

Ferdie J. Deering

MAY 23 1974

Food Production Trails Population

IF people don't stop raising so many children and start producing more food, everybody may starve to death. That may sound facetious but it is a serious statement.

Population experts estimate that if present rates of population increase continue, there may be 7 billion people on earth by the year 2000, twice as many as at present.

Agricultural experts believe that wider application of present technology, plus new discoveries from continued research, will greatly increase total food supplies. However, even the most optimistic have not predicted that the food supply will double in 30 years, and only a few countries have enough food now.

India has joined the list of nations possessing the secret of the atomic bomb, but has not learned either to feed her people adequately or to teach them how to avoid bringing millions of unwanted babies into lives of abject poverty.

It is predicted that when the Aswan dam is completed in Egypt in a year or two, food production will be

increased by 35 per cent over what it was when construction began. This is great, except that population will be 48 per cent more!

The world's largest food producing nation is China, but with more than 800 million people, amount per person is small. Like most of the world's population, the Chinese subsist mainly on rice diets.

Extreme drought has laid waste a wide belt across Africa for six or eight years. Entire villages have starved, and others have eaten their livestock and seed stocks to survive. When the rains come, these people will produce only enough to exist.

The world has proved the theory advanced by Thomas Malthus of England nearly 200 years ago that population doubles and redoubles, while food production makes only percentage gains. Now the world has come to the critical choice of whether to raise more large families or to feed the people already born.

Progress toward birth control and planned parenthood is slowest among those people who are poorest and hungriest. There is no peaceable

way to require nations to grow more food or have fewer babies.

Proposals have been made that "have nations" reduce their diets to subsistence levels and give more food to "have not nations". If this were possible, it would not solve the problem, because scientists calculate that if all the food in the world were to be equally distributed among all humans, everybody would go hungry.

Major factors in the population explosion have been reduction of infant mortality and delay of death by controlling diseases. Advancements are being made toward conquering heart disease and cancer, and by the year 2000 transplanting of body parts to prolong life may also become common practice.

Unless we are able to halt the reckless population increase, we may reach the 21st century with tremendous knowledge, unexcelled technology, perfect health and equalized distribution of the food supply, only to starve to death. In an overcrowded world, there just won't be enough for everybody to eat.