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**SOCIETY**

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