



136. Depopulation

Sarah: Wentworth, did you know that the US is expected to be one of a handful of developed nations whose population will continue to rise strongly, largely through immigration?

W: Yes, I did. Most of the other rich world's countries are doing the exact opposite. By 2050 Japan may have shrunk to roughly a hundred million and Russia is suffering a critical fall in population from harsh living standards and poor medical services.

Sarah: I fully agree. Actually the fertility rate in Europe has dropped dramatically, particularly in Spain, Italy, Germany and Russia. On the other hand, Britain, Ireland, France and the Netherlands are faring relatively well with fertility rates above 1.7.

W: Yes, but still nowhere in the European Union does fertility approach 2.1, the level needed to keep the population stable. How do you explain that?

Sarah: Well I think ever since the advent of the pill, women have been able to have children, by choice rather than by chance, and fundamental changes in the role of women in society can account for their reluctance to have children. They probably think that it's incompatible with a career, have the fear of unemployment or simply they are afraid of the future.

W: Very true Sarah. However, Europe's plummeting fertility rate is a time bomb, threatening economic growth and social welfare. A country that doesn't have children, that grows old, is a country without a future.

Sarah: I agree with you but how can European governments try to get people to have more children then?

W: To my mind, they should promote flexitime, increase child benefit, extend maternity leaves and create maternity pay. Nothing really impossible is it?



GLOSSARY:

Depopulation: le dénatalité	The level needed : le taux nécessaire
To expect: s'attendre To rise: augmenter	The advent of the pill : l'avènement de la pillule
To shrink/shrank/shrunk: rétrécir, diminuer	Fundamental changes: des changements fondamentaux
To suffer: souffrir, subir	The role of women: le role des femmes
To drop: chuter	Their reluctance: réticence
To fare: s'en tirer, s'en sortir	A career: une carrière
To approach: approcher	A time bomb: une bombe à retardement
To keep: garder	Economic growth: la croissance économique
To account: estimer, considerer	Social welfare: la protection sociale
To be afraid: avoir peur	Flexitime: l'aménagement du temps de travail
To plummet: être en chute libre	Child benefit: les allocations familiales
To threaten : menacer	Maternity leave: le congé maternité
To grow old : vieillir	Maternity pay: des allocations de maternité
To promote : promouvoir	Strongly : fortement
To increase : augmenter	Largely through : essentiellement en raison de
To extend : allonger	Roughly : environ, aproximativement
To create : créer	Dramatically : de façon spectaculaire
one of a handful: un des rares	Relatively well : relativement bien
The exact opposite: exactement l'inverse	Above : supérieur à, au-dessus de
A critical fall: une chute critique	Ever since : depuis
harsh living standards: des niveaux de vie très bas	By choice: par choix, volontairement
poor medical services: de piètres services de santé	Rather than: plutôt que
The fertility rate : le taux de fécondité	By chance : accidentellement, par hasard