

**BIRTH CONTROL: WHAT IT IS, HOW IT  
WORKS, WHAT IT WILL DO. THE  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST AMERICAN  
BIRTH CONTROL CONFERENCE HELD AT  
THE HOTEL PLAZA, NEW YORK,  
NOVEMBER 11, 12, 1921**

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HOW IT WORKS  
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

**T**HE First American Birth Control Conference, like every great landmark in the history of human progress, grew out of an idea. For years Mrs. Margaret Sanger, and her little band of faithful helpers, had been engaged on the lecture platform, in the columns of the *Birth Control Review*, in thousands of communications with individual men and women, through the selling of literature on the streets, and even in jail, in the uphill task of bringing Birth Control to the attention of the public. In the summer of 1921 she sent out a letter addressed to people prominent in biology, medicine, economics, sociology and social service, and also to well-known business and professional men, writers and educators. About five hundred of these men and women were asked their opinion as to whether the time was opportune for a national conference on Birth Control and whether in case such a conference were held, they would be willing to help financially, by contributing papers, or by personal work in connection with it.

A surprisingly favorable response was received from these letters. Replies were received from 40 per cent. of the persons addressed and opinion seemed overwhelmingly in favor of the calling of a conference. In view of this response, it was arranged to call the First American Birth Control Conference to meet in New York, November 11, 12, and 13, 1921. From among those who had signified their willingness to aid, a large Conference Committee was formed, with Mrs. Margaret Sanger as chairman. The Committee was made up as follows:

### THE FIRST AMERICAN BIRTH CONTROL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MARGARET SANGER, *Chairman*  
JULIET BARRETT RUBLEE, *Vice-Chairman*  
ANNE KENNEDY, *Executive Secretary*



CLARA LOUISE ROWE, *Extension Secretary*  
 FRANCES B. ACKERMANN, *Treasurer*  
 EDITH HOUGHTON HOOKER, *Chairman of Sessions*  
 SARA E. NIEMAN, *Hospitality Chairman*

*Committee on Resolutions*

MRS. LEWIS L. DELAFIELD                      DR. ALICE BUTLER  
 CLARA LOUISE ROWE

*Conference Committee*

Mr. & Mrs. Thos. L. Chadbourne	Mr. Herbert Croly
Mrs. Thomas W. Lamont	Mrs. Dexter Blagden
Winston Churchill	Mrs. Frank I. Cobb
Lydia Allen DeVilbiss, M.D.	Dr. E. M. East
Professor Irving Fisher	William J. Fielding
Donald R. Hooker, M.D.	Bernarr MacFadden
Mrs. Wallace Irwin	Virginia C. Young
Mrs. James Lees Laidlaw	Mary Shaw
Mrs. Donn Barber	Elizabeth Severn, Ph.D.
Dr. & Mrs. Frederick Peterson	Dr. S. Adolphus Knopf
Dr. & Mrs. Ernest H. Gruening	Mrs. Kate Crane Gartz
Mrs. Willard Straight	Mrs. Henry Villard
Mrs. John Winters Brannan	Dr. Alice Hamilton
Frederick C. Haeckel, M.D.	Mrs. Shelly Tolhurst
Mrs. John A. Fry	Mrs. Otto H. Kahn
Mrs. Stanley McCormick	Lillian D. Wald
Charles G. Taylor, M.D.	John Favill, M.D.
Dr. & Mrs. L. Emmett Holt	Juliet Barrett Rublee
Mrs. Maxfield Parrish	Mrs. Dwight Morrow
Mrs. Homer St. Gaudens	Mrs. Pierre Jay
Mrs. Lewis L. Delafield	Rev. Arthur E. Whatham
Professor Walter B. Pitkin	Kate W. Baldwin, M.D.
Mrs. Charles E. Knoblauch	Mary Halton, M.D.
Baroness Keikichi Ishimoto	Clara W. Carter
Lothrop Stoddard, Ph.D.	Lowell Brentano
Rabbi Rudolph I. Coffee, Ph.D.	Prof. & Mrs. James A. Field
Mrs. Learned Hand	Dr. Mary I. Bigelow
Edith Swift, M.D.	Mrs. Robert B. Gregory
Mr. Kendall Banning	Mrs. Ernest R. Adee
Mrs. Ruth W. Porter	Bertha Rembaugh
Dr. Anna Blount	Mrs. Robert Bass
Kenneth Taylor, M.D.	Mrs. George H. Day, Sr.

Mrs. William Spinney	Mrs. Waiton Martin
Mrs. Charles Tiffany	Sara Messing Stern
Mrs. Ernest Poole	Mabel Wood Hill
Florence Bayard Hilles	Andrew H. Green
Laura Hickox Young	Mrs. William A. McGraw
John C. Vaughan, M.D.	Theodore Dreiser
Mrs. Arthur L. Lawrence	Mrs. Samuel Lambert
Miss Martha Davis	Mary Winsor
Mr. Robert M. Lovett	Florence Guertin Tuttle
Mrs. Minturn Pinchot	John Hays Hammond, Jr.
Mrs. Simeon Ford	Helen Thomas Flexner
Mrs. C. C. Rumsey	

In arranging the Programme the Committee did not limit itself to the United States. Twenty-four papers in all were presented, and all but three were read at the Conference by their writers. The three exceptions were the paper of Professor Lindeman of North Carolina, read by Mrs. William A. McGraw; that of Dr. C. V. Drysdale of London, read by Dr. Roswell Johnson, and that of Professor A. B. Wolfe of Texas, read by Dr. Sidney E. Goldstein. Two of the speakers were from England—Mr. Harold Cox, Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, who came at the invitation of the Conference Committee for the sole purpose of speaking at the Birth Control Conference, and Mr. J. O. P. Bland who was in this country in connection with the Disarmament Conference at Washington. A paper was read by Professor Moens of Holland, and the rest were from American men and women from New York, New England, the Atlantic States, the South and the Middle West.

The papers covered the scientific, economic and political and social aspects of the question. The medical aspect was discussed at a meeting open only to members of the medical profession, held on Friday evening, November 11th. This meeting revealed the interest taken by the medical profession in the subject. The room assigned for the gathering was crowded to the doors and many people stood throughout the prolonged session. Another point brought out was the very general ignorance among doctors concerning hygienic and efficient contraceptives. As no branch of medical training undertakes to give instruction concerning such contraceptives, this ignorance

ought not to be a matter of surprise. It is noted merely to show the need of research and clinical experience. The record of the proceedings at this meeting has not been published, but is in the possession of the American Birth Control League.

The question of the Morality of Birth Control was reserved as the subject for discussion at a public meeting, arranged to be held on the evening of November 13th. Through the arbitrary and illegal action of the police this meeting was broken up before the speakers had a chance to begin their addresses; and two women—Mrs. Margaret Sanger and Miss Mary Winsor—were arrested and taken to the police court. They were released on their appearance the following morning, as it was clear that they had committed no offence. Hearings on the outrage were demanded by a committee of independent citizens, interested in the right of free speech and free speech and free assembly. The demand was granted but hearings dragged along for three months, without disciplinary action against the offenders responsible for breaking up the meeting being taken by the city authorities.

The meeting was hastily rearranged to be held the following Friday, November 18th, at the Park Theatre. This time there was no interference attempted. The theatre was filled to capacity and huge crowds were turned away. The programme as arranged for the Sunday night meeting was carried through, the principal speeches being given by Mrs. Margaret Sanger and Mr. Harold Cox.

As a preliminary to the public meeting, Mrs. Sanger had sent out some weeks previously a letter asking for replies to the four following questions:

1. Is not over-population a menace to the peace of the world?
2. Would not the legal dissemination of scientific Birth Control information through the medium of clinics by the medical profession be the most logical method of checking the problem of over-population?
3. Would knowledge of Birth Control change the moral attitude of men and women toward the marriage bond,