

U.S. Subsidizing Population Growth

THE COMMUNIST party chairman of China has announced that each married couple will be limited to having one child.

Because China's population now is approaching one billion, the need to reduce rate of growth has become critical. Cities have been awarding bonuses and cash subsidies to couples with only one child, but now the limitation is to be enforced nationwide.

This contrasts with policies in the United States. Here a tax exemption is allowed for each additional child, children of many unmarried parents are supported by government, perhaps encouraging them to have more, and federal subsidies are distributed to cities according to population.

Population growth is a traditional American boast. It may have substantial financial meaning for communities applying to Washington for financial aid under dozens of subsidy programs.

Demographics experts keep close tabs on population changes for other reasons, too. One is that shifts in

residential patterns bring significant alterations in school attendance. Forced busing to achieve racial balance has resulted in large scale movement from metropolitan areas to small towns and rural communities.

Because of federal and state aid to schools, increases or decreases in average daily attendance are carefully tabulated. Variations may affect number of teachers and salaries paid.

A slowing of population growth a generation ago is resulting in fewer young people entering the nation's workforce. They might not be needed so much to push buttons in this electronic age as they are needed to pay taxes to support the increasing number of elderly people drawing Social Security checks.

Medical advancements are enabling people to live longer, so the number of old people is increasing, while the outlook is that family planning may bring about a leveling off or decline in young people.

The United States has just spent a billion dollars to take a census for a

number of reasons, including assessment of taxes. When the first census was taken in 1790, the United States had 889,000 square miles, 2.5 million people (about the same as live in Oklahoma today), and wealth was estimated at \$3 billion.

Today there is four times as much land, 10 times as many people and the 1790 wealth wouldn't pay the interest on our national debt.

Problems of population growth are greatest in countries that produce least food per capita. Food shortages have seldom, if ever, been known in the United States but starvation is a very real hazard of life in many African, Asian and Latin American countries.

In spite of worldwide efforts to reduce growth, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities estimates that by the year 2000 some two billion persons will be added to the earth's numbers.

And if Chamber of Commerce estimates materialize, a million of them may live in the Oklahoma City area. Perhaps Central Expressway and the West Bypass will be completed by then to ease the traffic jam.