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AND BIRTH CONTROL  
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Nothing can come out of nothing. The State, to be virile, happy, healthy and secure, must be composed of individuals of that type, born and reared, nourished and educated in the belief that on the individual himself rests the well-being of the community.

### THE FEMININE ASPECT OF BIRTH CONTROL.

By Miss F. W. STELLA BROWNE.

I must begin by stating that I represent a very small minority in the movement in this country; so small a minority that, when I remember the divergence of opinion on the subject, I wish more than I can say that I might be able to approach the clarity and vigour with which Mrs. Drysdale has just expounded an entirely opposite point of view. But I fear you will have to pardon my deficiencies. I can at least promise to be brief.

In my opinion, as a Feminist and a Communist, the fundamental importance and value of birth control lies in its widening of the scope of human freedom and choice, its *self-determining* significance for women. For make no mistake about this: Birth Control, the diffusion of the knowledge and possibility of Birth Control, means freedom for women, social and sexual freedom, and that is why it is so intensely feared and disliked in many influential quarters to-day. For thousands of years births and the rearing—and often the losing—of unlimited broods of babies were considered to be women's business *par excellence*. But that women should *think* about this business, that they should judge and examine it, that they should look at their future and their children's future with what Chesterton has—in a somewhat different context, it is true—described as "bright alien eyes," this is, indeed, camouflage it as you may, the beginning of the end of a social system and a moral code.

Let me develop very briefly and sketchily my assertion that Birth Control means sexual freedom. The ostensible reasons for the established form of patriarchal marriage have always been (a) the inheritance of property, and (b) the protection ensured to the young children and to their mother during her child-bearing period. But when

marriage no longer means the subjection of unlimited motherhood and the economic dependence of mothers, the main social reasons for its retention as a stereotyped monogamous formula will be at an end. Observe, I do not say that Birth Control will abolish or diminish real monogamy: there will probably always be as much, or rather as little, monogamy as there has always been. But it will no longer be *stereotyped* as the one lifelong and unvarying form of legally recognised expression for anything so infinitely variable and individual as the sexual impulse.

Now the demand for Birth Control has long ago ceased to be academic. It is becoming very urgent and more widespread than many persons, even among those interested and sympathetic, quite realise. This demand touches the lives of the majority of women in this and every country very acutely. Any one who knows the lives and work of the wives and mothers of the working class—or, as I, a Communist, would prefer to style it, the exploited class—who has helped them and striven to teach them, not in the spirit of a schoolmistress, but as a fellow-woman and a friend—knows that these women are in no doubt as to the essential righteousness of their claim to control their own maternity. But how? Hardly any of these women, if she can speak to you fully and frankly as a friend, but will admit that—often more than once—she has, on finding herself, in the hideously significant phrase they use, "caught," had recourse either to drugs or to most violent internal operative methods in order to bring about a miscarriage. And these operative methods have, of course, been applied absolutely without antiseptic or aseptic precautions, and without any of the rest which is as essential after such an experiment as after a normal confinement at full term. Yet it ought not to be beyond the powers of medical and chemical science to invent an absolutely reliable contraceptive! Think of the marvels of destruction in the shape of asphyxiating and corrosive gases all ready for the next great war for liberty and civilisation. Think of the knowledge we have already attained of the structure and functions of the endocrine glands, and the work which has been done in the direction of modifying, renewing or transforming sexuality and procreative power by Steinach, Friedlander and Unterberger. Surely a science which can perform such wonders, though the technique is obviously only in its first stages,



should be able to prevent conception without injuring health or impairing natural pleasure!

Well, women demand that science should do this; and meanwhile, they are taking matters into their own hands. The English mind has always been impatient of social theories and the development of principles to their logical conclusion. But what I am going to put before you now are not *speculative theories*, they are *historical facts*.

In that unique experiment in constructive civilisation, the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, under the administration of Comrade Alexandra Kollontay, the Commissariat of Public Health has been functioning since 1918, and in 1920 a law was passed by which any woman about to become a mother, and under three months pregnant, should be entitled to have an abortion procured by a qualified physician, and to rest and care after the operation at the expense of the State.

In the early part of this year a Bill was brought before the Czechoslovakian Parliament by a woman-deputy, Madame Landova-Stychova, containing the same provisions as the Soviet law; and a vigorous agitation is being developed among proletarian women in Germany and Austria for the enactment of a similar statute by the Reichstag. This agitation is led by the Feminists of the Left Wing and by several prominent Socialists—for the Continental revolutionary, unlike many of his British brethren, has realised that Birth Control is not a capitalist red herring, but a requisite for life itself in starving and tortured Eastern and Central Europe. The agitation is entirely spontaneous, the expression of the women's misery, of their desperately defiant mother-love. They cry aloud, "If you have done this to our children, and if you can only offer them slavery and starvation, you shall have no more."

Now I am *not* concerned here to vindicate the moral right to abortion, though I am profoundly convinced that it is a woman's primary right, and have argued the case for that right in the Press, both in England and America. I am told, however, by one of the leaders of our movement, to whose penetrating judgment and wide nursing experience I give the highest honour, that abortion is *physiologically injurious* and to be deprecated. It is open, perhaps, to question whether the effects of abortion itself have been sufficiently separated from the appalling bad

conditions of nervous terror, lack of rest and lack of surgical cleanliness in which it is generally performed. But *granted that it is injurious per se*, the demand for effective contraception is all the stronger. The ancient codes, the decaying superstitions and prejudices of an old theoretical morality which has never been thoroughly accepted in practice, are losing all the sanctity they ever had. For an increasing number of persons throughout the world, including all the most mentally capable and physically vigorous, *they mean just nothing at all*.

It is up to science to meet the demands of humanity; and one of the most urgent of those demands is that of true eugenics (not privilege and property defence) that life shall be given, as Anna Wickham says, "frankly, gaily," or—not at all. Which shall it be?

#### NEO-MALTHUSIANISM AS A NECESSITY OF CIVILISATION.

By PROFESSOR J. FURCH.

Neo-Malthusianism, which is popularly known as Birth Control, is vastly expanding. At its inception it only attracted the attention of a very limited number of intelligent people; its value has been differently rated and has been the impulse behind the writing of a large number of books, pamphlets and the like, particularly medical and juridical, which, frequently, were of a controversial nature. Further, political economists were passionate disputants of the theory of neo-Malthusianism, which led to a one-sided support or opposition of the cause, and resulted in the regrettable error being in some quarters accepted as truth that the call for limiting the rate of birth is solely a materialistic necessity. The most ardent opponents arose and were the cause of the reproaches urging the sanctity of the child, the weakening of patriotism, and selfishness or egoism. Every sentiment, as well as religious and scientific doctrines, was speculatively employed, and even the power of the Government was called upon to take action, as we all know, unfortunately with success, against the alleged undermining of the power of the State. Any popular treatise about the advantages of neo-Malthusianism was suppressed, while its abuse has been encouraged and helped in every way possible. A person speaking