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Cambridge
Women's Welfare Association

SECOND
ANNUAL REPORT
1926-1927.

BIRTH CONTROL CENTRE,
FITZROY HALL, WELLINGTON STREET.

*They kept saying!
What say they?
Let them say!*

LONDON GUILDHALL UNIVERSITY
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SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE Cambridge Women's Welfare Association.

NEARLY two years have passed since the opening of the Birth Control Centre by the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association. In the light of experiences gained in those two years, the Committee present their second annual report with increased confidence in the desirability of maintaining and extending their work.

It will not be surprising to those familiar with conditions prevailing in a small town like Cambridge, that the increase in numbers of women attending the Centre has been very gradual. There is still a widespread belief among many of the poorer women whom we have tried to reach, that the subject of birth control, or indeed anything pertaining to sex, is one which they should feel shame to approach. The fear that her neighbour will learn of her visit and discuss it with other neighbours has deterred many a woman from coming to the Centre. We have also had to combat many unfounded stories launched by opponents of birth control, which play upon the ignorance and superstitions of the very poor, and make them afraid to take advantage of help, even when they are most anxious to restrict the size of their families.

But in spite of these difficulties, the number of patients has increased from 118 at the time of the last report, to 293. The total number of visits made by patients during the year is 404. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this increase is the wide field which has been covered, for patients have been received from *forty-three* villages and towns lying in every direction from Cambridge, and as far distant as fifty miles. A considerable number of these countryside patients are wives of agricultural labourers earning thirty to thirty-five shillings a week. Some of these women have been sent by friends; some have seen the advertisement which appears in each issue of the local weekly newspaper; a number have been sent by doctors.

The increasing interest shown by medical practitioners has been very gratifying. Fifteen doctors have made use of the Clinic as against seven last year, while several nurses and one midwife have also sent patients. Many of the patients, especially amongst those sent by doctors, have been cases in which cessation of child-bearing has been made imperative by the presence of inheritable disease, or the serious condition of the mother's health, or the acute danger attending previous confinements. Women have come for advice who were suffering from tuberculosis, epilepsy, diabetes, heart disease, and paralysis, while large numbers have complained of nervous troubles and general ill-health. A considerable number of women visit the Centre only when they suspect a state of pregnancy, and it is of course too late to render any

aid. These cases are always referred to the proper Centres for ante-natal care, and a majority return to the Clinic after confinement.

Among the interesting cases during the past year have been six patients who desired to have children, and who came to the Centre anxiously hoping that some treatment could be advised which would enable them to become mothers. These patients received most sympathetic attention from the medical officer who, after considering their cases, referred them to the hospital or to the proper specialist for appropriate treatment.

As was pointed out in the previous report, not all the patients visiting the Centre are the mothers of very large families. Many come after the first child with the deliberate intention of spacing their children. Others who have three or four children and find it a struggle to support these in any comfort on their existing wages, come for advice because they do not want to lower their standard of life by further additions to their family.

Even including, however, the childless patients mentioned above, we find a total of 608 pregnancies among the 175 patients who have been enrolled since the last report. There are 525 surviving children, or an average of three per family. To maintain our present large population, L. R. Connor* estimates that 2.58 legitimate *births* per marriage are necessary to replace each generation as it disappears. Of the 608 pregnancies, 35 resulted in miscarriages—many of them self-induced—and 11 children were still-born. Forty-five children died,—32 under one year of age, 11 under two years of age, and two at ages slightly higher.

Numerous cases involving real hardship have been dealt with, as will be seen in the following brief summary:—

Mrs. A.—Age 30. Husband carter. Married 1921. Miscarriage 1922. Child born in 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926.

Mrs. B.—Age 27. Married 1917. Eight pregnancies in 8 years. Two miscarriages in 1918, 2 in 1925. Child born 1919, 1920, 1922, 1924.

Mrs. C.—Age 36. Husband gardener. Ten pregnancies. Child born 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1916, 1922, 1924, 1925. Miscarriage 1913 and 1917.

Mrs. D.—Age 38. Husband small holder. Twelve pregnancies. One miscarriage, 1 still birth. Two children died under 6 months of age. Eight survive.

Mrs. E.—Age 34. Husband labourer. Seven children, 6 survive.

Mrs. F.—Age 36. Husband labourer. Wages £2. Nine pregnancies. Two miscarriages. Seven survive.

(*) Fertility of Marriage and Population Growth. Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Vol. LXXXIX, Part III. May 1926. Dublin and Lotka, working on American figures and employing slightly different methods arrived at 2.62 as the necessary births per marriage.

Mrs. G.—Husband labourer. Nine children in 13 years. 8 survive.

Mrs. H.—Age 30. Husband labourer. Wife has £1/10/- a week. Four children in 5 years. One bedroom only.

Mrs. I.—Age 30. Husband labourer. Seven children in 11 years. All survive. Family of 9 live in 2 rooms.

Mrs. J.—Age 30. Husband labourer. Six pregnancies in 6 years. Five survive. Family of 7 live in 3 rooms.

Mrs. K.—Husband dealer. Thirteen pregnancies. Ten survive.

Mrs. L.—Nine pregnancies, 1 miscarriage. Six children survive.

The past year's work has been of special interest in that many of the patients who attended during the first year have revisited the Clinic, and their experiences in using the contraceptive appliances have been recorded. Many have warmly expressed their gratitude and appreciation in person, while letters like the following have been received :—

"I must take this opportunity to thank you and all the ladies for the great help you have been to me, it must be a great blessing to all mothers. I will tell all I can of the Welfare Centre."

"I would now like to tell you what a difference to both my husband and myself the pessary has made. The constant dread of bringing another little mouth to feed into the world, that we could ill afford, has gone, and in consequence something new has crept into our home and we are both happier in our married life. I may have expressed myself badly, but I think you understand."

"I am very pleased with the pessary and so grateful for the help I have received."

In view of the statement made by some medical opponents of birth control that the use of contraceptives causes neurosis, many of the old patients have been particularly questioned on this point. They have invariably replied that their nerves and their general health have improved since the fear and dread of unwanted pregnancies has been removed. Indeed, the change in the appearance and bearing of some of the patients returning some months after their first visit, has been most marked. The general observations made thus far, would appear to contradict the neurosis theory.

One case deserves special comment. A young woman visited the Centre a few months after her marriage. She explained that she and her husband were living in one room, that they had hopes of getting a house eventually, and that they wanted to postpone the birth of their first child until they were settled in suitable quarters. Her husband had practiced coitus interruptus which appeared to result in a serious nervous condition. He had become quick tempered and unreasonable; the wife was depressed and miserable, and had doubts whether she would be able to continue to live with her husband. She was supplied with a pessary. Some months later she revisited the Clinic. Her depression had disappeared, and she reported that the nervous condition of her husband had vanished. She was beaming with joy and

said that her married life became happier week by week. The young couple subsequently moved into a house, the wife left off using the appliance, and is now a happy expectant mother.

The misery and poverty so often recorded at the Clinic sometimes has a comic interlude. Mrs. H. an energetic and enterprising woman called at the Centre though expressly forbidden to do so by her husband. She was the mother of six children, and wanted to know whether there was any contraceptive she could use without the knowledge of her husband. They were evidently on very good terms; neither wanted any more children, but the husband had been frightened by some tales he had heard about birth control. She was supplied with a pessary. Some months later she returned, chuckling. After she had used the pessary for some time without the knowledge of her husband, he began to wonder why they were never worried as previously about unwanted babies. She then confessed that she had visited the Centre, but told him nothing further. He was delighted, and now, believing that something not far removed from magic takes place at the Centre, urges his wife to return periodically to make certain that the magic—whatever it is—is renewed.

Much valuable experience has been gained in the past two years. An effort is made to keep in touch with old patients, and the result of these visits has convinced us anew of the need for some simple and as nearly as possible "fool-proof" method of contraception. The Dutch pessary now mostly advised at the Clinic involves the use of the syringe for douching. This becomes a serious problem for women living in tiny overcrowded houses with no sanitary facilities, and with one or more young children always around to observe everything the mother does. In the case of the woman with very low mentality—exactly the class whom it is most desirable to restrain from propagating—the necessary stamina and perseverance is often lacking, and she gives up using the appliance because of the douching difficulty. Many such cases would continue to use a contraceptive if it were simpler. With this in mind, and believing also that too little is known as to the actual efficacy of any existing method of contraception and its effect, the Committee suggested that a body of scientists and clinic workers should be set up to undertake a scientific investigation of contraceptive methods. This has been done, and the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association is represented by the president, Sir Humphry Rolleston, Dr. F. H. A. Marshall, Dr. E. D. Adrian, and the Secretary, Mrs. Florence. The Committee has an able secretary in the Hon. Mrs. Marjorie Farrer, and F. J. Huntington, Esq., of the Walworth Women's Welfare Centre, is Treasurer. The other members of the Committee are: C. P. Blacker, L.R.C.P., Charles J. Bond, C.M.G., F.R.C.S., Professor A. M. Carr-Saunders, Frank Cook, F.R.C.S., Mrs. Gladys Cox, M.B., B.S., Professor Winifred Cullis, D.Sc., Professor Julian S. Huxley, Mrs. Margaret Lloyd (Workers Birth Control Group), Mrs. Margaret Spring-Rice (North Kensington Women's

Welfare Centre) and Mrs. Mary Stocks (Manchester and Salford Mothers' Clinic). A questionnaire has been drawn up, and it is proposed to collect data from large numbers of cases both from existing clinics, and from the private practice of doctors who are willing to co-operate. Such an investigation should provide a reliable guide for the medical profession in its dealings with contraception in future, and should supply convincing answers to some of the haphazard statements now made with regard to birth control.

No public meetings have been held since the annual meeting of 1926 when Lord Dawson of Penn so very ably presented the case for birth control. An effort has been made to hold small meetings for working mothers, but the difficulty of securing suitable meeting places has frustrated this attempt. One or two small meetings have been held for half an hour preceding the weekly Clinic, and these will be continued from time to time.

The Secretary has continued to address meetings on the subject of birth control as opportunity offered. One of the most interesting of these meetings was that held by a group of undergraduates organized to study the population problem.

The Committee deeply regret the long illness of their chairman, Mrs. Hartree, which has deprived them of her valuable counsel. They have been very fortunate however in securing as an additional member of the Committee, Mr. Arthur Cooke, F.R.C.S., whose experience and advice have been of great value.

In August, Mrs. Rosemary Pritchard, the first medical officer at the Centre, found it necessary to hand in her resignation. This was reluctantly accepted by the Committee who wish to place on record their gratitude for the help and loyal service given by Mrs. Pritchard in those difficult months when the Centre was first opened.

The Association is to be congratulated upon having secured the services of Mrs. Robson, M.B.C.M. (Glasgow), D.P.H. (Cambridge), to succeed Mrs. Pritchard as medical attendant. Mrs. Robson is already well known among large numbers of working women through her work in the Welfare Centres, and her tact and friendly counsel helps to banish the nervous fears of patients and to establish confidence. Nurse Newman continues to give most efficient and devoted service.

A financial statement for the year is appended. As has been stated previously, the Clinic depends for support entirely on voluntary subscriptions. Even so, each patient is charged a fee of one shilling. Appliances are sold at wholesale rates, often on deferred payments. In cases where the patient is already receiving aid from public monies, such as grants from the Guardians, etc., it is often necessary to give appliances free of charge. It will be evident therefore, how vital to its success is the continued support of those who believe in this essentially prophylactic work in combating such social evils as has been described in this report.

BALANCE SHEET at April 29th, 1927.

ASSETS		£	s.	d.
Value of fittings and equipment (estimated) ...	...	8	0	0
Value of appliances in stock (estimated) ...	...	12	0	0
Debts from patients (estimated) (actual), £10 16 3 ...	...	10	0	0
Credit Bank balance at current account ...	...	40	17	1
Cash in hands of Secretary ...	...	2	14	0
		£73	11	1

LIABILITIES.		£	s.	d.
Rent and Light ...	...	1	2	0
Doctor ...	...	4	4	0
Advertising ...	...	1	15	0
Outstanding cheque not yet paid in ...	...	9	0	0
Balance of Assets over Liabilities ...	...	66	1	1
		£73	11	1

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS from April 25th, 1926 to April 29th, 1927.

RECEIPTS.		£	s.	d.
Subscriptions and Donations ...	...	142	17	2
Cash collection at 1926 Annual Meeting ...	...	9	7	4
Patients' fees ...	...	7	12	0
Patients' donations and payments for teas ...	...	5	10	1
Sale of Appliances ...	...	35	9	1
Credit Bank balance at April 24th, 1926 ...	...	39	9	0
Cash in hands of Secretary at April 24th, 1926 ...	...	5	0	0
		£245	4	8

EXPENDITURE.		£	s.	d.
Doctor's fees ...	...	53	13	5
Nurse's fees ...	...	24	10	0
Appliances ...	...	39	16	9
Printing, stationery and postage ...	...	26	12	6½
Rent, light, and heating ...	...	14	16	0
Caretaker ...	...	8	10	0
Repairs to premises and furniture ...	...	1	9	9
Newspaper advertising ...	...	22	10	0
Tea and other provisions ...	...	1	16	4½
Hire of Rooms at Guildhall ...	...	2	5	10
Sundries (including railway fares to London) ...	...	5	11	11
Cheque books ...	...	10	0	0
		202	2	7
Cash in Bank (after meeting 1 outstanding cheque) ...	...	40	8	1
Cash in hands of Secretary ...	...	2	14	0
		£245	4	8

Cambridge Women's Welfare Association.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

.....192

To Mrs. ROBERTSON, *Hon. Assistant Secretary,*
56, Bateman Street, Cambridge.

I enclose.....for £.....

*being a Subscription to the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association, and shall
be prepared to give the same amount annually**

Signature

Address

** Delete, if this is not desired.*

Cambridge Women's Welfare Association.

To be sent to

Mrs. ROBERTSON, *Hon. Asst. Treasurer,*
56, Bateman Street, Cambridge.

.....192

I have to-day instructed Messrs.....
to pay annually the sum of £.....in support
of the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association.

Signature

Address

.....

Cambridge Women's Welfare Association.

ORDER TO BANKERS.

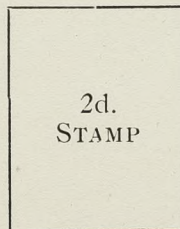
.....192

To Messrs.....

Branch.....

Please to place to the credit of the Cambridge Women's
Welfare Association, at Barclay's Bank, Limited, Bene't
Street, on the receipt of this order, and annually on the same
date, the sum of £.....

£ : :



Signature

Address

Cambridge :
JOHN ARLISS
ST. TIBB'S ROW

