

Birth Control Review

Published by the American Birth Control League

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JUNE, 1937

American Medicine Accepts Birth Control

THE history of human progress as well as the history of medicine will record a decisive victory on June 8th, 1937, when the American Medical Association gave its first official recognition to birth control as a legitimate part of medical practice. While the Association met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, for its eighty eighth annual assembly, its House of Delegates, sometimes called "the supreme court of American medicine," adopted unanimously the report of the Association's Committee to Study Contraceptive Practices. This report included constructive recommendations destined to extend both the reliability and the availability of contraceptive knowledge in the United States.

For years American medicine's recognition of birth control has been delayed and bitterly fought by powerful groups, religious and otherwise, within its own ranks. All resolutions on the matter were shelved until two years ago, when the Association appointed its Committee to Study Contraceptive Practices. Last June the Committee presented a preliminary report which in no way appeared to forecast the overwhelming acceptance to come this year.

The four recommendations adopted touch upon the progress of contraception in law, research, education and clinical service. They are as follows:

1 "That the American Medical Association take such action as may be necessary to make clear to physicians their legal rights in relation to the use of contraceptives.

2 "That the American Medical Association undertake the investigation of materials, devices and meth-

ods recommended or employed for the prevention of conception, with a view to determining physiologic, chemical and biologic properties and effects, and that the results of such investigations be published for the information of the medical profession.

3 "That the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association be requested to promote thorough instruction in our medical schools with respect to the various factors pertaining to fertility and sterility, due attention being paid to their positive as well as to their negative aspects.

4 "All dispensaries, clinics and similar establishments where information and advice concerning the prevention of conception are given to the public should be under legal licensure and supervision and under medical control."

Medical responsibility to extend birth control knowledge to all economic groups was recognized by the

Committee when it reported, "Information concerning contraception is admittedly available to persons in favorable economic circumstances. There appears to be no law to prevent physicians who work in dispensaries from furnishing patients there with any information that may lawfully be furnished to patients in any other economic group. In all cases, the legal justification is the medical need of the patient."

After reviewing the recent decision of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Second Circuit, the Committee gave the following opinion concerning the decision's effect upon state laws: "Although the statutes in force

COMMENTS OF THE PRESS

'The action marks another landmark in the annals of American medicine

—New York Times, June 9th

"The birth control policy adopted by the Association means far more than contraception. It was a recognition of a change in biological thinking based on many advances in knowledge of the human body mind and spirit."

—Associated Press dispatch, June 9th

"The new policy is of course a monumental victory for birth control. It is the capture of a stronghold which hitherto looked impregnable. We believe in the long run it will be counted as a milestone of progress toward a healthier and better country. Not the least beneficiary however, should be the medical profession itself which makes an important adjustment to the world around it and steps out with a clearer integrity.

—Editorial *Medicine Looks Up*
New York World-Telegram June 10th

in the several states that forbid the dissemination of information concerning methods for the prevention of conception do not in express terms exempt physicians from their operation, it seems fair nevertheless to assume that the state courts, if called on to construe them, will adopt lines of reasoning similar to those followed in the case cited and in other cases decided by United States courts, leaving physicians free to give information concerning contraception when required to meet the medical needs of patients"

The Committee also declared, "It is recognized that voluntary family limitation is dependent largely on the judgment and wishes of individual parents. The intelligent, voluntary spacing of pregnancies may be desirable for the health and general well being of mothers and children"

That "laymen assisted by the law" have blazed the road for medical advance in contraception was stated in a resolution of the American Neurological Association, submitted to the American Medical Association before action was taken on the birth control question. This resolution urged the Association to "consider

seriously the inroads that are being made on the prestige of organized medicine by the rapid advance of popular thought in the matter of social medical science, as evinced by the success of lay organizations in carrying out their program for greater freedom in the matter of contraception"

In a statement to the press released June 10th, Dr. Clarence Cook Little, president of the American Birth Control League, hailed the Association's action as "enlightened leadership." He predicted that the program adopted by the Association "will reduce America's high maternal death rate and protect the public against dangerous frauds"

Dr. Little stated, "The American Birth Control League, whose policies are set by the National Medical Council on Birth Control, has always held that birth control is primarily a medical problem and should be guided by the medical profession. We are happy to see our stand confirmed by the American Medical Association. This step undoubtedly indicates that the medical profession is conscious of its powerful position in influencing the course of progressive social change"

What of the Future?

A Message to Birth Control Leagues

WHILE the cheering over the action of the American Medical Association still rings in our ears, we pause to take our bearings.

Within a brief seven months the two greatest victories in the history of the birth control movement have been won. With the sanction of the high courts and of the American Medical Association, just where do we stand? What course will the movement take?

On the firm foundation of legal and medical acceptance, we now enter the most constructive era of the movement. Every effort and every dollar can produce vastly greater results.

Nothing in the entire history of public health movements indicates that lay groups can afford to rest once the battle for professional recognition is won. If that were possible, the great lay movements to eradicate tuberculosis and venereal disease, to prevent blindness and control cancer, would have long since disbanded. It would be fatuous to suppose that the youngest of the public health movements, that for birth control, can consider its work done at this point. Far from it!

There are still formidable hurdles ahead. The work of overcoming prejudice, inertia and greed is an educational process for the layman. The religious opposi-

tion, though obviously weakening, has by no means subsided. It is probable that our opponents will continue to use their power in politics and their membership in social work agencies to block the dissemination of birth control to the masses, who need it most. The eugenic ideal is still on the dim horizon.

While the American Medical Association's action will afford the powerful protection the public needs against the vast industry of harmful and fraudulent contraceptives, it cannot afford this protection at once. The process will, in the nature of things, be a slow one. In the meantime, the floodgates are open to the unscrupulous opportunists in the commercial field. Responsibility rests upon lay leaders in birth control to make the public aware of medically directed service and of the protection to be expected from the American Medical Association.

For women in rural areas, where medical service of any kind is woefully inadequate and birth control clinics inaccessible or non-existent, there is a great need to be met before we can rest.

Though the United States has a surplus of doctors, they are not distributed to meet the needs of our population. Can we expect that birth control will reach all

those who need it one bit more quickly than will other forms of medical service? Just as there are thousands in our country who through poverty or ignorance suffer and die of tuberculosis, cancer, heart disease without medical attention, so will there be thousands without the knowledge of medical birth control—unless we help to bring it to them.

Contraception is a medical problem. It may go only so far as doctors will or can guide it. Yet the money and the stimulus provided by intelligent lay pressure is as necessary today as it was twenty years ago. Lay support and education behind the physician and the public health agency is the cornerstone of national health.

In England, the work of a lay organization, the National Birth Control Association, continues to be essential, though seven years have passed since the Ministry of Health issued its first memorandum to local health authorities, urging the establishment of contraceptive clinics. The Association has forwarded the establishment of both voluntary and public health clinics. Lord Horder, one of England's most distinguished physicians, is its president. In its annual report for 1936-1937, the Association states that it "still has a great work to perform in promoting the physical fitness of the nation and in preventing much human suffering."

A similar task awaits lay leaders in the United States. At such short notice, a more exhaustive review of all factors of the situation is not possible. We venture that, when all are analyzed, they will fortify these general conclusions: there is and will be for some years to come need for extra mural centers. There is need for hospital and public health clinics as well. Each type has its peculiar advantages and disadvantages. Each can reach only a section of the community.

Here, then, is the challenge of the future. In meeting that challenge, the American Birth Control League and state member leagues will scrupulously follow the guidance of our medical boards, as we have done in the past. We welcome the progressive leadership of the American Medical Association.

Organized effort must not relax until every community and every rural backwoods has an adequate maternal health program, in which birth control is recognized as a vital factor. We must see to it that no needy mother, whatever her status and wherever she may be, is denied the means for child spacing.

ALLISON PIERCE MOORE,
Chairman, Board of Directors,
American Birth Control League

Puerto Rico Legalizes Birth Control

May first was indeed Child Health Day for teeming Puerto Rico. Dissemination of birth control information became legal there on that day when acting Governor Rafael Menendez Ramos signed a bill passed by the Insular Legislature and striking out the birth control prohibition from the island's penal code.

Strong Catholic opposition has delayed the passage of the bill, which authorities are convinced will provide the only solution for the island's pressing problems of overpopulation, ill health and poverty.

Himself a Catholic, Senor Ramos said in commenting on the bill, "Since the most used arguments in opposition have been moral and religious, I have given careful consideration to these. But I have not convinced myself that the judicious use of contraceptives is in conflict with wholesome public morality in its broadest sense."

Senor Ramos stated in an interview appearing in the *New York Herald Tribune* of June 6th, "I think there will be no difficulty in getting the people to make use of the birth control information once it is provided. They want the information very much. On my coffee farm the Mayaguez women come to me all the time asking what they should do to keep from having any more children."

Dr. Jose Belaval has written to Dr. Eric M. Matsner, medical director of the American Birth Control League, "We have already opened twelve clinics working in cooperation with hospitals and medical centers, and expect very soon to open three more in three sugar *centrales* sustained by the companies." Medical interest in the contraceptive program crystallized during Dr. Matsner's visit to Puerto Rico last fall, when he addressed three quarters of the practicing physicians on the island.

Mrs. Sanger Aids Bermuda Program

Returning from a two weeks' visit to Bermuda on May 29th, Margaret Sanger, director of the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau, praised the "statesmanship and vision" of officials of the island in adopting a birth control program. The work of educating doctors in contraceptive techniques is already under way, she said. Two clinics will be opened soon, one for white women and one for Negroes, the expense to be borne by the Colonial government.

Mrs. Sanger visited the island on the invitation of Dr. Henry Wilkinson, head of the Bermuda Department of Health. While there, she addressed two public meetings and spoke before the House of Assembly.

At the Social Work Conference

Today and Eight Years Ago

EIGHT years ago in San Francisco, the American Birth Control League held its first exhibit at the National Conference of Social Work Photographers' flashlights popped around the booth "Look natural, please, and hold out a copy of the *Review*!" urged the gentlemen of the press Anticipating a spectacular raid, city editors had their photographs and headlines ready But the raid did not occur, and the pictures were relegated to the "morgue," for in 1929 birth control was news only when something sensational happened

This year, on the Sunday the National Conference of Social Work opened in Indianapolis, May 23rd, the Indianapolis *Star* carried an illustrated feature story three columns wide on the birth control clinic of the Maternal Health League of Indiana and its participation with the American Birth Control League in the Conference There was nothing sensational about this story—it was a constructive chronicle of a public health movement, of a human service that the city is proud to have Similar illustrated feature stories, recently published in newspapers of seven other states, were part of a display shown at the League's booth The changed attitude of the press reflects how much popular opinion about birth control has progressed during those eight years

In 1929, social workers crowded around the new booth, many of them learning for the first time of the work of the League and of the 28 birth control clinics then functioning in the United States "How can we start a clinic in our district?" was the outstanding question

Cooperation, 1937 Style

Again this year the League's booth in Indianapolis was surrounded by eager visitors throughout the week Addresses of more than ten times as many clinics—307—were on the lists available to social workers this year Workers at the booth were happy to find the majority of the social workers already informed about clinics in their cities, and regularly referring patients to these centers Some told of religious opposition still retarding such referrals by their organizations "But I don't let that stop me," more than a few declared

"How can we start a clinic?" is still asked But today social workers, aware of the part the League plays in clinic extension, promptly offer information, contacts and suggestions which our field workers can use "If you come to my city, I'll do all I can to help, and I

think you can count on this list of people"—that is practical social work cooperation, 1937 style

During the week 904 delegates from 39 states, the District of Columbia, Canada and Japan registered at the booth Hundreds more stopped to take literature, but did not register More than 10,000 pieces of literature were distributed

The meeting on "Birth Control and Modern Medicine," May 24th, attracted the largest audience ever to attend a League session at the National Conference—1,300 persons, who jammed the largest conference room available and overflowed into the corridors A paper on "Scientific Birth Control and Mental Hygiene" was read by Dr John Favill, clinical professor of neurology, Rush Medical College, University of Chicago This will be printed in an early issue of the *REVIEW* In introducing Dr Favill, Dr Eric M Matsner, medical director of the League, who presided, pointed out that mental illness, like birth control, had until recently been a subject taboo in public discussion "Now both these branches of preventive medicine may be discussed frankly and openly," he said "Public discussion alone is an important step forward in combatting any disease"

"Rhythm" Method Called Unreliable

"An Evaluation of the Safe Period" was presented by Dr Irving Stein, associate clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago Not more than twenty percent of women are candidates for the use of the "rhythm" method of birth control, he stated, basing this percentage on a study of case histories from private practice

"Wide variations in the monthly cycles of women to day are the rule, and regularity is the exception," Dr Stein said "At the crucial times in a woman's life, when birth control is most urgently needed, it is impossible to estimate her safe period" Much more clinical evidence, gleaned from scientific observation of women applying the "rhythm" method must be obtained and verified before the theory will be acceptable to medical science, he concluded

At the May 25th meeting on "Birth Control and Social Change," Marguerite Benson, executive director of the American Birth Control League, presided Rev Ferdinand Q Blanchard, pastor of the Euclid Avenue

Congregational Church, Cleveland, Ohio, gave a thoughtful address on the moral and social aspects of the problem

Those who fear that birth control knowledge will be abused and employed to avoid the responsibilities of bearing and training children forget, he pointed out, "that the desire for children is one of the deepest instincts of the human soul, for which woman has literally gone down to the gate of death through endless generations, and prompted by which man has organized his career. You might as well say that if you teach people to avoid sunstroke they will dislike the sun, as to fear lest the knowledge of regulating the birth process will cause its claim to be ignored"

New Type of Leader is Essential

"Birth Control and Statesmanship" was the topic of Eduard C Lindeman, professor of social philosophy at the New York School of Social Work. The birth control movement is entering a new phase, which bears directly on the tasks of organized social work, he said. At this stage the movement must incorporate itself and its values into the American cultural pattern, it must relate itself to other programs of social and economic planning, including public health, parent education, housing, recreation, social security and the movement for world peace

A new perspective and a new kind of leadership is called for, Dr Lindeman declared. "In the past birth control developed a gallant group of fighters, who were willing to stake their own careers and their positions in the community on the justice of this movement," he said. "Now this sort of leadership must be augmented by people not so much interested in fighting as in planning—people who will look into the future and see where the birth control movement will be twenty five years from now"

Such new leadership is coming from many sources, some of them surprising, he pointed out. Physicians, business men, university professors, notable lawyers and publicists and national authorities in various fields are among these who are now enlisting in the movement, and helping to broaden its base of leadership and of support

The third birth control session of the week was held on May 27th under the auspices of our state member league, the Maternal Health League of Indiana. With an audience of more than four hundred, this was the largest gathering the League had ever secured in Indianapolis. Mrs Louis H Haerle, president of the League, acted as chairman. The program of the League's medical board was outlined by Dr Murray N Hadley,

chairman of the Indianapolis clinic committee. Rabbi Elias Charry, a member of the board of directors, described the growth of the League's work and the obstacles that had been overcome

One of the most inspiring addresses at any of the sessions was given by an Indianapolis business man, Mr Rowland Allen. As personnel manager for one of the city's largest department stores, Mr Allen has seen by inference the whole problem of birth control as it affects the lives of men and women

"We business men are not smart if we cannot trace the effect of today's unwanted child in misery and disease and translate that into our social problems of the future," he asserted. "In this country we are on the eve of the greatest era of planned decency that has ever been known in history. But we must guard against the disease that is sweeping over the entire civilized world today. Fascism tells us that individuals do not count. Well, they do count. Every single individual represents everything there is in the universe. Without individual dignity, there is no possibility of happiness. And without free choice, there can be no human dignity"

On this note closed the most successful series of meetings that the League has ever held during this important gathering of the nation's social workers

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Birth Control Council of America

In order to coordinate the activities of the two national birth control organizations, a central council has recently been formed by the American Birth Control League and the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau, to be known as the Birth Control Council of America

The objectives of the Council are to unify the work of the two organizations, to eliminate overlapping and duplication, to establish joint standards and certification of birth control clinics in America, and to serve in general as a coordinating agency in the manifold activities of both organizations

The Council consists of Margaret Sanger as chairman and Professor Henry Pratt Fairchild as vice chairman, with three members from each group to be appointed by the two respective organizations. Mrs Louis deB Moore, Dr Frederick Holden and Dr Eric M Matsner have been appointed as Council members by the American Birth Control League, with Dr Clarence C Little as alternate. Representing the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau are Dr Hannah M Stone, Dr Sidney E Goldstein and Dr Ira S Wile, with Dr Abraham Stone as alternate. Additional representatives may be invited as occasion arises

News from the States

ARKANSAS A fifth birth control clinic was established in the state in April, at Truman, following organization work by the Arkansas Eugenic Association

The Association held its sixth annual meeting in Little Rock on April 26th Mrs Edward Cornish, chairman, presented a report of clinic work "The Future of Contraception" was the topic of Dr John Samuel, medical director of the Little Rock clinic

The meeting adopted a resolution commending Governor Carl E Bailey for his courageous endorsement of birth control and of sterilization for criminal defectives This endorsement by the Governor, made during a speech before the annual convention of the Arkansas Medical Society, inspired Monsignor John H Healey's refusal to bless the convention and resulted in national publicity

DELAWARE The Open House which the Delaware Birth Control League held at its Wilmington clinic on April 20th was made the occasion for a whole week of intensive publicity The remarkable cooperation which resulted has set the League far ahead, reports its president, Mrs Union Worthington

The "family planning" exhibit of the American Birth Control League was displayed in the window of one of the city's largest brokerage houses When Catholics protested, the firm politely told them, "We shall be glad at any time to give similar space to an exhibit of the work of the Catholic Charities" But the exhibit stayed in the window

A full page feature story in the *Wilmington Star* was illustrated with pictures of the clinic and its directors On four successive days radio talks on the League's work were given over Station WDEL Dr F Earl Spencer began the radio series with a talk on the medical aspects of birth control Mrs Union Worthington spoke on the history of the movement, Mrs Lawrence Thomas described the work of the clinic and its need for funds, and the series concluded with a lively question and answer program by Mrs Thomas and Mrs J Danforth Bush, Jr

All the talks included an invitation to the radio audience to come to the clinic on Open House Day and find out for themselves what the League is doing And they did come—plenty of men as well as women, visiting nurses, contributors, social workers and the entire executive staffs of several local social agencies

MASSACHUSETTS The seventh Mothers' Health Office of the Massachusetts Birth Control League was opened in April in Fitchburg Early opposition has been successfully met Called "a cancerous growth on the community," by a local Catholic priest in a scathing sermon, the center and its work were defended on the following Sunday in sermons preached by four Protestant and Jewish clergymen of Fitchburg

Those who believe that birth control is "a woman's movement" would have been surprised to see the audience at the League's annual dinner meeting held in Boston on April 15th As many men as women attended With the exception of Mrs Leslie Hawkrigde, League president, those at the speakers' table were men, and men whose names are among the most distinguished in New England education, religion, science and medicine Dr Eduard C Lindeman of the New York School of Social Work gave the principal address

The League has prepared a splendid "Five Year Plan" for extension of clinical service Copies may be obtained from its headquarters, 3 Joy Street, Boston

NEW JERSEY With ten years of progress to its credit, the New Jersey Birth Control League held its annual meeting on May 19th in Newark Organized in 1927, the League now has nine county committees, which maintain nine maternal health centers Work has been started in three more counties, and a state wide medical council has been formed The year saw the opening of two new centers, in Camden and Paterson

Mrs Henry L deRham, president of the League, was chairman at the annual luncheon The second number of the League's news bulletin, distributed at the luncheon, contained the president's annual report and reports from all centers, in a form for convenient reference This saved the time usually taken for presenting these reports at the meeting, and is a plan other leagues may wish to try

Mrs Louis deB Moore, chairman of the board of directors of the American Birth Control League, told of the progress of the national movement

Dr A Nowell Creadick of Yale University School of Medicine gave a stimulating address on "Propaganda in a Democracy" He predicted a rise in the death rate and a stationary population for the United States in the near future "There is nothing to fear about a sta

tionary population," Dr Creadick declared "It is long since time to begin to think about quality rather than quantity"

Birth control is not the cause of a declining birth rate, but is merely one means for securing this end, he pointed out Some means has always been found for limiting families when social and economic circumstances do not permit more children If scientific birth control is not available, mothers resort to abortion, which causes a tremendous pregnancy wastage It is clear that some sense of security must be obtained before the middle class will be willing to raise its birth rate, he said

"Control of population need not be restraint," Dr Creadick emphasized "It may be the promoting of population, if the situation ever arises which calls for such promotion A well established habit of birth regulation will be found an aid to revising the population upward as well as downward"

NEW YORK The opening of five new centers since May first brings the total in the state to 52, reports the New York State Birth Control Federation Albany now has a second center, and first centers have been established in Elmira, Niagara Falls, Millbrook and Jamaica

An attractive folder "Your County and Birth Control" has just been issued by the Federation, which will be glad to send sample copies to interested groups

IN THE WEST Medical birth control service has had a promising start in Oklahoma and Colorado through the field work of Mrs Ruth Smith, R N, of the American Birth Control League Active maternal health leagues have been formed in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Ponca City, Muskogee and Okmulgee, Oklahoma Two clinics are now functioning and others will be opened soon With the backing of the county medical society, the Tulsa league has opened a clinic in the Tulsa General Hospital The Ponca City clinic has quarters in the City Hall

Mrs Smith is now organizing in Colorado, where she has formed leagues in four cities and has helped all of them to start contraceptive service for mothers who are on relief or cannot afford to consult a doctor Pueblo has a clinic, located in the City Auditorium Referral services now functioning are the Maternal Guidance Center of Boulder, the Maternity Health Service of Fort Collins and the Pike's Peak Maternal Health Center of Colorado Springs

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American Eugenics Society Meets

Cooperation with public health and social welfare agencies, looking toward a practical program to advance eugenic policies, was the keynote of the annual meeting of the American Eugenics Society, held in New York City on May 14th. The results of recent conferences held by the Society with leaders in fields of recreation, nursing, medicine and education were summarized. Conferences on the relation of eugenics to birth control, housing, mental hygiene and the church were announced for next year.

Birth control and its meaning for the eugenic program entered many times into the reports and the discussions. Dr. Haven Emerson, Professor of Public Health Practice at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, New York, said, "The spacing of children in the family to assure optimum conditions for mother and children would alone justify our concern with the general distribution by physicians to men and women who seek their advice and instruction of all useful and appropriate information upon the control, prevention and occurrence of conception."

"Only when the circumstances of a new life can be calculated, predetermined, chosen with forethought and planned for, and per contra, undesired and undesirable creation of life can be with certainty and safety prevented, shall we have the essentials upon which to build a manner of family, the begetting and rearing of children to satisfy the reasonable ambitions of those who would apply genetics for eugenic ends."

The need of the United States to adopt a eugenic policy "harmonious with our traditions of democracy, self reliance and individual initiative" was emphasized by Dr. Ellsworth Huntington, the Society's president.

Deeds and Dollars

'It's the first vacation I've had in six years,' Mrs. Y told the nurse at the birth control center.

She and the five little Y's were staying right at home as usual, that summer. What Mrs. Y meant was her first vacation from childbearing since her marriage, the first time in six years that she could face the future without anxiety and with hope, now that she had visited the birth control center.

Summer time is vacation time for most "Review" readers and for the "Review" itself which suspends publication until September.

BUT

The demand for birth control information and clinic service will not slacken. More than 1,000 mothers appealed to the American Birth Control League for help from June through September last year.

Because of the growing demand for clinic service the League increased its budget by 57 per cent for 1937—to \$66,770. On June 1st only one-third of this amount had been received. Although many new friends have sent contributions, nearly \$4,000 is outstanding in unrenewed gifts.

If you are one who has not yet sent your 1937 contribution, won't you mail it now before you leave for your vacation?

If you have already sent a check and can give more, please do so now!

Help us to prevent misery.

Please make checks payable to the

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BIRTH CONTROL
REVIEW



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for

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(New Series)



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