



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	The level needed
To expectTo rise	The advent of the pill
To shrink/shrank/shrunk	Fundamental changes
To suffer	The role of women
To drop	Their reluctance
To fare	A career
To approach	A time bomb
To keep	Economic growth
To account	Social welfare
To be afraid	Flexitime
To plummet	Child benefit
To threaten	Maternity leave
To grow old	Maternity pay
To promote	Strongly
To increase	Largely through
To extend	Roughly
To create : créer	Dramatically
one of a handful	Relatively well
The exact opposite	Above
A critical fall	Ever since
harsh living standards	By choice
poor medical services	Rather than
The fertility rate	By chance



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