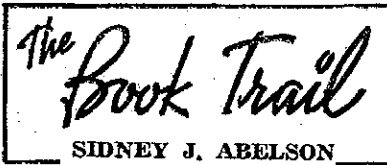


In "People: The Quantity and Quality of Population," (Henry Holt & Co. \$3.00), Henry Pratt Fairchild publishes an excellent popular discussion of the subject. Here is a book which because of its careful organization and clarity can be read with profit even by those who have advanced beyond the elementary stage of study in this field.

Some of this profit will derive from detecting a few of Professor Fairchild's



unwarranted assumptions and conclusions. He says, "There is obviously a point at which, given a certain equipment of land and economic culture, the population is exactly right to maintain the maximum level of living." This is an example of what I mean by thinking without benefit of a covering doctrine. If Fairchild kept in mind the fundamental axiom that "man's desires are unlimited" he would be incapable of using such a phrase as "maximum level of living."

Moreover he assumes "a certain equipment of land and economic equipment"; but these are two factors which are not and never will be quantitatively and qualitatively static from the point of view of capacity to sustain human life. Today, of course, the use of land is restricted by the institution of private landlordism; and subsistence theories based on artificial restrictions of this nature will themselves be unrealistic. But even if we extend our reasoning to assume that all the land area of the world were freely available for production, land would still not constitute a fixed quantity as far as potentialities of production are concerned.

Man's capacity to transform the free gifts of nature into effective articles of wealth is truly unlimited and unpredictable. Chemical agriculture is already an established fact; and a man who denies the possibility of finding a chemical substitute for, say, wheat or some other basic commodity, would be rash indeed.

At any given time a nation or an area may be "overpopulated" in the same way that at a given time an individual may be sick. In this sense the United States with an unemployed army of 10,000,000 men and women is "overpopulated." Yet no one in possession of the elementary facts would say that the area of the United States is incapable of sustaining its population of 130,000,000, or, for that matter, of keeping in high comfort an increased population of 200,000,000 or more. What is signified by our widespread unemployment is not the incapacity of land and the arts of production, but the ineffectiveness of our social arrangements for the use of these factors.

Fairchild makes this very point, (with respect to the U. S. A.) but attributes our economic instability to faults of the "capitalist system," which, he says, "has proved itself to be a system of restriction and scarcity." Yet Belgium, a country of high capitalist development lives in comparative prosperity with a population density of 691 per square mile, while India, where capitalistic development is still of a low order lives in abject poverty with a population density of only 195 per square mile.

Obviously there is a factor involved which counts for more than the mere fact of population quantity—and I suspect that this factor might be called freedom of enterprise.