## *Governments should not enact legislation on the number of children a couple can have*

Decision of the Chinese government to alter its one-child policy, thereby allowing couples to have a second child, is being debated as widely as introduction of the policy was. It was under the Deng Xiaoping regime that the policy was implemented with the intention of restricting Chinese population to 1.2 billion to fulfil the country's economic target (Jian 2013). The one-child policy of the government has been hailed among the biggest experiments in state regulated social engineering and has drawn the attention of supporters and critics alike. And therefore it has been at the epicentre of an ethical debate of whether governments should mandate, through legislation, the number of children a couple can have. Taking into consideration the plethora of factors involved, it dawns that the state should not legislate the number of children a couple would want to have and various arguments can be put forward to support this premise.

Post implementation of the one child policy, birth rates in China plunged from 4.77 children per woman to 1.64 children. While the first figure relates to the period around early 1970s the latter corresponds to 2011 (Wan 2013). This sharp fall implied shrunk young population, the effects of which are being felt now. The shrinkage has resulted in a scenario where the country is faced with a potential shortfall in working population, because rate of aging population is higher than rate of young people who can join the workforce. Probable shortage of working population has forced the government to amend the one-child policy (Wan 2013). Therefore critics opine that government's interference in issues of child bearing negatively impacts the balance between working population and older population.

When governments adopt legislations like China's one-child policy, it also arranges for its implementation the modes of which are often ruthless. Fear and panic runs amok as severe penalties are enforced and women are forcefully aborted and sterilized by the state (Jian

2013). In China 336 million abortions and 196 million sterilizations were conducted post adoption of the legislation and 10,000 yuan fine was imposed for ever child over the solitary allowance. This has subjected families into abject poverty and also caused physical and mental agony for the women.

Notwithstanding the ill effects as discussed above, there are supporters of family planning legislations who cite population rise and its environmental impact as justifying reasons. This group opine that estimation of world population reaching 9.7 billion by 2050 should be taken seriously (Conley 2015). For a small planet like ours, this will exert huge pressure on finite resources and result is increased struggle among groups for control of resources. Overcrowding, large scale immigration and displacement and probability of wars will increase. Global warming and climate change will worsen due to enhanced green house gas emission (Conley 2015). Therefore to pre-empt the above from becoming reality, population control must be implemented and enforced by the state.

In conclusion it can be said that population control is probably the need of the future but government legislation and enforcement is not the solution. It leads to compounding of problems rather than mitigating them. Awareness among couples should be heightened and adherence best left to their judgement.

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