

country. They have far less resources with which to cope with the education, health, economic, social, and political problems inevitably raised when their populations almost double with each new generation. Increased poverty, disease, and starvation certainly lie ahead, and the threat of turmoil and political chaos. Many of them have very little time left to turn the demographic clock around.

Fortunately, the interested private organizations—and particularly the International Planned Parenthood Federation with its 64 member associations in 64 different countries—have been persuading government after government to announce policies calling for lower population growth rates and to adopt national population and family planning programs. In the past 3 years nearly 30 governments have made such a beginning.

And only 6 weeks ago the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico announced a governmental islandwide birth control program. On January 15 Governor Ferre in his State of the Commonwealth message announced “a vigorous and ample program of family planning.” He called Puerto Rico’s rapid population growth the “greatest obstacle to the realization of the Great Task which we have set before us.” He went on to say, “All the jobs which we are able to create will not be enough; all the moneys spent to improve education and health will not be sufficient; we will not be able to construct enough homes; nor construct enough aqueducts; nor pave enough streets; nor equip enough hospitals.

“In other words, the Great Task will be impossible. By the year 2000 we will have 5,600,000 inhabitants”—they have about 2.7 million, something like that now—“and we will have doubled our population density.” And 3 weeks ago, in an historic announcement by Archbishop Luis Aponte Martinez the Catholic bishops of Puerto Rico—and there are seven of them—stated publicly their approval and support of the government’s family planning program, provided only that there is no coercion and the decision as to family size and the use of contraceptives is left freely to the conscience of each couple.

This example—both the government’s decision and the supporting statement by the Catholic bishops—points the way for many Latin American Catholic countries which also find too rapid population growth the greatest obstacle to their economic and social development. It illustrates very well indeed how well the world’s leaders everywhere are beginning to understand the meaning of the population explosion, and how governments on every continent are starting to take the necessary action to head it off. Better contraceptives would also help the Puerto Rico program.

Speaking of Puerto Rico, last Saturday I was in Puerto Rico, in San Juan, and called on Governor Ferre to extend to him at the suggestion of Dr. Moynihan in the White House, the White House congratulations and offer of help on this program in any way possible, and he is very hopeful, with the support of the Catholic bishops, and generally of the population of Puerto Rico, in which this population problem is probably as serious as anywhere in the world, to have a successful program there.

But I am sure he would appreciate better contraceptives. I should add, Mr. Chairman, that this great step forward in Puerto Rico