By the 1920s the practice of birth control—by various means including abstinence, the "rhythm method," withdrawal, abortion, and even for some women in desperate circumstances infanticide—had a lengthy history in Canada. Most Canadians, however, were reluctant to acknowledge or discuss this reality openly. Privately, women had always shared with daughters and friends their knowledge and methods of controlling family size through, for example, the use of herbs, home-spun recipes (some rather frightful), and vaginal sponges. Public discussion, however, was limited by lingering Victorian morality and, more importantly, by the fact that the advertising, sale, and distribution of contraceptive products, devices, and information, had been made illegal in 1892. So too was abortion. Although it was common knowledge that women determined to avoid childbirth often risked their lives through self-induced or "back street" abortions, women seeking abortions and practitioners offering them were both penalized harshly under the Criminal Code of Canada. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that a broadly based birth control movement—with representation from radicals, reformers, and capitalists—did not fully emerge in Canada until the 1930s. The appalling and pervasive economic misery of the Great Depression, and the social and political unrest which accompanied it, eased moral scruples about "artificial" contraception in favour of more practical, even instrumental, thinking.

It was not middle-class reformers and industrialists, however, who initiated the first round of public debates on the issue in Canada. Rather, a handful of male and female sex radicals, anarchists, and socialists in the political left had been the first public promoters of birth control as early as the late 19th century. Among them were the English socialist couple in British Columbia, Dora
Forster Kerr and R.B. Kerr, who linked the demand for fertility control to a new vision of sexual and social relations between men and women which challenged monogamy and insisted on the importance of women's sexual pleasure and economic independence.

Generally Finnish socialist groups were more frank than their English counterparts, even advertising contraceptive devices and methods in their press. Reluctance in Canadian socialist parties about taking a public stand in favour of fertility control was linked partly to an old fear that such "women's issues" were irrelevant to the working class and diverted precious attention away from the class struggle. Suspicion was also deepened by the lingering association of birth control with the socially conservative views of 19th century English economist Thomas Malthus who saw family limitation as a cure for working-class poverty and unrest.

The positive attention given to birth control in the pages of the *Woman Worker* in the 1920s therefore represented an extension of an earlier but distinctly minority tradition within socialist circles. Through the paper, the practice of limiting family size and its implications for working class freedom were confronted more directly and thoroughly than ever before, and at a time when reformers were still uncomfortable with the whole idea, despite their increasing familiarity with the activities of well-known birth controllers and reformers Margaret Sanger in the United States and Marie Stopes in Britain. Even the highly controversial question of abortion, previously taboo in the left, received limited, though surprisingly frank, attention. Granted birth control, along with most other "women's issues," was still no burning priority for the male Communist Party leadership. But women in the Communist-linked WLLs insisted on championing the causes of birth control and, more generally, sex education, by calling for the de-criminalization of birth control (and occasionally abortion) and the establishment of what they called "Mothers' Clinics." These were to be public institutions where information about fertility control and pre-natal care itself would be readily available to all women, not just to the wealthy who had always had privileged access to information and health care services. If the Communist Party did not applaud the actions and opinions of the WLLs and its Federation, nor did it try to censor them.

The selection of articles reprinted here testify to the personal and political importance of fertility control to many working-class women connected to the Communist Party. Florence Custance had always maintained that birth control was an immediate and pressing need among working-class women. She noted, for example, how membership in the Toronto WLL increased significantly during
1927-28 when the birth control issue was made a priority in the paper and the Federation, and then just as suddenly dropped from sight when this discussion ceased. Her observation of the centrality of reproductive issues for women of the working class was based largely on her experience with the Toronto League, which seems to have been the most vocal and persistent advocate of contraception. It is likely that the high visibility of the issue reflected in part the extent to which the paper was influenced by the Toronto League with which Custance worked. Still, of the many contributors to the debate in the paper, only one, Margaret Crowder writing from Los Angeles, outrightly rejected "scientific" (or "artificial") birth control. All other commentators were supportive, even insistent, that sex education, birth control access, and quality maternity care were all crucial for the liberation of working-class women.

In taking up this platform in the 1920s, the Women's Labor Leagues and other left-wing contributors to the *Woman Worker* separated themselves even farther from the community of white middle-class reformers and feminists who, apart from a few lone individuals, were still opposed to contraception. There is no doubt that the birth control issue was considered too politically contentious at this time for mainstream reformers to consider seriously. Some women reformers had moral and religious concerns about the practice. Some, alarmed by the sharp post-World War I drop in birth rates and by recent waves of immigration from eastern and southern Europe, spouted racist concerns that the British population was already in decline in Canada and needed boosting, not limiting. Some feminists could not reconcile advocacy of birth control with their idealization of motherhood as women's primary role and source of power in the family and the nation. Others worried that artificial contraception, rather than giving women more freedom, would actually decrease their sexual autonomy. After all, without the fear of unwanted pregnancies, what grounds would women have to exercise choice and refuse men's sexual advances when they were not welcome?

The Labor League women and other contributors to the *Woman Worker* also differed in their thinking from the majority of birth control advocates in the United States and Great Britain who, since the nineteenth century, had been heavily influenced by Thomas Malthus' socially and economically conservative argument that the root cause of poverty was overpopulation. Most WLLers distanced themselves from any birth controllers who by neo-Malthusian logic would blame working-class poverty solely on family size, thereby ignoring the most obvious cause—capitalism. In an article reprinted here
(“Birth Control and Working Women”), a member of the Toronto WLL attacked the old Malthusian doctrines and re-directed readers’ attention to the inadequate size of working-class wages. Large families certainly strained the limited resources of working-class families, and therefore contributed to family impoverishment, but the majority of writers in the Woman Worker were too class conscious to accept the notion that birth control alone would ever end working-class poverty. A 1928 editorial (“Immigration—Now Birth Control”) warned readers of the wealthy “lords and ladies” in Great Britain who were supporting birth control as a solution to the pressure of unemployment. Turning Malthusian arguments on their head, the editor reminded women that “Capitalism is overpopulated by the parasitic class,” and unemployment is caused by capitalism. Mrs. Lillie Broadhurst was unusual in her acceptance of distinctly neo-Malthusian judgements, but Custance, while disagreeing with her, allowed her space to voice her perspective. In a column spanning three monthly issues, Broadhurst pushed family limitation specifically on poor and working-class families, and insisted that it was a “calamity” and a “crime” for workers to have more than two children.

Broadhurst and also Z.L. Burt, who appears to have been a member of the Toronto League, were among the few writers to draw specifically on eugenic arguments linking family planning to “race” improvement. In the context of the Great Depression of the next decade, both neo-Malthusian and eugenicist thinking would take centre stage as white middle-class reformers and industrialists turned increasingly to birth control advocacy, and for some, sterilization, as means to limit the fertility of the poor and the so-called “unfit.” The sterilization of the mentally ill, legalized in Alberta in 1928 and in British Columbia in 1933, was endorsed by many medical professionals, as well as interwar reformers and feminists of various political stripes, like Agnes MacPhail and Nellie McClung. Following the tradition of earlier socialist women, most contributors to the Woman Worker, while not attacking the racism and ableism inherent in eugenicism, generally avoided linking contraception to racial purity. Instead, they focused their discussions on class. Pointing to recent alarming reports documenting the extent of maternal mortality in Canada, they argued most strongly for birth control as a means of securing the health and peace of mind of working-class mothers and their children. Without safe and accessible means of controlling fertility, working-class wives were consumed with worry and burdened with ill health as each pregnancy brought with it little chance of quality pre-natal care, greater pressure on the family budget, and concern for the future of her chil-
children. Was it any wonder that it was women of the working class, not the wealthy, who died most often in childbirth? In an article not reprinted here ("Working-Class Mothers—Save Yourselves!" May 1928), Custance relayed the story of one woman from the Peace River District who died in her sixth month of pregnancy, 135 miles from hospital or medical services. "The hen house had to be torn down to provide boards for her coffin," and the family crumbled: the children turned "wild" and her husband became a "wastrel." Mothers' Clinics would reduce maternal mortality and improve the health and happiness of working-class family life. This was an argument centering on both collective and individual, though class-based, rights: the collective right of working-class families to reproduce was defended alongside the right of individual working-class women to survival and health through practising family limitation.

Writers in the Woman Worker also were motivated to advocate birth control out of concern for the numbers of women who suffered death or injury through abortions either self-induced or obtained at the hands of back-street abortionists. Working-class women frantically determined to end a pregnancy were not only subjected to life-threatening procedures, contributors argued, they were also victimized by the high prices charged by practitioners of abortion. Socialists had long pointed to abortion (and also infanticide) as damning evidence of the brutality and immorality of capitalism, and they assumed that in a socialist economic system there would be no reason for women to resort to such desperate measures. The WLLs continued this line of thought, taking a defensive economic approach rather than entertaining any abstract notion of a woman's individual right to end a pregnancy out of personal preference. Only occasionally could contributors be found calling for the legalization not only of birth control information and devices but also abortion. Two examples of this unusually progressive stand are found in the article by the Toronto WLLer entitled "Birth Control and Working Women," and the excerpt from a column applauding the situation of women in post-revolutionary Russia. But most often the argument went that birth control, especially in a socialist context, would do away with the need for abortions and the dangers they entailed for women. The specifically feminist argument for abortion based on women's right to control their own bodies would not gain popularity until a much later period.

The advocacy of birth control and the tentative explorations of the necessity for abortion, especially under capitalism, put those associated with the Woman Worker in the vanguard of a movement that would only gain broader popularity in the depressed conditions
of the 1930s. By then, however, most advocates were anxious to use birth control as a social and political stabilizer. Family planning was aimed most pointedly at the working classes, especially non-Anglo Canadians and people with physical or mental disabilities who were judged "unfit" to reproduce. Although this mainstream coalition served to increase the general respectability of contraception, and birth control clinics were established in several centres in the 1930s, the popularity of eugenic ideas and social conservatism meant the movement as a whole took a turn to the right. The emerging socialist feminist analysis was overshadowed for the moment, but came to the fore in the 1960s to 1980s, blending insights from the distinctive but overlapping historical traditions of socialism and feminism in Canada.

Further Reading:


MRS. ANNE KENNEDY SPEAKS ON "BIRTH CONTROL"

February 1927, pp. 8-9.

When asked why the United States Government was afraid to publish statistics of women's deaths as a result of childbirth, Mrs. Kennedy, the field secretary of the American Birth Control League, replied, "That it was not so much fear as it was shame." Mrs. Kennedy claimed that two or three millions of women died each year as a result of child-bearing. She also gave the appalling figure of the practice of self abortion by women as from 5 to 40. This latter was a discovery made through the medium of the Birth Control Clinics, a few of which have been established in some of the States.

Birth control must not be confused with abortion. Birth control could be defined as the prevention of conception. It did away with the dangerous practice of abortion.

In dealing with the attitude of various countries towards birth control, Mrs. Kennedy said that Holland had practised it for fifty years. France had prohibited it as its policy is "cradle competition." Recently Japan had tolerated it. There were four clinics in Tokio. Russia's attitude had been that it had allowed the practice of abortion. Germany had permitted birth control methods.

One of the greatest objectors to birth control in India is Gandhi, who preaches "self-control." The greatest force of opposition in England is the attitude of the Church, but England has some clinics. Despite the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, individual women of that faith practised birth control. In fact, 30 per cent. of the women who attend the clinics in the U.S. are Roman Catholics.

Uncle Sam's reply to Mussolini, who requested that the United States Government open its doors to permit Italian immigration, because of Italy's state of over-population, is very significant. This reply was, "Your people must stop spawning."

Suppression Brought Forth Its Fruit

Birth control teaching had thrived and advanced as a result of suppression. Mrs. Sanger, who could be called the founder of the present movement in the U.S., had been prosecuted and persecuted, but the movement had grown. Mrs. Sanger, who was a nurse by profession, felt herself morally compelled to take up this teaching because of the great waste of motherhood and womanhood through childbirth in conditions of great poverty. Mrs. Sanger believed in prevention.

The law in the U.S. is still very rigid. Only birth control information is allowed in the case of women who are diseased. The weakly woman with impaired heart, kidneys, or lungs, to whom child bearing would be a de-
cided burden and injury, is not allowed to receive birth control information at the clinics. This prohibition forms the subject of a special Bill which the American Birth Control League has before the Senate.

It was a noticeable thing at the clinics that of all the many women who came for information and assistance, all were married women, with the exception of two cases. This goes to prove how wrong those people are who think that birth control knowledge will result in laxity of morals, and that unmarried women will have recourse to methods.

Birth control was intended to be a measure to cope with the tremendous increase of the world’s population, which during the past 100 years had increased out of all proportion to that of the previous years. And birth control knowledge, too, could play some part in making some of the things that were wrong, right.

WORKING CLASS MOTHERS PAY WITH THEIR LIVES FOR CHILDREN
Mothers’ Clinics Must Be Established.

March 1927, p. 11.

The press of the Province of Quebec is up in arms because the Sun Life Assurance Company has a special rate against French-Canadian married women. It is claimed the company is unfair. The company answers this charge by giving a few facts.

The company claims that from the period of 1901-1923 the mortality has been 175 per cent of the French-Canadian married women insured in a large number of companies in Canada and the United States.

While “childbirth” claims 7.8 per cent of these women, other diseases, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, pleurisy, peritonitis, take heavy tolls.

The company claims that recently it has been able to make some alterations in its rates. These alterations apply to French-Canadian women married to professional and business men.

The statement made by the president of the company speaks volumes and should be heeded by working women. He says: “Too often the wife of a farmer or artisan does not take sufficient rest after the birth of a child, but is up and about in a very few days, attending to the household and other duties at a time when she is physically unfit for tasks that are frequently burdensome and exhausting. One cannot but admire her pluck and sympathize with her difficulties, but the result may be disastrous.”

He goes on to state that it is this neglect of health that leads to the other diseases.
This is the fate to which working-class motherhood is condemned. Can this be justified by Church or State? If we want further proof of the conditions that prevail in Canada, let us read what Dr. Helen MacMurchy states in "Child Welfare Work in Canada" (1922). On page 10 it is stated:

"On the list of seventeen civilized nations arranged in order as regards maternal mortality, Canada and the United States stand at the foot of the list. We are seventeenth in a class of seventeen. It is a disgrace to us. We must make a better record. Surely the first step in child and maternal welfare is to save the mother and child alive."

Is not this statement damning enough? Is anything more necessary to prove that something must be done to save the lives of mothers? But who will save them? **It is up to working-class mothers themselves.** Despite condemnation we must make a bold stand for the establishment of MOTHERS' CLINICS. **BIRTH CONTROL KNOWLEDGE** must be considered a necessity and an immediate means of dealing with a condition of poverty. We must rally to our side all those who will help to **SAVE working-class motherhood.** But even this is not enough. We must demand higher wages, and support our husbands in their demand for higher wages, in order to keep up a higher standard of health. It is poverty, tortuous poverty, that lies at the root of the terrible death toll of working-class motherhood.

F.C.

**A VIEWPOINT OF BIRTH CONTROL**

September 1927, p. 12.

There is so much involved in the question of Birth Control that one is at a loss which phase of it is most important. Sometimes the population problem of every country seems to be of the first magnitude. We cannot help wondering how long the human race will go one breeding numerically without a thought to the intelligence or quality of the offspring, and whether or not they will be able to give them opportunity in life.

It is very encouraging to know that the most progressive portions of society are giving their time and holding meetings for the discussion of Birth Control. It is no longer a fad but a necessity.

It is said that religionists offer the strongest resistance to the subject of Birth Control. However, the challenge has gone forth and they must give answer to some of the most pressing questions of the present day.

If organized Christianity is sincere it must tell us why, after the third child, poor people, under our present social system, no longer maintain their
self-respect, and all kinds of diseases, especially undernourishment and poverty, set in. Statistics have proved this to be so.

Again, the church does not believe or preach fatalism, why not children by choice instead of chance? Or, as Dr. Louis L. Mann, Rabbi of Sinia Congregation, and member of the faculty of the University of Chicago, would have us say, "voluntary parenthood."

Dr. Mann says: "Without Birth Control woman becomes a mere breeding machine, as she was in ancient Greece, void of a soul, but necessary to produce slaves and soldiers for industry and war."

From a brief review of the attitude of religionists towards contracepted unions, and their assertion that Birth Control is destructive of love, we reply in the words of Professor Thomas D. Elliot, of the Sociology Department of Northwestern University. Prof. Elliot maintains that "Birth Control among refined people need not impair love; procreation by sensual people does not necessarily spiritualize the union."

If religion is concerned with the well-being of the mass, should not religionists encourage those physically and morally capable to have children, and give some time and effort to segregate and discourage the propagation of the unfit and degenerate?

Many of us have glimpses of a time when this subject will be put on the plane of ethics. Instead of tradition we shall have science. Instead of bondage we shall have an intelligent motherhood responsible for each human being.

Z.L. Burt.

THE CASE FOR BIRTH CONTROL

Another viewpoint by Mrs. Lillie Broadhurst.

October 1927, pp. 10-11.

I know of no single question that is of more far-reaching vital importance to the human race than is the question of Birth Control. Directly, or indirectly, it touches every man, woman and child, nay more, it touches the child not yet born.

But before we can discuss any question intelligently we must know just what the subject is. Briefly it is this:

We believe that under any conditions and particularly under our present economic conditions, human beings should be able to control the number of their offspring and to accomplish this result we demand the knowledge of preventing undesirable conception, and that it should not be considered criminal knowledge.
There is no element of force in our teachings, that is, we would not force any family to limit the number of their children against their will, though we would endeavor to create a public opinion which would consider it a disgrace for anyone to have more children than they can bring up and educate properly. We should consider it an anti-social act to bring children into the world who would be sent out to earn a living at a tender age in mills, shops and streets. A working man should not have more than two children. Every child after the second and particularly after the third is a calamity. The mother’s health is exhausted. It is nothing less than a crime against the mother—a crime against the father and the other children, also a crime against society.

Every doctor knows that too frequent childbirth, nursing and loss of sleep exhausts the vitality of mothers and makes them prematurely old, or they turn into chronic invalids. The knowledge of prevention would do away with this evil. We believe that a woman is, can be and should be, a human being besides being a mother, and if she is to take a place in social life she must not be forced to bear children when she does not wish to.

The first right of the child is to be wanted, that is the slogan of the Voluntary Parenthood League. But how many children, think you, are wanted? In Holland, a country in which prevention is legally sanctioned, the children are wanted, planned for and surrounded with love and care from their advent, and the people are very happy. Look around you in this city and count the worn, weary faces of some of the mothers you see and think of their many agonies. If men had to go through what women do, if men were the bearers of children, the laws against prevention of conception on our statute books would never have been written. Look at the women who were high-spirited and talented! After a few years of marriage and childbearing, what are they? Spiritless drudges without any ambition but to wash and feed their little ones. How can a woman who has four or five children in the first ten years of married life follow up her studies and live up to her ideals and aspirations?

Children are a blessing when properly spaced and wanted. Conscious and limited procreation is dictated by love and intelligence. It improves the race. Unconscious, irresponsible procreation produces domestic misery and half-starved mothers and children.

What we want is quality, not quantity.

The babe is so important a thing that it demands it shall be created in love, and only as a gift to parents whose hands are held out in loving welcome. Our love is a noble one which forces us occasionally to deprive ourselves for the pleasure of children for the children’s own sake.

There is no danger of the parental instinct dying out. Dr. Robinson, of New York, says: “When I see the risk and expense woman will go to, endangering her life, I am speaking of numerous Caesarean operations, and
prospective mothers will undergo in order to have a living child, I have no fear that the use of preventatives will result in the dying out of the human race—it is the height of folly to argue that because people object to six or a dozen children they would object to two or three. I believe in the scientific principle of birth control because it works. It is no new idea, it has long been tried and has not been found wanting.”

In Holland there are fifty headquarters where women may be given this information as a health measure. The death rate among the children has dropped from 180 to 90 a thousand in a period of thirty years, which is a record for Europe. These Clinics also help the mothers who are in distress because they find themselves unable to bear more children, and after instruction and treatment they will joyfully come to thank those who have helped them and tell the joyful tiding that they are now expecting a little one. There are very many women in this condition. The last war is responsible for many sterile mothers and fathers, the mothers becoming so from their work in munition factories, and the fathers from dreadful wounds in vital portions of their bodies.

(To be continued.)

THE CASE FOR BIRTH CONTROL

(Continued from October issue.)

November 1927, p. 13.

You must remember we are not speaking for the mothers who have maids, nurses and doctors to wait on them at the birth of their children, good food, warmth and every comfort during the weary nine months that precede the advent of the child, but of the poor, half-starved mother who had to depend on the kindly ministration of her neighbour and perhaps the attention of a physician at the birth of her child. In these cases very often the nourishment that the mother should receive is impossible to obtain in the husband’s limited wages. I have personally received my education along these lines. I once stood in a small flat in London, England, and took a child from the doctor’s hands and in the next room, the bailiff was counting the spoons, knives and forks (three of each, I think) and wanted to know if he could have his dinner. There was no food in the house. The husband had been out of work for some time. One other child, aged two, was in the house. This is only one of many thousands of cases. Do you think this child was wanted, and would you think it right for that woman to give birth to any more under like circumstances?

What inducement is there for the intelligent, sober, class-conscious worker holding a twenty-dollar a week job to bring more wage slaves into
the world. As the family increases, do the wages. No! Very often, knowing full well that he has a large family they will give him less money, for the master class know that when a man has a large family he will do anything rather than lose his job. So you see the large family is like a club at his head.

Think again of the many young folks, who would like to marry, but because of the small amount they earn they fear to do so. It is the thought that they will bring little ones into the world who would need food and clothing out of the same small amount that deters them. Once more I would remind you that it is not the mothers who have lovely homes, kind, wealthy husbands, who can afford to give them every care, that we speak of. To these we say reproduce and raise the standard of manhood and womanhood if you are so willing, and may your efforts be crowned with success. When I see a lovely woman without children, I think of that quotation of Shakespeare’s—“Lady, you are the cruellest she alive if you lead these graces to the grave and leave the world no copy.” I believe I am talking to a group of women who are above the average in intelligence and I ask you to give this your earnest attention and support the Birth Control Movement, also the Voluntary Parenthood League and at all times help and instruct all young people in these matters. Always read and advise the reading of Dr. Marie Stopes’ books, also Dr. Robinson’s. There are none better and none as good. Should we not, as a progressive body of women, try to get a speaker from the Control direct; it is not so much for ourselves, but for the good of the generation to follow and the many poor souls asking for help.

“What shall be done to quiet the heart cry of the world? How answer the dumb appeal for help we so often divine below eyes that laugh.”

No, I do not think that Scientific Birth Control would cause more immorality. I think it would help to do away with it. If young folks could have Scientific Birth Control instruction, they would lead normal, happy lives, and when they felt they desired.

(To be Continued)

BIRTH CONTROL (Concluded)

By Lillian Broadhurst

December 1927, pp. 10-12.

A little one theirs would be the joy of voluntary parenthood. The cause of immorality, as it is called, is the effect of a cause. That cause is the fear to marry and bring into the world babes unwanted.

Our civilization, instead of advancing, is retrogressing to barbarism. The forcing of young girls into marriage will bring forth idiots and morally in-
sane. This also leads the race into degeneracy and, eventually, race suicide. Unless the child can be born well and brought up well it is better it would not be born at all. A mother is physically strong only when she bears her first child in mature age. When she becomes a mother she has to rest a long time to recuperate and bring up well her first child before she is in condition to have another one. Frequent children cannot be healthy ones, physically or mentally, and economic conditions will keep them in deficiency and misery. After a few generations, the nation, instead of having strong and brave people, will have weak and cowardly ones, and gradually will fall into degeneracy. For the sake of the country and the nation it is necessary to resort to contraceptives.

Abortion is a crime, celibacy is immoral, prostitution is an abomination. The only honest, decent and moral remedy is prevention of contraception. From the moral and philosophical view, every unwelcomed child is a burden to itself and to society. Unhappy lives of millions are caused by their being forced into existence.

Physicians from their profession, priests from the confessional, know of thousands and thousands of women seeking destruction of their unborn children because they want no more babies.

Why should they be forced into compulsive motherhood or why should men be compelled to unnatural celibacy?

This compulsory celibacy is a frequent cause of men's immorality. A man confesses that he assaulted or seduced a girl because his wife is sick and afraid to have children. If there were a way to prevent conception he would be moral and good. But he has now seventeen children and the doctor said that the next pregnancy will kill her. Recently there was an action for separation in Pennsylvania because the woman wants no more children.

We know that priest-ridden Poles, Slavs and Italians have weak and sickly children because there are too many and they are underfed.

In these children that are born year after year, there is always an inborn immorality.

Polish men are often immoral because they have been born of too young mothers or preceded by many born before.

There was a case in Nebraska of a girl of 12 who became pregnant. Priest and parents compelled the man to marry her. Now she is a mother of sixteen children; she is only 29 years old and just a skeleton.

Dr. John Doe in Lincoln, Nebraska, was arrested for procuring an abortion. Four hundred names were found on his register—women that want no more children.

And we want no more abortions. We want and we will eventually gain Scientific Birth Control. Yes, there are women who are too lazy and self-indulgent to bring into the world children, although they are surrounded with every comfort. But would you come to them? No, I think not. You like
to see these women mothers—would you envy the babes that would see, these wealthy women can obtain Scientific Birth Control—why should not the poor workers do so? May I ask why they should not enjoy life if they wish?

Yes, I know that some think that it is only for procreation that you should have unions, but you all need a great amount of study along these lines. Do you know anything about the laws of your country? You are only your husband’s chattel and the law is on his side. You cannot refuse by law to cohabit and if you do; because you do not wish to conceive, he can and will divorce you, or neglect you and seek other comforts elsewhere and you, his chattel, can be very thankful if he does not illtreat you as one type of man does, and the law will not give you a divorce, unless you can prove cruelty and adultery, the world will blame you for not conforming to your wifely duty forsooth.

The higher intelligence of the breeder restrains a beautiful mare; she is not allowed to foal every year, only at special times, when her condition is good and circumstances favorable. It is the same with high-grade cows. Surely the higher intelligence of man should not think animals more important than children.

We know there are many methods in use that are detrimental—that is why we want Scientific Birth Control. Then we should not have so many nervous wrecks to look upon.

Note: —The writer of this article wishes to state that very little of it is original. She is indebted to the works of Dr. W. Robinson, of New York, whose books should be ready by all intelligent people. She is also similarly indebted to Dr. Marie Stopes, of the Birth Control Clinics, London, England, whose valuable works should be read by all mothers, more especially her book entitled, “A Letter to Working Mothers.”

Lillie Broadhurst.

Editorial note: Mrs. Broadhurst has informed us that she is indebted to Dr. W.J. Robinson, of New York, for a number of quotations she uses, and whose permission she obtained to use them. Her article was first of all prepared for a debate for a Women’s Group. She also expresses the opinion that it would be good if other opinions were expressed besides her own.

In the next issue of The Woman Worker another article will appear which will deal with Birth Control from another point of view.
Candor About Sex and Life

"In many other ways the moral life of the U.S.S.R. is constructed upon a different plane, with entirely different shibboleths, from that of the rest of the Christian world.

"Sex is considered a sane topic that is discussed everywhere with clarity and candor.

"Birth control is written about in a manner that would at once astonish and terrify a modern American. Pamphlets on the topics are numerous. Indeed, they can be bought at any book-store or even railroad stations. One pamphlet entitled "Prevention of Child Birth," by Dr. U.Z. Shpak, discussing all possible means of contraception, has already gone through many editions. Abortion, to cite another instance of this different attitude, is not condemned but legalized. The Commissariat of Public Health in 1920 issued the following mandate in reference to abortions:

1. Operative interruptions of pregnancy without charge are permitted in the hospitals of the Soviet Government.
2. The performance of such an operation by any other than a physician is most strictly prohibited.
3. The midwife or nurse who shall perform such an operation shall be deprived of the right to practice her calling and shall be turned over to the courts for trial.
4. The physician who performs such an operation in his private practice for motives of gain shall be handed over to the trial court.

"In conclusion, one can certainly say ... that the moral life of the New Russia is built about the pivot of social co-operation."

Thus does Mr. Calverton, who is now in the Soviet Union, write of the social life and morals of the people.

Who would be a party to the destruction of such progress? Certainly not members of the working class. The workers of the Soviet Union have dared where other workers have feared as yet to tread.

Mr. Calverton is an educationalist of the highest order, contributing articles to the very best periodicals of America and Great Britain, and his interpretation of the social life of Russia of To-day is one that should receive the widest publicity. His contribution to Current History for November will do more to break down prejudices towards Soviet Russia than anything that has come to hand of recent date.
He shows that the Ten Years of Struggle of the New against the Old have been worth-while.

BIRTH CONTROL AND WORKING WOMEN

January 1928, pp. 7-9.

About a century ago there lived in England a man named Thomas Malthus. He was a professor of History and Economics. He lived in a period very like the one in which we are living, a period of revolution and war, of changing orders and new ways.

We all know that a century ago saw the beginning of a new industrial age, the age of machine production. This started first in England. To-day sees machine production as a world method of production, and we live in a period of that age that can be called gigantic machine production.

Just as new machinery to-day displaces old types of machinery and tends more and more to displace labor causing unemployment and misery—so, over a century ago, the introduction of the machine into industry displaced the handicraft worker, and a terrible condition of unemployment obtained. The workers in those days hated the new invention, the machine, and at times smashed and destroyed the factories where they were.

Now, you will ask, "What has all this to do with Birth Control?" Well, let us see.

Thomas Malthus, whose name has been mentioned above, knew of this misery of the workers, their unemployment and starvation. He saw, too, the evil after-effects of the wars of that time, the Napoleonic War. And he, like a very wise man, tried to fathom the cause of it all so that he could suggest a cure.

He wrote an essay on the subject entitled, "Population." In this essay he said that the cause of the social misery of that day was due to the fact that there were too many people in the world—there was "Over-population." He predicted that if over-population continued the world would be faced with utter starvation, because not enough food, etc., could be produced.

A hundred years and more have passed since he wrote his essay, and I think it can be agreed that production has always been ahead of the growth of population. To-day some professors tell us that the cause of trade troubles and unemployment is "Over-production." However, the conditions called poverty and starvation are still with us. So Thomas Malthus' theory has been proven all wrong by history itself.

With our own eyes we can see that social misery—(poverty)—is the lot only of one class—that of the workers and poor farmers. And these are slowly but surely learning that the reason for this condition lies not in the size of the population of a country, but because of the fact that a country and
all its wealth are in the hands of a few persons, and these determine how the rest shall live.

Yes, indeed, Malthus was wrong in his calculations. But, in spite of this Malthus’ theory is taught in the universities and colleges as a correct theory, and this, because professors and teacher dare not tell the truth concerning the cause of poverty and social misery.

This theory, too, is accepted by social service and uplift organizations. One of the most outstanding uplift organizations, the Birth Control Movement, has adopted Malthus’ theory to justify its existence and to gain a standing as a social organization.

And this is why we have found it necessary to give to our readers the foregoing introduction to our statements on Birth Control. We must draw a line between the theories of the Birth Control Movement and the actual practice of Birth Control and the scientific knowledge this entails.

The only advice received from official quarters was to the effect that if we had knowledge ourselves, to pass it along quietly.

Now this is just what the Women’s Labor League Movement will not do.

The demand for Mothers’ Clinics is a legitimate demand. This demand carries with it the end of “illegal operations” and the danger to life these entail—it carries with it the end of robbery of working women by doctors whose practices are on the decline—it places the propagation of life on a more scientific basis and spells death to mock-modesty and ignorance.

**Working Women Have Few Illusions**

The average working woman knows already that the size of her family does not alter the root of the maintenance of the life of herself and family. The wages system still remains. The thing pans out for her something like this, quoting the words of one woman: “The only difference it makes is one largely affecting the children. A small family makes larger cultural demands on parents; you feel you must send your children to high school or business college; you must have them taught music and let them have a good time at athletics, and these things bring their financial worries—whereas a woman with a large family is forced through necessity to let her brood take potluck.”

Malthus was wrong in his theory as to the cause of poverty, unemployment and social ills. The Birth Control Movement is wrong, too, when it supports and advocates this theory. But when conditions prevail, as we have them in Canada, then Birth Control is not merely a matter of individual relief but carries with it a struggle against narrow-mindedness on the subject of Birth and the evil practices that obtain as a result of this narrow-mindedness.

Member of the Toronto League.
THE WOMAN WORKER

POVERTY KILLS WORKING-CLASS MOTHERS

[Editorial]
April 1928, pp. 1-2.

CANADA loses more than four mothers every day. So states the government report on Maternal Mortality, publication No. 37.

We have become so used to hearing it said that Mrs. So and So died in childbirth that we take such happenings for granted, and after merely expressing words of sympathy for those left behind, we have simply let the incident pass from our minds. Such is our indifference!

To appreciate what this death rate of motherhood means, the figures given in the report should be studied. From the period July 1st, 1925-July 1st, 1926 there were 237,199 births in Canada—1,532 mothers died—giving an average maternal death rate of 6.4 to every thousand living births.

Imagine, in a single year 1,532 mothers died! And the average age of these mothers was thirty-one years! Just young women!

We are appalled when we read of mining disasters and the loss of life in the mines. And yet we have up to the present given very little heed to the frightful loss of life of our working-class motherhood. Now that fairly accurate figures are given by the government concerning this loss, we may shake off some of our apathy and get down to action.

To a certain extent apathy on the matter is the result of the fact that working-class mothers die in isolation—in their poverty-stricken homes out in the bush, or on the farm, or in the crowded city where everyone minds her own business in times of sickness. There is nothing dramatic about such a death, and nobody is held responsible. Hence the indifference!

Yet the women who die are the working women of farm and city. That this is so can be proven from the words of Dr. Helen MacMurchy, who prepared the government report. Speaking in Toronto on March 21st of this year, Dr. MacMurchy stated that “Canada had a total of 1,532 maternal deaths, most of which might have been prevented. The children thus left motherless numbered 5,073, including 768 new-born babies. Investigation has proved that half these mothers now deceased were in poor health for a long period of time. Some suffered from heart disease, some from tuberculosis. Many were exhausted through constant care of home and children, and a few were the victims of extreme poverty. More than 300 were in poor condition on account of toxaemia (blood poisoning), and 100 came to their death through hard labor. Over 1,300 had received no pre-natal care.” (The Globe, 21/3/28.)

When we boil down the words of the report the cold, hard fact which stares us in the face is that these mothers need not have died. The reason they died was because they had not the wherewithal to pay for medical attention
nor to obtain help and relief from their household duties. They died—the Victims of Poverty—the Victims of the small pay envelope—the Victims of the wages system which cares naught for the life of the man who earns the wage, nor for that of his wife who has to eke out, week after week, that miserable wage-pittance.

The Solution! Medical experts advise "education," and that interested organizations should be asked to co-operate in educating mothers to demand pre-natal care.

To us this advice is late. One of the objects of our organization is THE CARE OF MOTHERHOOD, and we have consistently asked for the establishment of MOTHERS' CLINICS at which our working-class mother can get the care and attention needed.

But Mothers' Clinics will not cure all the cares and worries of burdened working-class motherhood. That pay envelope has to be bigger; it has to contain more dollars with which to buy necessities and to obtain help. This means that working-class mothers will have to support their husbands' demands for higher wages. The demands of working-class mothers must be "More Wages to Live On" and "Mothers' Clinics for Medical Attention."

BIRTH CONTROL—ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

April 1928, pp. 11-12.

I see a great deal in The Woman Worker about scientific birth control, but from what I can gather it seems that what you want is artificial birth control, or sated lusts, with consequences aborted.

If you will search such history as is left to us of the civilizations that are now being dug up from under the sands of time, you may be surprised to find that even the workers of every one of them was fairly well acquainted with such variety of preventive.

The fact is that the only scientific birth control is self control, and until the human animal uses it he is a slave to his baser passions.

Creative force is the same throughout the universe. What we sometimes call a difference is not a difference in force but a difference in the application of the force.

The same force that turned downwards created a child or goes to waste—if turned upward through the spinal nerves creates intellect, and it is a provable fact that all past civilizations have died because the great masses of the people, in other words the workers, lacked intellect to continue on the path of progressive evolution, and either gradually or speedily devolved according as the waste of creative force was violent or less violent.
The very ancient Caldeans taught self control, but it was hard to get the masses of the people to practice it, and eventually a cunning priestcraft got in power that encouraged satiation of lust which gradually devolved the mass intellect to where the masses of the Caldean people were no more. The last empire of Babylonia, and especially the City of Babylon, dedicated itself, from the start, to the enjoyment of lust in the most violent way, and her death was as violent and speedy as her waste of creative force was.

The same can be said of all nations, and also of individuals.

Horace Greely was considered a powerful intellectual in his younger days, but he was one of the worse sex perverts in American history, and was in the insane asylum before he had reached middle age.

As for the rich having access to scientific birth control, they may have control, but the enormous number of congenital idiots they are pouring into the world by ones and twos to the family would soon swamp civilization if workers poured such intellects into the world as fast, in proportion to their numbers.

If you doubt me, examine any Sunday magazine of the big dailies. You would not find as many, absolutely imbecile, intellects in all the peasantry of France as is displayed along the Riviera in silks and satins. The same is true of all other large cities in varying degrees. But people have worshipped at this shrine of Mammon for so long that even the workers are wont to substitute the dollar for intellect.

Of course we have been told, by priestcraft, that such abuse of the generative function was natural for so many ages that we are inclined to believe it, from sheer force of habit, but as a matter of fact there are about three other animals in nature that indulge as man does—the ape, the jack-ass, and the goat. Is it any credit to man's will or to his pride, either, that he wilfully classes himself with such?

"Man, only, breaks his chains when self control he gains."—Heindel.

The worker cannot afford to imitate the rich in their debauchery.

Priestcraft encourages such in order to keep the intellect so impoverished that it is a garden spot for superstition, and, through fear—the deformed off-spring of superstition—they enrich themselves.

MARGARET CROWDER,*
Los Angeles, California.

**MARGARET CROWDEN ANSWERED**


Margaret Crowden, in the April number of The Woman Worker, disapproves of scientific birth control and suggests that the only way to limit the
number of children is by self-control. We would all agree with her that self-control is most important in matters of sex, but I doubt if this would have the desired effect. Most modern psychologists agree that absolute continence is harmful to the average person and often results in serious nervous disturbances. Moderation in all things is the ideal to be attained.

In the early development of man, in order that he should survive, it was necessary that a great many children should be born, and a few of them might have a chance to escape the many dangers which beset them. Now that we are able to protect the lives of children better it is not necessary that so many should be born. People, however, have not changed physiologically nor psychologically to the point where it is natural for them to have only one, two or three children, so it is necessary to use birth control.

At any rate, if we depend on the self-control method we will find the few superior individuals having small families and the many continuing to have large families.

The ills of society will never be overcome by lessening the size of families. We can see in Holland, where scientific information regarding birth control has been given out for many years, they still have the evils of present-day society. The only cure for our present ills is a co-operative commonwealth. Yet the limiting of the number of children is a great benefit to the whole family. It preserves the health and strength of the mother and gives her more time to develop mentally. It relieves the father from the terrible strain of providing for an ever-increasing family. It gives the few children more advantages than the many would have.

The advocates of birth control do not encourage unbridled license. They only believe that in this as in all other matters man should use his knowledge to govern nature in such a way that he may attain a more perfect life.

I.E.H.

*Editors Note: Crowden was spelt inconsistently in the original.*

A FEW WORDS ON BIRTH CONTROL

October 1928, pp.15-16.

Birth control means much to the working-class mother. It gives her a little freedom, it enables her to have time to think of other things than just her children and her work for them, it gives her the chance to bring a healthy child into the world when she wants it and to bring it up according to her ideals. All these things are impossible if she bears a child too often. We know many workers’ homes are wrecked, because the burdens of child raising have been too much for the parents. Sometimes the mother has deserted her family, but more often the father goes away and leaves the burdens to the mother.
How I delight in seeing a worker's family with parents fully class conscious, and these with a limited number of healthy children to whom they teach the germs of the great struggle ahead of them! Such parents, to my mind, are giving their children a square deal in giving them strong bodies and healthy minds to fit them for the trying conditions they will have to face later on in life.

But, of course, this question of Birth Control has another side, too—a dark side. I know homes that have become worse than can be imagined just because the wife held the reins in Birth Control. She wouldn't spoil her looks just to please her husband. She wouldn't be bound to her home by a child, or children, perhaps. No! She'd live and be happy even though she was married. Gradually the society she mingled with dragged her so low that she wasn't even good enough to mingle with it any longer. Or, again, perhaps there is a child already. The mother hops after the latest mode in dress, habit, slang of modern times: she does everything to be smart and girlish, and she neglects her child entirely. This child wants to know so much, so very much, and the mother hasn't time for the little fellow. He goes hungry, ragged, dirty, while his mother mends her facial beauty or her silken hosiery. And the father, if he isn't like his wife, goes to work steadily and has no chance to console his child. In cases like this I often wonder if bearing a few children wouldn't shake silly, butterfly ideas out of the heads of such mothers and force them to contemplate life a little more seriously from the real working-class point of view and thought.

But, of course, I wholly agree that the knowledge of Birth Control should be spread among the working class.

Sofie.

IMMIGRATION—NOW BIRTH CONTROL

[Editorial]
November 1928, p. 5.

We are informed by press dispatches that an appeal signed by Lady Balfom, Lord Buckmaster, Lord Dawson, and so many other Lords and Ladies of the Realm, for subscriptions for the establishment of birth control clinics in mining districts, has been issued in Great Britain.

"The clinic in Rodeham," a dispatch says, "has been visited by many miners wives under the pressure of acute economic necessity."

The appeal states that birth prevention is "a scientific and humane way of helping to solve problems of depressed and over-populated industry."

And so the cat is out of the bag. A quack scheme for the solution of the unemployed scheme. First emigration, now birth control. Not birth control
from the point of view of having a woman determine if she wants a child or not, but birth control because of economic pressure, due to an over-populated industry.

Over-populated industry forsooth. If the Burleighs, the Buckmasters and the Dawsons were off the backs of the workers, the economic pressure would disappear.

It is here that the danger has in the birth control agitation. "The Woman Worker" has supported the demand for the abolition of Birth Control literature and information. We must be exceeding careful, however, not to fall into the trap of being drawn into quack schemes for the so-called easing of the "burden of the poor" by appeals from our Lords and Ladies for a reduction of the birth rate, to solve the problem of "over-populated" industries.

Capitalism is over-populated by the parasitical capitalist class. A steadily growing unemployed army is a product of capitalism. Beware of the nostrums of our masters, with the bleeding hearts for the bleeding workers.