

**ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**

only major market from which Japan buys manufactured "primary" goods such as textiles and chemicals—thus making European exports highly vulnerable to Japan's protectionist forces; and (b) the Japanese need for a balance-of-payments surplus to pay for their oil imports—between 1973 and 1976, annual Japanese outlays for Middle Eastern oil climbed by \$13.8 billion.

Japan's success in the competitive struggle unleashed by the oil crisis is due above all to its vigorous private sector, observes Sautter. Although its population is one-half and its GNP (\$492 billion) one-third that of Europe, it nonetheless boasts 44 more major corporations than Europe (compared to four fewer than Europe as recently as 1975).

Japan follows intensive initial capital investment with sharp price-cutting, a process that eliminates all but the most efficient firms. This "industrial Darwinism" is kept within politically acceptable limits by the MITI (Japan's powerful ministry of industry and commerce). Sautter argues that European industry, plagued by union and government restrictions, must encourage a similar pattern. This strategy could be regulated by a European equivalent of MITI.

Such a comprehensive approach, Sautter warns, will depend largely on West Germany's participation. With a trade surplus of \$54 billion in 1973-76 (versus Japan's \$17 billion for the same period), Bonn could either decide that its long-term interests are tied to the rest of Europe—or decide to go it alone.

**SOCIETY***The Social Costs  
of Early Death*

"Early Death: An American Tragedy" by James W. Vaupel, in *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Autumn 1977), Duke University Press, Box 6697, College Station, Durham, N.C. 77708.

In devising policy on health and safety, Federal planners should not consider death rates per se but the years of useful life lost due to death, writes Vaupel, professor of public affairs at Duke University. Out of a total of 2 million deaths of Americans in 1974, 700,000 were before age 65. Such early deaths deprive the individual and society of far more years of useful activity than late death; losses should thus not be measured in numbers of deaths but in "quality-adjusted life-years" lost—a figure reached by assuming that quality of life remains constant until age 65, when it declines rapidly.

The likelihood of "early death" in the United States—28 percent at birth—is higher than in other Western countries. (Sweden's rate is under 19 percent.) Furthermore, early death in America tends to strike nonwhites disproportionately (39 percent). Little attention has been focused on such "life-span inequality." The main causes, all found to a

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greater degree among nonwhites, are cardiovascular disease, cancer, infant mortality, accidents, and homicide.

The social and economic consequences of attacking early death, Vaupel writes, are less disruptive than those of extending old age. Reductions in early deaths would be unlikely to produce major demographic changes in the population. Designing programs to deal with the problem will nevertheless be a vast undertaking, Vaupel acknowledges. New funds for "early death" research, health care, and education would require cutbacks elsewhere—a "politically difficult" and "highly charged" task.

### *Till Divorce Us Do Part*

"Marriage, Divorce, and Living Together" in *Interchange* (Jan. 1978), Population Reference Bureau, 1337 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The U.S. divorce rate is high and the number of unmarried couples "living together" is increasing steadily. But according to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) the divorce rate may soon level off—and living together may be one of the reasons why.

The Census Bureau reports that 2 million Americans are living together without being married, most of them young (in the 1960s, most unmarried couples consisted of a middle-aged or elderly woman with a younger man as a tenant). In about a third of these couples, the woman is the breadwinner, with an "unrelated man" living in.

The U.S. divorce rate, meanwhile, is the highest in the world (5 divorces annually per 1,000 population). In 1976, there was one divorce for every two marriages (1,077,000 versus 2,133,000). It is estimated that of each 100 first marriages, 38 will end in divorce; 29 of the 38 divorcees will remarry; 13 of these 29 will be divorced a second time.

But the divorce rate has reached its peak, the PRB contends, and may even decline in the next two or three years. One reason: Couples are having fewer children, which tends to improve the family's economic position—a key factor in marital stability. Another: "Living together" may lead to "a more careful selection of a spouse and thus to a more enduring marriage."

### *Washington's Mule Program*

"General Washington and the Jack Ass" by J. H. Powell, in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Autumn 1977), Duke University Press, P.O. Box 697, Durham, N.C. 27708.

Not the greatest, but possibly the least known of George Washington's concerns when he assumed the Presidency in 1789 was the dearth of mules in the young republic. Five years earlier, on his return to Mount Vernon after a decade of war, the general had tackled the problem with singular dedication. Washington believed that reliance on horses as draft animals had produced a "ruinous" system of agriculture: Horses