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URGES MOTHERS TO GO ON STRIKE

Says No Children Should Be Brought Into Being In Next 5 Years

(The following remarkable article by Mrs. Margaret Sanger in the April issue of The Birth Control Review is given to INDEPENDENT readers for their information and consideration. It is a remarkable appeal for an altogether unique method of meeting a world panic.—Editor.)

By MARGARET SANGER

For three months we have been suggesting through this magazine that women cease bearing children for five years—that is, until the world, most of which is disorganized industrially and financially, shall have had time to right itself in one way or another. The suggestion has received wide publicity in the daily press, and most of that publicity has been favorable. It has been discussed from platforms, as well as in private and in small gatherings. Some of the discussion from the platform has been unfriendly to a degree, some of it pronouncedly antagonistic. Many letters and verbal comments from thinking people who are aware of the actual trend of world affairs have confirmed the opinion that a cessation of births for a period of a few years will not only save an unimaginable amount of misery, and give society a chance to put its house in order, but that such a step is a prime necessity in our present situation.

Everywhere in America the talk of a financial panic is growing. It may not come within a few months or within the year, as predicted by R. C. Martens, whose series of interviews have appeared in these columns, but the very fact that it is expected and that it is feared on every side, means that it is inevitable. And that means industrial paralysis, unemployment and want.

Within a few days after The Birth Control Review published one of the Martens interviews, predicting a shortage of farm products in the United States Department of Agriculture issued a statement in which it made substantially the same prediction for the coming year. The report, based upon information gathered throughout the country, said that there was a serious risk of reduced food production. And this when Europe is starving and America is constantly being called upon to send food, either as a gift or upon credit.

The financial crisis, which Speaker Gillette of the national house of representatives says is to be "the worst in history," and the altogether probable food shortage of next year, are enough in themselves to make every thinking mother refrain from bringing more children into the world until the situation is stabilized. But such conditions as those mentioned bring in their train others which are worse—the paralysis of industry and hunger among the masses.

Meanwhile the United States is not taking proper care of the children already here. To say nothing of the two or three million child laborers, the hundreds who are perpetually undernourished and the vast amount of preventable disease that is at all times with us, new factors and situations are coming to light. The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, in New York, for instance, is making a drive for nearly a million dollars, and promises nothing better than mild palliatives for a situation which it describes in disheartening terms. This drive is typical of many now in progress. Mayor Hylan of New York City is trying to find the way out of an intolerable housing situation by an agreement between real estate operators, contractors and labor. There is an important prospect of success. Rents have doubled upon the average, and no landlord seems to care to have children

in a building that has all the modern comforts.

Milk continues at 18 cents a quart in New York and, despite the constant agitation, the price doesn't seem to be inclined to come down. The housewife's dollar continues to be worth about forty cents or fifty cents, as compared with a few years ago, and high wages seem to rule only in spots. Moreover, there is a shortage of public school teachers in New York, owing to the salaries paid. Twenty-two hundred more teachers are needed.

The conditions mentioned are prevalent to a greater or less degree throughout the country, and on top of it all comes the report of the United States Bureau of Education, showing that owing to the low salaries paid teachers, 18,270 schools have been closed and there are 41,900 schools being taught by teachers who are not satisfactory.

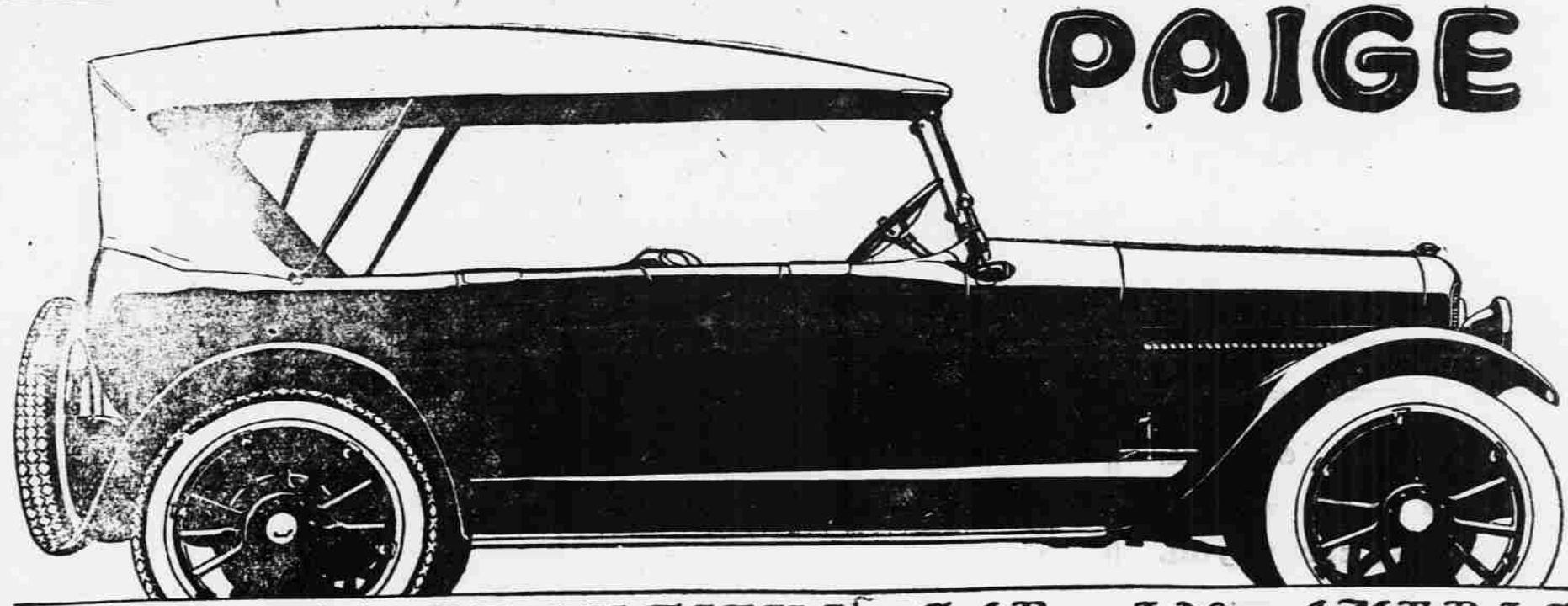
The fact is that we are not caring properly for the children now here and the conditions which are in prospect for the near future will make it impossible to give even such care to children as they are now getting. The sensible mother will have no more until conditions are better.

The soundness of the plan to curtail births until world affairs are sufficiently stabilized to give a better prospect of providing for children, is being attested by a number of facts, most of which are being brought to light by persons who become panicky every time the birth rate shows signs of going down. Speakers are beginning to clamor for more births in the United States, which is a good indication that a considerable percentage of the mothers have decided to bring no more children into being until the newcomers can be well cared for. France, officially and unofficially, is making a tremendous campaign, with honours and whatnot for mothers, in a thus far futile effort to induce women to usher children into the disordered world.

A. Hayday, labor member of Parliament, in a recent speech in the Commons, served notice upon his fellow Britons that if the English imperialists who are demanding more babies should attempt to speak in districts inhabited by workers, they would be mobbed by women and that "there is growing in this country today a woman's movement which may be called a birth strike." This strike would continue, he said, until the mothers were sure of being able to provide for their children.

Those who demand of the middle class and the laboring class more and more children, are sending up cries from all corners of the earth that women are not "bearing enough children." No nation is exempt—even Germany with its firmly grounded "birth politics," has a falling birth rate like the rest.

All of this means that women are already beginning to act instinctively upon the principle involved in the suggestion made in these columns. It is but a step to the application of the principle upon a broader scale. The call to women to cease bearing children until conditions are better is born of the bitter necessity of the times. It springs from conditions—not from theory. The principle and the common sense of it is as obvious as that of ceasing to overload a vehicle which is already breaking down under its burden. The plan is Birth Control applied to the world, just as it is applied to families—a limitation of numbers in accordance with our ability to provide.



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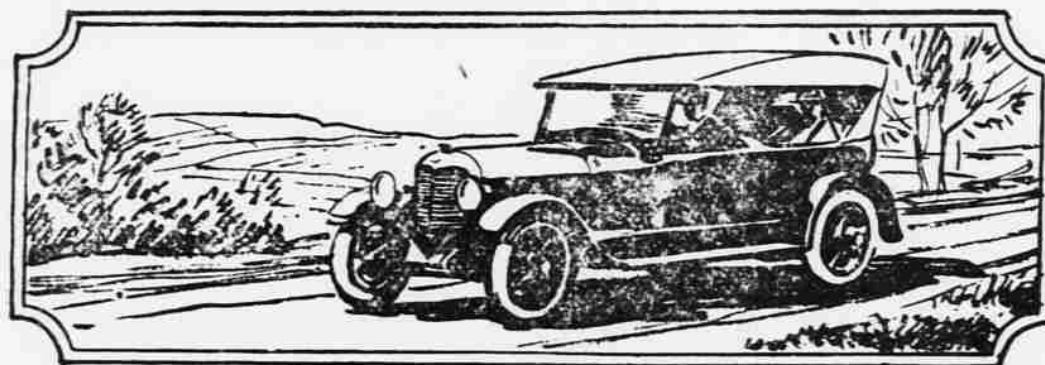
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—Fred M. Coulter

President of the Iowa Corn and Small Grain Growers Association

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