

through clitoral stimulation was said to be "immature" and not to have resolved fundamental "conflicts" about sexual impulses. Of course, once he had laid down this definition of our sexuality, Freud not so strangely discovered a tremendous "problem of frigidity" in women. (p. 245)

Thank you, Sigmund. Can it be true that much of the frustration women have suffered at the mercy of doctors and psychiatrists is the legacy of one man's inadequate knowledge of female biology? How much faith have we had in ourselves that we have been willing to accept what Freud says about how we feel? And, Hite asks, "Could many of the sexual neuroses which seem to be endemic to women today be, in part, induced by doctors attempting to treat them?" (p. 248)

The Hite Report is a documentary of three thousand women's attempts to define their own needs and not feel badly about so doing in spite of what they have been taught, in spite of peer pressure, in spite of themselves. A good deal of anger shows through and it is no wonder. But there is also joy in the sexual awakening of so many women.

In bringing the sexual reality of women out from under centuries of mistrust and mistake, Hite has allowed women the chance to be honest

with themselves and their mates. Let's hope she will be able to do the same for men.

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Population Target: the Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America

E. BONNIE MASS. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976. Pp. 299

Reproductive "control over our own bodies" with respect to such issues as non-compulsory child-bearing and access to reliable birth control procedures has been in recent years a concern of progressive, Western women. In this book, Bonnie Mass describes how Third World women living in such population target areas as Latin America have had birth control measures alternatively denied them and forced upon them at the whim of government policy. Rather than birth control decisions being left to the people involved, birth control in Latin America has become population control, an aspect of economic policy linked to "development." While poor women in

population target zones were once seen as vital to the supply of a "cheap labour force," their babies in the modern era have become obstacles to economic growth and political stability. To achieve these economic and political objectives, women have been coerced into participating in birth control programmes, often involving sterilization as was the case in Puerto Rico.

The author describes how the Alliance for Progress supported attempts to reduce population by "brutal, unsafe and coercive measures . . . necessitated by imperialism's increasing need to retain the inequitable social and structural foundations of Latin American society." (p. 56) Among its successes is cited Panama City; in 1968, one-quarter of the married women of child-bearing age in Panama City had been sterilized. Bonnie Mass does a thorough job of pointing out class biases in mass fertility control programmes in which birth control is just one aspect of an overall oppression. To speak of "choice" is ludicrous when the acceptance of birth control is contingent upon the receipt of welfare measures and health care; or when permission, in the case of sterilization, is obtained when the woman is in a weakened post-partum state.

Although Mass convincingly details the relationship between population control and economic objectives, she fails to persuade me that overpopula-

tion is a "myth." The demonstration of the "myth of overpopulation" is the stated focus of the book. (p. 2) That I still believe in overpopulation does not mean that her endeavour is a failure. Perhaps our divergence of views concerning the myth or reality of overpopulation stems from our definition of the term.

I would not define overpopulation in moral or eugenic terms as Malthus did when he blamed the poor for their poverty and instructed the "unfit" to have fewer children than the rich. Overpopulation is simply the state that exists when there are insufficient resources, such as food, to sustain the people in a country. Whether the shortage is "real" or "artificial" is not relevant to my definition; it is for Mass. If Mass were aware that food shortages, for example, reflect the practices of multinational agribusiness to the extent that people are raising food for export while they are starving, she would argue that the land could support the people if different economic practices were engaged. For Mass, therefore, overpopulation is a myth; overpopulation for me is a reality until that time when people are ecologically balanced with the land they inhabit.

Given the overpopulated reality in which the poor in the target areas live, I would not want to hold back birth control information from people until that day when birth control was

part of a humanely administered, comprehensive health care system. Perhaps Mass would not either. In her argument for the best of all possible worlds, I lose sight of where she stands in the present. While the practice of birth control may not be a sufficient or even a necessary condition for raising the overall status of women, the denial of birth control may contribute to high rates of maternal if not infant mortality. Mass cites a study of Puerto Rican women who were asked if they would undergo sterilization again if they had it to do over. About one in four women would not. Mass interprets this data to mean there is a high level of regret regarding the decision. Whether this is a high or low figure would not be known unless privileged women who had been sterilized were compared with poor women. The level of regret may be a constant for women in all material conditions if women in general tend to view nostalgically their lost potential to conceive and give birth.

The value of Population Target is that it emphasizes the necessity of looking at the total social and economic context in which population programmes are administered. In the developed countries there is a tendency to think that an increase in the number of birth control "acceptors" and an increase in the status of women is an association that would occur in all countries.

This need not be the case. Birth control aimed at the population targets that Mass has documented clearly qualifies as one of the many continuing instances of man's inhumanity to woman. Cuba as a "socialist alternative" is instructive as it illustrates how easily women become "acceptors" without coercion when birth control is integrated with an improvement in overall health and economic well-being.

Mass is to be congratulated for her exhaustive research effort; her commitment and concern are evident. An early section in the book provides the best historical treatment I have seen regarding the development of birth control ideology from the social context of Sanger to the 1970s. Regardless of where one stands on the population debate, this is a serious, highly readable report that is not to be passed over lightly by those "involved in the struggle for race, class and sex unity." (p. 5)

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