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Cambridge

Women's Welfare Association

FIRST
ANNUAL REPORT
1925-1926.

BIRTH CONTROL CENTRE,
FITZROY HALL, WELLINGTON STREET.

3940074132

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*The Committee deeply regret the death of the Rev. H. Latimer Jackson.

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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
Cambridge
Women's Welfare Association

A GROUP of people interested in the problem of Birth Control met in the Spring of 1925 to consider means of bringing knowledge of contraceptive methods within the reach of all married women.

Two initial meetings were held. The first, on March 10th was attended by about forty women. Mrs. Hugh Dalton representing the Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics presented the case for family limitation. A provisional organization under the aegis of the London Society was formed.

A second meeting was called on May 5th, attended by both men and women, and the Cambridge Women's Welfare Association was formally launched. It was agreed that Professor Sir Humphry Rolleston, Bart., K.C.B., M.D., then President of the Royal College of Physicians, and Physician in Ordinary to the King, should be invited to become President. Mrs. Eva Hartree, then Mayor of Cambridge, was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee, Dr. E. D. Adrian, F.R.C.P., F.R.S., Honorary Treasurer, and Mrs. Lella S. Florence, Honorary Secretary, whilst the following formed the Executive Committee: Dr. F. H. A. Marshall, F.R.S., Mrs. Marjorie McNair, Mrs. Helen Bowen Pease, J.P., and Mrs. Agnes Ramsey. Later Dr. G. S. Haynes, M.R.C.P., Mrs. Rachel Marshall, and Mrs. Petica Robertson were added to the Committee, Mrs. Robertson subsequently consenting to act as Assistant Treasurer. About £65 was subscribed at these two meetings to meet the initial expenses.

Premises were secured in Wellington Street through the kindness of the Fitzroy Hall Committee, and the Centre was opened on August 5th with Mrs. Rosemary Pritchard, M.R.C.S.(Eng.), L.R.C.P. (Lond). in attendance as medical officer, and Mrs. A. Newman, C.M.B. as nurse. Both doctor and nurse had a short course of training at the Walworth Centre before the Cambridge Clinic opened. The Committee are deeply indebted to Dr. Pritchard who served for some time in a voluntary capacity. The Clinic has been open each Wednesday

afternoon since this date, in all 37 afternoons. There have been 118 patients representing a total of more than 200 visits. The greater number of these women reside in Cambridge, but news of the Centre has begun to penetrate the villages and more distant towns, and there have been patients from Histon, Girton, Cherryhinton, Burwell, Mildenhall, Foxton, Longstowe, Caxton, Trumpington, Littleport, Newmarket and even from Winchester and Coventry and from Yorkshire. The doctor and nurse also visited Felsted by arrangement of Mrs. Waley, where seven patients unable to attend the Cambridge Centre were interviewed.

A number of women from distant towns have written asking for advice. Mrs. M. residing in Liverpool had two children under two years of age, and but one room; the father suffered from shell shock. Mrs. K. wrote from Scotland. She was preparing to go to Calcutta with her husband and two children, aged three months and two years. She was able to pay for medical attention, but was unable to secure the information in her town. She elected to travel to London in order to visit a Centre. Mrs. C. the mother of a three months old baby was about to start for Australia in the hope that her husband might find health and opportunity in a new country. She knew that a second immediate pregnancy would frustrate these hopes. The Cambridge Centre has touched even India. A former undergraduate, writing from his native land, felt that the opening of a birth control clinic in a town so old and respected, must be sufficient guarantee of its scientific character. He and his wife, a medical student, had one child and were anxious to space their family. It was suggested that they might undertake to introduce birth control in India.

Mrs. X. writes from a Cambridgeshire village :

"I have five children, a baby 7 months, the next nearly 2 years, one just turned 4, and two others a little older. I have had two miscarriages and one child who died. I am always nervous. There are none of them very strong. My G— who is nearly two was for six months between life and death. My little girl has had St. Vitus Dance. I am sure I do not want any more. There is always a doctor in the house with one or the other. I would be so grateful if you could help."

And another :

"I thought I would write and let you know that I got my new baby that I told you about. I do wish you had opened your Clinic before as I did not want any more. Fancy that makes me 7 alive and 2 dead, and what is a man's money when you get it? I always went to work mornings, but I had to give it up as I did not feel the woman with the ninth as I did with the first. I have only one earning besides my husband. Now I shall be booked to stay at home as my other little girl is two. Fancy, I am only 36 and had nine children."

The Centre has reached so far a surprisingly wide range of patients. We have not been successful in attracting a large number of women from families who are notoriously indigent, though a special effort has been made to approach a number of them. The general impression derived from these efforts has been that a woman who is not equipped initially with a stable temperament is particularly unable to withstand the strain of a numerous family, and in time becomes so apathetic that there is little hope of teaching her, or of depending upon her persistent use of the appliance even though she goes so far as to visit the Centre. But the essentially hopeful feature is that a large number of the patients visiting the Centre are of the type who would probably sink to the unteachable level if their present families of two, three or four children were to go on increasing.

One-fourth of the patients so far interviewed are wives of labourers, a considerable number of whom are unemployed. The next largest number engaged in any given trade are railway workers. The remainder are drawn from many fields—a teacher, a publican, a butcher, a clerk, painters, carpenters, cleaners, blacksmiths, down—or up—to a "general fixer."

It has been difficult to gather much information concerning wages, both because of a natural reluctance to press so personal a question, and because in nearly every case, the wife does not know what her husband earns, and can only name the sum he gives her to meet the family expenses. In many cases this sum varies from week to week according to the casual fortune of the breadwinner. But such figures as we have been able to collect indicate that each wife has on the average considerably less than £2 a week. In order to cope with these limited circumstances, patients are allowed to pay for the appliances as best suits their convenience. The appliances are bought by the Committee at wholesale rates, and are sold to the patients without profit. A fee of one shilling is asked, and the total charge in some cases amounts to seven or eight shillings which is often paid off in sums of sixpence per week. This is an advantage in that the repeated visits of the patients keep them in touch with the Centre, and make it possible to gather further data respecting the efficacy of methods employed.

A limited amount of information has been gleaned on the housing conditions. Not every patient has been asked to state the size of her house, but among those questioned, only eleven had houses of six rooms. The majority live in four-roomed houses, while a considerable number occupy lodgings of one, two or three rooms. One patient, the mother of fifteen children, thirteen living, has occupied a three-roomed cottage in a neighbouring village for twelve years.

A small percentage of the patients are mothers of families ranging from eight to fifteen children. Among the 118 patients visiting the Clinic there had been a total of 491 pregnancies or 4.16 for each mother. Deducting the deaths—mostly infantile—and miscarriages, there still remain 425 living children, or 3.6 for each mother.

The attendance of a fully qualified woman doctor has done much to win the confidence of the medical profession. Eight doctors have inspected the Clinic as well as numerous other visitors. Patients have been sent to the Centre by six doctors. The examination of each patient by Dr. Pritchard has resulted in other benefits. Several patients found to be in need of medical treatment have been referred to Addenbrooke's Hospital, while women found to be pregnant have been urged to attend one of the Welfare Centres for proper advice. Among the patients are several suffering from tuberculosis or married to tubercular husbands. It seems probable that the Clinic will help materially in combating racial disease and inherited defects.

A notable event was the unanimous adoption by the Borough Council of a resolution drawn up by the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee. The resolution advised co-operation between medical officers at the Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and the Birth Control Clinic in any case where family limitation appear advisable on medical grounds. This move, in effect, gives medical officers and health visitors full authority to refer to the Birth Control Centre such patients as may be in need of contraceptive knowledge.

The Secretary represented the Association at a Conference called in London by the Eugenics Education Society for the purpose of discussing case records and means of reducing information received from all Birth Control Clinics to statistical evidence. A second conference of medical men and women only, at which Dr. Pritchard was present, was called to discuss the whole neglected subject of contraceptive methods and schemes for further research. Other meetings for further discussion on this subject are being arranged.

Reference must not be omitted to the Guildhall meeting addressed by the Bishop of Pella on "The Evils of Birth Control Propaganda." The Bishop's remarks were singularly unconvincing, and the audience, largely undergraduates, converted the meeting into a serious defence of family limitation. Leaflets announcing the hours and place of the Birth Control Clinic were distributed to the women in the audience at the close of the meeting.

It is hoped in the coming year greatly to increase the number of women attending the Centre, through advertising, through small meetings in various parts of the town and in villages, through the distribution of leaflets and similar methods. It is hoped also to open the Centre one evening each week for the benefit of married women who are employed during the day. This will necessitate a substantial addition to the sum which was available for last year's programme. But the desperate need of most of the women who have come to the Clinic, and the acknowledged poverty and misery of hundreds of women who unwillingly add to the burden of the community as often as they bear another child to share their dismal circumstances, embolden us to appeal for further financial support.

An account of the receipts and payments for the year is attached. It may be mentioned that apart from the nominal fee of one shilling paid by patients, the Association depends entirely on voluntary contributions. A grant of £20 was made by the Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics to assist with initial expenses, and a sum of £15 reached the Association through the generosity of Mr. John Sumner, of Birmingham. Apart from these two sums, the year's work has been financed entirely from the smaller subscriptions of members.

At present we are able to count on about £100 a year. We estimate that more than double that sum will be needed if our work is to expand as it should. We earnestly appeal to all believers in birth control to help in carrying on this important social reform so long overdue.

BALANCE SHEET at April 24th, 1926.

ASSETS.	£	s.	d.		LIABILITIES.	£	s.	d.
Value of fittings and equipment, say	10	0	0		Rent... ..	15	0	
Value of appliances in stock, say	22	2	10		Chemist's account for Appliances	18	6	
Debts from patients (actual, £6 11 11)	6	0	0		Caretaker	9	0	
Credit Bank balance at current account	39	9	0					
Cash in hands of Secretary	5	0	0		Balance Assets over Liabilities	80	9	4
	£82	11	10			£82	11	10

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS from beginning up to April 24th, 1926.

RECEIPTS.	£	s.	d.		EXPENDITURE.	£	s.	d.
Donations and Subscriptions	207	13	11		Structural and other expenses of installation and equipment	44	3	4
Analysis (estimated):					Doctor's fees and travelling expenses	48	18	6
Donations	105	12	5		Nurse's fees (including journey to London)	19	10	0
Subscriptions for 1925—26	99	10	6		Appliances	43	0	4½
Subscriptions for 1926—27	2	11	0		Printing, stationery and postage	17	17	4
	£207	13	11		Rent and light	10	5	0
					Caretaker	4	17	0
Patients' payments in fees and for appliances	26	16	4		Sundries	1	1	8½
					Cheque books	8	0	0
						190	1	3
					Cash in Bank	39	9	0
					Cash in hands of Secretary	5	0	0
	£234	10	3			£234	10	3

E. D. ADRIAN, *Hon. Treasurer.*

*Audited and found correct, ARNOLD D. McNAIR,
29th April, 1926.*

Cambridge Women's
SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

.....192

To Mrs. Robertson, *Hon. Assistant Treasurer,*
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.

