

Is Indiana Becoming Overpopulated?

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When few people lived in Indiana, nearly all of them were poor. For several generations, increases in population led to higher standards of living for most of the people. This was made possible because with more people, there were more workers, more varied abilities, and also improved education, transportation, health and equipment with which to work. Decade by decade also more of Indiana's resources were put to productive use. Now resources which were unused or only slightly used when Indiana became a state in 1816 contribute greatly to Indiana's prosperity. "Progress Made in Increasing Indiana's Human Resources" (*Proceedings, Indiana Academy of Science*: Vol. 70, pp. 189-193; 1961) discusses at some length several of these factors. It concludes that Indiana's human resources in 1960 could be conservatively evaluated at more than 45 billion dollars. This is more than the money value of all of Indiana's land, buildings, roads, railways, equipment, etc., and thousands of times as valuable as were Indiana's 100,000 people and land in 1816.

The vast increase in the value of Indiana's human resources was accomplished partly at the expense of Indiana's forests; eroded soil; considerable coal mined or rendered practically useless; much petroleum and natural gas used or wasted; and a drastic depletion of most wild life—birds, game animals and fish.

Various scenic resources also suffered badly during recent decades as results of the fast expansion of inadequately planned "urban sprawl," auto junk yards, and the misuse of Parks and other recreational resources, which are inadequate for the present population. Pollution of streams, lakes, and the air over several cities gives appalling evidences of deterioration associated with great population increases.

Although Indiana continues to be a relatively prosperous state, many hundreds of thousands of Indiana's present population are "unemployed or inadequately employed." This is in contrast to "the good old days" when almost any willing worker could find worthy work. Many young people are especially handicapped now, partly because they possess inadequate ability, vigor and desire or motivation to obtain the education now needed. There still are opportunities for people possessed of various skills obtained from special training, facilitated by appropriate talents. But, as a direct result of the great increase in population, there is increasing competition for jobs.

No longer is there opportunity for many workers on Indiana farms, which have, during the agricultural revolution of recent years, required expensive equipment, fertilizer and skilled management rather than strong, willing workers.

The industrial revolution, with its drastically increased use of complicated equipment and automation, has greatly decreased work opportunities for people who do not have special skills.

Unfortunate indeed are the many people who lose their jobs as a result of innovation and automation, and who are unable to train themselves for another job.

Every Hoosier knows that there is a great increase in the percentage of somewhat elderly people, and that this percentage is growing rapidly. Many positions are restricted now to people younger than 45. Few people can obtain worthy work in Indiana now if they are much older than 55. Many even very able people are forced to surrender their job at 65, as there are so many younger people ready to take them.

Instead of expecting "better times" to follow the "population explosion," it is logical to urge not only the obtaining of better education but also "family planning" and "birth control" so that each new child is not only strongly wanted by its parents but also has a good prospect of having a reasonably bright future because it can be adequately reared and educated.

Overpopulation certainly is approaching rapidly in much of Indiana, if it is not already here. Indeed, already the state and its cities are having serious difficulties in providing the much better education now needed, the more adequate facilities required for proper health and the recreational and transportation facilities required by our present population. What will we do when Indiana's population increases by another million, as it almost surely soon will do? Our schools, highways, parking places are already crowded. Within the next five years the population pressure will increase sharply. Of course we hope that this population increase will not produce a decline in the quality of life and services.

There clearly is need now in Indiana for more people who possess distinctly better than average mental, physical and emotional ability or vigor, superior education and earnestness. Such people can contribute significantly to Indiana's welfare. Indiana certainly is not now overpopulated with well qualified people. There are so many things which need to be done, but which require special skills that we could use millions more "superior" people.

Better quality, not great population total, is what is needed. How can this need be filled?

Most of those who read this realize that there are many difficult problems as to Indiana's people, including its Negroes, slum dwellers, and those who are deficient in ability, vigor, education, or are "too old." Wise planning, including birth control and a sharp reduction in "teen-age" marriages, surely are needed. We should plan far more wisely than we have planned. Each one of us can assist in this planning and the problems that face us are so serious that we should assist.