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# The Birth Control Movement

By Mary Jo Huth, Ph.D.

As a Catholic female sociologist whose principal area of research has been “the family,” I have, quite naturally, had special interest in the Birth Control Movement, now nearly 170 years old if one traces its origin to Malthus. More specifically, it is the widespread controversy in Catholic circles concerning the morality of the oral pill, a contraceptive device which places the major burden for “responsible family planning” on the wife, as well as the significant role of the pill in eliminating the double standard of sexual morality for single persons, which has prompted me to trace the highlights in the development of this movement which embraces, in time, both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, in space, nearly every continent on earth.

## *Nineteenth Century Developments in the Birth Control Movement in England and in the United States*

The modern population control movement received its original impetus from an English clergyman, Thomas Robert Malthus, whose *Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1798, stated that population, when unchecked, increases in a geometric ratio, while subsistence only increases in an arithmetic ratio.<sup>1</sup> If a society wished to escape the inevitable consequences of uncontrolled fertility—famine, pestilence, and war—Malthus suggested celibacy, late marriage, and moral restraint in marriage.<sup>2</sup> The first unequivocal advocacy of contraception as a check on population growth, however, was in Francis Place’s *Illustrations and Proofs of the Principle of Population*, published in 1822.<sup>3</sup> Place, the father of fifteen children, regarded the Malthusian recommendation of “moral restraint” as an utter absurdity.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, Place and his present-day followers are often called Neo-Malthusians.

Among Place’s most influential “converts” was Richard Carlile, whose *Every Woman’s Book*, published in 1826 under the assumed name of “Dr. Waters,” was the first English publication dealing with the social, economic, and medical aspects of birth control.<sup>5</sup> Carlile’s book prompted Robert Dale Owen, founder of the utopian-social experiment in communal living at New Harmony, Indiana, to publish in 1830

1 James A. Field (editor), *Essays on Population*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931, p. 43.

2 *Ibid.*

3 James A. Field, “The Early Propagandist Movement in English Population Theory,” *Bulletin of the American Economic Association*, I (4th Series, 1911), p. 220.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Marie C. Stopes, *Contraception: Its Theory, History and Practice*, London: Putnam and Company, Ltd., 1934, p. 286.

his *Moral Physiology*, the first treatise on birth control in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Owen's associate at New Harmony in the publication of the *Gazette* and its successor, the *Free Enquirer*, was Frances Wright, the first woman agitator for birth control.<sup>7</sup> Another utopian-socialist experimenter, John Humphrey Noyes, implemented a combined program of eugenic mating and conception control by *coitus reservatus* at his Oneida (New York) colony between 1846 and 1879, when he fled to Canada to escape mounting legal opposition to his activities.<sup>8</sup>

Two books which attained considerable notoriety in England's mid-nineteenth-century birth control movement were Dr. George Drysdale's *Elements of Social Science* (1854), which maintained that only by the prevention of conception could society escape the "three interrelated evils of poverty, prostitution, and celibacy," and John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1862), which stressed the "urgent need" for family limitation through contraceptive means.<sup>9</sup> It is significant that John Stuart Mill was arrested when he was only seventeen years old for distributing Place's "diabolical handbills" advocating artificial birth control,<sup>10</sup> and that Dr. George Drysdale organized the English Malthusian League with Charles Bradlaugh in 1861.<sup>11</sup>

After 1865, in England, the negative eugenic effects of the differential application of Malthusian "moral restraint" by the "prudent," "desirable" elements in society and the "swarms" of "sensual" lower class people were increasingly emphasized by such prominent scholars as Francis Galton and William R. Greg,<sup>12</sup> from whose works Charles Darwin drew extensively in writing his chapter on "Natural Selection as Affecting Civilized Nations" in his *Descent of Man* (1871). In the United States, during the same period, freethinkers like Emma Goldman, Ben Reitman, Robert Ingersoll, Ezra Heywood, Abe Isaak, and Ida Craddock, who advocated contraception along with other reforms such as free love, relaxed divorce laws, woman suffrage, temperance, abolition, and anarchism, prepared the way for the acceptance of the utilitarian arguments of the birth control movement in the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

6 Norman E. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen, the Pioneer of American Neo-Malthusianism," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXV (January, 1930), p. 547.

7 Randall Waterman, *Frances Wright*, New York: Longman's, Green and Company, 1924, p. 158.

8 Norman E. Himes, *The Medical History of Contraception*, Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1936, p. 270.

9 Arthur W. Meyers, "Neo-Malthusianism," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, IX (December, 1923), p. 532.

10 W. D. Christie, *John Stuart Mill and Mr. Abraham Hayward*, Q. C., London, 1873, p. 9.

11 Frank H. Hankins, "Birth Control," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, II (1930), p. 562.

12 Francis Galton, "Hereditary Talent and Character," *Macmillan's Magazine*, XII (June, 1865), p. 157-166; William R. Grey, "On the Failure of Natural Selection in the Case of Man," *Fraser's Magazine*, LXXVIII (September, 1868), pp. 353-358.

13 Francis M. Vreeland, *The Process of Reform with Especial Reference to Reform Groups in the Field of Population* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1929), p. 32.

The close relationship between the English and American birth control movements in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was further illustrated when just eighteen months apart—in January, 1876, and in June, 1877, respectively—there occurred in the United States District Court of New York the indictment of Dr. Edward Bliss Foote for mailing a copy of his pamphlet on contraception, *Words in Pearl*, to a Chicago decoy in violation of the Comstock Law (1873), and, in England, the indictment of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, co-owners of the Free Thought Publishing Company, for publishing a pamphlet, entitled *Fruits of Philosophy* (1832), by the American physician, Dr. Charles Knowlton, in violation of a similarly suppressive parliamentary law.<sup>14</sup> While Foote was convicted and fined \$3500, an English court of appeals eventually acquitted Bradlaugh and Besant, whose trial had produced such far-reaching effects as increasing the circulation of Knowlton's pamphlet, diffusing contraceptive information and practices in England, stimulating birth control propaganda in the United States, and reviving the English Malthusian League which, under its new president, Dr. Charles R. Drysdale, brother of its co-founder, was influential in organizing birth control leagues in Holland (1885), Germany (1889), France (1895), Bohemia (1901), Spain (1904), Brazil (1905), Belgium (1906), Cuba (1907), Switzerland (1908), Sweden (1911), Italy (1913), and Mexico (1918).<sup>15</sup> The Malthusian League established a clinic for the poor mothers of South London in 1921, the same year in which Doctor Marie Stopes organized the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress to stress the medical and eugenic arguments for birth control as opposed to those based on classical economics.<sup>16</sup> Since 1939, the Family Planning Association has been England's principal birth control organization.<sup>17</sup>

### *Twentieth Century Developments in the American Birth Control Movement*

The person whose name is associated with the American birth control movement more than any other is Margaret Sanger. The event which sparked Mrs. Sanger's career as a birth control leader was the death in July, 1912, of Mrs. Jake Sachs, one of her public health nursing cases on New York's Lower East Side, following a second abortion.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Sachs had told Mrs. Sanger that all her doctor would say when she asked him how to avoid having more children was, "Tell Jake to sleep

14 Stopes, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

16 Abraham Stone and Norman Himes, *Planned Parenthood*, New York: The Viking Press, 1951, p. 14.

17 *International Planned Parenthood Federation: Programme for a World Problem*, a leaflet published by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, 64 Sloane St., London, SW1, England, revised in November, 1963 and reprinted in March, 1964, p. 9.

18 Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control*, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1931, p. 51.

on the roof.”<sup>19</sup> In the fall of 1913, Mrs. Sanger spent several months in Europe studying birth control techniques, which she incorporated in a pamphlet entitled *Family Limitation* upon her return to the United States early in 1914.<sup>20</sup> That same year, Mrs. Sanger released only one issue of her new birth control propaganda magazine, *The Woman Rebel*, when the Post Office Department declared it unmailable under the Comstock Law.<sup>21</sup>

The first organized efforts in behalf of the American birth control movement were those of the National Birth Control League, founded in 1914 by Mary Ware Dennett;<sup>22</sup> renamed the Voluntary Parenthood League in 1918, it ceased operations in 1925.<sup>23</sup> Mrs. Sanger refused to join either organization because she preferred direct action tactics to the Leagues’ legislative approach in combatting the federal and state obscenity statutes which were restricting the progress of the birth control movement. Consequently, on October 16, 1916, she opened the first birth control clinic in the United States in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Sanger was subsequently arrested, tried, and committed, under the New York State Penal Code, to the Queens County Penitentiary, from which she was released on March 6, 1917.<sup>25</sup> In February, the *Birth Control Review*—the magazine which was to be the movement’s principal voice for the next twenty-three years—had been successfully launched by her associate in the New York Birth Control League, Dr. Frederick Blossom.<sup>26</sup> This encouraged Mrs. Sanger to appeal her Brownsville Clinic case to the New York Court of Appeals, which did render her a favorable decision in January, 1918, by permitting physicians to give instruction in contraception to married people “for the cure or prevention of disease.”<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, Mrs. Sanger opened a second clinic in New York at 317 East Tenth Street under the medical direction of Dr. Lydia Allen de Vilbiss.<sup>28</sup>

The first major birth control conference in the United States was held from November 10-13, 1921, in New York City.<sup>29</sup> Although the police, at the instigation of Archbishop Patrick Hayes, disbanded the closing session at Town Hall and forced

19 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

20 Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1938, p. 112.

21 Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

23 Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

24 Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 185.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 311.

28 Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

29 Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

Mrs. Sanger to spend the night in jail, the conference was successful in establishing the first permanent birth control organization in the United States, the American Birth Control League. Mrs. Sanger served as President of the League until 1928, when she resigned to devote more time to the Clinical Research Bureau which she had organized with Dr. Dorothy Bocker in 1923 to perfect contraceptive techniques and encourage the medical profession's support of the birth control movement's objectives.<sup>30</sup> From 1925, until her death in 1941, Dr. Hannah M. Stone served as Director of the Clinical Research Bureau, which became the Margaret Sanger Research Bureau in 1940 following its merger in 1939 with the former American Birth Control League, renamed in that year the Birth Control Federation of America, and again, in 1942, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Aquiles J. Sobrero became Director of the Margaret Sanger Research Bureau following the death in 1959 of Dr. Abraham Stone who had served in that capacity since 1941.<sup>32</sup>

In 1961, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America merged with the World Population Emergency Campaign to emphasize the interest of both groups in population problems at home and abroad.<sup>33</sup> Planned Parenthood-World Population encourages and helps finance research in contraceptive techniques and in the social, economic and biological implications of human reproduction, and disseminates information about planned parenthood through various conferences and the mass media, as well as through its own publications and films. Its 108 affiliates in 34 states and the District of Columbia currently operate about 250 family planning centers where contraceptive information and care are provided under medical auspices, along with fertility treatments and marriage counselling.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher is President, and Dr. Mary S. Calderone, Medical Director, of Planned Parenthood-World Population, whose headquarters are located at 515 Madison Avenue in New York City.<sup>35</sup> The combined membership of Planned Parenthood's Medical Council and World Population's Medical Committee is forty-seven (47) physicians.<sup>36</sup>

### *Acceptance of the Birth Control Movement*

#### *Legal Acceptance*

The federal Comstock Law, enacted in 1873, was named after its chief proponent, Anthony Comstock, who spent most of his life conducting a crusade against vice

30 Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, pp. 358, 395.

31 Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 318; Rilma Buckman, "Social Engineering: A Study of the Birth Control Movement," *Social Forces*, XXII (May, 1944), p. 425.

32 Planned Parenthood-World Population, *Annual Report—1963*, p. 16.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 36-39.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 13.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

and obscenity.<sup>37</sup> This law, which closed the United States mails to contraceptive literature and devices and prohibited their importation from abroad, as well as their transportation by common carriers in interstate commerce, was soon reproduced in every state except New Mexico.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, in 1929 the country's birth control leaders organized the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control at Washington, D.C., for the purpose of repealing or securing a more lenient interpretation of the Comstock Law by the federal courts. The Committee disbanded in 1936 following the decision of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, in the case *United States Versus One Package*, that contraceptives imported for a "lawful purpose" did not come within the restrictions of the federal statute.<sup>39</sup> In 1938, the same court further liberalized the interpretation of the Comstock Law, in the case *United States Versus Certain Magazines*, to permit the importation, sale, or mailing of birth control literature if the consignee were a "competent physician" or a "qualified person," and "provided such literature would serve the purpose of saving lives and promoting good health."<sup>40</sup> Today, only in Massachusetts does state law prohibit the sale of contraceptives and the dissemination of birth control information, even by a doctor, thereby effectively barring birth control clinics. In June, 1965, the Connecticut law of 1879, which prohibited not only the sale but the *use* of contraceptives, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.<sup>41</sup> Almost the only opposition to amendment of these laws to exempt the medical profession has come from the Catholic Church, which maintains that artificial contraception, being contrary to the natural law, is intrinsically evil. Recently, however, some Catholic spokesmen have questioned whether in a pluralistic society it is just for the Catholic minority to implement its unique moral position on birth control through legislation, thereby restricting the behavior of the majority to whose consciences artificial contraception is not morally objectionable.<sup>42</sup>

### *Medical Acceptance*

Dr. William Gerry Morgan, president of the American Medical Association from 1930-1931, in an address on May 20, 1932, before the House Ways and Means Committee opposing the Hancock Bill, which proposed to exclude physicians from the

37 "Anthony Comstock," *America*, XIII (October 2, 1915), p. 615.

38 Edward Roberts Moore, *The Case Against Birth Control*, New York: The Century Company, 1931, pp. 278-281.

39 Lawrence Lader, *The Margaret Sanger Story*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955, p. 302.

40 Stone and Himes, *Planned Parenthood*, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

41 "Back in Business," *Newsweek*, LXV (June 21, 1965), p. 60.

42 J. E. Dunsford, "Public Policy on Birth Control: Possible Attitudes of the Catholic Community on State Involvement," *America*, CXI (August 8, 1964), pp. 132-134.

restrictions of the Comstock Law, said: "The medical profession as a whole does not sponsor or favor the passage of this bill, or any other of like nature, because it realizes the dangers inherent in such legislation. Whenever man departs ever so little from the natural laws of the universe, destructive influences to a greater or lesser extent creep in; and in the laws of nature there is no provision for birth control through contraceptive devices."<sup>43</sup>

During its 1937 convention, however, the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association, contending that contraceptive advice should be dispensed only under medical controls, recommended that physicians be apprised of their legal rights in regard to prescribing contraceptives and that its Councils on Pharmacy and Chemistry and Physical Therapy investigate the various contraceptive methods and publish their findings for the medical profession.<sup>44</sup> In 1938 the House of Delegates elaborated upon these two recommendations, urging the amendment of all anti-birth control laws so that physicians could, if they so desired, legally prescribe contraceptives, but they also emphasized that neither resolution should be construed as endorsing contraception *per se* or as suggesting what advice doctors should give their patients.<sup>45</sup> These were the latest birth control policies of the American Medical Association until 1963 when it established a new Committee on Human Reproduction, headed by Dr. Raymond T. Holden of the Georgetown University Medical School, and including Dr. Calderone, Medical Director of Planned Parenthood-World Population, to consider problems relating to family planning.<sup>46</sup> That same year, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists approved for the first time a resolution urging that birth control methods be made available to all groups in accordance with their religious convictions and recommending the expansion of research on all aspects of human fertility.<sup>47</sup> The American Public Health Association, which formally endorsed family planning as an integral part of preventive medicine in 1959, established a Program Area Committee on Population and Public Health in 1963 under the chairmanship of Dr. Leslie Corsa, Director of the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health of the California State Health Department.<sup>48</sup> Dr. Calderone, Medical Director, and Dr. Stephen Polgar, Research Director, of Planned Parenthood-World Population

43 "The Physicians' Attitude," *A Symposium on Birth Control*, Washington, D.C.: The National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1940, pp. 37-38.

44 Carl H. Davis, Chairman, "Report of Reference Committee on Executive Session at the 88th Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City, June 8, 1937," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, CVIII (June 26, 1937), pp. 2217-2218.

45 Arthur Booth, Chairman, "Report of the Committee to Study Contraceptive Practices and Related Problems," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, CX (April 30, 1938), p. 1479.

46 Planned Parenthood-World Population, *Annual Report—1963*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

were named consultants to the committee.<sup>49</sup> Government-sponsored birth control programs for indigent families also received a strong endorsement in September, 1963 from Dr. Kenneth W. Clement, President of the National Medical Association, the organization of Negro physicians.<sup>50</sup>

### *Religious Acceptance*

The story in Genesis (38. 7-10) of Onan, whom God slew for spilling his seed on the ground (*coitus interruptus*), is the common heritage of Jews, Protestants and Catholics which, until about thirty-five years ago, motivated their united stand against artificial birth control. The earliest favorable Protestant reaction to birth control, as well as one of the most comprehensive recent statements on family planning, came from the Anglican Bishops' Lambeth (England) Conferences of 1930 and 1958.<sup>51</sup> In the United States, approval of the "careful and restrained" use of contraceptives by the Federal Council of Churches' Committee on Marriage and the Home in 1931 established a precedent which was gradually followed by all major Protestant denominations, preparing the way for American Protestantism's first nearly-unanimous pronouncement by the National Council of Churches in February, 1961, sanctioning the use of birth control for "responsible family planning."<sup>52</sup> The Orthodox Communion delegates to the Council refrained from voting, however, in order to dissociate themselves from the pronouncement.<sup>53</sup> Abstinence is still the only method of family limitation approved by them as well as by most of the Fundamentalist Protestant groups which are not members of the National Council of Churches.

In 1958, the Rabbinical Alliance of America stated that while Orthodox Jews still condemn all male birth control practices, they do permit married women to use contraception, provided their health is in jeopardy and direct consultation has taken place between the medical and rabbinical authorities.<sup>54</sup> Resolutions in 1935 by the Rabbinical Assembly, representing Conservative Judaism, and in 1960 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing Reformed Judaism, sanctioned contraception for social and economic as well as health reasons.<sup>55</sup>

49 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Kingsley Davis, "Birth Control," *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, New York: The Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1964, p. 219.

52 *Ibid.*

53 "Responsible Parenthood: Statement Adopted by the National Council, with Editorial Comment," *Christian Century*, LXXVIII (March 29, 1961), pp. 380, 396-398.

54 Richard M. Fagley, *The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 122.

55 *Ibid.*

Pope Pius XI summarized the Catholic position on birth control in his encyclical on Christian Marriage (1930): "Any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of grave sin."<sup>56</sup> In October, 1951, however, Pope Pius XII indicated that serious conditions of a medical, eugenic, social and economic character in a marriage might justify the temporary and even permanent use of continence during the ovulation period (rhythm), and he expressed hope that science would soon succeed in providing this method of fertility control with a sufficiently secure basis.<sup>57</sup> In response to the world-wide controversy among theologians and laymen about the morality of using the new contraceptive pill, Pope Paul VI, in June, 1964, admonished Roman Catholic Prelates to stop discussing the subject publicly and barred Catholics from using the pills as contraceptives until the Church had completed its study of the entire birth control question in terms of increasing populations on the one side, and of family morality on the other.<sup>58</sup> "We have not yet sufficient reasons to consider outdated, and therefore not binding, the norm established by Pope Pius XII in this connection on September 12, 1958: 'A direct and, therefore, illicit sterilization is provoked when ovulation is stopped so as to protect the uterus from pregnancy.'"<sup>59</sup>

### *Popular Acceptance*

The most recent information available on the extent of contraceptive practice in the United States was obtained in 1955 from a nation-wide sample of 2713 white married women, eighteen through thirty-nine years of age.<sup>60</sup> According to this investigation, 70 percent of the couples had taken up the practice of birth control prior to the interview, and an additional 9 percent were planning to do so at some later date.<sup>61</sup> Among those couples who had been married fifteen years or longer, 92 percent were users of contraceptives.<sup>62</sup> Only 57 percent of the Catholic couples reported use of contraception, however, compared with 75 percent of the Protestant and 86 percent of the Jewish couples.<sup>63</sup> Of the couples who had not gone beyond elemen-

<sup>56</sup> Pope Pius XI, "Casti Connubii," *Social Wellsprings*, Vol. II, (Joseph Husslein, S.J., editor), Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1942, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> Pope Pius XII, "Allocution to Italian Catholic Midwives Convention," October 29, 1951, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XLIII (1951), p. 843.

<sup>58</sup> "Pope's Words; with Statement," *America*, CXI (July 11, 1964), p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Freedman, Pascal K. Whelpton, and Arthur A. Campbell, *Family Planning, Sterility and Population Growth*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959, p. 109.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

tary school, 48 percent used contraceptives, as compared with 84 percent of the college-educated couples; similarly, 58 percent of the couples earning under \$3,000 a year practiced contraception, as compared with 79 percent of those whose annual incomes exceeded \$6,000.<sup>64</sup>

*Acceptance by Private and Public Health and Welfare Agencies*

While only in Fort Worth, El Paso, and Waco, Texas, are United Funds currently supporting planned parenthood agencies,<sup>65</sup> there are twenty-one states and the District of Columbia in which at least some start has been made toward integrating family planning services into publicly-financed medical and welfare programs.<sup>66</sup> Seven southeastern states—Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Virginia, and Georgia—have offered birth control services through their health departments for over two decades,<sup>67</sup> and in Florida, during 1964, fourteen counties agreed on a plan to provide family planning services to east coast migrant farm laborers.<sup>68</sup> In that same year, three more notable tax-supported birth control programs were instituted—in Illinois, New York State, and the District of Columbia. Due to Catholic pressure, however, referrals and reimbursement for birth control services under both the Illinois and New York plans are restricted to married relief clients and, supposedly, no pressure is exerted, or suggestion made, to influence a recipient's decision to request contraceptive information or devices.<sup>69</sup> Of special significance was Congressional approval, also during 1964, of a \$25,000 appropriation to provide birth control services at maternity clinics operated by the District of Columbia's Health Department, and approval of a \$30,000 appropriation for similar services to relief clients of the District's Welfare Department.<sup>70</sup> Most welfare departments and public hospitals in our nation, however, do not yet provide family planning services, and many forbid their caseworkers and physicians to even discuss the subject with their clients or patients.<sup>71</sup> Such restrictions, originating at the local government level, especially affect Negro families, because as the most disadvantaged group in the United States, they depend very heavily on public health and welfare agencies for medical care.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Letter to author from Francis A. Marzolf, Field Representative of the United Community Funds and Councils of America, 345 E. 46th Street, New York, New York, dated June 22, 1964.

66 Planned Parenthood-World Population, *Annual Report—1963*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

71 Planned Parenthood-World Population, *Birth Control Services in Tax-Supported Hospitals, Health Departments and Welfare Agencies*, 1963, p. 4.

### *Birth Control and United States Foreign Aid Policy*

In July 1959, President Eisenhower's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program issued a report named after its chairman, William H. Draper, Jr., which recommended that the United States foreign aid program include the giving of birth control information to countries requesting it.<sup>72</sup> When interrogated by the press following the American Catholic Bishops' negative reaction to the Draper Report in November, 1959, most holders of public office assumed a defensive posture. Alonzo Smith, Press Officer of the International Cooperation Administration, for example, stated that not one penny of foreign aid funds had ever been used for dissemination of birth control information and that there were no plans to do so.<sup>73</sup> Presidential aspirant, Senator John F. Kennedy, asserted that it would be a "mistake" for the United States to "advocate" birth control in foreign countries,<sup>74</sup> a view endorsed by President Eisenhower himself when he declared, "I cannot imagine anything more emphatically a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility."<sup>75</sup> Four years later, however, General Eisenhower qualified his earlier statement with these words:

When I was President I opposed the use of federal funds to provide birth control information to countries we were aiding, because I felt this would violate the deepest religious convictions of large groups of taxpayers. As I now look back, it may be that I was carrying that conviction too far. I still believe that as a national policy we should not make birth control programs a condition to our foreign aid, but we should tell receiving nations how population growth threatens them and what can be done about it.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, the final version of the foreign aid bill for fiscal year 1964, which was approved by the Senate and House conferees just two months after General Eisenhower's statement, did not include Senator Fulbright's amendment authorizing the Agency for International Development to provide technical assistance to cooperating nations in carrying out population control programs.<sup>77</sup> It simply provided that

72 Melvin G. Shimm, *Population Control: The Imminent World Crisis*, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1961, p. 233.

73 *New York Times*, November 29, 1959, p. 1, col. 1 and p. 43, col. 4.

74 *New York Times*, November 28, 1959, p. 1, col. 8 and p. 12, col. 2.

75 *New York Times*, December 3, 1959, p. 1, col. 6 and p. 18, cols. 1 and 2.

76 Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Let's Be Honest With Ourselves," *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXXXVI (October 26, 1963), p. 26.

77 Planned Parenthood-World Population, *Annual Report—1963*, *op. cit.*, p. 9; D. S. Greenberg, "Population Planning: Missions Told that U.S. is Now Receptive to Requests for Some Assistance," *Science*, CXL (June 21, 1963), p. 1291.

funds would be made available to conduct research into the problems of population growth.<sup>78</sup> Sweden is the only one of the developed nations which has made birth control assistance a major part of its expanding foreign aid program.<sup>79</sup>

*Birth Control and United Nations Population Policy*

In December, 1963, the United Nations General Assembly also refused to include a controversial clause related to birth control in its resolution calling for an intensified study of the relationship between population growth and economic development. Maurice Viaud of France, together with the delegates from Argentina, Lebanon, Liberia, and Peru, had pressed for the deletion of the clause which provided for "United Nations technical assistance for national projects and programs dealing with problems of population."<sup>80</sup> The vote of 34 against, and 34 for, retention of the clause, with 32 abstentions, including the United States, was a clear indication, however, that opinion in the United Nations is seriously split on the question of birth control.<sup>81</sup> The amended resolution passed by a vote of 69 to 0, with 27 abstentions.<sup>82</sup>

*International Scope of the Birth Control Movement*

More concern is being expressed about population problems today than at any time since Malthus. The situation is regarded as especially acute in the "underdeveloped" areas of the world—Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania—where a combination of reduced mortality since World War II and continued high fertility has produced a "population bomb" which threatens to explode within the next generation, resulting in lower standards of living, the expansion of Communism, and even war, unless effective measures are implemented now to combat illiteracy, along with ancient traditions and taboos, which retard the capital formation and scientific and technological development prerequisite to the full utilization of natural resources, to industrialization, the mechanization of agriculture, and to effective population control policies. An increasing number of governments—Barbados, Puerto Rico, Chile, Uruguay, Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela, and Brazil in Latin America; Egypt in the Middle East; and Ceylon, Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Pakistan, India and Japan in Southeast Asia and the Far East—are financing and in other ways supporting family planning services through public health clinics and hospitals.<sup>83</sup> The International Planned Parenthood Federation is supporting family planning programs in other countries

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Philip M. Hauser (editor), *The Population Dilemma*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, p. 164.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Reverence for Life*, New York: Planned Parenthood-World Population, 1963, p. 10.

and areas where governments do not yet participate officially—in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, the Philippines, Trinidad, Turkey and East Africa.<sup>84</sup> Launched in 1952 at a meeting in New Delhi, the International Planned Parenthood Federation has national affiliates in 35 countries and territories currently organized into five regions: Europe, Near East and Africa; Indian Ocean; Southeast Asia and Oceania; Western Pacific; and Western Hemisphere.<sup>85</sup> With headquarters at 64 Sloane Street, London, the International Planned Parenthood Federation has regional offices in Bombay, Singapore, Tokyo, and New York, and is planning two more in Cairo and Nairobi.<sup>86</sup> Its President is Lady Rama-Rau of India, and Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher is Chairman of its Medical Committee.<sup>87</sup>

### Conclusion

This complex international structure of the Planned Parenthood Federation represents the final stage of the family limitation-population control movement which, as this article has indicated, began in England with Thomas Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, but spread to the United States in 1830 via Robert Owen's treatise, *Moral Physiology*, and has continued since that time to derive its principal impetus, in terms of leadership and financing, from this country. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, however, agitation for birth control in the United States was discontinuous, unorganized, and confused with a multitude of other reform issues—abolition, temperance, free thought and woman suffrage. Moreover, as long as the United States remained primarily a rural nation, large families did not constitute an economic liability and birth control propaganda was relatively ineffective. It was not until the twentieth century that a combination of superior leadership and a receptive social setting operated to revitalize the birth control movement. Now 87 years old and bedridden with a heart condition for the past five years at her home in Tucson, Arizona,<sup>88</sup> Margaret Sanger, the "Mother" of the twentieth-century birth control movement, has acquired international prominence entirely as a result of her successful stimulation of the movement's growth from the stage of unorganized agitation and propaganda through the final stages of formal organization and institutionalization. Constituting, according to Max Weber's terminology, a sort of "charismatic" leader,<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Sanger has communicated her zeal for voluntary parenthood to millions of people throughout the world.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *International Planned Parenthood Federation: Programme for a World Problem, op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Reverence for Life, op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> *International Planned Parenthood Federation: Programme for a World Problem, op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Lloyd Shearer, "Margaret Sanger: Fifty Years of Crusading," *Parade* (Syndicated Sunday Newspaper Magazine Supplement), December 1, 1963, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gemeinschaft* (1922), cited by Theodore Abel in "The Pattern of a Successful Political Movement," *American Sociological Review*, II (June, 1937), p. 350.

Just as essential to the progress of the birth control movement in the twentieth century, however, have been numerous social, economic, and intellectual factors which have facilitated increasingly widespread adoption of contraceptive practices: (1) the feminist movement which has "emancipated" married women by providing them with the training and opportunity for gainful employment outside the home; (2) the tremendous immigration to the United States between 1860 and 1920 (about 29 million persons)<sup>90</sup> which incited eugenists to warn of "overpopulation" and "race deterioration" unless alien birth rates were quickly and effectively reduced; (3) the Great Depression of the thirties which convinced many persons that poverty and relief status are necessary corollaries of a large family; (4) the growth of hedonism, pragmatism, materialism and secularism with increasing economic affluence and urbanization; (5) the development of improved means of transportation and communication which have facilitated the dissemination of birth control propaganda; and (6) the threat of Communism in the underdeveloped nations of the world suffering from the effects of the population explosion as their birth rates remain high and mortality rates decline. Most conclusively, Hadley Cantril's thesis that social movements emerge and thrive under conditions of rapid social change when basic values are being constantly subjected to reappraisal has certainly been substantiated and reinforced by the history of the birth control movement.<sup>91</sup>

90 "Immigration," *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, *op. cit.*, p. 536.

91 Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Social Movements*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1941, p. 10.