

Lecture Notes

I found the women with whom I talked in Montclair greatly disturbed over increase in population. There had been a lecturer who told them how hideous it was that Mussolini should be encouraging large families when Italy could not raise enough wheat to feed them all. He had argued that if she did not shut off her birth rate she would be compelled to fight for land - and that was what probably she had in mind.

I parried by saying that man power was the only wealth that Italy could freely produce. Her people loved their big families, the Church encouraged them, the government encouraged them, considering that this was their great wealth, that these men went out and worked in other lands. I noted the number that had gone to France, to Africa, to Peru - the attempts at developing waste lands in Italy - all calling for enormous man power. But they were for suppressing the population lest it might be a cause for war. I argued that the war question was for the League of Nations and other nations with space to consider relieving Italy, that Japan's condition was the same. They are all for birth control and sterilization. I said that I don't believe a woman who had not the experience of a family should be talking on the question, that I was very much afraid that the teaching of birth control in the way that the advocates are doing on the street, and the distribution of literature was resulting in its falling into the hands of youth and being used for license; that it should be in the hands of physicians, that the moral effects were dis-

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astrous to men and women, that self-control was the only moral path.

It looks to me as if these ladies thought what the last man said to them.

They have weekly lectures but they are unrelated. They don't have time to digest, and they are so busy with so many things that they haven't the inclination. It looks to me as if they thought getting excited over something contributed to their own development and might be of some use to the public. A muddle of ideas and emotions seems to be the result.

All of these large women's clubs in populous towns, like this Montclair Club - big membership, good sized dues, fine club house, many backers, furnish their constituency with this mess of discussion. They all sighed and said, "Oh, there are so many problems that half the time we don't know where we are at." If they know half the time they seem to me to be doing well.

And yet they are fine women, a good proportion of them probably college graduates - all of them intensely interested in their families and children, and to their up-bringing they seemed brought to me to have more sense than they did to their own mental training.