STOP FORCED STERILIZATION

NOW!
BY THE COMMITTEE TO STOP FORCED STERILIZATION

Price 25 cents
Welfare mothers & unemployed 15 cents

For sources of information and contact with the committee, write to:
2212 W. Sunset
Los Angeles 90026

JOIN US TO FIGHT FORCED STERILIZATION
If you want more information
If you want a speaker to come to your house
If you want leaflets to pass out
If you have information to give us about sterilization

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

At Los Angeles County General [LA County-University of Southern California Medical Center] women are being sterilized. In many cases women signed consent forms after they had been in labor for many hours or had been heavily drugged. Other women believed they were consenting to a cesarean section and not to sterilization. Spanish-speaking women were given consent forms in English, which they obviously could not read. Some women left the hospital not knowing they had been sterilized.

IN LOS ANGELES
- Between 1968 and 1970 the number of sterilizations not medically necessary increased dramatically at the Women's Hospital:
  - Hysterectomies (removal of uterus or womb) increased 742%
  - Tubal ligations (permanent tying of tubes) increased 470%
  - Tubal ligations after delivery increased 151%

(Health Research Group)

"I want you to ask every one of the girls if they want their tubes tied, regardless of how old they are. Remember, everyone you get to get her tubes tied means two tubes [i.e., two operations] for some resident or intern."

(Health Research Group)

Acknowledgements:

Cover - from Jan./Feb. 1971 issue of "Up from Under."

Posters - from wall murals in Chile before the reactionary coup.

Other cartoons by Gini and Chris of the Committee to Stop Forced Sterilization.

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Thanks to Joel Andreas for his Rockefeller cartoon.

Information sources:
Newsday articles, January 2, 3, 1974.
Ramparts, September, 1974.
Asian Women
Our own interviews.
IN OTHER PLACES IN THE U.S.

- Nal Ruth Cox was sterilized in 1965 in North Carolina:
  "I was 17 and pregnant," she recalled. "I was living with my mother and eight brothers and sisters. I got pregnant, because I didn't know about birth control. When the welfare caseworker found out, she told my mother that if we wanted to keep getting welfare, I'd have to have my tubes tied temporarily. I asked the doctors later if I could have more kids. They brained me off. Then I found out I could not.

Now she and others are suing officials in North Carolina.

- At an Indian hospital in Claremore, Oklahoma, 82 Indian women were sterilized in just one month (July, 1974). Women who come to the hospital are urged by doctors and social workers to stop having babies. Hysterectomies are often performed right after delivery. The program is financed by HEW - the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

- In Delaware a state senate committee recommended that welfare mothers with two or more illegitimate children should be sterilized.

(African Women's Journal)

- At Duke University County Hospital, also in North Carolina (which serves mainly unemployed Blacks), welfare women or unwed mothers who come in to have their babies often have one of two things happen to them. Either the doctor will hold the baby up by its feet over the floor and threaten to drop him unless the woman signs a sterilization paper, or when the woman comes into labor, the personnel will refuse to help her until she signs sterilization papers. (Triple Jeopardy)

- In Puerto Rico 1/3 of the women between the ages of 20 and 49 had been sterilized by 1965, in programs funded and controlled by HEW.

(IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD)

- Colombian newspapers charged that 40,000 women were sterilized between 1983 and 1986, through programs funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. These women, mostly from rural areas and urban slums, were coerced into agreeing to the operations by gifts of lipstick or artificial pearls, by payments of $1.50 and by promises of free medical care.

(Bonnie Mass pamphlet)

- In India, men have been offered free transistor radios if they agreed to be sterilized.

(Bonnie Mass pamphlet)

MOS OF THESE EXAMPLES HAVE TWO THINGS IN COMMON.

1. The targets for forced sterilization are poor women - mainly Black, Chicana, Puerto Rican, Latina, and Native American.

2. Sterilization is done in programs that are funded by the US government through HEW and AID (Agency for International Development) and by private foundations which are funded and controlled by rich people like the Rockefellers.

WHAT IS STERILIZATION?

Sterilization is a permanent means of birth control. In other words, after being sterilized you can never again have more children. Surgical sterilization can take several forms. Women can receive a hysterectomy, where the womb is removed; a laparoscopy, where the tubes are cut and burned (this is the cheapest, fastest, and least tested way); or a tubal ligation, where the tubes are cut and tied (they cannot be untied for you to have more babies). Men can receive a vasectomy, where the tubes that carry sperm are cut.

All surgery is dangerous, but of these operations, hysterectomy is the most serious operation and should be avoided if possible. Sterilization should only be used when people are absolutely sure they don't want to have any more children and don't choose to use another method of birth control.

In addition to these surgical means, sterilization may result from other causes. Both venereal diseases and infection of the female organs can make a woman sterile if she isn't given proper health care.

WHAT IS FREE CHOICE? WHAT IS FORCED STERILIZATION?

When parents are too poor to clothe and feed their children adequately, can they freely choose to have another child? When women are offered the "choice" of being sterilized or having welfare payments cut off, that is not free choice. When a Spanish-speaking woman signs an English form consenting to be sterilized, that is not free choice. When prisoners are told they will not be paroled unless they agree to be sterilized, that is not free choice. When "mentally deficient" people are sterilized without their consent, on the excuse that they cannot make the decision themselves, that is not free choice.

Poor women do not freely choose to be experimented on. Rich women can afford a private doctor who will prescribe an already tested method of birth control. Poor women have no choice but to get free or low-cost birth control at a teaching or research hospital where sterilization and birth control methods are being tested. Some of these birth control experiments result in the sterilization of women who are used as guinea pigs.

We believe that the purpose of birth control is to give women more choice about how we will live our lives. We believe women have the right to decide how many, if any, children we will have. Women have fought together for a long time to get safe birth control, including abortion and sterilization. But we know that birth control alone will not give us the freedom we want for all people. We want to live in a world where all human life is valued, and we have real power to control our lives. For women to be truly free there must be enough food, proper health care, jobs, good schools, and child care centers for everyone. Birth control will give all women freedom only in a society where these basic human needs are met. When women are forced by their poverty to agree to sterilization, this is not free choice; this is FORCED STERILIZATION.
The population control movement in the US has its roots in racism. At the turn of the century, organizations formed to promote birth control, first among poor immigrants from Southern Europe and later among other groups such as Blacks, Asians, Mexicans. Because middle and upper class white people were afraid of being outnumbered, they passed laws authorizing sterilizations.

We are taught that men are better than women and that whites are better than non-whites. The majority of those sterilized are non-white women. Because of job and educational discrimination non-white women have a greater chance of being sterilized. In Los Angeles, Latina women without immigration papers have been especially hard hit by forced sterilizations, for these women "fighting back" means exposure and deportation.

When the drug companies or Rockefeller's International Planned Parenthood need to experiment with a drug or a new method of birth control they do it on poor non-white women. There are documented cases of birth control pills being tested on Black and Puerto Rican women before they were certified "safe" for the US public.

The racism of the sterilizations goes further than who is actually sterilized. White workers are told that the reason taxes take so much out of their salaries is because they are supporting all those non-white people and their kids on welfare. Minority people are told that the reason they are poor is not because of job and education discrimination but because they have too many children. This helps direct the anger of these people towards poor people or towards themselves instead of against the corporations and the government of the rich.

Inside the US the idea of forced sterilization is not new. During World War Two, thousands of Japanese-Americans were rounded up and put into concentration camps. In 1945, a bill was presented to Congress to sterilize Japanese-American women. The bill was defeated by only one vote.

20% of married Black women have been sterilized. This is almost three times the percentage of white married, according to the 1970 National Fertility Study.
WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT RATHER ELIMINATE POOR PEOPLE THAN POVERTY?

Of all things in the world, people are the most precious. Yet we live in a system that puts profits before people—the interests of the businessmen before the needs of the people. We feel that government priorities should be providing food, good medical care, and other necessities. Instead, the US government spends money on bombs, on police for struggling countries, ghettoes, and barrios, and for programs of population control and forced sterilization.

People ask for jobs and decent health care—they get money for free sterilization. The government and the people who control the wealth of our country say that overpopulation causes poverty. They say the solution to poverty and misery is for poor women to have fewer babies. By spreading this lie and by providing free sterilization, they try to avoid making the changes that will really eliminate poverty.

China, the country with the most people in the world, is a living example of how untrue this "overpopulation causes poverty" argument is. In 1949, China's population was 400 million and it was one of the poorest countries in the world. But in 10 short years following the Chinese revolution in 1949 China was able to organize the economy so that all her people were fed. Now in 1974, China's population has doubled to 800 million, but unemployment, hunger, and most disease has been wiped out.

Similarly, in Cuba, population growth is even encouraged, while everyone has plenty to eat and all the necessities of life. Since Cuba, also, was an extremely poor country, this shows that it is control and distribution of wealth, not overpopulation, which both creates poverty and can eliminate it.

Why is the US government interested in keeping poor people all over the world from having a lot of babies? The US government (and the private foundations) can say they are doing something to help stop the poverty in the world. At the same time they can mask their own responsibility for that poverty.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELFARE

The US government, through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), is a major source of funds for birth control services in the US today. Since 1966, HEW has been funding sterilizations for poor women who can't afford to pay private doctors. Although HEW has not kept accurate statistics before 1973, it estimates that in 1973 alone between 100,000 and 200,000 poor women were sterilized! While in recent years the money for HEW-financed child care centers, Head Start programs, and community health programs has been cut, in the period 1969-1974 the budget for family planning has increased from $51 million to $250 million.

HEW has population control programs all over the country. In Los Angeles, this money is funneled through the Los Angeles Regional Family Planning Center (LARFPC). LARFPC channels this HEW money to LA County Hospital, John Wesley, Martin Luther King, White Memorial, Glendale Adventist, and UCLA Medical Center.

AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For foreign countries, the US government finances population control projects through the Agency for International Development (AID). This money is used for research on new population control methods and for research on the birth rate and attitudes of people in a country towards birth control.

AID programs help keep dictatorships in power, by helping them to suppress dissent. For example, in Brazil, where people who speak out are jailed and often tortured, AID has trained more than 100,000 policemen in the past 10 years. AID money is also used by repressive governments to sterilize certain ethnic groups in an attempt to wipe them out. A good example are the Indian populations in Latin America. While AID pours money into police forces and population control programs, it is reducing the money given for such things as education, health, and agricultural development.

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

Much of the research into population matters and birth control is funded by foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, International Planned Parenthood Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. These foundations receive money from wealthy families, from the US government, and from each other.

WHO PAYS FOR FORCED STERILIZATION?

The Rockefeller family, which is one of the biggest financial backers of population control programs, has wealth of over 10 billion dollars. This is more than the combined wealth of all Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and 40,000,000 white people.

... Personally the Rockefellers like big families, though Together the five brothers have produced 22 kids...

With this foreign aid, countries can buy contraceptive materials from US companies. Just as HEW money for population programs has increased, so too has AID money increased. From $55 million in 1968, AID funds for population programs grew to $125 million in 1973.

We're not against helping people in other countries, but AID programs don't help people. AID programs make countries dependent on the US by requiring that AID money be spent on US goods. Many programs help keep dictators in power, by helping them to suppress dissent. For example, in Brazil, who speak out are jailed and often tortured, AID has trained more than 100,000 policemen in the past 10 years. AID money is also used by repressive governments to sterilize certain ethnic groups in an attempt to wipe them out. A good example are the Indian populations in Latin America. While AID pours money into police forces and population control programs, it is reducing the money given for such things as education, health, and agricultural development.
"GENEROSITY"

...The Rockefellers say that the world's main problem is people... If there weren't so many of us everything would be fine... So they brought us the "Population council" and donate millions of dollars to the cause of sterilizing people in India, Puerto Rico and Harlem... And it's all very liberal of course...

AID MONEY TO LATIN AMERICA 1966-69

| Population Control Programs:          | increased by $7 million |
| Agriculture and Rural Development:    | decreased by $3 million |
| Education:                           | decreased by $6 million |
| Health:                              | decreased by $49 million |

One of the methods of sterilization being tested is the "slurry" (transcervical installation). The slurry is a kind of cement that is introduced into the womb through the cervix. Once inside the womb it moves to the fallopian tubes where it blocks them, preventing the egg from reaching the womb. This technique is only 60% effective and has unknown side effects.

The slurry is being developed in particular for use in Latin America. Because it can be administered by someone who is not a doctor, the slurry can be used on a massive scale.

The National Institute of Health (a part of HEW) has given money to a Miami doctor to study the slurry. He has encouraged other doctors using the slurry to perform hysterectomies on their women patients in order to discover how the slurry works.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare produced, in April 1974, guidelines to be followed by any institution receiving federal funds for sterilization. According to LA County General, patients now have these rights. IF YOU HAVE BEEN DENIED THESE RIGHTS, CONTACT US.

1. Sterilizations can be performed no sooner than 72 hours after delivery.
2. The patient must be given a fair explanation of the operation so that she understands that she will no longer be able to have babies. She should also know what alternative birth control is available, and what benefits and problems are involved with sterilization operations.
3. The patient must be told and it must be stated in big letters at the top of the consent form that no welfare benefits will be withheld as punishment for refusing to be sterilized.
4. The consent form must be signed in the presence of a witness chosen by the patient.
5. The patient can change her mind at any time, whether or not she has signed a consent form.
6. For an indefinite period, no sterilizations should be performed on women under the age of 21.