

TOWN HALL

UPON my return from the Amsterdam Conference on Contraceptive Technique, I plunged at once into tying together the loose ends of our scattered forces. I had an uncanny dread of social organizations, I had held aloof from becoming involved in any of them. There was something heavy and ponderous, something lifeless and soulless in the mechanism of those I had known. Even the women who were able and clever at organization work terrified me with their rule and rote minds, their weight and measure tactics. They seemed so sure, so certain, so ruthless in their dogmatism. I felt I was in the way of a giant war tractor which destroyed as it went, mercilessly, but that was what it was built for.

In spite of that dread, I reasoned out the necessity for building up public opinion, and together with members of the Conference Committee we formed the American Birth Control League on November 10, 1921, which was later incorporated under the membership laws of the State of New York.

The First American Conference on birth control was well

attended by delegates representing groups in seventeen states. Papers were read by such experts in the fields of medicine and science as Professor A B Wolfe, Dr Abraham Myerson, Dr Aaron J Rosanoff, Dr Roswell H Johnson, Dr C C Little, Dr S Adolphus Knopf, Dr Lothrop Stoddard, Mr James Maurer, president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor. These and others presented a dignified and representative opinion of experts qualified to speak on various aspects of the subject. The Medical Session was packed to the doors and hundreds were turned away.

On Sunday, November 13, as a fitting conclusion to the first birth control conference in this country, a mass meeting was arranged at the Town Hall in New York City. The subject chosen for discussion was "Birth Control, Is It Moral?" It was my intention to use this occasion not for agitation, but to sound the opinion of representative men and women of all professional classes. Opponents were invited to present their opinions openly.

The moral question of birth control was at that time constantly debated. Opponents hurled at us the statement that this knowledge would cause immorality among young people, that promiscuity, vice, prostitution would be the inevitable fruits of our efforts. This I did not believe. I knew that morality or immorality is not an external factor in human behavior, essentially it grows, emerges, and comes from within. If the young people of the war aftermath were slipping away from the old moral codes, it was not the fault of birth control knowledge any more than it was the fault of any other progressive or advanced idea of the modern day. Henry Ford's automobiles made transportation available for thousands of young people—morality or immorality as a consequence should not be placed at the door of Mr Ford.

The moral question as a discussion had great possibilities. Thousands of people had applied for seats in the Town Hall auditorium on Sunday evening where the question was to be debated and the conference was to close. Mr Cox and I had

dined together at the home of Mrs Juliet Rublee, and together we drove to the meeting place

I shall never forget that night Usually I had been able to visualize my audiences But all day, try as I would to tune in to the evening's events, I could not do it My dream the preceding night was a memorable one I was carrying a small baby in my arms up a very steep hill I came rather abruptly to a side hill which became a mountain side of rock and slippery shale, and I had nothing to hold on to to keep me from slipping The baby kept crying, and I tried to comfort it, but I dared not use my right hand as it seemed to be held up like a balancing rod which kept us both from falling That wretched dream kept me drowsy all day—always when I dreamed of babies there was some kind of troublesome news not far away Another difficulty was that I could not think *through* what I was going to say at that meeting My brain seemed numb, I felt a strange lack of the worrying anticipation one usually feels previous to a large meeting

When the car crept along West Forty Third Street to the Town Hall, we found the thoroughfare swarming with thousands of people Finally arriving in front of Town Hall, we pushed our way to the door Two policemen stood before us The doors were closed, and as Mr Cox and I attempted to enter we were barred by the arm of the officer

You can't get into this place tonight, he announced brusquely

Why not? I asked

There ain't going to be no meeting, he replied

But who has stopped this meeting? I questioned I am one of the speakers, and this gentleman (Mr Cox) is another We wish to be allowed to go inside to find out about it

You can't go in, I tell you! he repeated That's all I know about it

I looked about and saw a cigar store across the street, and quickly decided to telephone to Police Headquarters This I did, and I received a reply that no such order to close the hall had been issued from there Mystery! A meeting of

self respecting citizens stopped by the police, yet Police Headquarters had given no order to stop it

Who then *did* give that order? I telephoned to the Mayor to ascertain what he knew about this, but before I could get a reply I noticed that people were coming out of Town Hall. Cautiously they were opening the doors, where two policemen still stood, to let people out, but at the same time they were violently pushing back the crowds vainly trying to get in. At the sight of that open door, I hung up the receiver and dashed across the street and wedged my way in and out of the crowd to the policemen. I waited for the door to open again and at once sprang forward, stooped down under that strong arm, and behold, I was within the hall! Then I hurried—yes, I fairly flew up the aisle to the stage.

Like naughty children being sent to bed, people were standing about reluctant to obey the orders to go home. They were grumbling, and seemed vague about it all. I looked up at the high stage and then at the steps on the side which led to the stage, but as I saw two official looking men there on guard I decided not to go that way. A tall handsome man stood near me looking vacantly around and much perplexed. A small messenger boy with a large bouquet of pink roses also stood nearby. As I stood looking at that stage and wondering how on earth I could get upon it and call out to the audience to come back, I was suddenly caught up in the strong arms of the handsome man beside me and lifted—no, really flung over the footlights onto the stage. Before I could pick myself up and recapture my poise the same man grabbed the flowers from the messenger with the vacant stare, leaped upon the platform with the quickness and agility of an athlete, and placed the huge bouquet of roses into my arms and called out that I was present to address the meeting.

At that people in the aisles began to sit down and all over the house men and women resumed their seats. Then began such a thundering applause, as if it were the only relief for their angry, indignant, rebellious spirits. The fight was on, and every man and woman in that hall was there beside me

to fight to the finish I felt it in the air, in their voices, as they called out to me to speak Mr Cox was close behind me all the way along I announced to the audience that the meeting would proceed as quickly as they took their seats and as soon as we could be heard

While this was going on, I learned from Mrs Anne Kennedy, our executive secretary, what had occurred She said that at about seven thirty, when the hall was half full of people, there appeared several policemen with Capt Donohue of that district, attended by a man who stated that he was Monsignor Dineen, secretary of the then Archbishop, Patrick J Hayes of the Roman Catholic Church He stated that he had orders from the Archbishop to close the doors of that meeting, and Capt Donohue then issued orders to his men to see that no more people entered

Mrs Kennedy a capable, cool headed woman of vast experience, calmly protested, but asked Monsignor Dineen to kindly put his order in writing so that she could read it from the platform to the early comers then occupying seats in the hall

When I saw this statement, I grew hot with indignation It was one thing to have halls closed by a mistaken or misguided ignorant police captain, but a very different thing to have a high dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church order me to stop talking I knew the law of the city I knew the rights of citizens guaranteed under the Constitution I had been taught by my teachers in American history that the church and state were separate and apart that we as citizens were guaranteed from interference by powerful church influence At the thought of this official impertinence, this bullying, this arrogant dictatorship, this insolence of a Roman Catholic Archbishop, my resistance, my resolution become set I would not close that meeting unless I was forced by arrest to do so I knew our rights were being violated by the police captain They must go the limit Unless I stood my ground and got arrested, I could not take the case into the courts I decided to stand firm, to hold my ground as long as I had strength in my body to stand upon that platform

As I stepped to the front of the stage and began to speak, I was checked by another demonstration. Before I could continue, two policemen walked onto the stage, held me, and ordered me not to speak.

Where's your warrant? What's the charge? I asked. Confusion reigned.

In a few minutes, the stage was in a tumult. Several women began to address the audience, and as fast as one was silenced by the police another began to speak. Mr. Cox was pushed before the audience and was introduced to the crowd.

I have come from across the Atlantic— he began, but the rest of that sentence was lost when several minions of the law came between him and the audience.

The attitude of the police both on the platform and in the hall was if they scarcely knew what it was all about. They seemed to be without official instructions. Back at the far end of the hall stood a medium sized man in plain attire who seemed to be directing things from that side. Later on, he stood at the back of the platform, leaning against the wings, calmly directing the police by a casual nod of the head or a whisper to one of the men who acted as runner between him and the captain. This man was later identified as Monsignor Joseph P. Dineen, secretary to Archbishop Hayes.

No wonder Police Headquarters knew nothing of the order to close the hall! The Archbishop did not think it necessary to seek advice of the Chief of Police—nor to ascertain the legal rights of non Catholic citizens and taxpayers of the City of New York.

Confusion and tumult continued for fully an hour. First one woman would attempt to speak, she would be silenced by two or three policemen then the crowd would boo, roar, hiss, shout, catcall, as that wore down, someone else would attempt to speak only to be instantly silenced by the policemen on the platform. Mary Winsor, that brave and undaunted suffragist, insisted again and again on speaking, but finally, after continuous resistance and a show of determined effort never to give up the attempt to speak at that meeting, the

police captain ordered my arrest and Miss Winsor's. By this time the crowd was in a belligerent and ugly mood—anything might happen.

People now excitedly jumped upon the platform to help me in case of trouble. Men from all classes and of all ages eagerly came forward to see that I was not improperly treated. I have never been afraid of the police, but it was a glorious feeling to see those men behind me with eager, determined faces with jaws set and eyes blazing with indignation—the faces of more than a hundred men citizens of this great metropolis who came forward to protect me.

With a policeman holding each arm, and the captain escorting us to the street, I was led out of the building. No speeches had been made, no laws had been broken except by the police men who had taken orders from Captain Donohue.

Meanwhile, a call for reserves had been sent out, and the crowd was soon driven out by the police. Miss Winsor followed close behind me.

We were marched through the streets to the station house, followed by a huge mob. When we reached our destination, the street was blocked by a great crowd of singing humanity. The reserves returned from the hall and tried to clear the street, but they had no success until after we had been driven to Night Court in a patrol wagon. Then the crowd, still singing, booing, and jeering the police, fell into line and marched behind us up Broadway.

The case was put over until the following morning. The next morning I was discharged by Magistrate Corrigan. Police Captain Donohue could not be found.

In the investigation that immediately followed, it was proved by Monsignor Dineen's statement to the press that the raid had been ordered by Cardinal Hayes. A complaint was made to headquarters at the Cardinal's direction some time previous to the meeting, and Monsignor Joseph P. Dineen, his secretary, went to the Town Hall to meet Captain Thomas Donohue before the hour for the meeting. Captain Donohue, it was

later disclosed, did not know why he had been sent to the Town Hall until he met the Monsignor there

Faced with public censure and challenged by a protest sent to the mayor by a group of prominent citizens, the Monsignor hedged, and attempted to stake new claims of justification

I was present from the start The Archbishop had received an invitation from Mrs Margaret Sanger to attend the meeting and I went as his representative The Archbishop is delighted and pleased at the action of the police, as am I, because it was no meeting to be held publicly and without restrictions Such was the feeble explanation Monsignor Dineen offered in the *Times* of November 15

I need not tell you what the attitude of the Catholic Church is toward so-called birth control, he went on What particularly aroused me, when I entered the hall, was the presence there of four children I think any one will admit that a meeting of that character is no place for growing children Decent and clean minded people would not discuss a subject such as birth control in public before children or at all, he went on The police had been informed in advance of the character of the meeting They were told that this subject—this plan which attacks the very foundations of human society—was again being dragged before the public in a public hall The presence of these four children at least was a reason for police action

The humorous side of the situation, if such a flagrant violation of the principle of freedom of expression can be said to have a humorous aspect, was the fact that these four children, these immature youngsters who provoked the appearance of two hundred policemen, a patrol wagon, and a front page news story, were four mature Barnard College students with bobbed hair They were students of Professor Raymond Moley in sociology

The boomerang effect of this performance was indicated by the reverberation in the press The idea of birth control was advertised, dramatized, given column after column of free and favorable publicity Only a small section of the

public had been aware of the first American Birth Control Conference, and even fewer knew of the proposed meeting in the Town Hall. The clumsy and illegal tactics of our religious opponents broadcast to the whole country what we were doing. Even the most conservative American news papers were placed in the trying position of defending birth control advocates or endorsing a violation of the principle of freedom of speech.

Thus, through the attempted enforcement of medieval dogmas by an official of the Roman Catholic Church, our first national conference was crowned with triumph. Indeed, the momentum of publicity we obtained at this time carried us over many months. Instead of cutting off public discussion of birth control, the episode made the whole country talk about it. There were symposiums, editorials, letters from readers, all of which had the effect deliberately sought by us of keeping our idea before the public at large. Editorials in the *New York Call* and the *New Republic* were thoroughly appreciated, but those intelligent organs of liberal opinion had always supported me. But the editorials in the *New York Evening Post*, the *New York Tribune* and the *New York Times*—journals in which I had been previously known as the Sanger woman, or the well known birth control fanatic, indicated the progress the movement had made.

In an editorial headed "Police Prussianism," strongly condemning the action of the authorities, the *Tribune* said: "The police broke up the meeting without waiting for any expressions of opinion which would warrant repression. They had earlier tried to intimidate the lessor into closing the hall. Their attitude was one of persecution, not of orderly vindication of any local ordinance which might in their opinion be infringed. It was arbitrary and Prussian to the last degree."

The *Evening World* in its editorial declared: "The issue Sunday evening was bigger than the right to advocate birth control. It is part of the eternal fight for free speech, free assembly and democratic government. It is a principle which must always find defenders if democracy is to survive."

Defending his position, Archbishop Hayes issued the following statement through the press

As a citizen and a churchman, deeply concerned with the moral well being of our city, I feel it a public duty to protest against the use of the open forum for the propaganda of birth control. This I do in no sectarian spirit, but in the broader one of the common weal.

My protest is made in the name of ten national organizations of women with a combined membership of nearly a million, as well as in the interest of thousands of other indignant women and distressed mothers, who are alarmed at the daring of the advocates of birth control in bringing out into an open, unrestricted, free meeting a discussion of a subject that simple prudence and decency, if not the spirit of the law, should keep within the walls of a clinic, or only for the ears of the mature and experienced.

The Federal law excluding birth control literature from the mails and the New York penal law making it unlawful to disseminate information on the subject reflect the will of the people most emphatically. The latter law was enacted under the police power of the Legislature for the benefit of the morals and health of the community.

The law of God and man, science, public policy, human experience, are all condemnatory of birth control as preached by a few irresponsible individuals, without indorsement or approval, as far as I know, of a reputable body of physicians or a medical society, whose province it is to advise the public on such matters.

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Human experience confirms that, on the average, successive children in a family are stronger up to the fifth or sixth in succession, and that those marked with special genius are very often born after the fifth in the family. The seventh child has been regarded traditionally with some peoples as the most favored by nature. Benjamin

Franklin was the fifteenth child, John Wesley, the eighteenth

Ignatius Loyola was the eighth Catherine of Siena, one of the greatest intellectual women who ever lived, was the twenty fourth It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the lack of genius in our day is that we are not getting the ends of the families Moreover, vital statistics of New South Wales show that mothers of from five to seven children live longest, while Alexander Graham Bell asserts that the greatest longevity occurred in families of ten or more children

I answered the Archbishop's statement (New York *Tribune* November 22, 1921)

I agree with the Archbishop that a clinic is the proper place to give information on birth control I wish, however, to point out the fact that there are two sides to the subject under consideration—the practical information as distinct from the theoretical discussion The latter rightly may be discussed on the public platform and in the press, as the Archbishop himself has taken the opportunity to do

The object of our work is twofold—to arouse public discussion on the theoretical issue as well as to establish clinics where practical information may be given to mothers through the medical profession

The inference is made by him that the genius is born at the end of a large family, usually the eleventh or twelfth, or, as quoted by the Archbishop, the fifteenth child (Franklin) If the Archbishop will recall his Bible history he will find that some of the most remarkable characters were the first children, and often the only child, as well For instance

Isaac, in whose seed all the nations were to be blessed, was an only child, born after long years of preparation Sarah, his mother, was a beautiful, talented woman, whose counsel was highly valued Isaac's only children were



THE KAIZO GROUP IN TOKIO IN 1920
Grant Margaret Sanger and Baroness Kaizo



KITTY MARION

twins—Jacob, the father of all Israel, and Esau Isaac's wife, Rebecca, was also a lovely woman of fine character Joseph, the child of Rachel, was born late in her life, and she had but one other child

Samuel, who judged Israel for forty years, was an only child, born after years of prayer and supplication on the part of Hannah John the Baptist was an only child, and his parents were well along in years when he was born

One might also add that the leader of Christianity, Jesus Christ himself, is said by Catholic teachings to have been a first and only child

Later the Archbishop continued The Catholic Church's condemnation of birth control, except it be self-control, is based on the natural law, which is the eternal law of God applied to man, and commanding the preservation of moral order and forbidding its disturbances Therefore the Church has but one possible thing to do, namely, to accept and obey the will of the Supreme Law giver

Consistency, where art thou? Self control is based on natural law says the prelate Where? When? How?

Even in face of statements as ridiculously illogical and unlearned as the above, I wish to state here what I have stated again and again The Catholic Church may teach and preach self-control, continence, abstinence, as the only method of birth control it will tolerate I, and I speak for non Catholics, have no objection to the teachings of any church providing it does not inflict its theology upon the rest of the population I believe also that we have a right to protest against the attempt to intimidate and force through legislative channels their doctrines of morals and to thwart by bullying and coercive measures the right of millions to change our laws consistently with the progress of scientific thought

Think for a moment of the conditions embodied in modern life if the following statement from Archbishop Hayes Christ mas Pastoral (December 18, 1921) were allowed to dominate our poor civilization Children troop down from Heaven be

cause God wills it. He alone has the right to stay their coming, while he blesses at will some homes with many, others with but few or with none at all. They come in the way ordained by His wisdom. Woe to those who degrade, pervert, or do violence to the law of nature as fixed by the eternal decree of God Himself! Even though some little angels in the flesh, through moral, mental or physical deformity of parents, may appear to human eyes hideous, misshapen, a blot on civilized society, we must not lose sight of this Christian thought that under and within such visible malformation there lives an immortal soul to be saved and glorified for all eternity among the blessed in Heaven.

Heinous is the sin committed against the creative act of God, who through the marriage contract invites man and woman to cooperate with him in the propagation of the human family. To take life after its inception is a horrible crime, but to prevent human life that the Creator is about to bring into being is satanic. In the first instance, the body is killed, while the soul lives on. In the latter, not only a body but an immortal soul is denied existence in time and in eternity. It has been reserved to our day to see advocated shamelessly the legalizing of such a diabolical thing.

According to the above, an abortion is only horrible, but to deny life is satanic. Why then, I wonder, do priests and nuns remain unmarried? Why then are celibacy and self control approved and exacted? What a priceless ideal for mothers to follow! To continue bearing children misshapen, deformed, hideous to the eyes, in the hope that Heaven may be filled! It is a monstrous doctrine, abhorrent to every civilized instinct in us. The only comfort I have is to know that the Catholic women themselves have grown out and beyond this medieval doctrine.

Healthy children, happy homes based on consideration of the mother's health and life, on the children's education and the possibilities for their development, on the father's income or wage—these considerations are here today. They are part of Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant mothers' thoughts. They

have come to them through the general rise in our moral responsibility for little lives we have brought into the world

Let priests and bishops denounce—let the hierarchy roar!
They cannot push the chick back into the shell