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If the population explosion continues around the world, New Bern might end up being a big town one of these days. After all, people have got to go somewhere, and the shores of the Neuse and Trent are not without appeal.

Humans are reproducing at a rate that challenges the best efforts of rabbits and guinea pigs. During this one year, we are told, the world's growth will equal the combined populations of France and Spain.

To put it another way, every 39 days enough people are added to the earth's inhabitants to fill a city the size of New York. You hear a lot of talk about the hawks and the doves in our current military predicament, but maybe along the way we ought to include the stork in our bird watching.

"Family planning" is being attempted in 30 countries, but the results are discouraging. India, for example, is expected to double its population of 500 million within the next 27 years, if the present trend continues. Brazil, where the government frowns on birth control, is in frightening economic shape.

The ironic fact isn't that a lot more people are being born, but a lot less people are dying. In case of India, modern civilization has reduced the death rate from 48.6 per 1,000 population in 1921 to 36.3 in 1931, 27.4 in 1951, and only 16 in 1966.

By comparison, India's 49.2 birthrate per 1,000 population in 1921 has decreased to 41. This reduction, it is easy to see, can't begin to offset the much greater lowering of the death rate. Such is the plight of a country where famine is no stranger.

If all this omits, consider the fact that El Salvador has a birthrate of 47 and a death rate of 10.8. Then there's Mexico, south of our border, with a birthrate in the 40's and a death rate of only 10.4. We can't give you any figures on China, or Vietnam, and for your peace of mind, if you've got any left, that may be a blessing.

From the tone of this column, a first-time reader of The Mirror might get the notion that we would like to see babies outlawed. An assumption of the sort wouldn't be in keeping with our incurable habit of giving photographs of children top priority on our front page.

While we're on the subject of kids, pity those Secret Service men at the White House if Bobby Kennedy is elected President. Keeping that many juveniles under constant surveillance will be a nightmare, and it is to be hoped the furnishings remain intact. Heaven help the rose garden.

The miracle of spring never ceases to amaze us. As these lines are being written, we've spotted a butterfly hovering near our doorstep where snow and ice mingled a short time ago. And along the curb, a flowering plum tree that burst into bloom with the suddenness of a Jack-in-the-box is waving its branches to the fitful rhythm of a late March breeze.

April, this editor's favorite month, is just around the cor-

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LION'S SHARE — Florence Hanff's prize poodle, Paddy, used to have wonderful dreams in which he found himself the exclusive owner of the biggest bone that's ever been. Now that the dreams are a reality, he is obviously awed by the immensity of it all. How, he ponders, can one small dog do justice to the feast set before him? Incidentally, the huge bone is for real. Florence latched onto it at a supermarket where the butcher was cooperative, and the resulting

picture was subsequently selected for hanging at the latest gathering of the North Carolina Professional Photographers Association. There's a moral in Paddy's predicament. Too many of us wish for things far beyond our needs, and when our desires are fulfilled we find we've bitten off more than we can chew, or in Paddy's case crunch. Whatever you do, don't be greedy.