

McNamara evokes 'massive effort' to cut population

by Marcia Merry

The principal topic on the agenda in Washington, D.C. today, and elsewhere around the globe, is the question of what emergency economic measures can lift the world out of the decay and suffering caused by economic decline. While many policymakers offer "solutions" that benefit a select few and harm millions of others, there is one character that stands out from the pack. Robert Strange McNamara, former defense secretary in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and former head of the World Bank, has come forward with a proposal to eliminate worldwide poverty by murdering poor people.

Though McNamara, now 75, is supposedly just a private citizen, his grisly proposal is sponsored by a United Nations agency, and is getting major play in the U.S. media, such as National Public Radio and the Dec. 16 *Time* magazine, just at the time when the debate over economic program is uppermost in the U.S. election campaign, in the new republics of the former Soviet Union, and almost everywhere else. For example, *Time* writer Strobe Talbott praises McNamara's boldness in comparison to George Bush, in an editorial called, "How Bush Has Wimped Out." What is McNamara offering? A blueprint for genocide.

On Dec. 10, at United Nations headquarters in New York City, McNamara said that new projections show that the world population, currently at 5.4 billion, could almost triple within 100 years, and this, he claimed, made rapid population growth the greatest barrier to progress, and a grave danger to the environment. He released a 56-page document at a special lecture honoring the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), called "A Global Policy to Advance Human Development in the 21st Century." In his address, a lecture in memory of the first head of the UNFPA, Rafael M. Salas (1928-87), McNamara called for "massive global efforts" to curb

population growth during this decade.

The report features 18 pages of tables, listing figures for each nation for fertility rates, contraceptive use, expected lifespan, and other data, assembled in a way befitting the author, who came to be known during the Vietnam War years as "Body Count" McNamara. He specialized at that time in projections of war fatalities which were as coldblooded as they were inaccurate. Earlier, McNamara was a "numbers man" at Ford Motor Co., and subsequently, while head of the World Bank, he backed only those "investment projects" in the Third World that would lower population.

'Absolute poverty'

The conclusion of the new McNamara report is that over 1 billion people live in conditions of "absolute poverty," and that the U.N. must intervene to see that they don't reproduce. His report states, " 'Absolute poverty' is a word of art. When I coined it in the late 1960s, I did so to distinguish a particular segment of the poor in the developing world from the billions of others who would be classified as poor in western terms. The 'absolute poor' are those living, literally, on the margin of life. Their lives are so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, and disease as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human dignity.

"Today the number of such individuals approaches 1 billion. As a proportion of the total population, it has decreased over the past two decades (except in sub-Saharan Africa), but in absolute numbers it has increased. And the World Bank estimates that it is likely to increase further—by nearly 100 million—in this decade.

"A major concern raised by poverty of this magnitude lies in the likelihood of physical and intellectual impairment of children."

McNamara's solution? Prevent the birth of those children. His report calls for step-by-step measures to cut birth rates in specified countries until a zero population growth level is reached. He estimates that the program would cost approximately \$8 billion in 1990 dollars by the year 2000, with \$3.5 billion coming from the developed countries and \$4.5 billion from the developing countries.

In addition to demanding this sweeping anti-birth project, the McNamara plan conspicuously avoids mention of measures to stop the death toll from diseases that are right now spreading and costing millions of lives—AIDS, cholera, malaria, measles, enteric illnesses, parasites, etc.

Are people the problem?

McNamara claims that the population growth of the past century has been responsible for massive degradation of the environment, and for an increase in poverty. He then tries to scare people by citing the increased need for food and industrial development if the population continues to grow, with the implication that this growth will definitely destroy the environment.

Of course, McNamara cannot prove his point. In his speech, he said: "Within the past decade, four global environmental phenomena have surfaced: the loss of bio-diversity, acid rain, destruction of the ozone layer, and climate change. All are a function of rising population levels and increasing consumption per capita." Ten pages of the new report are given over to pseudo-scientific discussions of each point. But, in fact, there is no evidence that these phenomena are catastrophes, much less that they are caused by overpopulation. McNamara is making a point of his pagan religious faith, nothing else.

Even more ludicrous is the idea that reducing the number of people will improve living standards. Will having fewer people to drink dirty water, actually build the infrastructure for clean water? Will having fewer people to feed, actually produce more food? No, all of these real problems can only be dealt with by a change in credit policy, that will allow developing sector countries to build up their infrastructure.

McNamara admits that improved technology will allow "less damage to the environment." But he fails to acknowledge that it has been a denial of that improved technology to the developing sector, as well as a squelching of technological progress in the entire world, that is responsible for the real problems of people living in poverty.

McNamara challenged

At his pre-lecture press conference, McNamara was challenged on his proposals before the international press corps. Warren A.J. Hamerman of *EIR* put to McNamara that his program, like all previous population control programs, is nothing but malthusian genocide. Hamerman specified to McNamara that in the absence of debt moratoria, technology transfer, and a True Fourth Development Decade policy, this

program will constitute nothing but malthusianism toward the developing sector. He specifically challenged McNamara with the assertions by various leaders from Africa, Asia, and the Vatican, that such conditionalities for population control are against the will of the Creator.

McNamara gave a rambling reply with off-handed references to the Pope, and to the need to implement every possible population control method to advance progress, to save the environment and to end poverty. He also claimed, incredibly, that he does not know of any OECD nation which is pushing family planning as a substitute for technology transfer, debt relief, and development.

McNamara furthermore claimed that after he initially raised the need for population control in his inaugural speech as president of the World Bank in 1968, he was treated as an enemy by the developing sector, and was even expelled, or virtually expelled, from some countries. Today, however, he reported that many governments in Asia, Africa, and South America have accepted the idea and are attempting to implement it. Now, he calls for each developing country to agree to a target for a "population stabilization" level.

McNamara proposed that the World Bank organize this program, and that the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in effect impose formal conditionalities for population growth upon all nations of the world, in order to enforce it. McNamara also called for the establishment of a population commission to help in the preparation of the planned U.N. 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

During an exchange with Hamerman, McNamara asserted that "we have not even begun to act on this population control program, and we must take strong actions." However, he claimed ignorance in reply to Hamerman's query about McNamara's familiarity with 1970s U.S. government policy documents on population reduction—National Security Study Memorandum 200, authored by Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, and others. These detailed memoranda, only recently declassified, state that it is in the national security interests of the United States that the populations of a specified list of countries be suppressed. In line with this, massive sterilization programs—sometimes involuntary ones—were undertaken in Pakistan, Brazil, and other locations. Earlier this year, lawmakers in Brazil began an investigation into the NSSM-200 scandal and the damage done to their nation by such malthusian policies, which included the sterilization of 40% of Brazilian women of child-bearing age.

However, when Hamerman raised this issue with McNamara, the latter claimed ignorance of the uproar in Brazil and other nations. He said that he could not conceive of Dr. Kissinger, or the U.S. government, or the National Security Council, ever having adopted such a policy—or if they did, ever putting it down in writing.

Hamerman informed McNamara that "murdering billions of poor people is not a desirable way to end poverty."