

MOTHERS FIRST!

Charles Zueblin

Why is Birth Control being agitated in America while Europe is crying for men? The need for manhood is greater than the need for men. Too much time and energy are spent by the multitude in correcting mistakes. Popular morality consists too largely in observing prohibitions. The inherited code is: "Thou shalt not—thou shalt not—thou shalt not." *What shall we do to be saved?* However we may differ as to military preparedness, cannot we agree on three essentials of social preparedness: selected citizenship, protected childhood, voluntary motherhood?

1. **Selected citizenship.** Most of our young men are unfit for military service. The young men accepted by the National Guard prove to be not qualified for the army. Ten per cent. of the young, athletic enthusiasts who go to Plattsburg are reported to have fainted on a hot day's hike. Our men are too soft for vigorous fatherhood. How many young women are fit for motherhood?

We limit immigrants; we hold them up at the nation's portals and inquire into their pedigree, their health, their sanity; *why do we not choose our natives?* Why do we let midwives guide them into their native land? Why do we let ignorant mothers bear untimely and unwelcome children? Do we not care enough for the nation's native citizenship to fortify potential mothers with the knowledge that will guarantee welcome, healthy children at the time when the mother can give them wise and loving care?

2. **Protected childhood.** A family too large for the parents' economic and spiritual resources means the sacrifice of one child for another. It also means usually a high death-rate, with its needless waste of life and exhaustion of motherhood. Indianapolis reported recently a destitute mother and father with an infant, the sole survivor of sixteen born in nineteen years. A New York judge dismissed a woman thief, mother of six children by a tuberculosis father, and reproved the State that denied this woman the means of determining when she should have children.

Race suicide does not mean having few children; it means having few surviving children.

In Johnstown, it was found that the death-rate in families of eight children or more was two and a half times as great as in families of four children or fewer. In Holland, where the control of conception is taught under the patronage of the State,* both birth-rate and death-rate have steadily declined. The happy result has been an actual increase not only in population, but in the stature of the people.

* This statement, although widely current, is not entirely correct. The birth control clinics in Holland are maintained by the Dutch Neo-Malthusian League, numbering eight thousand members. Dr. Rutgers, secretary of the League, states that, while the government has not formally sanctioned the birth control propaganda, the laws regarding personal liberty and the freedom of the press uphold it and protect its advocates from molestation.—Ed.

In this country, the families least able to support children are the most prolific. Perhaps the well-to-do ought to have more children; but what shall the mass of the workers do? Postpone marriage? Abstain? They must marry early and have children early because their incomes decline in middle life, when the rewards of the middle-class increase.

Are the mothers of the multitude not to choose the appropriate time to have children, as the more fortunate mothers do? Is the nation to go on paying for this human wastage, at the same time that its citizenship is undermined? Can we not insure, for more of the children that come into the world, the care of a healthy, happy mother?

3. **Voluntary motherhood.** Children have too often been the by-product of men's sensualism. Women have not only been the victims of selfish, lustful men; they have given themselves freely for love when they knew the price would be too high. Many scientific methods are being employed by intelligent women to control conception. Many other methods are employed unnaturally or criminally to the destruction of womanhood and motherhood.

The methods of preventing the birth of children range from asceticism to abortion. None of these must be confused with contraception, the purpose of which is to allow women to determine when they shall be pregnant. Asceticism is the surrender of both motherhood and the sex relation. Continence is the postponement of both. Perversion is a very common consequence of continence, a menace to the woman and the race. In fact, continence may be injurious where contraception would conserve health and favor subsequent motherhood.

Some austere people believe the sex relation should be limited to procreation, but most objections to the restriction of offspring come from celibates who may be supposed to be without personal knowledge of sex.

Defying fear, superstition, tradition, is the necessity of voluntary motherhood for the protection of mothers, children and the race. Contraception commands the support of those who believe in MOTHERS FIRST!

A Degrading Implication

Those who talk about a higher plane where the number of children will be regulated by what they call self-control, but what is really unnatural asceticism—the harmful results of which the physician and social worker know only too well—are not elevating but degrading marriage by implying that there is something bestial and reprehensible about the normal expression of affection between husband and wife. We will elevate the race, not through trying to crush out the physical basis of life, but by laying stress upon its spiritual meaning.—*Frederick A. Blossom.*

Motherhood will never be truly sacred until it becomes conscious and voluntary.



Drawn by Chamberlain.

BREEDING MEN FOR BATTLE

Olive Schreiner

In supplying the men for the carnage of a battlefield, women have not merely lost actually more blood, and gone through a more acute anguish and weariness, in the months of bearing and in the final agony of child-birth, than has been experienced by the men who cover it, but, in the months of rearing that follow, the women of the race go through a long, patiently endured strain which no knapsacked soldier on his longest march has ever more than equalled; while, even in the matter of death, in all civilized societies, the probability that the average woman will die in child-birth is immeasurably greater than the probability that the average male will die in battle.

There is, perhaps, no woman, whether she have borne children or be merely potentially a child-bearer, who could look down upon a battlefield covered with slain, but the thought would rise in her, "So many mothers' sons! So many young bodies brought into the world to lie there! So many months of weariness and pain while bones and muscles were shaped within! So many hours of anguish and struggle that breath might be! So many baby mouths drawing life at women's breasts—all this, that men might lie with glazed eyeballs, and swollen faces, and fixed, blue, unclosed mouths, and great limbs tossed—this, that an acre of ground might be manured with human flesh, that next year's grass or poppies or karoo bushes may spring up greener and redder, where they have lain, or that the sand of a plain may have the glint of white bones!"

And we cry, "Without an inexorable cause this must not be!" No woman who is a woman says of a human body, "It is nothing!"

BIRTH CONTROL AND EUGENICS

Paul Popenoe

Editor of the Journal of Heredity, official organ of the American Genetic Association

Is the practice of birth control eugenic?

To be eugenic, a measure must favor the reproductivity of the happier and more efficient parts of the population and discourage the increase of the less capable parts.

It is a matter of common notoriety that birth control as at present practiced does just the reverse. The superior parts of the population are limiting their families so much that they are not even reproducing their own numbers, while the increase of inferior families is checked only by the death-rate, because they do not practice effective methods of birth control.

It is necessary to conclude, therefore, that birth control as at present practiced in the United States is the reverse of eugenic. It is tending to race deterioration.

For race betterment, the present differential nature of the birth-rate must be changed. A spread of birth control to the less capable part of the population will be an important advance for eugenics in cutting down the racial contribution of inferior stocks. But it is not likely that the gain will be as great as is sometimes supposed. It seems probable that those who will practice birth control most effectively are the prudent, far-sighted, conscientious parents, whose children the race needs; while even possession of a knowledge of contraceptive methods will not affect the reckless and improvident, those who procreate while drunk—those, in short, whose children the race would be better off without.

Even though he firmly adheres to the principle of intelligent and voluntary motherhood, the eugenicist cannot think that the universal practice of birth control will have no drawbacks. It will be a better condition than that which at present exists, when the superior classes alone limit the size of their families effectively; but it will increase the task of eugenics, since it will require vigorous measures to augment the birth-rate of eugenically superior families.

To this end, it would be desirable that birth control propagandists should not make unfounded claims of the merit of small families and delayed parenthood. The quality of a child is determined much more by the character of his ancestry than by the number of brothers and sisters he has or the length of the interval between his birth and that of his predecessor.

If it is admitted that parents should have no more children than they can afford to bring up decently, it ought perhaps to be equally admitted that they should have as many as they *can* afford to bring up decently. In other words, there is much need for public education on the proper size of family, but the doctrine of birth control is only one side of it. Some people need fewer children, some need more. It is not fair to expect the birth control propagandists to carry on a simultaneous campaign on these two sides of the question, but they ought at least to recognize the two sides and not throw unnecessary obstacles in the way of eugenics.

In the past, much Neo-Malthusian propaganda has tended to convey the impression that small families are *per se* a desirable thing racially—a statement that should not be made without important qualifications.

It makes no difference whether one believes in universal knowledge of birth control; it can not now be stopped and must be regarded as a fact to be reckoned with. But I believe eugenists go much farther than this. They will look with satisfaction on an extension of birth control to the inefficient part of the population, and many of them are taking an active part in the campaign. If some have hesitated, it is because they see so clearly the harm that has been done the race already by birth control among the superior classes, in excess of what was needed or desirable. Here not birth control but "birth release," as Sprague has said, must be preached.

If birth control advocates will recognize this discrimination and support it, they can count on the active support of most eugenists in endeavoring to reduce the size of families among the inefficient and destitute.

Birth Control Not Birth Prevention

Roswell H. Johnson

(Comment on the preceding article)

If "birth control" is synonymous with birth prevention, every eugenicist must, of course, take a very critical attitude toward it, for, as Mr. Popenoe points out, all who desire a better race are greatly interested in increasing the size of many of the families of capable people which are now too small.

Mr. Popenoe's quotation from Professor Sprague errs, however, in using birth control as synonymous with birth prevention. Birth control means not prevention but regulation. It means the determination of the size of the family by the will of the parents. The true birth control advocate should be as eager to see the too small family increased as he is to see the too large family decreased in size. Those who advocate birth prevention for the sake of a wholesale reduction of the population are not asking for control. Suppression is not control.

Control in the sense of the Birth Control Movement must be taken to mean birth regulation. Birth regulation is desired by no one more than the eugenicist. Regulation should be not only individual, but also influenced by the social and racial needs of the species.

There is no warrant in limiting birth control beyond this proper scope.

"The people or nation that follows the false teachers—be they editors of papers, authors of books, magazine writers, "Eugenists" or what not—who advocate the limitation of the birth of children, will enter upon the sure road to ruin and extinction and will deserve their disgraceful end."—*President Hyrum M. Smith of the Mormon Church.*