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Letter from New Zealand

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Letter From New Zealand

The past year has seen the continuation of the dramatic recovery in the economic situation, following on devaluation. Exports increased by 50%, the Stock Exchange index is at a record peak, and overseas funds are at a comfortable level. Drillers have for the first time struck oil and natural gas.

The fall in the birth rate has been arrested at 22.60 per 1,000. Illegitimate newcomers have reached a record incidence of 13% of all births. This shameful figure has at least one bright aspect; there are no adoption rackets because the supply exceeds the demand. Besides their enterprise in this field the teenagers keep up with the rest of the world in the matter of drugs, drink, long hair, gate crashing, and generally giving their parents hell.

The recent recession temporarily increased the "brain drain" to Australia, Canada and the U.S.A., even leading for a while to a small loss of population for the first time in 150 years. As an underpopulated country we could not afford this trend.

The universal health insurance scheme has up to date been only a general practitioner service, subsidising the doctor's fee to the extent of 90c. (U.S. figures), an amount which had been unchanged since 1941. Since it was an election year, this was increased to \$1.90 for pensioners, and a specialist subsidy was introduced. The government assists the patient by the sum of \$4.40 for most specialties, and \$6.30 for non-consuming ones such as medicine, neurology and psychiatry.

Maternity fees for general practitioners have been increased from \$30 to about \$50 for complete services. Specialists usually charge the patient an additional \$50.

Your correspondent has helped to found the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child to combat the threat of liberalized abortion legislation, which during the year has been passed in Singapore and South Australia. The President is Professor A.M. Liley, who introduced to the world the intrauterine transfusion of the Rh negative baby. Most church leaders, Christian and Jewish, have agreed to being Founding Members. We expect an interesting inter-necine struggle ahead.

We have also organized a natural family planning service based on ovulation detection techniques. There is a growing demand for this information from people of all faiths who have become disillusioned with current hormonal and IUCD methods. To help the doctors, whose proper role should be solely educative, we have recruited nurses and interested lay couples to follow up patients and convince them of the beneficial fruits of this way of life.

In the year following the encyclical the Catholic community has cooled down and returned to ancient virtues. There was one protest march on the Archbishop's house but we quickly organized a "Swiss guard" to protect him. There were speeches, banners and booing. It was stimulating while it lasted.

H.P. Dunlop,
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