

Women and the Social Control of their bodies

Series One: Journals and Papers of the Birth Control Movement

**Part 1: The Malthusian,
1879-1921; Eugenics
Review, 1909-1921**



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Harvester Microform are proud to be making available a series of journals and papers devoted to the birth control movement. Part One of this new microform series comprises The Malthusian, 1879-1921, and the Eugenics Review, 1909-1921.

The Malthusian League, founded in 1877, was the first organisation in the world to advocate voluntary family limitation as the solution to the problems of over-population and poverty.

Its tenets were a mixture of Malthusian doctrine, early nineteenth century liberal economics, and new scientific theories that conflicted extensively with existing Victorian views of sexual relations.

This mixture of enlightened thought and contentious economic theories was not readily accepted and the movement met with a number of setbacks in the late 1890's. However, by the first decades of the twentieth century league members had done much to influence the findings of the National Birth-Rate Commission (1916), progress towards the creation of a Family Planning Association, and inspire the work of Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and Margaret Sanger.

The chief source of information about the activities of the league is its journal, The Malthusian. This includes a wealth of letters and articles on poverty, over-population, demographic principles, legislation, race, the size of families, birth control, and statistical comparisons with other European nations and major powers. Also featured are the Reports of the Council of the Malthusian League, notes of Annual General Meetings, of public meetings and of related organisations. The progress and setbacks of the Neo-Malthusian movement are fully documented.

The first President of the League was Dr. C.R. Drysdale. Its stated main object was "to spread among the people, by all practicable means, a knowledge of the laws of population, of its consequences, and of its bearing upon human conduct and morale". This amounted to a crusade against poverty and the core of the work was done by the devoted members of the League's Council. This small circle of members met every month for over twenty years and included: Annie Besant, Mrs J. Grout, C. Bradlaugh, J.K. Page, T. Parris, W.H. Reynolds, George Standring, J. Swaagman, E. Truelove, and, of course, C.R. Drysdale and Alice Vickery. Up to 1899, full minutes of these Council Sessions were included in The Malthusian.

The Eugenics Review was the quarterly publication of the Eugenics Education Society founded in 1907. This became the Eugenics Society in 1926. Its aims were defined as follows:

"to study hereditary and environmental aspects of human qualities, to formulate and support proposals for improving these qualities and enabling them to develop to their full potential in the individual, to foster a responsible attitude to parenthood, to promote relevant research and to facilitate communication between those interested".

Leading figures included Charles Davenport, Sir James Barn and Sir James Crichton Browne. However, the study of eugenics is synonymous with the name of Sir Francis Galton, (1822-1911), Honorary President of the Society in 1908. His foreword appears in volume one.

The Eugenics Review features articles, discussion, and reviews on a wide range of topics: Abortion, Alcoholism, Biology, Birth Control, Birth Rates, Anthropology, Child Welfare, Crime, Politics, Disease, Divorce, Education, Hereditary, Eugenics, Ethics, Religion, Morality, Legislative Processes, Population, Fertility, Maternity, Poverty, Peace and War. From 1909 the President of the Society was Major Leonard Darwin.

Reasearchers interested in the Birth Control Movement should also consult the microfilm edition of The Margaret Sanger Papers also available from Harvester Microform.

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