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Toward United Action

TO PROMOTE better public understanding and greater efficiency, an important step has been taken toward drawing together all national forces concerned with the birth control movement.

A Joint Committee, created by the American Birth Control League and the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau, is now engaged in developing a program of united action to expand and intensify the movement throughout the country and thereby to serve in the most effective way possible the needs of clinics, local committees and state organizations. Early in 1939, the Committee expects to be able to make public a full report outlining the program. Coordination of all research, teaching, field organization, clinical work and educational activities of the two national organizations is its objective.

Dr. Richard N. Pierson, president of the League, is chairman of the Committee. Its members are Margaret Sanger, director of

the Bureau, Mrs. Francis N. Bangs, Mrs. Dexter Blagden, Mrs. Stephen Whitney Blodgett, Gilbert Colgate, Mrs. Alexander C. Dick, Dr. Robert L. Dickinson, Dr. Frederick C. Holden, Mrs. William C. Potter, Dr. Abraham Stone, Mrs. Diego Suarez and Dr. Ira S. Wile.

The widening acceptance of birth control, Dr. Pierson explained in a statement to the press, has brought the activities of both organizations to the point where they have begun to overlap. Realizing this, he said both organizations sponsored last summer a fact-finding survey which pointed the way to closer coordination. The Joint Committee has been appointed as a result of this study.

Closer cooperation, Mrs. Sanger stated in commenting on the objectives of the Joint Committee, would advance the common objectives of securing maximum inclusion of birth control in medical education, in medical practice, in institutions and in public services for maternal and infant health and family welfare.

A Long-Range Program for Massachusetts

PUBLIC opinion—informed and mobilized—will lead to victory in changing the present legal status of birth control in Massachusetts. Of this, the Birth Control League of Massachusetts is confident as it launches a long range program to focus public opinion on the issue. Citizens of the state showed in the Gallup Poll of 1936 that they favored birth control. Now, as a first step toward mobilizing this favorable opinion into action, the League has issued to 12,000 Massachusetts residents an explanation of its plans and a questionnaire to be returned. Response has been immediate from all quarters of the state.

“We will seek to clear up the misunderstanding which has confused the issue to date, and educate the public to a correct understanding of the birth control movement,” the League announces. “Informed public opinion will mean sound public opinion. We must face the fact that there is organized opposition to any change in the present legal status of birth control in Massachusetts. Victory in the courts will be permanent only if public opinion is mobilized to support the work of the League, and is so thoroughly informed of the issues at stake that it cannot be misled or confused in the future.”

The League welcomes as many expressions of support as possible from persons throughout the United States. Therefore, we print on this page a form, which we urge readers to sign, cut out and mail to the REVIEW. If you prefer, write us your approval on another sheet and include any suggestions you may have which you feel will be helpful.

Massachusetts is the only one of the forty eight states which has taken action to deny to doctors the full right to provide birth

control aid for a mother's health. Here is the case, as stated by the Birth Control League of Massachusetts, in its leaflet, “A Situation Exists which is Almost Beyond Belief.”

“In 1937, after years of service under the direction of highly qualified physicians, two of the medical centers sponsored by the Massachusetts Birth Control League were raided by the police. The President and Educational Director of the League were also arrested for distributing to social workers literature containing the addresses of the Mothers' Health Offices. The League then voluntarily closed all its affiliated Mothers' Health Offices.”

“Under a strict interpretation of an old ‘Indecency Act,’ the Massachusetts courts

LET MASSACHUSETTS KNOW

I am in sympathy with the present plans of the Birth Control League of Massachusetts, as outlined in the December issue of the *Birth Control Review*.

(Signed)

(Address)

May the League use your name?

(Yes or No)

*Please sign and return,
as soon as possible to the*

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501 Madison Avenue New York City

upheld the police and imposed fines against the League. The case of the Salem Mothers' Health Office was appealed to the United State Supreme Court. On October 10, 1938, the Supreme Court refused to review the case on the technical ground that there was a 'want of a substantial Federal question'. It is important to note that the Supreme Court in no way ruled on the legality of the birth control movement.

"This means, however, that today all physicians in Massachusetts are forbidden to prescribe contraceptives to married women, who lacking such essential medical advice may be threatened with permanent disability or death itself.

"Even more fundamental, it means that a serious threat is made to the inherent right of physicians to prescribe whatever they believe to be essential to the health of their patients.

"A group of leading doctors, together with their supporters, are working with the Birth Control League of Massachusetts to develop a plan of immediate action to clarify the issue both in the courts and in the minds of the people of Massachusetts.

"*First* On the advice of lawyers, the pending case will be dropped.

"*Second* New cases will be sought with a committee of eminent physicians sponsoring the defense. They will place before the courts more clearly and definitely the issue of whether a physician has full right to prescribe for the health of a mother. These test cases will give the courts opportunity of passing judgment on the ancient indecency act as specifically applied to a particular medical case—for example, a case in which the inability of a doctor to give contraceptive aid would lead to the death of a mother suffering from cancer or from tuberculosis."

Will you help by sending the REVIEW today your approval of this program?

A Long Step Forward

STRONG impetus to the advance of birth control service through public health channels will be lent by the progressive action taken on November 23rd by the First Southern Conference on Human Welfare, meeting in Birmingham, Alabama. Fifteen hundred delegates, attending the Conference from thirteen Southern states, adopted a resolution asking all public health agencies in the Southern states to include birth control officially in their services. The resolution was passed on the floor of the Conference, following submission by the Resolutions Committee. It is as follows:

WHEREAS, birth spacing is now recognized as an integral part of public health and preventive medicine, for protecting the health of mothers, and as the means for reducing maternal and infant mortality and

Inasmuch as the only medical service available to a large group is possible through public health service

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Southern Conference for Human Welfare recommends the inclusion of birth control clinical service in the public health agencies of the Southern states

With the approval of this body of their citizens so emphatically expressed, other Southern states may more readily follow the example of North Carolina, whose birth control program is described on page 143

EDWARD MURRAY EAST

The birth control movement has lost a distinguished advocate by the death of Dr. Edward Murray East, professor of genetics at Harvard University. Dr. East was a consulting editor of the REVIEW. His study of world population, *Mankind at the Crossroads*, published in 1923, created wide discussion on the problem of birth limitation.

The Economic Significance of Population Trends

By Guy Irving Burch

THE Institute of Public Opinion poll, which has been generally praised for its very high degree of accuracy, indicated that 70 per cent of the American people approve of birth control. The *Ladies' Home Journal* poll showed 79 per cent of women in favor. A study of these two polls suggests that more women than men are favorable to birth control. This may seem to be a very natural thing because the health of women is more closely associated with the birth of children. However, at the present time at least, the general economic significance of population growth and birth control may be quite as important to the welfare of the nation as the maternal and child welfare aspect. In fact, in due time, the welfare of mothers and babies will depend to a great extent upon general economic conditions.

Since almost all American economists and students of population are fairly agreed that birth control is essential to the economic prosperity of the nation, why is it that more business men are not actively interested in the birth control movement? Can it be that the scientists have not made their studies understandable? Or that their studies have been misinterpreted by the newspapers? Many examples of both could be given, and consequently the average business man is probably very much confused as to the effects of birth control upon population growth and as to the economic significance of the population trend.

At nearly all scientific conferences various shades of thought and theory are presented, and the scientist who differs the most from his colleagues is likely to get the most

publicity in the newspapers, because his statements are so unusual. A few years ago, Dr. R. R. Kuczynski received a great deal of publicity for the statement that one of the best ways to create unemployment in this country would be to democratize knowledge of birth control. This statement was again quoted at the joint meeting of the Population Association of America and the American Philosophical Society, held in Philadelphia on November 18th. The theory behind it is that if birth control knowledge became general the birth rate would drop rapidly and those businesses which supply the wants of children would have to close up and discharge their employees.

This theory, which has been advocated by one or two other statisticians, utterly ignores the economic fact that it is the standard of living and "effective" demand for goods that counts, and not mere mass of population or "potential" demand for goods. To give an extreme example, there are plenty of children in China and India who furnish a great "potential" demand for goods, but business and economic conditions are stagnant in those countries because of the low standard of living and lack of purchasing power. Nor do we have to go to China to find such an example. Much the same thing may be said about a large part of the population of the Southern states.

Reported, however, at the joint conference in Philadelphia, were a number of very significant studies concerning the economic consequences of the population trends. It was brought out by Drs. Carl C. Taylor and Conrad Taeuber, of the United States Department of Agriculture, that the

parts of the farm population having the highest birth rates are generally those that produce the least goods. It was also shown in a study, presented by Dr. Clyde V. Kiser of the Milbank Memorial Fund, that the great majority of childless families were so because of physical sterility and not because of an unwise practice of birth control.

Those who fear that the race may die out because married couples do not desire enough children to carry it onward, will be glad to learn that Dr. John C. Flanagan of Columbia University concluded from a study of this subject that married people, on the average, desire more than three children per family—a sufficient number to carry on the race. His study also showed that, on the average, women desire more children than men. This indicates that, if birth control knowledge were possessed exclusively by women, there would be plenty of children.

These studies concerning desire for children verify earlier studies by Dr. Joseph K. Folsom of Vassar College, and other students of the subject. Dr. Folsom has also presented studies indicating that the educated groups desire more children than the poor and uneducated, which suggests that, if birth control knowledge were equally available to both groups, the more cultured groups would have the largest families. This actually has happened in Stockholm and certain other cities in Europe where birth control knowledge has been democratized to a great extent.

Perhaps the greatest confusion in the public mind about birth control and population growth is due to the fact that the trend in the birth rate is often mistaken for the trend in actual population growth. Much of this confusion can be cleared up if we will remember that there are *three* major trends in population, not one, as many seem to im-

agine. Two of these major trends are pointed in opposite directions, and it is most important that we do not get these two trends confused with each other.

At the November 18th conference, Mr. Waldemar Kaempffert, science editor of the *New York Times*, referred to the fact that women in the childbearing age are not having quite enough children to produce an equal number of women in the next generation. His own newspaper quoted him to the effect that the population is declining—which is far from the truth, as we are adding about 800,000 persons each year to our total population.

The three major trends in population are (1) the trend in actual population growth, which is still pointing upward and is likely to do so for at least twenty years, (2) the trend in the birth rate which is pointing downward and is likely to do so for at least twenty years, and (3) the trend in the “quality” of the population which, if measured by such things as intelligence tests, education, economic and social position, is pointing downward, and has been for at least fifty years.

Of these three major trends in population, the one that is publicized the most by newspapers and perhaps also by students of population is the downward trend in the birth rate or fertility rate. And of all three trends this one has the least immediate economic significance. One of the most significant economic, social, if not political factors in American life has been the disappearance of the frontier which was caused by *population growth*, and which has made economic opportunity far more difficult to find in this country. Of equal economic significance is the trend in the “quality” of our population, namely, the fact that the lower income groups and the least educated parts of our population are having families

about twice as large as those of the higher income and better educated groups

We are now told by our scientists that there are too many people even in our "open spaces" of the Great Plains and that there is little economic opportunity in sight for the rapidly increasing families of the lower income groups. In view of these facts,

the democratization of birth control knowledge is not only desirable but practically indispensable, if the American people wish to preserve their democratic institutions, political or economic

(This is the first of a series of articles by Mr Burch on population trends and their relation to economic conditions)

North Carolina Leads the Way

MARKED success for the first state sponsored program of birth control in the United States was reported to the American Public Health Association on October 28th, during its 67th Annual Meeting in Kansas City. Dr J W Roy Norton, assistant director of the Division of Preventive Medicine, North Carolina State Board of Health, speaking before a health officers' section, said that, since a contraceptive program was inaugurated eighteen months ago by the Board, 56 birth control clinics had been opened in 50 of the state's 100 counties, and advice had been given to 1,140 wives

All of the clinics have been set up under the auspices of local medical societies and health officers. "The difficulty has been to meet the requests for the establishment of clinics," Dr Norton stated. The local health officer must make the first move by requesting consultation and cooperation in the development of the service. The entire program has been coordinated with the general maternal and infant health program of the state.

The service was started as a result of letters from hundreds of mothers, mostly of low economic status, who asked the Health Department for information on birth control, Dr Norton said. Among these was a letter from a 26 year old mother, bearing her tenth child while bed ridden with heart

disease, another from a mother who had only four out of thirteen children living

In almost every case, Dr Norton pointed out, the mothers who ask for information "desire children, but they prefer that the babies come in such numbers and with the birth timed for the best health interests of mother and offspring. They want to be better mothers with healthier babies, and they feel that being able to say when and under what conditions babies shall come will promote the attainment of these worthy aims."

The advice has been given to aid mothers in having children, as well as in spacing them for health and economic reasons. "The encouragement of having larger families in selected cases and even enabling some couples hitherto sterile to have babies, has been a part of the program," stated Dr Norton.

It has been the policy to give contraceptive advice only to indigent mothers. Others are encouraged to go to their family physicians for proper advice. An interesting by-product of the Health Department program, it was reported, has been the changed attitude of local practising physicians in the communities served. The doctors have had their attention called to the availability of desirable contraceptives and to the fact that they may legally advise their use. As a result, a great many women not in the in

igent group have been given contraceptive advice by their family physicians

Dr Norton concluded on the basis of his state's experience, "To preserve balance in a generalized public health program, it is important to develop complete health education programs and to make available the

necessary clinical facilities that serve to encourage or discourage conception or contraception, according to the medical indications"

Progressive North Carolina has started an admirable pattern for other states wishing to make a fuller investment in family health and human welfare

News from the States

Illinois

A new constitution was adopted at the fall board meeting of the Illinois Birth Control League. The board is enlarged to 27 members, nine of whom will be replaced each year, thus, says the League, assuring fresh energy and fresh interest.

The first evening clinic conducted by the League was inaugurated on October 3rd at 1938 West Chicago Avenue. The nurse reports that patients are expressing great satisfaction at this opportunity, since many of them are employed all day.

The League, as a member of the Illinois Conference on Social Welfare, had an exhibit and distributed literature during the Conference's annual meeting in Peoria.

Indiana

The most successful Annual Meeting ever held by the Maternal Health League of Indiana took place on November 4th in Indianapolis, in conjunction with the State Conference of Social Work. Leading social work officials of the state were speakers' table guests at the League's luncheon. About one hundred social workers attended though four other meetings were scheduled for the same time.

The principal speaker, Dr Norman E Himes, professor of sociology at Colgate

University, chose as his topic, "The Place of Birth Control in Modern Social Work." "Birth control's sphere of legality is widening steadily," he said. "In the last four or five years court decisions have whittled the old Comstock law until virtually nothing is left."

Reports were presented by the Leagues of Evansville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and South Bend. Since its opening in December, 1933, the Indianapolis clinic has advised 1,940 patients.

Kentucky

A new and larger clinic has been established by the Louisville Committee of the Kentucky Birth Control League to serve the needs formerly met by the East and West End clinics. Centrally located, the clinic is near the city hospital, mental hygiene clinic and children's center. A sliding scale of fees has been established at all clinics, so that no patient need be without the service.

At the Annual Meeting of the League, held on October 24th, Mrs Charles G Tachau, president, reported that during the last six months extension service had been established in twelve counties of the state. She announced the employment of the League's first executive secretary, Mrs Louise F Bowser, for clinic and field work.

The League had an exhibit and conducted a round table at the Kentucky Conference of Social Work in October Mrs Tachau presided at the round table and Mrs Edna Rankin McKinnon of the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau spoke on "Planned Parenthood"

Michigan

That public health workers of the state realize the value of a birth control program and the need for it in their communities was apparent from interest shown and conversations held at the booth conducted by the Maternal Health League of Michigan during the Michigan Annual Public Health Conference, which met November 9th, 10th and 11th in Grand Rapids The League had a choice and conspicuous place for its booth in the lobby of the convention hall

"Many valuable new contacts were made with public health workers and former old associations renewed and strengthened," reports Mrs Charles W Gore, executive secretary of the League, who, with Mrs Robert Breakey, president, was present throughout the conference More than one hundred delegates registered with the League and hundreds more stopped for literature

New Hampshire

The Concord Maternal Health Center has been named one of the charter members of the Concord Council of Social Agencies, organized during 1938 "to meet the social needs of Concord more effectively through cooperative planning" The Council includes private and public organizations primarily concerned with social welfare activity

New York

Fifty seven representatives from eleven counties attended the meeting of the East

ern Region of the New York State Birth Control Federation, held in Poughkeepsie on November 16th Mrs Everett Sweet, chairman of the Dutchess County Maternal Health Service, presided

Professor Joseph Folsom of the Sociology Department of Vassar College addressed the group on the relationship of the birth control movement to the community Members of the Dutchess County Maternal Health League led a spirited discussion on county wide service

Committees of civic leaders and physicians have recently been organized in Troy and Clinton, it was reported Referral service has been started in Clinton

Mrs George C Barclay, president of the Federation, announced that its Annual Meeting will be held on January 18th at the Biltmore Hotel, New York City

Rhode Island

The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Birth Control League, held on November 7th, had as its theme, "Achievements and Challenges in the Birth Control Movement" Mrs Thomas K Chaffee, president, outlined the main events in the organization's year The formation of a state medical advisory board had marked, she said, a significant advance in League activities She announced the addition to the staff of an executive secretary and two social workers

Dr Robert H Whitmarsh, chairman of the Medical Advisory Board, reported that three important hospitals have given lectures on contraceptive technique to nurses in training

The social workers' report of the Providence Maternal Health Clinic revealed that the average weekly income of patients had fallen to \$14.65, two dollars less than last year's figure

• BOOKS •

MARGARET SANGER *An Autobiography*
New York W W Norton and Co 504
 pages \$3 50 postpaid from the *Review*

We have here not only vivid and dramatic reminiscences of the personal experiences of a great woman of action, who has been making contemporary history in a significant field, but an account of the personalities who have worked with or against her. Not that this book is intended to be a history of the birth control movement. But in the course of sketching her youth, in tracing the stages of her thinking on the birth control problem, and in reporting with reasonable candor her estimates of co-workers and notables with whom she has had contact, Mrs. Sanger has produced more than a narrow autobiography.

In style and literary technique, the autobiography is superior to her earlier books. This ought to give it an audience far beyond the circle interested in forwarding birth control.

For here is a record of what one woman, in a masculine society—a woman with fire in her eyes, a glow in her heart, and who knew what she wanted and why—could accomplish in the face of social inertia (still the greatest enemy of birth control), prudery, ignorance, medical conservatism, and pious cant. As such, therefore, Mrs. Sanger's career is a living monument to human achievement.

There is much in her mode of action that represents the American way of life: her achievements despite obstacles, her humble respect for the integrity of oppressed minority groups or individuals, her hatred of organized religious tyranny.

One reason, I think, for the success of Mrs. Sanger, other than courage and singleness of purpose, has been her capacity to



MARGARET SANGER

learn from experience—not simply her own, but from the experiences of others. Mrs. Sanger has been wise enough to seek advice. But when all the evidence was in, she made her own decisions. Like any person of action, she has doubtless made some mistakes. But hindsight is always better than foresight. And, in the end, a person's life is to be judged—is judged usually in America—by the balance of account, by the points of strength and of weakness, by the flashes of vision and insight, on the one hand, or the mistakes in policy, if such they were, on the other. All must be seen from a balanced point of view.

In any such accounting Mrs. Sanger's career comes out "on top." Even her enemies—and she has made some, as does any one with strength of character—will have to admit that.

The book traces her life from the conditioning of her early family experiences (the influence of her freethinking father and the death of her mother from tubercu-

losis, worn down by a large family), through her education, marriage, contact with early radicals, jumping bail to Europe, the clinic raid in Brooklyn, her trial, her speaking tours in the United States and abroad, the founding of the Clinical Research Bureau, her legislative work, and her later experiences in Russia and India

The historical value of the book is somewhat marred by the unfortunate, but indeed human, tendency to rationalize after the fact, to read into events reasons for conduct which in all probability appeared subsequently. There are also a few minor historical errors of fact, such as the confusion of John Stuart Mill with his father James (P 125), and of Robert Dale Owen with Robert Owen (P 126). It was Robert Dale Owen who wrote the *Moral Physiology*. The sentence of the Bristol bookseller, Cook, was not suspended, but enforced.

Despite some shortcomings mentioned above, the autobiography is an illuminating record of distinguished public service and can hold its own as a great human document quite independent of its subject.

NORMAN E. HIMES, PH D

Books Received

BIOGRAPHY OF THE UNBORN—The First Nine Months, by MARGARET SHEA GILBERT *Williams and Wilkins Co* 132 pages \$1.75

A fascinating tale of human development which received the publisher's prize for the "best book on a scientific subject for general reading."

THE GOOD HOUSEKEEPING MARRIAGE BOOK—Twelve Ways to a Happy Marriage, edited by WILLIAM F. BICELOW *Prentice Hall* 173 pp \$1.96

A series of twelve articles written by authorities in their fields, which appeared in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*.

Advocates Lower Rural Birth Rate

A reduction in the birth rate, to improve conditions of disadvantaged rural classes, was advocated before the fourth National Rural Home Conference, which met November 3rd in Lexington, Kentucky.

Dwight Sanderson, president of the American Country Life Association stated, "In pioneer days a large family was an economic asset. But today, when education is more important, an overlarge family is a liability. The children cannot be given opportunities for improvement and are forced to remain on the same level."

Friends' General Conference Studying Birth Control

THE study of birth control problems is proceeding among the various social service committees of the Friends' General Conference. This is in accordance with a recommendation approved by the Social Service Committee of the Conference during its meeting in Cape May, N. J., last summer.

The recommendation reads as follows: "We believe that the subjects of parenthood and family relationships are basic community problems. We recommend for consideration and study by the several social service or similar committees in our Yearly Meetings this subject, in particular, the legal disabilities now faced by the medical profession in dissemination of adequate information in regard to birth control."

"We believe that this question is a live one in our present day and that it carries not only social but also important religious implications, as is illustrated by the studies and endorsements by Protestant and Jewish religious bodies. We earnestly solicit its examination by Friends and request our committees to report back by 1940 their findings and recommendations."

Eighteenth Annual Meeting

AMERICAN BIRTH CONTROL LEAGUE

BILTMORE HOTEL NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

January 18th, 19th and 20th

The meeting will have more than annual significance. It is expected that an announcement of vital concern to everyone in the movement will be made, relating to the program of the Joint Committee on Coordination, announced on page 138 of this issue.

All active workers, volunteer and professional, will both receive and give help and inspiration by their presence at these sessions. Some of the program features will be

Symposium on Population Trends. Leading national authorities will participate. Organized and conducted by Frederick Osborn of the American Eugenics Society.

Margaret Sanger will speak at the Annual Luncheon.

Presentation of the new national program and its financing.

Reports of State Leagues.

Evelyn K. Davis on "Board Members and Volunteers."

A quiz session on the new "Manual of Standard Practice."

Open House at the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau.

Showing of the Bureau's slide-film, "Why Let Them Die?"

Dinner for State League presidents.

Full details of other program features will appear in the January REVIEW. Urge directors and members in your state to join their president for a large and representative state delegation.

Plan Now to Attend!