

A large, bold, black and white graphic of the letters 'Z.P.G.' stacked vertically. The 'Z' is at the top, followed by 'P', and 'G' at the bottom. The letters are thick and blocky, with a high-contrast, stencil-like appearance. The 'Z' and 'P' have a slight shadow or secondary outline, giving them a three-dimensional feel.

Z.P.G. WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?


Jack Ryan

Z.P.G.? The initials, z.p.g. stand for zero population growth. Not zero population, but zero population *growth*. We hear a lot about environmental problems, population problems, and population growth these days. What is zero population growth all about?

Zero population growth means simply that the total number of individuals in the population does not increase. The death rate is equal to the birthrate. For every person who dies, another is born, taking his place. As you see, zero population growth does not mean that there should be no population or that no children should be born, only that the number of births and deaths be equal.

Is zero population growth a good thing? Certainly! The best example of the benefits of zero population growth is found in our own bodies. We begin life as a single living cell. This divides and the new cells grow and divide again and again. There is a rapid growth in the cellular population. We may grow for quite a few years, with the number of cells continually increasing. But then certain changes take place, we stop growing, and the number of cells does not increase. This does not mean that no new cells are formed, but that those which form replace others which have died. If this does not occur, we are in trouble. We tend to get larger and larger, suf-

The Institute for Tomorrow



Zero population growth
means *bread* . . . enough
food for our people . . .
energy . . . space between
people . . . a wholesome
planet.

fering from the disease of gigantism until our body becomes so massive that we can no longer control it, and we die. Sometimes certain cells begin to grow without limit to their numbers. We are victims of cancer. Again, the disease is likely to be fatal. Limiting the growth of our bodies prevents them from becoming so large that we can no longer control them. Zero population growth here is certainly beneficial and necessary.

For similar reasons, zero population growth in our human society is also beneficial. Imagine the inevitable consequences of unlimited increases in the population on a planet with finite space and resources! Every time the population doubles, there is half as much food and water available to everyone, twice as many people looking for jobs, twice as many people filling our schools, and twice as many people filling our

roads and recreation areas. Noise increases, litter increases, air and water pollution increase. We see our many environmental problems coming into focus. Continued unlimited population growth on our limited world is a disease every bit as dangerous as cancer or gigantism.

Why do we not have a zero rate of population growth? At one time we nearly did. Early man lived by gathering food, hunting. His life was in constant danger from starvation, disease, enemies, and a generally hostile environment. He had a high death rate and a high birthrate to match it. The high

death rate has always been considered undesirable. The high birthrate was necessary, and therefore desirable, to offset the death rate. The development of agriculture, technology, communications, and medicine changed the situation dramatically. Dangers of starvation, disease, and the hostile environment decreased. So the death rate also decreased. But since the high birthrate was still unaltered, still considered socially desirable, the population began to increase dramatically. Today the world population doubles in about thirty years!

**To get from city to city,
hardly noticing the green
areas between, man tears
down his homes and paves
them over with concrete
roadways—mindless mon-
uments to the population
explosion, to a world that
does not know where it is
going! And may not be
able to go anywhere—
without gasoline.**



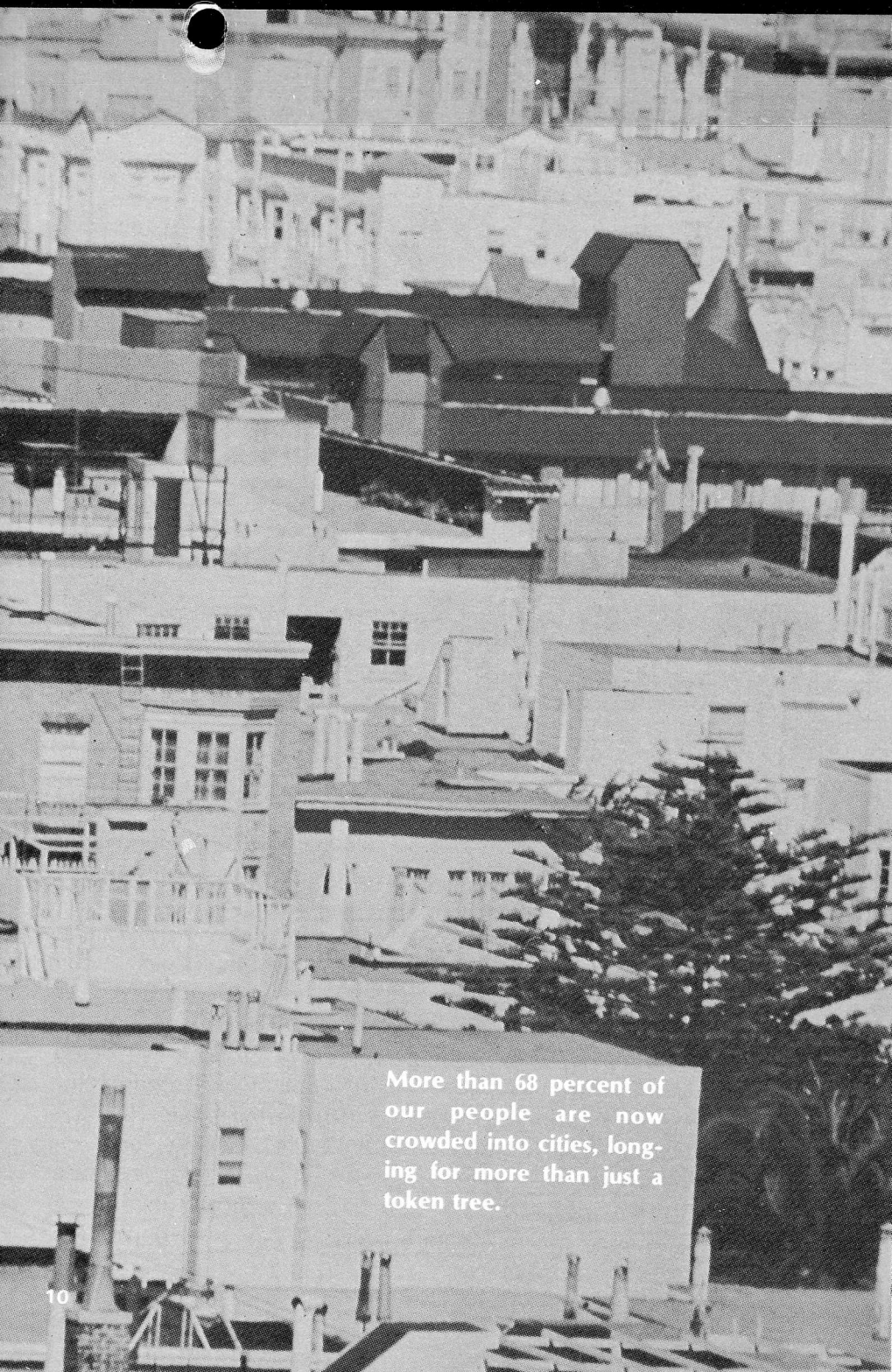


Disillusioned in an overcrowded world, we attempt to get away into the outdoors, but what do we find? More people, elbow to elbow!

How can a zero rate of population growth again come about? There are two fundamental ways: increase the death rate, or decrease the birthrate.

The first method is not pleasant. We certainly would not voluntarily increase the death rate. But it could come about involuntarily! The increasing population in the face of limited food resources means that many will starve to death. Many are

doing that now! Malnutrition makes people more susceptible to disease, and a disease which might not harm a healthy person may kill a starving one. Overcrowding makes the transmission of all diseases much more of a problem. The need for room and resources makes people desperate; they will kill, or go to war—what have they to lose? Famine, disease, and war certainly can increase the death rate to a point where it equals (or exceeds!) the birthrate. They are distasteful, frightening, but not necessarily inevitable, because there is still a second method of bringing about zero population growth.



More than 68 percent of
our people are now
crowded into cities, long-
ing for more than just a
token tree.



This second method is not so harsh as the first. In fact, it is quite beneficial to all concerned: simply lower the birthrate. For example, if the average number of children per family were reduced to two, we would exactly be replacing the parents and we would approach a situation of zero population growth. As simple as that.

Unfortunately, decreasing the birthrate is really not as simple as it seems. While we have a strong cultural desire to decrease the death rate, no such drive to reduce the birthrate exists. High birthrates are still considered favorable. We must come to realize that high birthrates are unacceptable, that fewer children are beneficial to the family and to society as a whole. A family can give much better care to two children than to some larger number. And children from small families, within any one socio-economic level, do better than children from larger families in their mental and physical development.

The unrealistic attitude that high birthrates and large families are proper under all circumstances has even been formalized into laws. Our income-tax laws encourage large families, penalizing the small family and unmarried persons. In some places it is illegal to discuss methods of birth control or to distribute contraceptives. Thus, even if a family realized that

limiting their family size to two natural children is best, they may not know how or may not be able to obtain the necessary contraceptives. Such laws should be eliminated, either by legislative or court action.

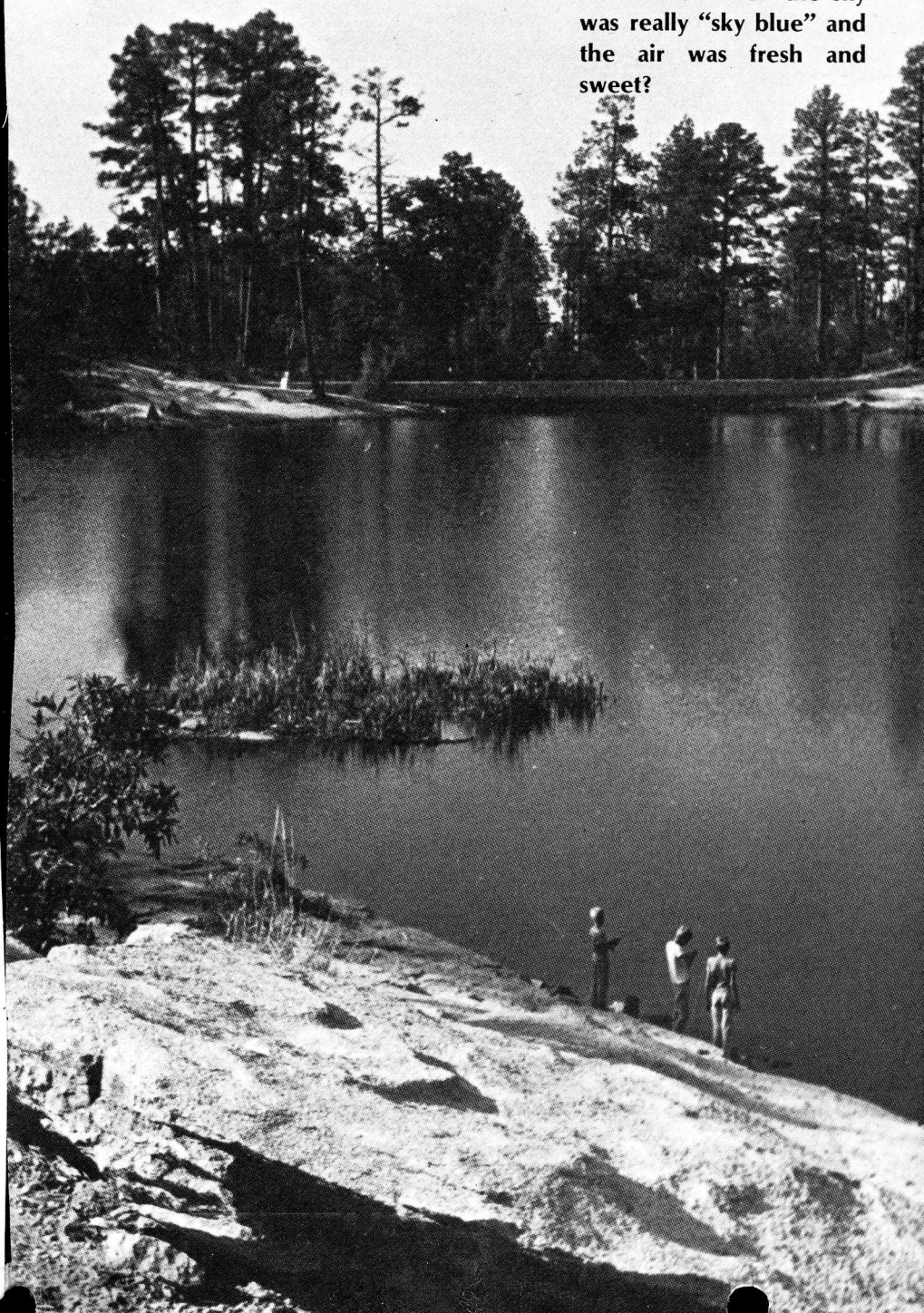
Even when birth-control information and contraceptives are available, there may be some families which simply cannot afford to purchase the more reliable contraceptives. They are forced to rely on undependable birth-control practices. This can become a vicious cycle as each new child makes it even harder to purchase contraceptives. We need sources of funds to make all forms of birth control available to all people. This could be in the form of tax-supported or privately supported clinics.

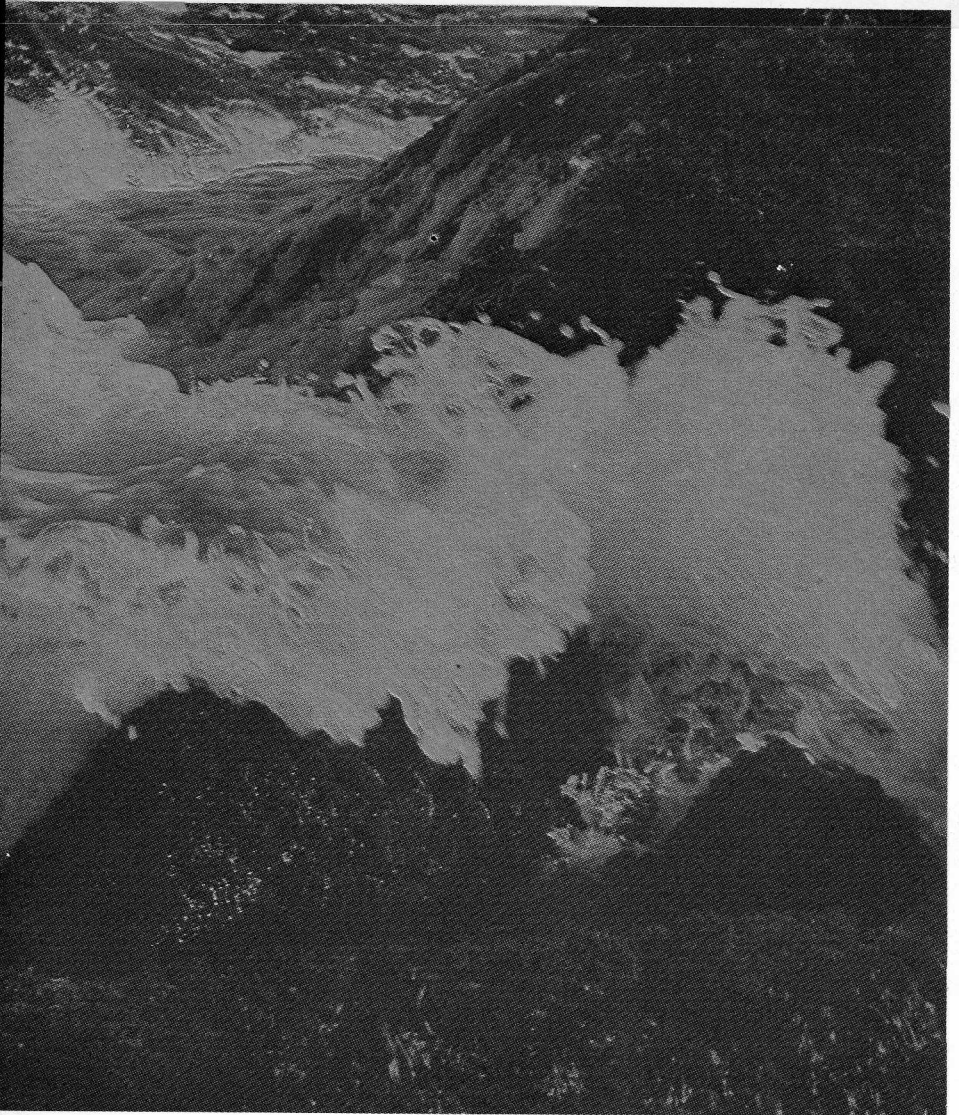
As you have seen, the concept of z.p.g. is quite simple: when the birth and death rates are equal, we have a state of zero population growth. That zero population growth is beneficial is best illustrated by the fact that this is the situation within the cell population which makes up our own bodies, and by considering the gruesome prospects of unlimited population growth on this planet. The best way to bring about zero population growth is by lowering the birthrate to match our already lowered death rate and by limiting our family size to two natural children.

But there are numerous social and legal impediments to this goal, impediments which only you can help remove.

What can you, as an individual, do to help bring about zero population growth? A lot! Limit your own family size to two children. Educate your children and your friends, and encourage them to stop with two children. Beyond this, what can you do? Work within the civic and social organizations to which you now belong to bring about changes which will allow us to attain zero population growth. Support financially those organizations (Planned Parenthood-World Population, Zero Population Growth, The Institute for Tomorrow, The Hugh Moore Fund) who are promoting zero population growth and the distribution of birth-control information and devices. If you can, volunteer your time to one of these organizations, perhaps join or start a local chapter, to help promote their goals. Write to your elected representatives asking them to help change archaic laws which promote population growth or restrict the distribution of birth-control information and devices. Ask them to support research for new and better contraceptives. Be willing to contribute some of your tax money for the distribution of contraceptives to those who cannot afford to purchase them.

Remember when the sky
was really "sky blue" and
the air was fresh and
sweet?





God created the heavens and the earth . . . liked what he had done. It's his gift to us . . . so let's show our appreciation.

Remember, zero population growth will not solve the problems

of the world. But without it, there are no equitable solutions to those problems. Only your concern and personal commitment can bring about the necessary changes for solutions to our population and environmental problems.