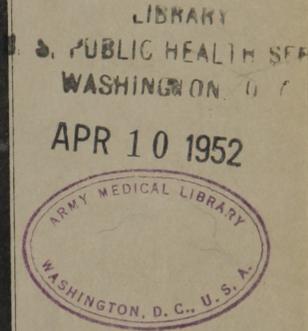


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Verbatim Report of the Town Hall Meeting
Under the Auspices of the
VOLUNTARY PARENTHOOD LEAGUE

At which the Chief Speaker was



Dr. Marie C. Stopes, of London

President of the Society of Constructive
Birth Control and Racial Progress

OCTOBER 27, 1921

Price of this pamphlet, 10 cents

VOLUNTARY PARENTHOOD LEAGUE
St. Denis Building, Broadway and 11th St., New York City

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The meeting was called to order at 8:30 P. M., Mr. NORMAN HAPGOOD *presiding as Chairman.*

Chairman Hapgood: Ladies and gentlemen, my first task tonight is a pleasant one. I have to read to you messages from three of the best known literary men of England. If we had in the United States to secure an expression of opinion on a subject that had considerable delicacy, that aroused a considerable amount of uninformed opposition, I am not at all sure that we would be able to secure names as distinguished as these. I think we may say that the nation to which our distinguished visitor belongs has had for one of its choicest assets throughout its history a sense of obligation in the intelligent class to show courage, to show intellectual leadership.

Of the three kinds of courage: physical courage, moral courage and intellectual courage, it is possible that the rarest of the three is intellectual courage. First, I will read a message from Havelock Ellis:

"I have followed the Birth Control Movement in America for many years and with much sympathetic interest, so that I am very pleased to hear of these great public meetings which you and Mrs. Margaret Sanger are holding in New York this year. Such meetings are convincing testimony to the progress which has been made and an encouraging promise for the future. I congratulate the League on the presence of Dr. Marie C. Stopes, whose name is so well known for her work in the cause of sex education in the widest sense, and who will long be remembered in connection with the establishment of the first birth control clinic in this country.

With all good wishes, Sincerely yours, HAVELOCK ELLIS."

The next is from Edward Carpenter:

"Dear Mrs. Dennett:

I am glad to hear that Dr. Marie Stopes is to speak in New York on the 27th of October in connection with the Voluntary Parenthood League. Birth control is one of the most important movements

of the present day, and you could not have a better and more authoritative speaker on it than Dr. Stopes."

The last is from a man who is influencing world thought today in the mass probably more than any other writer alive—from H. G. Wells: "Dear Mrs. Dennett:

I regret very much that I shall miss your interesting meeting. I am a very great admirer of the outspoken courage of Dr. Marie Stopes and of the useful work she is doing in the propaganda of reasonable sexual knowledge. Our hopes of a civilized life for all rest entirely on the possibly of sane birth control.

Very sincerely yours,

H. G. WELLS."

Now the formal function of a presiding officer is merely to introduce the speakers, but I have been requested by Mrs. Dennett tonight to give in a few words my own personal approach to this subject. Possibly the reason that she asked me to make a short address myself is that some years ago I took part in the controversy; one of the magazines that I edited published a number of admirably interesting and informative articles. Those articles aroused controversy. I don't believe there was at that time, although it was only perhaps half a dozen years ago, the same bulk of informed opinion to back the cause that there is today. I was glad of the opportunity to say a few words, because while anybody is or ought to be willing to be criticized for his own opinions, he would rather have his own personal opinions the thing he is criticized for rather than those of any other group, however superior to him in knowledge that group might be. In a subject like this where we all agree on general principles, some will necessarily emphasize one aspect of it and some another.

The aspect about which I wish to say a little now is an aspect which I understand is practically left alone by the Voluntary Parenthood League. For them to leave it alone is the part of wisdom; it is entirely apart from their purpose; it has to do with politics; it has to do with the discussion of public questions, and for them to get into it would probably lessen the efficacy of their work by raising questions which are controversial and which are not necessary to their cause. But to me this issue connects itself with the greatest dangers that exist to civilization from international conflict. It can be disputed, of course, but I am one of those who are perfectly convinced that the underlying causes of great modern wars and of the probable wars of the future, lie in over-population, lie in the pressure of populations for existence on a modern scale of comfort. I believe that among the many accidental causes, the profound historic causes of the World War was the conflict between England and Germany for those parts of the earth which had not been built up, which had not been developed.

Germany, with a population which found it difficult to exist on a modern scale of prosperity, which imported her food, felt keenly the necessity of a road to Asia in order to continue her method of living, which was to exchange intensive manufactures for her food. England with a population that she can't possibly feed faces actual starvation if she were cut off from other sources of food for even a few weeks.

We are to have in Washington, within a few weeks, a Conference which is to take up that particular part of the earth in which thoughtful publicists and thoughtful statesmen see the greatest danger for the future, namely, the Far East. What is the essence of the danger that threatens civilization through another war in the Far East? People can dispute about whether Japan has populated up to her limit or not; it really makes no difference whether she has or not, because if she hasn't now she fears that she soon will have. The fear is the important thing—the fear that she will have a population that she can't take care of. That is what makes her so determined to expand on to the mainland of Asia. And the center of this menacing eastern problem is China herself. The Chinese today have a population that illustrates Malthus to an extraordinary degree. She populates right up to the last ounce of possible subsistence. If the western powers teach them how to manufacture and develop their resources, then from all we know of Chinese history, there is danger that China will populate still further up to her resources. As her resources increase her population will increase with all the added complications to the eastern question that such increase will bring.

Now, that aspect of the matter, of course, is not a pressing one in the United States today. The United States is concerned only as she is concerned with the peace of the world, but in the United States, as everywhere else, there is another aspect of the question, and that is the quality of the population. I don't suppose it is open to dispute among reasonable people that even in this country a large part of the children who are born are born into homes that are unable to give them that bringing up which makes useful and happy citizens. I am coming, however, when I touch that point, to the subject on which the two principal addresses of the evening are to be delivered, and I don't mean to encroach on it.

The first talk will be given to you by the head of this League. Mrs. Dennett will, as I understand it, devote herself to giving you an outline of what is being done by this association. I introduce Mrs. Dennett. (Applause)

ADDRESS BY MRS. MARY WARE DENNETT:

The great basic aim of the Voluntary Parenthood League is a human race that shall be better born and better reared. Our ambition for the human race is certainly not limited to the bounds of the United States. It doesn't stop anywhere. But our particular program of procedure happens to be limited to the United States.

Another way of expressing the aim of the Voluntary Parenthood League, is to say that it is to work toward that happy day when it shall be recognized that the right of every child is the right to be wanted. Beyond that is a deeper and broader aim still, that is, thinking of the child not alone in its babyhood, not alone when it makes its first bow into this difficult world, but thinking of the child as it grows up, as it reaches the profoundly difficult stage of adolescence; and there we have a much wider aim than that regarding merely to the control of parenthood, and that is to help do our bit toward the education of the people, so it may happen, by and by, that children shall have for their parents men and women who are lovers and who stay lovers. Our adolescents are going to have a finer youth, a more splendid manhood if the art and science of married life and parenthood are better understood by their parents. We hope to be able by our practical program to contribute something toward making the ending of the old-fashioned fairy stories come true: "They lived happily ever afterward." It is a dream but not unreal; the truest things in all the world are its ideals.

The immediate program of the Voluntary Parenthood League is very definite. It has two large departments which are mutually dependent on each other, and which fuse into each other, and neither one can get along without the other. The main aim is first of all to get the information to the people by which the wanted babies may come and the unwanted babies may be postponed until they are wanted.

You know, I think, all of you who are here, that our laws forbid it. They forbid the circulation of this information. Therefore, our first aim is to wipe away those laws. Next, it is to see that the information which people can get on this subject is the finest and best; that it is given to people in the finest and best way. That means the establishment of clinical centers like the one which Dr. Stopes has come to tell us about.

Our legislative project is to correct Anthony Comstock's blunder made in 1873. Anthony Comstock has been a very much belabored person during all these years, and yet, curiously enough, until recently there has been no concerted and persistent effort to untangle what Anthony Comstock did for this country. We aim, first of all, to change our federal law because on that all our state laws are modeled, and there are only two states in the whole United States which are clear of the contamination of the Comstock laws. Those are North Carolina and New Mexico. In twenty-four states, beside the federal law which prohibits

the circulation of this information by mail or any other public carrier, there are additional state laws, most of them penalizing giving the information in any way whatever, verbally, direct or indirect. But you can see how much will be accomplished if we secure first the change of the federal law. It will instantly make scientific published information circulatable all over the United States. In addition to that it will remove this subject from the federal obscenity statute, which was the ancestor of all state obscenity statutes, and in the twenty-four states where there is no specific prohibition of contraceptive knowledge the situation is cleared at once; at a single stroke this subject is brought out of the gutter and put in the light of modern science where it belongs.

This action is the one great move, the master stroke which will clear the way for the establishment of such clinical service as this country very sadly needs. We have the pleasure of announcing tonight that our legislative program has reached a quite unprecedented stage in this country. After a long and very quiet but most painstaking effort to have this measure introduced in Congress, we have now presented our proposition, our recommendation, to Postmaster-General Hays; submitting to him the plan that he himself recommend this change to Congress as a part of his housecleaning of the post office, on which he has already made such commendable progress. (Applause)

Now, it is one thing to submit a plan; it is another thing to have it accomplished. I cannot tell you Postmaster-General Hays' conclusion because, if he has made it, he has up to date, kept it to himself. The many letters that he writes to inquirers on the subject convey the impression that he has the project under cordial and hospitable consideration, and is giving it the deepest thought. You can see what it will mean to have this recommendation come to Congress via a cabinet officer, via one of the dominant leaders of the dominant political party. It is quite a different matter from what it is for lone citizens to fight their battle without the aid of the head of a government department making a recommendation for the betterment of his department. Mr. Hays, as you know, is on record as saying that he does not believe it is the inherent function of the post office to act as a censorship machine. This is a censorship law. It says to the citizens of the United States: "There is information on this subject, but you may not have it; it is behind governmental lock and key." We ask Mr. Hays to apply his announced principle that the post office should not inherently be a censorship machine to this situation, and I must say we are hopeful of the results,—with your aid.

It is obvious that no project of this kind can go through Congress merely on its merit—just on the pronouncing of the need. It will go through Congress when enough pressure is brought to bear, when enough people are heard from, when all of those thousands and thousands of

people who not only believe in family limitation but who have obviously proved it in their own lives, will take the trouble to say so.

I would like to remind you that our laws which forbid the circulation of this information *do not forbid the use of it*. The laws *merely forbid people to have knowledge* on the subject, (laughter) and that is a very interesting point, because when we remove the law by a converse logic, we ask people's very careful attention to the fact that the removal of this law carries with it no compulsion upon anybody to utilize the freed information. (Laughter) It merely provides a freedom of access to knowledge. This, I think, should be a great comfort and reassurance to that group of people who for religious reasons have felt opposed to this whole movement. This is no intrusion on the religious views, the private life or practice, of any individual or any group; they are quite and absolutely free.

Our laws act so that there is a very curious situation in regard to this little book, which I hold in my hand. It is Dr. Holt's famous book on the care and feeding of children. It is called the modern mother's Bible and quite rightly, because most of the sophisticated mothers of our present generation keep this book on the nursery shelf and bring up the baby by it. The jacket which the publisher puts on this book says: "The foremost authority on babies in America here answers *every* perplexing question which is apt to confront the mother or nurse." It is obvious that according to our laws the book cannot answer *the one* most perplexing question which sooner or later confronts most mothers. By contrast, in England and in fact anywhere else in the world, it is legal to circulate a certain remarkable little book which *does* answer beautifully and specifically that most perplexing question. If I were to tell you the name of that book I should be infringing the New York State Law. (Laughter) I should hesitate to invite Mr. Sumner* to act in accordance with any such statement, and therefore I omit the title. I think I may, however, be safe from interference if I should tell you that the author of that book is not a thousand miles away from here. (Laughter)

I am not going to take the time to outline to you much, if any, of the clinic plan. The whole clinic plan will be well before your attention when Dr. Stopes tells you the story of her wonderful work in London and gives you the picture of what can happen and must happen here in America. I will only tell you this—that the Voluntary Parenthood League has outlined a plan of procedure for the establishment of clinical service in America. As you know, we already have existing in America some widespread and elaborate health machinery. We have hospitals and welfare associations of different sorts; we have maternity center associations and health centers; large amounts of health advice are given both verbally and in published form. Presently, of course, at everyone of those health centers this sort of service to parents should also be avail-

* Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

able. Pending the time when such service is available at them all, we recommend that there be established in this country a few sample clinics, a few demonstration clinics like Dr. Stopes' clinic, which will point the way to all these hospitals and welfare centers and show them how to do it. We draw an analogy between the introduction of this service into America and the way that the kindergartens came into America. Those of you of the older generation will recall how the kindergartens came. They were initiated by private funds, by the vision of one woman who saw that the kindergarten was a great new factor in education. The kindergartens were opened under private administration and financed by private funds. By the time a generation had grown up the kindergarten was amalgamated into the whole educational system of the country both public and private. It will be so, we think, with these first pioneer original birth control clinics. They will show the way and show how to do it, and then the hospitals and all the welfare bodies will take the service on and make it their own and develop it as it should be.

The ushers gave you, as you came in, a little leaflet that tells in a few brief sentences what it is we want to do. We hope that our want is your want. We hope that everyone of you here will help us to accomplish that aim in the best and most generous way possible. We are not going to take up a collection here and now, but we ask each of you to remember every sentence in that leaflet, to take it home with you, to think hard over it after you have heard what Dr. Stopes has to say, and then to mail it back to us like lightning tomorrow morning, putting in the envelope everything that you can, to help us do this thing. You will do it better, we think, if you go back home where your check book is. It probably is not here with you now. Or you do it better, we think, if you go back home where the stocking is which has the rainy day fund in it. We ask you—invite you cordially—to share your rainy day fund with this project in order that there may not be so many rainy days by and by for so many other people. You will distinctly brighten your own rainy day, I think, if you help to ward off the rainy days that are coming to many people unless they get this help.

Our measure is of wonderful significance for the reason that it doesn't ask Congress for a single penny; it carries no appropriation with it. That is remarkably unlike most measures presented to Congress. Uncle Sam will not have to turn round and say to us: "Dear children, I can't afford it." It won't cost Uncle Sam one cent to repeal that law and free this whole beneficent humanizing machinery. We ask you then to help us put this program over, to help us make these beautiful dreams about a better humanity come true. They can come true. We know that we want them to come true for *us* and *our children*. It requires only a little bit of imagination to want them to come true for *everybody else* and *their children*. Dr. Stopes will tell you all the great

fundamental reasons that brought about the remarkable work which she has done, the work which differentiates, I think, Dr. Stopes from anyone else who has ever been articulate in the birth control movement, and that is that she co-ordinates all the factors in life; she herself and her work are a remarkable demonstration of what is coming to be recognized more and more, and that is that art and science in the last analysis are all one.

Before Dr. Stopes made her world fame by the publication of her books, which America has disgraced itself by suppressing, she had an academic reputation, a remarkable one, as an individual research worker in biology. Her standing as a paleontologist is recognized very thoroughly in England. The trustees of the British Museum have brought out two of her volumes on the cretaceous flora. Dr. Stopes is one of the happiest products of that merging of art and science which is indicative, I think, of the very highest civilization. (Applause)

Chairman Hapgood: I have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Will Hays. He is one of the most promising influences in Washington today, one of the most active, one of the most open-minded. He won't be able to do a great deal alone. The amount that he can accomplish either in this field of freeing thought, or in other fields in which he is endeavoring to free thought, will depend on the response that he gets from the public. I would suggest seriously that anybody here who has done any personal thinking on this subject shall write a letter to Mr. Hays, not a conventional, political, propaganding letter but a letter showing individual thought and if possible individual experience.

Suppose, to take an example, that some woman here is rich; that she has three or four children who have been the joy of her life, and she knows why they have been; she has also taken the trouble to see what children have meant to other women in other environments,—if she could make a thing like that in her letter real and send it to Mr. Hays it wouldn't fall on barren ground. Your guest of honor tonight stands out with distinction in many different ways. Mrs. Dennett has already told you of her early standing as a scientist. You all know doubtless from what you have read, about the enormous vogue that her books have had, in which science and the highest and finest emotion are combined. She comes to us as a distinguished woman of science; she comes to us as a woman who has done one of the great necessary things of democracy—has taken special knowledge, special power to think, and passed it on to great numbers. She has made this long and rough and expensive trip across the Atlantic for a very little stay with us. She is paying the whole cost of that trip herself. (Applause) Its only importance is a vivid illustration of the generous ardor with which she is carrying on this great cause. She comes to us then not only as a scientist and educator of the people but as a friend. She is a generous friend of us because she is a generous friend of truth. Dr. Stopes—(Applause)

ADDRESS OF DR. MARIE C. STOPES:

Ladies and gentlemen, I thought I was going to be able to speak very bravely to you, but the extraordinary warmth of your reception has almost for the moment taken away my voice. I have crossed the ocean only to find myself here among English-speaking friends, among descendants of my own people who speak my own tongue, and the warmth of your reception is a thing which I will never forget. But I will never forget also the fact that I am not known in this country as I am in Europe, and that if it had not been for the most generous and self-forgetting introduction and the kindness of Mrs. Ware Dennett and of your chairman, you would not have known me either, and I would not have been received by you in this most kind and cordial way.

Now, may I also say to you before I begin my formal address, that though I speak English and you speak English there is just enough sea between our countries to make the slightest little differences in the way in which some words are used. I can hold an English audience of any class, but I do not know whether perhaps the unwonted use of words which would be quite proper in my own country may surprise or startle you, or I may make some slip in the way in which I speak. If I have that misfortune please remember that though a cousin I am to some extent a stranger, and that I use words in the sense in which they are perfectly proper in England. (Laughter and applause)

Then, too, I have a horrid fear that I may speak not only as may appear to you indelicately but may perhaps say actually too much. I am so accustomed to being able to say anything in England, that I may forget that I must not and should not mention the names of my own books in this country. (Laughter and applause) And if I do by chance let them slip from my tongue, and there is a minion of the law to haul me off to jail as a consequence, I hope at any rate I may have a friendly escort there and may be bailed out by someone who has enough money to do it. (Applause)

Now, we English-speaking nations are each in our respective countries spending millions of pounds and millions of dollars every year in armies of nurses, armies of doctors, armies of educators, armies of jail keepers, armies of reformatory masters, armies of protectors of the feeble-minded. We spend these millions of pounds to deal with wastrels, with the diseased, with the miserable, with the criminal, with the degenerate and we have not one single official whose business it is to stem this stream of misery at its source. We have not one government institution, not one person whose official business it is to prevent the birth of a child foredoomed to a life of misery, to save a woman from bearing a child which she knows must be weak and diseased. We have not one person to prevent that intolerable stream of misery which ever overflows

its banks, not so much in our class but devastatingly in the class beneath, the working or the submerged classes of our own countries.

And there is in England only one little unofficial "Birth Control" Clinic which is setting out to try to do that piece of necessary stemming at the source of this terrible torrent of human misery. That little clinic we opened, my husband and I, this spring in March, in a very crowded and slum district in London. Now, why did we do it? And what have we done in that little venture which is apparently going to be like the grain of mustard seed? I hope it may not have its vitality crushed out, and that it may have a widely helpful influence. Why did we found it? I must answer these questions rather personally. I was told coming across on the Aquitania with some very distinguished people that it is not oratory that you American audiences want, but simple, direct speaking from the heart, and therefore I will tell you a little of my own and my husband's private life and dreams, and that will show you why at any rate we started this clinic.

It was long, long ago in the year 1906 when I was first a lecturer in a university, that one of my students, a woman ten years older than myself, (who was just graduating as a medical student) had the most terrible experience, at least an experience which burnt itself in on my memory. She was in the infirmary clinic for poor women, and a woman came in with a syphilitic child, her fourth, and this woman begged and prayed the doctor to tell her whether there was anything wrong with her or her husband and why it was that her babies were all diseased and died, and if it was true, as she feared, that there was something terribly wrong, what she could do to stop having any more of these doomed babies. And the doctor lied to her. He told her there was nothing wrong and she was to go home and have more children.

That couldn't happen, I think, today, but it burned itself like a flash of searing lightning in my heart, and from that moment I said: "If I can do what I want, women will never again, after I have done my work, have to bear against their wills foredoomed, diseased infants." But it was no good hurrying; I was very young; I was very poor, and I had no status in this work at all, so I just lay low and studied the whole question and did my other work and made my way in life, waiting until the opportunity should arise when I could do what I was really determining to do all the time and kept hidden in my heart.

Now, my husband was a man of big affairs; as his profession he was a regular officer in the army and he gave that up to help in the inventing and to manage the business for the flying machine which saved Europe in the beginning of the war. My husband was flying before the war came on and was doing immense things with that in the first year of the war and handling large numbers of work-people. You wouldn't think that a career like that would lead a man to see that birth control

was the one burning topic of the day! But it did, because he is a man of extraordinary sympathy at heart. He found among his work-people that those homes where children came unwanted or far too fast, or where the wife was ill and miserable, were just the homes where the workman was downcast and wretched, and where he couldn't get the type of work or the type of happiness in that man that he wanted in his work-people. Thus he was convinced that birth control was the one thing to help to solve the terrible economic and miserable physical conditions of the people in England. Hence when he finally went out to the war himself to do actual dangerous flying, he went to the leading hospital in a big English town and offered them 12,000 English pounds on his death—and he expected to be killed—and 1,000 pounds a year from that moment if they would open a birth control clinic, and they refused it because they were afraid to do it.

Now, why were they afraid in England when we have no law against it? The reason for that is a reason which should interest you not only in the history of the subject, but as a special part of your own history as well. The reason why they were afraid was that they thought they would lose some of their worthy supporters, their more religious supporters, if they opened a clinic which had not the sanction of the most of the religious bodies, and which they felt was anti-religious. Why did they think it was anti-religious? The reason was that in 1877 in England the atheist Bradlaugh had come in a very unnecessary way to the front in this subject and had stamped it on the memory of our people as being an atheistic movement so strongly that there is to this day a feeling in England that birth control is in some horrible way mixed up with atheism and therefore is a thing which good religious people can't have anything to do with. That view is quite untrue, as a matter of fact, but as you know yourself—if you are in a dark room and there is a brilliant beam of light it hides the rest of the furniture; and the glare of the Bradlaugh trial was so great that in the memory and thought of the English people, while the birth control subject is *not an illegal* subject, it is one which is stamped with the reprehensible, atheistical attitude of Bradlaugh. That has concealed from us and concealed also from you yourselves the fact that *before Bradlaugh's day, before Anthony Comstock came along in this country, you yourselves were the pioneer people in birth control.* There was a man whose name seems to be utterly forgotten in the United States who published in the year 1866, the best book of exact, explicit birth control and physiological information which has ever yet been published. I did not see that book until after my book "Married Love" was published, but that book of Dr. Trall's contains very much of extraordinary interest and novelty in that day and of extraordinary value to people of any date.

Of course, some of what he said in the way of sex physiology is now antiquated, but it still is in my opinion one of the greatest text-books

on the subject which have been written. And you don't know of the existence of that book! It was published in New York and it was published in London in the year 1866. In the year it was published it ran into three editions. I have an edition which on its title page says—40,000th. Now, for the years round 1866 that is a very large sale, as I am sure Major Putnam, here on the platform, as an old experienced publisher will guarantee. A sale of 40,000 copies of this pioneer book and the book is wiped out of your memory!

You Americans were the pioneer nation in exact, explicit practice and instruction in birth control, and yet you have allowed Anthony Comstock to wipe the memory of that pioneer out of the consciousness and out of the minds of everyone of you in the United States. Now it is my business to resurrect the memory of Trall, and the day before I sailed I, as president of a new society in England called the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress, gave a presidential address in which full credit is given to him. I think in your fight against the Comstock law you may perhaps be heartened and strengthened by the knowledge that the Comstock law is only a *phase* like a horrid cloud in your history; that you should wipe it out and go back to your early history when your medical men led the world in the practice and in the preaching of true, sound physiological knowledge and explicit birth control instruction.

Now that little diversion will explain to you perhaps why it was that we could not get any hospital in England to take up the birth control clinic. After my husband and I were married we decided that we must do it ourselves. We said: "Why are we in the world, healthy, happy, well enough off to pay for it and then asking someone else to do it? It is obviously our job." And so we decided we would do it. Then, of course, there was that extraordinary temporary condition of house-shortage in London owing to the dispersal of the troops, etc., and we were hung up for a year or two literally unable to get the necessary two or three rooms anywhere in a suitable district. But last year we finally got a suitable house and we opened the clinic early this spring.

Now, the clinic in reality doesn't figure nearly so largely and imposingly as one might think, because *one of the objects of our demonstration is that it should all be so simple*. We have only a little house in a slum district with nothing of the atmosphere of an ordinary medical clinic about it. Why should we have? This is a health measure for healthy people to keep them healthy. The doctors of disease can deal with diseases; we are there to keep people out of the doctor's hands. (Applause)

Among the patrons of the clinic we have one or two of the most enlightened medical men and women of the country: Sir James Barr, Sir

W. Arbuthnot Lane, Dr. Jane Lorimer Hawthorne, Sir Archdall Reid, etc., but those are the exceptional and enlightened medical people who really desire health for the community. (Applause and laughter)

We don't require in our clinic any of the appliances of an ordinary medical clinic. We have an outer room to receive the women, and we want that to be as unlike the ugly—I don't know what they are like in this country but in England they are ugly—the ugly maternity centers with their horrid deal tables and general dreary atmosphere. We want it to be as unlike that as possible. So I have arranged the little place with just whitewashed walls and bright blue paint, and all the pretty blue and white pictures of babies and flowers that I could get for the walls, and pretty chairs. Flowers are always kept there, and we have a charming nurse who is a trained midwife and therefore is able to detect whether the woman is healthy or whether she is a case for a medical doctor to deal with, and a nurse also dressed in blue and white to receive and talk to the women.

It only cost just a few pounds to furnish that outer room, and the inner room is even still more simple—just an examination couch, a wash hand-basin with a bottle or two of disinfectant, and the necessary simple little rubber caps and things which the women are shown and instructed how to use. A very few pounds fitted out that room. Then we have a couple of more rooms for overflow, storing papers and books, etc., and for dealing with correspondence, and that is all we have, and it is all we need, and that is all you need in New York. You could start tomorrow with the money the people have got in their pockets here now, I am sure. (Applause)

There is one other thing we do have and that is case sheets. We have tabulated lists in which the nurse enters up the name and address and certain details about all our women whom she helps, and that has led to the detection of something which I consider of *vital* importance in dealing with this subject. I no longer ask of a woman: "How many children have you?" I no longer say: "How many children have you had?"—but "*How many times have you been pregnant?*" That is the question; that is the thing that determines whether a woman has been martyred in her motherhood, or whether she has happily escaped misery.

In the first days of the clinic I was there every day myself so that the nurse should see the way we wanted it handled, and one of the first women who came to me said she had two children and she *must* have help. She couldn't have any more. And so I said to her: "Oh, but you know two children is not so very many. I think if you are as well as you look you ought to have three, don't you? What about having one more? And then come back to us?" Well, she talked for a little while; she nearly cried, and I found out her history in detail. She had been six

other times pregnant; every time a natural abortion took place the fourth or fifth month, and the last time because her drunken husband had kicked her just where the child lay.

Do you think that that woman's two children represented her motherhood? I didn't. And of course we gave her information. That is certainly one of the things that we happy middle-class people ought not to forget—that we ought to try to realize, ought to try to discover: what, in the intolerable burden of their ignorance the lowly and more illiterate classes are called upon to endure! So, it seems to me, that the birth control information which is so much wanted, is wanted not merely for the sake of checking the total number of children which an overburdened household sometimes finds itself given by nature, but also to spare the perfectly futile misery and agony, the wasteful and destructive torture of women who are potential mothers but whose circumstances make it impossible for them ever to have the full joy of motherhood. I wish I could make you realize what I have now so vividly seen as the result of our clinic records: it isn't the number of children; it is what the woman has endured in her motherhood that is the reason we need to give birth control information quite as often to people who appear to have no families or very small families, as to those with large families.

In England we have a plague of people who find themselves in the pulpit, and (laughter) who are inclined to rate women as an easy and cheap way of getting reports of their sermons into the newspapers. Not long ago we had an epidemic of sermons from Father Bernhard Vaughn, and people of that caliber, howling out against the woman who had only one child. They had noticed that in this awful war which has swept and devastated Europe, we constantly saw in the papers the death in action of the only son of so and so; and those heartless fiends in the pulpit took the opportunity of sneering at those mothers and saying how scandalous it was that they hadn't many other children! They even had the presumption to forget that there are many diseases, and one in particular, which is given to women by their husbands, which makes it impossible for them to have children which can be brought up as healthy sons fit for the army, and that it is often and often not at all the woman's fault but some terrible taint in our civilization which has led to her comparative childlessness.

Of course, you in America, I know, are very frank, and you are dealing with the problem of venereal diseases, but we in England are not so advanced in this respect as you are, and it is still possible for infected women to be allowed to have pregnancy after pregnancy, foredoomed. I say that such a thing is among the wickedest crimes of civilization. And, therefore, you may find in the list of those we helped, women who have only one child, and I want you who are here never again to judge a woman who has only one child as though it was necessarily her selfishness.

That brings me to another aspect of our clinic. It is an extraordinary thing that people so hypnotize themselves over the use of words that they may use them incorrectly for years without realizing that they are doing so, and in England—and I think in this country too—until I started a different type of birth control just a year or two ago, “control” was always assumed to mean only the checking of conceptions. Now, if I am driving a motor car and I had a steering gear which went only to the right or only to the left where should I be? A control for a motor car has to go to the right and it has to go to the left, and birth control has to *give* children just as much as it has to check conceptions. I may say that that seems to me so logical and so self-evident that it is extraordinary that control of conception apparently has not been looked upon in that light before we came along and started our clinic with that idea behind us. And one of the works of our clinic is to help those people who desire children and who haven't got them, just as much as to help those who have too many children or who are unfitted to bear children and therefore should not be allowed to conceive.

As a matter of fact, our case list contains not so many but a very appreciable number of cases of childless women and childless men who have come to our clinic in order to be taught those intimate physiological and psychological facts about sex life which are explicitly stated in “Married Love,” “Wise Parenthood” and “Radiant Motherhood,” but which sometimes want amplifying or adapting to an individual's life. And I may say that though my books cover a very large field, I do know more than is in them, (laughter) and sometimes things that I didn't like to publish or that I didn't think were important as general principles are necessary for individuals to help them in their own individual lives.

I may say also that what knowledge we have on these subjects is so novel even to the medical profession, and partly depends actually on my own discoveries and on my own original observations, that of the people who come to the clinic we find not only the poor for whom the clinic was started but nurses, health workers, medical women and medical men, coming for information not merely as to how they should handle their own patients or the poor women they have to deal with, but for exact and explicit help from me personally in their own private lives. The very day I came away there was a medical man, and the wife of another medical man, who both came to me as childless people, married for many years, wanting help in their own private sex lives, the kind of help which would lead to their conceiving. I gladly gave it. That medical man was, I don't know but perhaps 15 years older than I am, and he received it as *new* knowledge and helpful knowledge for his own life. I am threatening that when our clinic babies come along we are going to have a cinematograph of cheerful babies, birth control babies, and that may rub into

the minds of the public the fact that control is to the right or to the left as desired. (Applause)

We haven't advertised our clinic in England until just a little advertisement before I came away, and as the words "birth control" still rather shock English people we avoided it entirely. We put in this journal for the poor people a statement: "Babies in the right place." (Laughter) "Do you want a baby and can't get it? Do the babies come too rapidly for your means and health? In either case sound physiological knowledge of control is what you want. Come to the clinic and get it." And that is the attitude which we take.

Now, we do not make any charge at all for the clinic. We give it quite freely as a gratuitous service, and fortunately we haven't gone bankrupt yet and my husband and I are able to pay for the expenses, so we have not yet had the unpleasant experience of asking anybody to subscribe. (Applause) And I am very much hoping that before we come to the end of our nest eggs and resources, work in this line will be taken up by the proper authorities—that is, the various ante-natal clinics, the maternity centers and the various hospitals in local districts—and that they will follow the simple lines which we have initiated and make a service in connection with the infant welfare and the ante-natal work with which this birth control information forms such an extremely logical sequence. So when the reporters came around us and said: "I suppose you want to have clinics like this in every town," I said: "Yes and no. We want clinics like this but I am not going to agitate to get them. We are merely here as a kind of demonstration of what should be linked on to every health service in every town. I feel there very strongly with Mrs. Dennett that what we want at home and what you ought to get at once here are these *sample clinics*, just to show how easy and simple it is to run them and to stir the proper people up to do it all over the country.

Now, of course, although I have told you that we are very glad to help people to get babies, the cases for which we were primarily founded were the intolerably overburdened and very miserable and poor people who have some heartrending experiences, as I have described to you. Every day the hearts of the nurse and the lady doctor who attend the clinic, and mine are wrung by the intolerable misery of some of these quite poor and ignorant people. What the clinic has to do in this class is to bring knowledge, any kind of sound knowledge, to these people who are entirely ignorant. And what the clinic has to do for the middle classes is to correct incomplete and incorrect knowledge which has been circulated by people not sufficiently qualified to deal with the subject. As a matter of fact, almost everyone at present in the world who is disseminating birth control information is mixing a great deal of harmful information with the instruction as to various methods which they are distributing. I felt that so strongly that I wrote the book "Wise

Parenthood" which gives an explicit account of the physiological reasons why certain much practiced and often recommended methods of birth control are really harmful. And there I have again to express to you a position which inclines one to see both sides of the question.

The opponents of birth control are very often apt to throw at those who advocate it the slogan: "Birth control methods are harmful." They never state explicitly *which* methods they mean, and it is extraordinarily difficult to get them to state which methods they mean. They merely say that they have heard it, or that Dr. so and so or the Rev. Mr. so and so says (laughter)—that birth control methods are harmful. And the earlier advocates of birth control have always denied this with energy.

Now, I do not take either of those indiscriminate views, and that is perhaps one reason why I have made a good many converts in England among those who have hitherto been opposed to birth control. I distinguish between different birth control methods. I agree—in fact more than that—I preach that the majority of methods used by the middle classes *are* extremely harmful. The majority of methods recommended by the advocates of birth control are extremely harmful, and they have not recognized that harmfulness in their eagerness to recommend *anything*. But what I will not tolerate from opponents is a sweeping assertion that "birth control methods are harmful," when birth control methods differ extremely in their action, in their physiological results, because they consist of a variety of different processes.

For instance, to take an analogy, as I mustn't deal with the subject itself clearly as I would in England; if you put sugar in your tea it has quite a different taste from that it would have if you put in pepper and salt. It is no good, then, turning around and saying: "Anything in your tea is nasty," which is parallel to what the opponents of birth control would say. You can agree that salt in your tea is nasty and sugar in your tea is nice, but to say that *anything* in your tea is nasty is merely ridiculous. And to say that *all* birth control methods are harmful is merely ridiculous. A majority of the methods recommended *are* harmful, and if you want to know exactly how, you should take a steamer across the Atlantic and buy my book in any bookshop in England and read it. (Applause) (Laughter)

But there are methods which are entirely harmless and which are entirely easy of use and which do not destroy the romance, which do not necessitate all those hateful businesses which most women know and loathe, and which approach although they do not entirely reach the ideal method. Such a method exists and that is the method we recommend in the clinic. It is a free clinic and I offer the invitation to anyone of you who cares to come to Holloway to mention that I told them to come and they will get free service there.

Now, there is another point which ought to be cleared up and which is often made by our opponents. It has particularly been made by that dishonest type of pseudo-religious person who thinks more of his position as a religious person than he or she does of the truth. There has been a tendency in England and there was a tendency in that wretched film which you, I think, sent over to us called "Where are my children?" (I was on the cinema commission in England and I did my best to stop that film because it is a dishonest one) to deliberately confuse birth control information with abortion. A large number of the opponents of birth control deliberately confuse birth control with abortion. I suppose it is all right for me to explain to you that abortion can only take place when an embryo is in existence. An embryo can only be produced after the sperm cell and the egg cell have actually united, after their nuclei have fused and after the first cell divisions have taken place. The moment that that has taken place you have there a minute, invisible, but actual embryo, and anything which destroys that is abortion, and we never in our clinic do anything which can in any way lead to that destruction. But *until* the sperm cell has united with the egg cell, no embryo exists or can exist, and anything which keeps the sperm away from the egg cell cannot lead to or be abortion because no embryo can then exist. The control of conception consists in keeping the six hundred million sperm off the egg cell so that no embryo can possibly have started its existence, and therefore abortion cannot take place, with the sound birth control methods I teach.

Now, sometimes abortion and birth control are linked together, as they are in the tragic confusion of your Comstock law, and quite often the people who try to stop birth control speak of the two things as though they were the same. Therefore I want you to be very clear and very explicit in your own minds about the difference between control of conception and abortion. I want you to get that quite straight, not so much for your own sakes (because I am sure you will all understand that if you are intelligent enough to support Mrs. Dennett by coming to this meeting), but because I want you to counteract the underhand and treacherous and dishonorable opposition which is all over this country—as it is all over our country—instigated for deliberate political purposes by certain people whom I could name but don't choose to. (Laughter) Whenever this subject comes up and you find someone trying to fog the issue by linking it up with abortion or condemning it on certain grounds, I want you to fight that person and clear up the issue, because one treacherous and dishonest opponent can generally silence a group of unprepared people or a committee or anyone discussing it. I don't want you to let them silence you. *People who know the truth have no business to allow the powers of darkness to silence them on any point that matters.* (Applause)

Nothing matters to humanity so much as to get the power to create the next generation in its best possible form, and constructive birth control is the only thing that will do that for you. So it is up to each one of you, and I hope you have all inherited New England consciences and will never allow opposition to pass without clearing up the issue.

Now, I have told you some little things about our clinic, and I hope I have shown you how easy it would be to found a clinic of the same sort in New York. *Why don't you do it?* The reason you don't do it is that you are afraid of these Comstock laws which prohibit the giving of information on the control of conception. But I understand from Mrs. Dennett that the New York laws are not quite so bad as a lot of people have recently been thinking; that it *is* possible to have a clinic in which diseased women are prevented from becoming pregnant to increase their disease. Therefore I think it would be an extraordinarily good plan to start even with that little thin edge of the wedge—start your clinic and say: "We are allowed to give this information to diseased people, but we are not allowed to let healthy people keep their health." (Laughter)

If I were in America I would do that and I would have those words in big letters over the door. Then I think that you would find that was a crystallizing point to further support and further interest. I hope very much that you will start a little birth control clinic which is openly a birth control clinic and which goes only just so far as the law permits you. You will find that a good step up the ladder to the full and open handling of the subject which you will certainly get if you work hard enough and give Mrs. Dennett enough support as you go along.

This brings one to what is *really the kernel of the subject for this country, and that is the fact that you must change your laws*. Surely, you are not going to permit a dead and gone man who wallowed in the enjoyment of the things that he was trying to prevent or pretending to prevent—Anthony Comstock—you are not going to allow that one black hand to shadow all your history? You want to disentangle the good he did from the harm he did. You know from a well-known quotation how "the ill one does lives after one," and I think for the sake of a man who did good work in some respects, for the sake of *his* reputation, it is about time you disentangled the harm he did from the good that he did, and got the law to separate birth control information from obscenity, vice and other filthy things which are quite rightly suppressed.

Therefore, it seems to me that the change of laws is the very first things that you must press for. That is why I came across the Atlantic just for this one night's speech, and it is even a little bit more of a personal sacrifice than you would realize, because though I don't look a wailing invalid I am not really very strong and I simply loathe the sea voyage. (Applause) But I came because I felt that it was my duty to do the thing which seemed most likely to help Mrs. Dennett in her fight to

get the federal law changed, and I am lecturing in this one hall only under her auspices, in order to emphasize the fact that though I am sympathetic to all birth control movements, I think that this is the one most valuable movement in your country, and the one which wants every bit of help and support. That is why I have tried to make it as explicit as I can, that I am strongly supporting the change of the federal law, which the Voluntary Parenthood League is endeavoring to get accomplished.

I think that nothing is likely to have such important results for your country. Of course, your job will not be finished when you get that law changed, but it is the first and biggest thing to do, the first and biggest thing which you can do towards the one thing which we all desire, and that is that the world shall be made safe for babies. *There has been a tremendous lot of talk about making the world safe for democracy, but if the world is not safe for babies you are never going to get a democracy worth having.* (Applause)

Our chairman has mentioned the point of international peace, and therefore I will not say very much on that score, but I do want just to add a word to emphasize what he said, because it seems to me that as this conference draws near in Washington you must realize that you have there people dealing with this tremendously important subject who don't go down to the roots of the matter and the foundation of the problem. The roots of the matter lie in the definite and conscious control of the populations by the people in each of the various nations. We have Mr. Wells arriving in New York tonight. I do wish that he had been arriving yesterday and could have been here. He is one of the Vice-Presidents of my society, and it would have been splendid to have had him here; but if you have read his History of the world you have the right kind of kaleidoscopic view of the history of mankind, and you will realize the truth when I remind you how humanity has been swarming about horizontally over the surface of the earth, crawling about like an amoeba, one nation swallowing up another, one nation encroaching over another, one nation after another grabbing at material things, grabbing lands from another, all through the centuries. I feel that it is time that the nations stop that crawling about on the low plane, and that it was about time we stood firmly each nation on our own feet and grew upwards. The power of each nation is not measured in numbers but in quality, not in the numbers of its democracy, but in the accomplishments, in the intellectual riches which that nation has given to the common store of humanity, and if each nation deliberately spared its output of grabbing energies and devoted itself to internal growth and to the personal internal development of rearing a fine and splendid race, then the world could at last see human effort turned into its proper channel. Human effort should direct the whole of humanity *upwards*, instead of downwards and along, in a grabbing sense, that has hitherto been so prevalent.

I came across the Atlantic with Earl Beatty, and I put that view to him in a few words, and he said it had never been put to him before. Of course he is only one of a large number of people now assembling in Washington, and putting a thing once to a big statesman is not sufficient; I think it would be extremely valuable if all who saw that viewpoint would do their best to urge that the time for humanity's groveling is over, and that now with the knowledge of physiological sex laws and the control of conception we can start rearing a race which should really almost reach the skies in its achievement.

Now, there is just one other thing I want to say to you, for I am afraid I have been talking too long. There is one other thing which impressed me very much and of which perhaps you might like to hear, and that is the effect which your president, your new President Harding, in his presidential address made on us in England. The address was printed verbatim in our papers and I read it with great pleasure, but it seemed to me so extraordinarily *truncated*, and I wanted to finish it for him. (Laughter)

Your President Harding said: "With the nation-wide induction of womanhood into our political life, we may count upon her intuitions, her refinements, her intelligence, and her influence to exalt the social order. We count upon her exercise of the full privilege and performance of the duties of citizenship to speed the attainment of the highest state." I say: "Yes, but why not go on?" We count upon women, but women cannot build bricks without straw. How can the citizen mother do her full duty by her children unless she is given freedom and knowledge to do her best?

Then again your president said: "We want an America of homes illuminated with hope and happiness where mothers freed from the necessity for long hours of toil beyond their own doors may preside as befits the hearthstone of American citizenship. We want the cradle of American childhood rocked under conditions so wholesome and so hopeful that no blight may touch its development." Fine aspirations but those words are feeding you upon the wind; there is nothing *real* behind them. (Applause) I say that you can never have the cradle of American childhood rocked under wholesome conditions if the child that is in that cradle caused its mother an agony for nine months of fear and apprehension. I say that only perfect love coupled with knowledge will cast out that fear in the modern woman, and *knowledge* will never empty the cradle. It will give you, however, cradles in America in which all the children are those delicious children that come when love on the part of both parents is guided by knowledge, and the child is the product of that union. Demand, you women of America, knowledge, that your children shall be the finest that you can produce!

I came up the river—or is that wrong, don't you call it a river?—(laughter) past the Statue of Liberty, and the stewardess pointed out to me that she wasn't looking at America; she was looking towards England. (Laughter) And I thought I distinctly saw her smiling with a very ironical smile—the statue, I mean, not the stewardess,—because she had heard that presidential address with all its stirring words and its high-sounding phrases, and yet underneath her feet she saw that you have still thousands of slave mothers not allowed to do their best by the children which they might be producing. (Applause)

I want you to change your laws; I want you to be burningly determined that they *will* be changed and changed soon, not only for your own sakes, but for the sake of the whole world, because we English-speaking people have without any doubt the leadership of the world in our charge, and it is terrible for all that one-half of the English-speaking world should not be free.

I have read, of course, what you have all learned in school, one of the great human documents of the world, your Declaration of Independence, and I want to rewrite it for you (Applause and laughter) And I have done so. (Applause and laughter) Not the whole of it but just that middle part which you all know, and here are just the few words of change that will make it a real thing: “We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, *knowledge* and the pursuit of *health* and happiness, *both for themselves and to control their unborn children in the interests of the race.*”

(Prolonged applause. Presentation of a bouquet to Dr. Stopes.)

Chairman Hapgood: Mrs. Dennett will add one word more.

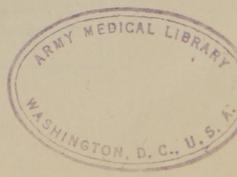
Mrs. Dennett: I forgot to tell you something that I am sure you will be glad to hear, an instance of the utter absurdity of our laws. In talking with Postmaster-General Hays, he asked me if I would provide for him samples of such publications as were circulated abroad and which, in our judgment, should be circulated here. I said I would gladly do so, but added: “Mr. Hays, you know I'll be breaking the law in sending them to you.” (Laughter) And he said: “Oh, no, I really wouldn't like to have it done that way. Don't mail them; send them by express.” (Laughter) You know it is section 211 of the Penal Code that says we may not mail things, and then I told him that section 245 of the Penal Code, which he didn't know, prohibited sending them by express. (Laughter) Then he thought a moment. He is very quick and he had an inspiration, “Send them by a messenger.” (Laughter) And so we did.

I have now the privilege of saying a little part of what is going to be something of a secret for twenty-four hours more. Dr. Stopes has urged

you as New Yorkers to turn to and make a clinic and go as far as you can go. Tomorrow afternoon there will be organized the patron group for the first New York clinic, to go as far as the 1881 law will allow. (Applause) I am not free at this minute to give you the names of the distinguished people that are back of this move. The 1881 law in New York State releases from the obscenity penalties physicians who give whatever prescription they feel is wise to cure or prevent disease, and the curious wording of that law says that such prescriptions and advice are "not of an immoral or indecent nature."

Therefore, this clinic will go as far as it can. The hope is that it will be established and in working order by the first of the new year. It will be the first demonstration clinic of the sort in America. We hope they will multiply at strategic points all over the country. It would be fitting and fine, would it not, if Margaret Sanger, whose name you all know (applause) should concentrate her extraordinary faculty for appealing to the tender sympathy of people—should concentrate her energy, and that of a group of people with her, on going over this country and rousing the public opinion that will culminate in the formation of these demonstration clinics? The Voluntary Parenthood League is going to do all it can in this direction. I most sincerely hope that Margaret Sanger will do it, too. (Applause)

Chairman Hapgood: I wish all reformers were like Dr. Stopes. I wish we all had her clearness, her measure, her humor, her noble charm. I am sure that I speak for every man and woman here when I tender her the heartfelt thanks of this assemblage. (Applause)



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