky in having Dick Lincoln as editor of Family Planning Perspectives to act as a "fence" for the material we produced, so that it got out quickly to those who wanted it. There were some tense moments over matters of language, slant, and emphasis, but overall it was a productive relationship--with respect to both sides of the science-advocacy line.

VDT: What other satisfactions?

KANTNER: I think any academic to whom you put that question would be bound to mention the occasional student who turned out well, whether or not you can claim credit for it. Some good ones came my way. The better they were, the less I had to do with how they turned out.

VDT: Now on PAA. Do you remember when you first joined and your first meeting?

KANTNER: I joined as a student member while still at Michigan. My first meeting probably was at Princeton--1950? The Association was small enough in those days to meet at a place like the Princeton Inn and to meet only in plenary session.

VDT: Everyone speaks lovingly about the Princeton Inn. Did you both stay there and have meetings there? [Meeting participants all stayed at the Princeton Inn, but the sessions were held elsewhere on the Princeton campus--McCormick Hall in 1950.]

KANTNER: We certainly stayed there. I remember luxuriating as the sole occupant of a double room and waking in the morning to find an unexpected roommate--one Charles Nam. Later we were to work together in the same office at the Bureau of the Census. When Charlie got caught in the downdraft of the RIF [reduction in force] instituted by the Eisenhower administration, I was one of several who recognized his ability and suggested he go off and get some more initials to put after his name. The rest is--a subject of one of your future interviews, no doubt.

The next meeting was, I believe, at the University of North Carolina [1951], which may have been one of the last of the meetings when we all met together. [Double sessions first appeared at the 1956 meeting at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.] Phil Hauser was president that year. I remember his address, which he arranged to have given by his esteemed Chicago colleague, William

Ogburn [on "Population and Social Change"]. Not that Phil didn't use the opportunity to speak his piece also. It may have been the only PAA presidential address with any poetry in it. Quoting W.H. Auden, Phil cautioned that, "Thou shalt in no wise associate with advertising guys, nor commit a social science." Not only was that a favorite line of mine also, but I was to remember it many times in subsequent years in connection with our work on teenage fertility and in coming into contact with the information-education-communication "specialists that abound abroad. For some, the word "specialist" partakes of professional legitimacy, as in medicine. I am old enough to remember Chick Sale.

VDT: What else comes to you in remembering some of those early meetings?

KANTNER: Racial discrimination at the Carolina meeting. One of our black colleagues was refused admission to the Carolina Inn. More favorable recollections are of the debates, which seemed almost titanic to us novitiates, with Frank Notestein, Frank Lorimer, and Kingsley Davis rising to argue on fundamental conceptual matters, with all registered members in attendance--not today's proliferation of simultaneous sessions strung out along the carpeted corridors of some look-alike hotel. There was Frank Lorimer, with his booming, burlap voice, which must have served him well in the pulpits of his earlier days, blazing away at someone's intellectual waywardness. There was the other Frank calling someone to task, but with such finesse and such sighs of regret and suggested extenuations that the victim may not have recognized immediately that he had been deprived of his trousers. Some great theater!

Remember, the theory of the demographic transition was still relatively new and intact and we still hadn't figured out how to look at the determinants of fertility or even how to decompose a fertility trend. But the analytical frameworks were being put in place, and that was heady: the demographic transition; Davis and Blake's intermediate variables framework, in 1956--I thought that was dynamite; and the Coale-Hoover study, which was another landmark in the late 1950s. The patterns were being laid that were followed up on subsequently. I don't see anything of that quality around these days. Maybe they're there and I'm not aware of them.

VDT: You think all the major frameworks have been put in place? What about migration? That hasn't been your field, but we have Everett Lee's . . .

KANTNER: That, as Everett acknowledged in presenting it ["A Theory of Migration," Demography, 1966], was a reworking and systematization of Ravenstein's propositions. I found it useful in teaching, but it didn't touch off a train of research as did Sam Stouffer's theory of intervening opportunities, perhaps because Stouffer's theory came earlier when there were graduate students around looking for something testable in a field that had been largely descriptive. Perhaps a more adventurous attempt to fashion migration theory was Zelinski's formulation of a migration transition, linking patterns of migration to states and stages of social development, an idea that could be seen as an extension of some of R.D. McKenzie's early ideas about how populations come to terms with their environment, given the technology and organization available to them. Certainly, I don't believe any field arrives at the state where all that is left is filling in the blank spaces of earlier frameworks.

It would be interesting to identify the major frameworks in our field and trace their development--and attempt to see ahead. I would expect new directions to rise from the interstices between the fraying edges of established disciplines and out of efforts at historical reconstruction, such as the Princeton European Fertility Project. A parallel account of the major methodological developments that have made us better able to grasp our subject--Coale and Brass's work in the 1960s, for example--would be valuable. I am thinking of something that would be more particularistic and on a less grand scale than Dudley Duncan's admirable book [Notes on Social Measurement: Historical and

Critical, 1984]. Something to do in retirement, eh?--as you Canadians say.

VDT: What do you see as the outlook for demography in the U.S.? In a sense you've answered that in saying that you expect fresh perspectives to come not from mainline demography but along the lines of contact between disciplines and out of the work in historical demography.

KANTNER: On the substantive side, yes. But in the area of application and methodological innovation there seems to be an open field. One of the fastest growing areas in demography, I would suspect, is the application of demographic knowledge and technique to business planning and public administration. We have a new term in the last several years, "demographics," which is the commercial world's jargon for the essential demographic information it needs to go venturing. Demographic information makes good copy not just for those who may want to risk a buck but also for the serious reading public that wants to know more about the reeling world they live in. The success of American Demographics is an indication of this interest. In Canada where free-market orthodoxy is less canonized than it is here, Statistics Canada puts out a publication based on their enormous data base that would not look out of place on any magazine rack; none of your "Queen's Printer" drabness. I can't resist noting that this publishing venture in Ottawa was the brainchild of Ed Pryor, who followed me as head of the department at Western Ontario.

Coming back home, as we return to a more responsible position regarding the need for government statistics, the market for demographers in government service should be bullish. The receptivity accorded the briefings organized by the PAA [through the Population Resource Center] for leaders in government and business is an indication of the demand for the kind of information that demographers are trained to dispense.

On another front, it seems obvious that the decennial census is inadequate to the needs of a complex, fast-evolving nation. The long-denied quinquennial [mid-decade] census may not be feasible, but the need will have to be met. Imagine taking pictures of your grandchildren only at ten-year intervals!

In higher education, there are opportunities for some important academic missionizing. Any social science department that doesn't offer its students solid work in substantive and technical demography is shortchanging them. The limits and potentials of social organization are set by population parameters, not deterministically but in terms of a matrix of possibilities. I've been away from the textbook market for a while, but the last time I looked at it there was little to choose from that would do the job that needs to be done. Some do a reasonable job of bringing social and economic factors to bear on population, but do less well in tracing out relations in the other field. Too much demographic theorizing in recent times has assumed a timeless, placeless setting, with no limits to demographic response except in terms of estimated elasticities.

Population education at the secondary level of education is important for an informed electorate. What I've seen of population education tends to put my teeth on edge. It is mostly concerned with conditioning students to recognize the individual and collective need for family planning while not saying so directly. Perhaps PAA should take a close look at what needs to be done in this area.

VDT: Since you're working on India, what hope is there for India really getting down to replacement fertility and population stabilization? Do you believe, for instance, the World Bank's latest projections that show China still in first place in 2100? Their earlier projections showed India surpassing China by 2025. What do you think?

KANTNER: They will undoubtedly run neck-and-neck in the next century. But as Frank Notestein might have said, sucking on the temples of his glasses and sighing impatiently, "Does it--the

difference--really matter?" Their rates of growth are important, of course. But which comes out on top for the dubious honor of being the largest will merely be fodder for the journalists of the day.

On the question of India's rate of growth, there are parts of India--Kerala, areas in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Punjab--where fertility has declined impressively. The problem stems essentially from the failure of the northern states that make up the Hindi belt to follow suit. An increase in demand for contraception, already evident in urban areas and in parts of the south, can be expected to develop elsewhere in India, perhaps more rapidly than many now would expect. When and if that does happen, it will be essential to have a good family planning program in place. In spite of years of effort, I am afraid it must be acknowledged that the efforts of the government in this regard have been enormously disappointing. There is no shortage of trenchant diagnoses of what is wrong with the government's program, but in this area, as in many other areas in which the government is engaged, they seem not to know how to deal with their own people. One could say that about the Chinese also, except there the leadership is not as restrained by the norms of democratic society.

VDT: A final question. You're living in this beautiful house, built in the 1870s. Tell me why you moved to Bedford, Pennsylvania.

KANTNER: Chiefly because we didn't want to live in a large urban area. Jane and I feel at home here. We both grew up nearby and we have had a summer place in the mountains near here that is the psychological epicenter for our widely scattered family. So much as we have a repository for shared memories, this is it. In addition, I enjoy the sense of closure that a small town like Bedford has. As someone observed, in a place like this when someone you meet on the street asks how you are, they wait for your answer.

And I'm quite busy, professionally as well, in other ways. I've just been named president of this year's [1988] Bedford Springs Music Festival; that happens every summer.

VDT: You mentioned that you have the musical son, the flutist, with the Grand Rapids, Michigan, orchestra. Are you yourself musical?

KANTNER: I used to be a jazz musician, years ago--the trumpet. I still get it out occasionally. Though I am sometimes chagrined by not having my own fax number and some of the other stigmata of professional engagement, serve as my own secretary, pay my own way to professional meetings, drive a couple of hours to the nearest good library, have a book budget that must compete with the grocery list--je suis content.

Obituary: John 'Jack' Frederick Kantner, 88, Pioneer in Family Planning Studies

By Tim Parsons
School of Public Health

John "Jack" Frederick Kantner, professor emeritus, died Feb. 3 at the age of 88. Kantner came to Johns Hopkins in 1968 as a professor in the School of Public Health's Department of Population Dynamics, which is now part of the [Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health](#). He served as chair of the department from 1976 to 1985.

During his time at Johns Hopkins, Kantner joined colleague Melvin Zelnik in conducting in 1971 the first national survey of adolescent fertility and contraceptive use. "No one had ever studied the behaviors of young unmarried women before," said Laurie Schwab Zabin, who was a student of Kantner's and is now a professor in Population, Family and Reproductive Health. "The government found their findings to be so surprising that they funded two more surveys. Today, this kind of research is done all the time." Zabin used Kantner and Zelnik's data for her own initial research.



John Kantner in an undated photo

Zabin added, "Jack was a very supportive and engaging person who gave a lot of his life to the support of family planning worldwide."

Kantner's early work was devoted to improving international family planning and reproductive health programs, particularly in developing countries. While working in the field, he aimed to figure out how to make family planning and reproductive health programs of the 1950s and 1960s work and how to encourage health systems to perform better. Beginning in 1957, he spent many years in Southeast Asia, first in Indonesia as an adviser from the University of California, Berkeley, and later working in Pakistan with the Population Council and in India with the Ford Foundation and USAID. While living in Canada in the 1960s, he helped found the University of Western Ontario's first Department of Sociology. Kantner, along with colleagues T.R. Balakrishnan and Jack Allingham, organized the first fertility and reproductive health survey ever undertaken in Canada. The study, conducted in Toronto from 1966 to 1967, resulted in the publication of *Fertility and Family Planning in a Canadian Metropolis*.

Kantner received his bachelor's degree in sociology from Franklin and Marshall College in 1942 and served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in Europe during World War II. He earned his doctorate in sociology from the University of Michigan in 1953. He began his career compiling and analyzing international demographic information from Eastern Europe and Russia for the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In addition to Johns Hopkins, Kantner also held academic appointments at the College of William and Mary and the University of Western Ontario. He was president of the Population Association of America in 1982 and wrote several books on population issues. He wrote his latest book with his son Andrew.

Kantner had a lifelong passion for music, according to his family. He played trumpet during his college years with a touring jazz band and later, during World War II, with the U.S. Army Special Services Band. Upon retiring to Bedford, Penn., in 1986, he was active in the Bedford Springs Music Festival, and he served as president of the festival for two years.

Kantner is survived by his wife, the former Jane Boose; his children, Andrew Kantner, Josie Kantner Smith, Chris Kantner and his wife, Cynthia Burger, and Julie Kantner and her husband, David Claffey; and five grandchildren.

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POPULATION, POLICY, AND POLITICAL ATAVISM*

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LOOKING BACKWARD

At our last annual gathering, on the occasion of our 50th anniversary, the mood was celebratory, congratulatory, confident—or so I remember it. As a professional association, we had lived to a zesty middle age, our numbers increasing and our voice heard more often throughout the land. Not chiefly because there were more of us to be heard; rather, the reversal in the postwar period of the magnetic fields governing demographic events called out for interpretation, for explanation, for prognosis, and we found we had an audience.

Students of today may not appreciate the extent to which the book was being closed on demographic questions in the years before World War II. Parenthood was thought to be descending into a twilight zone; the economics of a declining population and the difficulty of keeping a mature economy from settling into chronic stagnation without the stimulus of investment promoting demographic growth were the besetting problems of serious minds. Even that center stage event of the period for demographers, the Indianapolis study, had about it the sense of a closing era. The white, Protestant, monotonously monogamous, educated middle class from back home in Indiana seemed to have reached the end of the fertility trail-off. It is aesthetically pleasing, perhaps, that this classic study of what then appeared to be the beginning of the end of the demographic transition in America took place near the

nation's demographic epicenter—in the corn fields of Indiana. All seemed to be proceeding predictably.

But events of the postwar years changed all that. An era of affluence brought on unaccustomed levels of reproduction in the United States which defied ready explanation. Seemingly radical changes in family-building practices opened a new chapter of demographic inquiry. Just as Middletown was revisited to mark our changing ways, so in a way was Indianapolis. But this time Main Street was stretched across the entire nation and eventually widened to six lanes in a series of ever expanding national fertility surveys, from which it soon became evident that we had put paid to our fertility account prematurely.

At the same time, in far-off lands laid waste by war, peace and public health restored demographic vigor to populations badly mauled by the war. Mortality rates fell to levels that required demographers to adopt a new mind set toward vital trends. Having only a highly inferential understanding of the causes of an earlier mortality decline in the West, demographers were confronted suddenly with a telescoped mortality transition in the traditional lands of pestilence and famine.

To avert what many feared would be a Malthusian apocalypse of war, pestilence, famine and allied vices and miseries, nations in gradually increasing numbers, sometimes goaded by their forward foreign friends, called upon their under-achieving bureaucracies to do something about population growth. Rapid population growth was seen as a threat to the social order rather than as an affirmation

* Presented as the Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, San Diego, California, April 30, 1982.

of the vigor and vitality of the people. Most demographers, then as now, have seen the problem of rapid population growth, both its determinants and consequences, in its full complexity. However, few of us made more than mild protest as the profession was borne to prominence on a Malthusian tide of alarm. The rhetorical build-up, the proliferation of organizations, and the mobilization of resources which resulted makes a fascinating chapter in the history of human adaptation—in this case adaptation to the perceived threat of rapid population growth.

In this war against rapid population growth, truth often fell before expediency. The problem was presented in oversimplified terms, as were the solutions. The campaign to bring down birth rates went slowly, and it began to look like a long struggle. With their troops mired down in foreign lands, the generals in New York and London prayed for a success, anywhere, even if it had to be in the Chinese perimeter of Asia. At last there were signs of change in the hoped-for direction. Not always in response to what in its current reification is called "program effort" but a sign nevertheless. In some quarters, the initial reaction to these successes was to declare that the war was won, or about to be. On an occasion such as this some 20 years ago, victory or at least its sweet foretaste was proclaimed. About 10 years later the State Department, which measures progress from the time of its entry to the field, brought in its program officers from around the world to announce that with respect to the struggle to bring down birth rates the next 10 years involved only mopping up operations—the significant battles having been won. Heady times those, and something in it for everyone—the activist, the scholar, the foundation officer, the globe-circling consultant, the wait-listed government official. World conferences, a Population Year, commissions, select committees, new centers for research and training, a

growing supply of experts, pronouncements by world leaders and, most of all, money—lots of it. As much of it at any rate as seemed necessary, for, as conventional wisdom had it then, population control was an outstanding bargain and required only a few cents of the investment dollar. Money, one used to hear, was not a problem.

It couldn't last—and it didn't. Things are not the same. There has been a sea change. McNicoll and Nag (1982) may not have located our position on the list of public concerns precisely when they put it somewhere between ocean mining and acid rain, but they are accurate as to direction. As they observe: "Few public issues are as dead as is last year's crisis. From a high point some 10 to 15 years ago, intellectual concern about population growth waned. . . . The massive and continuously global transformation wrought by modern demographic change receives the same scant and short-lived attention as a newfound 'firewood crisis' or the disappearance of the Peruvian anchovies" (p. 121). I am not proposing here to search for the causes of this change in the way the population problem is regarded. I *am* concerned with tracing some of the reversals the field has suffered and is suffering and to ask what we ought to be doing about it.

Our present difficulties are manifold and of varied and complex origins. They include attempts to limit organized population control activities by attacks on the intellectual foundations that have provided a major part of the rationale for such efforts, efforts to ban certain kinds of research because of ethical and moral objections to particular features of fertility regulation programs, and widespread damage in the name of economy to systems for generating information and knowledge about population. With respect to the last mentioned problem, the threat to knowledge generation, we are not alone. Other fields that seek to monitor and comprehend social and economic trends are similarly afflicted. Let us look

further into what is happening here, taking the last problem first.

KNOWLEDGE AND POLICY

It is easy to be cynical about the relationship of knowledge and policy, since so much policy seems to be based on false knowledge, to fly in the face of facts, or to use knowledge selectively after the fact. Nevertheless, a complex society must monitor its basic processes and the supply, disposition and quality of its human and physical resources. Such information is generated in various ways: through legally mandated operations of statistical agencies, as the by-product of regulatory and enforcement activities, or in special ad hoc surveys. The collection of such data and the knowledge they provide are presumed to be relevant and helpful to the public interest. As George Washington commented in 1793 regarding the Statistical Account of Scotland:

I am full persuaded, that when enlightened men will take the trouble to examine so minutely into the state of society . . . it must result in greatly ameliorating the condition of the people, promoting the interests of civil society and the happiness of mankind at large.

That is our credo.

Statistical systems have grown apace as societies have become larger, more dispersed, more specialized and thus more interdependent, and as the economic and social system is more easily thrown out of adjustment. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) lists 77 current statistical programs in 28 agencies, with budgets totaling \$1.1 billion.

Among veteran observers of our federal statistical system, there is serious concern that the drive for economy in government is threatening the quality and integrity of many parts of this system (if such it can be called). Although the

situation is kaleidoscopic at present, making it risky to comment on what the outcome might be, it seems certain that the system will sustain significant damage in ways that will affect adversely our capacity as a society to "promote the interests of civil society," to use Washington's phrase. I will not expand on the lesser problem of the frustrations many members of this association will encounter as a consequence of these changes.

Let me be more specific about this matter. To begin with, to speak of a "system" is somewhat overblown. Ours is a highly decentralized system. Coordination is the responsibility of a branch of OMB—the Statistical Policy Branch, a chronically understaffed unit that has been moved about physically, downgraded organizationally and cut in its personnel to virtually inoperable levels, and finally disbanded altogether, thus marking "the end of statistical policy as an identifiable function within the government" (Holden, 1982, p. 833). The chief of the Branch, a man with long experience in the federal statistical system, resigned when the power of his position deteriorated. It is doubly unfortunate that the coordination function should be impaired at a time when major alterations of the system are being contemplated. The cuts will be made at a department or agency level without regard to their consequences elsewhere. Because of the ramified arrangements among government agencies to provide statistics on a reimbursable basis, the full effect of these cuts is not readily calculable except by an organization that has all the information required to do so.

As the Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics has noted, statistical programs themselves are being affected by a loss of geographic coverage, a loss of timeliness of data as the result of delays and cancellations, a decline in quality, comparability and methodological innovation, diminished access to data, and curtailed dissemination of results. There are no

private-sector remedies for these deficiencies.

Not all of the proposed changes are bad. For example, the reduced periodicity of some surveys such as the National Family Growth Study may not be a matter for concern—unless the interval between surveys should go to plus infinity. Moreover, we may look for some greater innovation in the use of administrative statistics and more inventive exploitation of statistical data developed largely for other purposes. Also, this may help to wean us from dependence on large scale, expensive survey approaches to problems which may be more effectively approached in other ways.

But most of the cuts are deleterious in significant measure. Here are some of the threatened activities which, if eliminated, delayed, or withheld from release or publication, will diminish our ability to understand and deal with important social and economic issues:¹

- Analysis of the sources of productivity growth in the U.S. economy
- Full valuation of U.S. imports by inclusion of transactions between related parties
- In-kind benefits to individuals and participation in entitlement (“safety net”) programs
- Income sources of small farm operators
- Living conditions of our handicapped and elderly populations
- Data on family budgets and multiple job holding
- Data on work stoppages in firms with fewer than 1,000 employees
- Data on household vacancies
- Data on federal payments to private schools
- Data on citizen participation in the electoral process
- Data on state and local expenditures on pollution control
- Estimates of population for Congressional districts
- Data on family planning facilities and on medical care utilization and expenditure

Of major interest to demographers is the decision to reduce the size of the Current Population Survey and the National Health Interview Survey, as well as the further decision not to redesign the sample for these population-based surveys on the basis of 1980 Census data. We therefore carry into the 1980s a sample frame for major federal surveys which is reflective of the population as it was distributed in 1970. Even using an outmoded sample frame, the CPS and other large scale surveys will continue to provide useful data. However, their value as the standard against which other, generally smaller surveys are compared will be diminished, as will general confidence in results from the CPS. The estimated cost for redesigning the CPS amounts to approximately 1.5 percent of the annual budget for all federal statistical programs. Coming on top of an earlier decision to abandon the mid-decade Census, these actions project an attitude toward the federal statistical system which can fairly be called irresponsible. The cuts have not been defended, the consequences assessed, nor alternative courses of action proposed.

Also distressing are other compromises affecting the quality of statistics. The National Health Interview Survey is revising its field and quality control procedures to reduce the number of interviewers, to cut by half the number of pretests for supplementary topics, and to abridge substantially quality control specifications for coding and data processing.

This is only a partial account of the damage. Colleagues interested in statistics dealing with other aspects of the nation's life—agriculture, crime, education, energy, transportation, labor relations, occupational counseling—watch in dismay as basic statistical programs are eliminated, cancelled, reduced, delayed, suspended, revised, and in various ways maimed. At the most basic level it is information policy, not merely statistical policy, that is at issue. This is evident in proposed changes in the clas-

sification of government documents, the release of material from the National Archives, and less forthcoming policies of the intelligence community—all part of a broad pullback from openness.

The greatest calamity of all is the chaos that has occurred in professional ranks as personnel are RIFed,² reassigned, and furloughed. This has accelerated the voluntary departure of many experienced and technically qualified persons from government service. Such attrition does avert less drastic reductions in personnel, but at the cost of a decline in overall capacity and efficiency. To my knowledge, no estimate of actual cost savings, even ignoring questions of quality, has appeared. In the long run this is likely to be an expensive exercise.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Knowledge of the economic, social and demographic situation for less statistically advanced nation states, though far from satisfactory, has improved considerably in recent years. Few analysts anywhere are content with the data available to them, but there is no denying that today we know vastly more about the world and know it more certainly than we did a decade or so ago. Nowhere has the advance in knowledge been greater than in the demographic field.

Major credit for this development must go to the United Nations system and in particular to the technical assistance rendered, with support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), to national censuses and to civil and vital registration systems. Such activity was sanctioned in the World Population Plan of Action (1976) which, under the heading of the "Promotion of knowledge and policies," called for "statistical data on the population collected by means of censuses, surveys or vital statistics registers" which were seen as "essential for the planning of investigations and the provision of a basis for the formulation, evalu-

ation and application of population and development policies" (p. 176). The continuous monitoring, review and appraisal of population trends and policies was recommended in the Plan "as a specialized activity of the United Nations" which should be reviewed biennially by the appropriate bodies of the United Nations system. It was recommended further that measures "be undertaken to promote knowledge of the relationships and problems involved, to assist in the development of population policies" and ultimately to work toward their implementation.

If there is a strong argument for the proposed International Population Conference in 1984, perhaps it would be to renew that resolve. The new priorities approved by the Governing Council of the UNFPA and that agency's subsequent behavior signal a retreat from the goal of statistical self-knowledge stated in the Plan. The new priorities require the UNFPA to give precedence to six family planning areas (delivery of services, training of personnel, strengthening of management, logistical support, i.e., provision of contraceptives, encouragement of local production of contraceptives, research on contraceptive technology) and to population education, communication, motivation, and the dissemination of information. Support for "basic data collection, population dynamics and the formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policy" is accorded lower priority.

One can see this reorientation of policy at work in UNFPA's reluctance to follow through with technical assistance for data processing, tabulation and analysis of the 1980-81 round of censuses which it helped to launch. Field experts have been withdrawn before their work programs were completed and while their services were still needed; entire operations, as in the case of the census of Bangladesh, have been abandoned, although the United Nations Development Program was able to assume financial responsibility in this instance. Com-

mitment to civil and vital registration projects is unclear but appears at best to be a residual concern; evaluation and monitoring of population programs, including family planning, is not a highly visible activity; in-house research in the areas of policy and population and development, which is centered in the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, continues, but the atmosphere is tentative. The status of future support for the population policy centers established in planning ministries in a number of countries (such as Senegal, North and South Yemen, Mauritania and Mali) appears to be in doubt. At the same time, the UNFPA is faltering in its support for foreign training and foreign training centers. Funds for the Centre Démographique ONU Roumanie (CEDOR) are not shown in the budget for the coming year; regional demographic centers are experiencing cuts (e.g., the Cairo Demographic Center). With the termination in July 1982 of the global block allocation for foreign training, fellowships will be available only through UNFPA funded country projects which include demographic training components. However, few new projects have been approved for the fiscal year 1982-83. Thus there is presently no corresponding build-up of skill and research capacity within developing countries to match the withdrawal of external technical assistance.

Hardest hit by this retrenchment are the countries of sub-Saharan Africa—the area of the world, outside of China, where the need for more and better information is the most acute.

Budgetary information for the UNFPA's 1981 activities does not foreshadow the changes wrought by the reordering of their priorities in mid-1981. The latest data available as of April 1982 are for 1981 fund *allocations* which in past years have diverged significantly from expenditures due to the rescheduling of outlays. The 1981 *allocations* actually suggest an increase in funds for "basic

data collection" both in absolute and relative terms. This is due largely to two factors: (a) a very large allocation to China for computer hardware; and (b) the relative time inelasticity of commitments for ongoing census operations in contrast, for example, to the postponable character of many aspects of family planning activities. For evidence of the changed picture being represented here, we must await data on 1981 expenditures and 1982 allocations. The dearth of projects approved in the past year for demographic analysis, planning and policy studies, institution building, and demographic training testify to the turnaround. I should note that any criticism should be laid at the door of the Governing Council, not, necessarily, directed at the UNFPA staff. Until the recent change, the UNFPA work plan was better balanced with respect to the diverse activities, programmatic and statistical, which experience has shown are needed.

If the funding goals announced at various times for the UNFPA had been reached or even approached substantially, the agency would be able to get through its priority list. But funding has remained tight amid waning enthusiasm on the part of some donors. In this situation it is understandable that there must be sacrifices. One is entitled to wonder, however, at the wisdom of neglecting basic information in favor of such a heavy concentration on family planning, especially IE&C (information, education, and communication) activities, the efficacy of which is far from established.

To comment on the other principal in the international arena, the Agency for International Development (AID), is to attempt to catch fog in a net. AID puts most of its population money into family planning and has always done so. There is nothing wrong with that; the question is whether demographic interests are provided for adequately. The demise of the Demographic Research Division in the Office of Population clouds the out-

look in this regard, as does the reported drain off of central funds to the regional bureaus. It seems doubtful that this organization, which has been a major supporter of international demographic activity, will assume that responsibility to the same extent in the foreseeable future. The Agency, through its sponsorship of the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey program, the Poplab project, important projects in the population/development area, and the provision of funds for research, continues to be a mainstay of international population research. However, it cannot be expected in a time of tight funding to take up the slack that has resulted from the turnaround at the UN and elsewhere.

Of the World Bank, there is little word except that population activities, along with a number of other areas, will sustain a 15 percent cut in support. Population is not being singled out for negative treatment, but it will be reduced and the Bank's activities in population will be redistributed within the organization. Given the Bank's past penchant for investing in physical infrastructure, a reordering of funding priorities within the population budget could go far toward maintaining a commitment to necessary demographic and statistical work. Increased attention in the Bank's new program to agriculture and industry might also include opportunities for research on demographic/economic interrelations.

INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF POPULATION POLICY

If policy rests on information, on empirical knowledge, it rests also on theoretical knowledge concerning causal relationships. As if to add insult to the injuries I have been reviewing, we have witnessed recently an outbreak of criticism aimed at the foundations of population policy. While the ultimate object of this criticism is population control, the immediate aim is to make the point that the relationship between population and

society has been erroneously perceived by social and economic demographers. Let us examine this line of argument which, for convenience, we may refer to as "revisionist."

The basic rationale for population policy is the presumption that individual responses cannot be counted on to produce desired aggregate effects. The belief that rapid population growth is detrimental to economic growth and will not adjust automatically through individual reassessment has provided one of the principal arguments for antinatalist population policies. It is this justification for fertility regulation policy in terms of social and economic benefits that has come under strong attack. Serious scholars have long conceded that the linkages between population growth and economic development are inadequately understood and that global propositions regarding such linkages are apt to be elusive. Nevertheless, there has been broad agreement that the rapid growth of population competes, in the short run, for resources that otherwise would be available for potentially productive purposes. Whether development is defined in terms of traditional growth indicators, such as the increase of GNP per capita, whether one insists on adding equity criteria to the definition of development, or whether one ignores measures of overall economic performance in any explicit sense and measures development in terms of specific needs, the task is rendered more difficult if growth of population induces pressure for more jobs, additions to the housing stock, expansion of the educational system, increased food production and food imports—just to stay even.

The recent spate of revisionist writing which has appeared in published form and as commissioned commentaries for intragovernmental distribution asserts that the effect of population growth on development—usually rendered as economic growth and measured conventionally by changes in GNP per capita—is at

best indeterminate and, as Colin Clark has argued for years, can sometimes be beneficial. The most prevalent form of analysis employed by the revisionist school is to selectively cite negative cases, instances, that is, where economic development and population growth have moved in parallel fashion instead of in opposition. It is usually pointed out also by these writers that earlier, somewhat hysterical predictions of resource exhaustion have not been fulfilled, and that real prices in many cases have been constant or declining. Environmental degradation in the revisionist view is a matter of policy and political will rather than a question of population growth. Political stability, it is argued, has nothing to do with the growth of population or with density or age structure. The real factor, so it is contended, is credible (i.e., tough) government policy. It is conceded by some revisionists that differential growth, as between ethnic communities, can be troublesome—but that's about as far as they are willing to go.

The conclusions derived from selective citing of negative evidence have been reinforced by appeal to that arcanum of modern policy analysis, the computerized simulation—a useful policy tool which, as in this case, is often abused. One can select among economic-demographic models, as among facts, to get the desired results—a familiar problem to demographers. A current model (Simon, 1981) much admired by the revisionists and used to give further solidity to their argument is constructed so that a rapidly expanding working-age population generates an expansion of social overhead capital (e.g., transport systems, schools and universities, water supply systems, power grids) which in turn act as powerful stimulants to economic growth. The model also incorporates and posits a positive impact of a high youth dependency ratio on net industrial investment. One can argue the merits of these unorthodox specifica-

tions. What is not arguable is the legitimacy of using this or any other model to settle arguments about policy for the real world.

As for the validity of the general case made by the revisionist writers, the following might be noted:

1. It is an attack on demographic determinism of a primitive Malthusian type. To the extent that Malthusian thinking survives among policy makers and among those who influence public discourse, it offers an antidote, but one that has its own hazards.

2. The mode of attack is one that is appropriate only for testing highly refined, scientific propositions claiming universal validity. Such propositions are totally vulnerable to destruction by the adduction of negative instances. The General Theory of Relativity, for example, can be called into question by a minute discrepancy in sidereal reckonings. By contrast, in our line of work we deal with statistical probabilities that are thought to be valid only within specified institutional settings. There would be little left of the corpus of social scientific knowledge if it were subject to the method of evaluation appropriate for scientific laws.

3. The question of optimization is avoided by revisionist critics. For example, to point to instances in which there is both economic growth and population increase does not of itself defeat the proposition that population growth retards economic growth. It does indicate that population growth is not a powerful enough influence to cancel economic growth under all conditions (who says it is?), but the question of what it might have been under a different demographic regime remains.

4. The counterarguments of the revisionists to the effect that problems such as job creation, maintenance of social order, protection of the environment, provision of housing and education are indifferent to demographic considerations and can be handled by innovations

in policy and organization ignore the obvious institutional impediments to change and the limited administrative capacity of the bureaucracies of most underdeveloped countries.

In sum, the revisionist case is a weak one, flawed in logic, method and empirical understanding. The brand of Malthusian thinking which the revisionists deride is not defensible, but neither is it representative of the views current among professional demographers and other careful students of the links between population and the economic and social order. One might ignore this whole matter on the grounds that bad analysis sooner or later is revealed as such, were it not for the serious consequences that such distortions can have on official commitment and policy in this area.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Coming from a different quarter than the revisionist attack is a threat to research in our field resulting from our close association with action programs in fertility regulation. We are witnessing in these days a resurgence of moral and religious fervor. Creationism is counterposed to evolutionism; libraries are searched and sanitized; there is an apparent, though uncounted, boom in rebirths. At a time when membership in staid middle-class churches is declining, fundamentalist groups are growing in size. These currents are reflected in the political process, since they translate into constituencies. Abortion, busing, and prayer in the schools are passionate, divisive issues in American society that have found a political voice.

Funds for population research are provided in the same legislative enactments that provide for family planning services. In all likelihood this has raised the level of support for research, but at the cost of greater political vulnerability. During the Title X hearings last year, there was, at best, polite interest in what the PAA's witness had to say in defense of government expenditures for population re-

search; the knives were out for Planned Parenthood and interest centered there. Nevertheless, had Title X failed of reauthorization, the future of federal funding for population research would have been in doubt. As it is, the situation is in temporary remission.

A bill has been introduced in the Senate which includes among its provisions a ban on the use of federal funds for research that deals in any way with abortion. Inquiries regarding the intent of this language indicate that it is restrictive in the extreme. Thus studies of fertility that look at the resolution of pregnancy would be ineligible for federal funding, as would studies of the relationship of maternal mortality and abortion, certain approaches to the study of infertility, and so on. The PAA (1982) has taken a stand against this measure, pointing out in a letter to all members of the Senate that, though we take no position on abortion as such, "we oppose restrictions on research directed toward demographic phenomena, no matter how controversial these phenomena may be . . . the role of research on abortion is no different from the role of research on unemployment or crime, and to our knowledge, no one would propose banning such research because of opposition to unemployment or crime . . . legislation is against the public interest when it blocks the scientific process."

RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Association has come of age in recent years in its ability to respond to actions of government that could affect the profession adversely. Perhaps this has been the most lasting unanticipated effect of the Commission on Population and the American Future and the subsequent work of the Select Committee on Population. Our ears are now cocked for sounds of trouble and we have a sensory apparatus for responding appropriately.

Commensalism among professional associations is spreading as the political climate affecting science grows more un-

certain. In addition to our own Committee on Population Statistics and the Political Affairs Committee, PAA is a founding member of the Committee of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics which includes representatives of major professional associations with a stake in use of federal statistics. We are now considering possible affiliation with the Consortium of Social Science Associations, a coalition of associations which has been prominently involved with efforts to forestall drastic cuts in federal research funding, especially funds for the National Science Foundation.

In addition to this watchdog activity, the Public Affairs Committee, working with Population Resources, Inc., has prepared briefing materials on selected population issues. With the help of members of the Association, this material has been presented to leaders in government and in the private sector with the aim of increasing awareness of ways in which population trends affect the "condition of the people . . . and the interests of civil society." We have evolved from a watch and ward ad hoc mode of protecting our interests to the realization that we must sustain a continuous effort to maintain conditions under which the field can flourish. Such conditions include not only support for the wherewithall of our craft, but also enlightened public understanding of what we're about and what we have to offer a society wealthy enough to support us.

I have dealt in this presentation with the most obvious weeds in our garden. On future occasions it would be well for

us to look further into the factors that affect the yield from our fields. We should be concerned to ask to what extent research directions may be distorted by the efforts of government agencies to project their interests. Does the review process falter at the extremes of creativity and by going with current intellectual fashions regress us unduly toward mediocrity? Are there substitutes for the enormously wasteful processes involved in securing research funds and in accountability? Can the private sector, including the private foundations, be brought back into a more productive relationship with our field? Are we reproducing ourselves professionally in the proper kinds and numbers? I leave these issues to you and my successors to ponder another time.

NOTES

¹ I am beholden to, among others, the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics for material on recent changes in federal statistical operations. Listed here are items that traversed my own threshold of dismay and that struck at matters which cross my professional path.

² This is an acronym for "reduction in force."

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