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Along Highway and Byway

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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NO. 2

ALONG HIGHWAY AND BYWAY A SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

Eugene R. Whitmore, M.D., is Chairman of an organization committee with headquarters at 2139 Wyoming Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C., for the formation of a non-sectarian Society for Social Welfare after the manner of the League for National Life, 53 Victoria Street, London, S.W. 1., England, the stimulating organ of which, *National Life*, is one of the most welcome visitors to our editorial office.

We present here the statement of the promoters of the Society for Social Welfare:

The incorporators of this Society for Social Welfare, viewing with concern the activities of various individuals and groups to improve the race by legislation based upon an adequate biological theory, have come together for the purpose:

- a. of developing biological concepts that are concerned with social welfare,
- b. of making known to the public and legislative bodies the present data of science in so far as they affect or may be brought to bear upon social welfare,
- c. of influencing public opinion, in the light of scientific data, which might contribute to human welfare.

This Society for Social Welfare maintains that it is far more important to influence public opinion so as to enable families to live in suitable dwellings and have wage earners employed and adequately paid, and enable children to remain in the home and have proper maternal care, than it is to labor for legislation to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about birth control and so to kill rather than nourish family life and the normal development of children.

This society also views with considerable concern the movement towards the sterilization of the ill-defined group known as the socially unfit.

The eugenic concepts on which these movements are based are open to serious question from the scientific point of view and turn public opinion away from positive measures for social welfare in which lies our main hope for the happiness of the individual and the improvement of the race.

This Society for Social Welfare is therefore organized to promote whatever may further in a positive manner the happiness of the individual, the improvement of the race, and the normal growth and development of these United States.

Those interested should communicate with Dr. Whitmore, who, though not a Catholic, has the cooperation of Catholics.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON EUTHANASIA BY CATHOLIC MEDICAL GUILDS

We are in receipt of a letter from Dr. Pasteau, General President of the French Society of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damien, and head of the International Secretariat for National Societies of Catholic Physicians, which presents a greater hope for the future as it is the second instance of international action by Catholics in defense of the Natural Law. Dr. Pasteau says in part:

“Among the social questions which have been transferred to the medical field and are on the point of receiving a practical solution, and which contradict the Natural Law, that of Euthanasia is the most important. In a certain country, which I need not mention, the civil law is on the point of legalising the procedure and of fixing the conditions. Do you not think that it is the duty of Catholic Doctors to protest against such abuses? Our General Secretary has thought that it is his duty to get in touch with all the Catholic Doctors of the world, and begs you to consider if it would not be convenient to pool our forces in a joint effort, as we did recently on behalf of another cause, and with such success. We do not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of any other nation, which is free to govern itself as it wills. But no one can take it amiss, little as he may respect the rights of human liberty, if a group of Doctors, whatever their nationality may be, stand up for the defense of the great moral principles which are the very foundations of their professional morality.”

THE EARL OF LISTOWEL AND EUTHANASIA

In connection with the euthanasia problem it is interesting to note that William Francis Hare, Earl of Listowel and member of the English House of Lords, is making a lecture tour of this country and speaking on international political problems. He was given a dinner and a

reception at the Biltmore Hotel on January 27th. On the reception committee were the names of three outstanding Catholics. This office addressed a letter to each one of these Catholics, calling attention to the fact that the Earl of Listowel, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for November 16th, 1935, is a member of the executive committee of the Voluntary Euthanasia Legislation Society, which is promoting an English bill for the legalization of euthanasia. It was noted in the letter to these Catholics that the Catholic hierarchy in England, together with the laity, is vigorously fighting this bill, opposition to which, as Lord Moynihan has stated, would come only from Catholics. It is gratifying to record here that the Catholics addressed by our letter all replied that they were unaware of the facts which we had brought out and would refrain from any further activities in connection with the tour of the English lord. We might mention here, in passing, that many of us are called upon to allow our names to be used on committees promoting various causes. Many Catholics are now being approached to join a Catholic committee in favor of the Child Labor Amendment, which is very loosely drawn, which in its enabling legislation may give undesirable power to the Federal Government over every person under eighteen years of age, and which has not the support, as far as we know, of any member of the hierarchy, or of any of the editors of our leading Catholic journals. Before giving one's name to any such committee, it is always the part of wisdom and prudence to consider the underlying principles of the cause which is being promoted and with whom one might have to cooperate in such activities.

ARE YOU TOURING EUROPE THIS SUMMER?

In the September, 1935, issue of the LINACRE, we presented a rather lengthy account of the First International Convention of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. The Second International Congress of Catholic Doctors will be held in Vienna, Austria, during the coming season of Pentecost. The Austrian Guild of St. Luke invites all Catholic Guild members to be present at this convention from May 28th to June 2nd, 1936.

The convention has for its purpose the work begun at Brussels last year: the scientific discussion of problems which touch on Catholic dogma and morals in the medical profession. Such questions as (1) Eugenics and sterilization; (2) Medical help for Missions; (3) International collaboration between Catholic doctors all over the world, to be arranged in a definite order to facilitate accomplishment of the

principal aims; (4) To vote upon and establish a "Program for International Collaboration."

A reporter should be chosen to represent each country and his name and title forwarded to us as soon as possible. The reporter should send his typewritten paper at least six weeks before the Congress meets so that it may be placed before all the members and time given to the study of it. The reporter will have only twenty minutes to read a short abstract of his paper with a discussion period of five minutes for each speaker. Each country is to send a delegate with full authority to discuss and vote definitely in the name of his society and should present the views of his group on means of realizing international cooperation. We appreciate all publicity given to the Congress and will welcome a large number of Catholic doctors from your country.

WHAT ABOUT TRUTH SERUM?

In answer to the ethical questions raised by the use of a truth serum in certain quarters to induce prisoners to talk while under its influence, we submit here the opinion of our Managing Editor. The Editor does not wish to express as yet any opinion on the correctness of the answers he will present as yet are submitted. We print here, as given, the opinion of Dr. Golden in the hope of arousing a veritable cyclone of dissentient voices.

1. In answer to the first question, it is certainly unethical for a physician to inject scopolamine for the simple reason that although the end may be good, bad, or indifferent, the means of obtaining the end is not good.

2. The means to the end is not good, because it is impossible to predetermine the effect on an individual of a quantitative injection of scopolamine, since this effect cannot be standardized for the purpose of making all people tell the truth under its effect, nor can individuals be standardized so that they will all react to tell the truth. Look at the various reactions alcohol has on different individuals and the same individual at different times, viz., hilarity, moroseness, laughing jag, crying jag, fighting jag, sleeping jag, etc.

3. Since an individual under the reaction of this drug has not the proper functioning of all the faculties of mind and body, the end obtained is not good and not totally reliable; therefore, the individual subjected cannot be held responsible or accountable while in a semi-conscious state.

4. In answer to the fourth question: if the means were good, that is, if the injections of scopolamine could make the individual at all times under its influence tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing

but the truth, and in a conscious state instead of a semi-conscious state, and if the end obtained could be proven by fact and evidence, then a state tribunal could find judicial value for the test. But, unfortunately, there is no such drug that can be justifiably used to produce the truth, since the semi-conscious individual is not responsible, due to the inhibition of reason. The means is not good and the end is not good, and the state tribunal cannot use any of this information obtained by these means.

BIRTH CONTROL AND THE MILK BUSINESS

The Health Commissioner of the City of New York, Dr. John L. Rice, recently made a speech in which he blamed, according to the New York *Herald Tribune*, birth-control propaganda for the diminishing sale of certified milk. This bold utterance by Dr. Rice called forth from the Birth Control League this classic bit of polemics. Dr. Rice, declared the Birth Control League, "evidently puts the cow before the mother and the profits of the milk producers before the health and security of New York families. . . . Dr. Rice commended the milk producers—but not the birth control advocates—for their share in reducing the death rate in the city. Medical testimony shows that birth control knowledge plays an important part in reducing the mortality of babies and mothers."

This bit of polemics is more plausible than true. In its statement the Birth Control League took issue with Dr. Rice because he failed to give credit to birth-control advocates for their share in reducing the death rate in the City. It is not difficult to show how little actual influence the birth rate in New York City has had on infant and maternal mortality.

Since the professed object of birth-control advocates has been to protect the mother who for some reason is considered unfit for child-bearing, it would seem that with the sharp decline in the number of babies born each year, the mortality rate from causes connected with pregnancy and childbirth would be much lower.

A study of recent reports published by the Academy of Medicine in this city, by the County Society in Philadelphia and by the United States Department of Labor for sixteen states, indicates that the mortality rate today for mothers and for babies in the first month of life is the same as it was twenty-five years ago. Statistics also are available to show that the decline in infant mortality relates only to the period after the first month of life.

The statement from the Birth Control League attributes the decline in the death rate among older children to the decrease in the size of families resulting from the use of contraceptives. It is common knowl-

edge that the most important factors influencing the reduction of mortality have been better milk and widespread knowledge regarding hygiene and routine care.

It is quite evident from the conclusions in the above-mentioned reports and from others of a similar nature that a reduction in maternal and infant mortality will come only as a result of improved teaching and practice of obstetrics. There is no evidence to show that birth control is the solution of the problem. On the contrary, studies both here and abroad show that with the increase in the use of contraceptives has come an increase in the number of abortions performed, with an alarming increase in the number of maternal deaths resulting from these operations.

It is also true that during this time the medical reasons alleged for the prevention and interruption of pregnancy have been greatly reduced with improved knowledge and management of diseases and conditions affecting pregnancy. The increase in the number of abortions must be due, therefore, to reasons other than medical.

A BLOW AT STERILIZATION

A summary of the report of the American Neurological Committee for the Investigation of Sterilization by Abraham Myerson, M.D., should give pause to those emotional individuals who are easily led astray by sterilization propaganda. The negative recommendations of the committee are presented. The positive recommendations with regard to voluntary sterilization, which, in general, will turn out to be compulsory, we pass over.

"This committee has studied the principal literature of the world on the subject which was assigned to it by the Association. In many respects the survey has been disappointing in that it appears that not much scientifically valid work has been done on the subject of inheritance of the diseases and conditions which have been considered. This might have been anticipated for neither psychiatry nor human genetics approach at present the status of exact sciences. It appears that most of the legislation which has been enacted so far is based more upon a desire to elevate the human race than upon proven facts.

"We believe that certain definite, though in a sense negative, recommendations should be made.

"*First:* Our knowledge of human genetics has not the precision nor amplitude which would warrant the sterilization of people *who themselves are normal* in order to prevent the appearance, in their descendants, of manic depressive psychosis, dementia praecox, feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, criminal conduct or any of the conditions which we have

had under consideration. An exception may exist in the case of normal parents of one or more children suffering from certain familial diseases, such as Tay-Sachs amaurotic idiocy.

“*Second:* Particularly do we wish to emphasize that there is at present no sound scientific basis for sterilization on account of immorality or character defect. Human conduct and character are matters of too complex a nature, too interwoven with social conditions, such as traditions, economics, education, training, opportunity and even prejudice, especially when these factors operate in the earlier years of life, to permit any definite conclusions to be drawn concerning the part which heredity plays in their genesis. Until and unless heredity can be shown to have an overwhelming importance in the causation of dangerous anti-social behavior, sterilization merely on the basis of conduct must continue to be regarded as a ‘cruel and unusual punishment.’

“*Third:* Nothing in the acceptance of heredity as a factor in the genesis of any condition considered by this report excludes the environmental agencies of life as equally potent and, in many instances, as even more effective. That scientific day is passed when the germ plasm and the environment are to be considered as separate agencies or as opposing forces. Both operate in the production of any character, though in different degrees, but the degree in which each operates is, at present, mostly in the country of the unknown. Neurology and psychiatry still have as their duty the laborious task of discovering pathology, pathogenesis and therapeutics even for those conditions in which heredity undoubtedly plays a role. Thus modern research has uncovered the fact that diabetes has a constitutional heredity basis. Yet the establishment of its relationship to the pancreas and the introduction of insulin are, none the less, triumphs of medicine.”

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF CHARLES EVERETT FARR

In assuming the Presidency of the Medical Society of the County of New York, Dr. Farr in his presidential address gave expression to certain personal views of his own on very controversial subjects which were at the same time religious and moral subjects. He admitted in his address that these were his “own personal views and not in any way to be considered the official views of the County Medical Society.” If that is the case, on what principle did he inject these personal views into his presidential address and give the press the chance to carry these sensational views, and enable the so-called liberal *World-Telegram* to write an editorial commendation?

When Dr. Farr says that birth control is a partial answer to the

evil of criminal abortions, can it be that the learned President is unaware that criminal abortions without doubt are frequently the result of the use of birth control which is frequently ineffective and brings about unexpected pregnancies? When Dr. Farr says that a partial answer to the evil of criminal abortions is the liberalizing of sentiment against performing abortions, to the present writer the argument runs something like this: Robbery and kidnaping are criminal; let us liberalize the laws against robbery and kidnaping and hence do away with the criminal aspect of these pernicious activities. It almost sounds like birth control or legalized abortion propaganda when Dr. Farr presents these old-time but unconvincing arguments: "My thought is for the unwanted and unloved child, to be raised in poverty and ignorance, cannon fodder to be sacrificed by or to our modern tyrants." Dr. Farr was talking in New York City. Where are the tyrants, and since when have mothers been producing cannon fodder to be sacrificed by or to our modern tyrants? And why should children be raised in poverty and ignorance, except as a result of an immoral economic system? And if children are unwanted and unloved by their parents, why should the parents engage in the activities from which children arise? Another non-Catholic doctor of New York City has denounced contraception by married people: "It is concubinage, not marriage, the new era of prostitution teaching our mothers and daughters, sweethearts and wives the common practices of the brothel. There is nothing in this Birth Control movement which the common prostitute does not practise in one form or another." And George Bernard Shaw calls contraception "reciprocal masturbation."

Dr. Farr spoke very lightly to our mind and in a strain unbecoming his presidential dignity when he said: "Euthanasia can be dismissed in a dozen words. We all want it for ourselves when the time comes, but who of us cares to hold the cup of hemlock to the patient's lips?" Now, Dr. Farr, since you said in the beginning of these remarks that you were giving your personal opinion and not that of the Medical Society of the County of New York, by what trick of logic did you dare speak for all of the physicians of your society, which includes many Catholics, when you allowed yourself to say: "we all want it for ourselves." Dr. Farr, do you know that such remarks are contrary to the sincere religious convictions of many of the doctors you have been elected to represent, because they are contrary to sound principles of Christian philosophy and dogma? Besides, Dr. Farr, as elected President of the Medical Society of the County of New York, do you not understand that you ought to promote and not be a hindrance to the prosperity of the doctors whom you represent? The writer of these lines, Dr. Farr, is not a member of your profession, but he would like to tell you that if it gets abroad among the women-folk that any particular doctor

is in favor of euthanasia, it is quite within the realm of possibility that that doctor's medical career will be at an end. The preservation of one's life is the strongest tendency present in the life of each individual and patients will become very suspicious of medicines prescribed by a doctor in favor of euthanasia, especially if they be rich and have relatives who are devoutly waiting for their passage from this valley of tears.

BIRTH CONTROL AND EUTHANASIA

The National Moderator of the Catholic Physicians' Guild, the Reverend Ignatius W. Cox, S.J., Professor of Ethics at Fordham University, is the author of two recent pamphlets, one on euthanasia called "Mercy Killing Is Murder!" which contains a feature article written by him for the *New York World-Telegram*, and a radio talk on euthanasia. The other pamphlet is entitled "Birth Control, Birth Controllers and Perversion of Logic," and contains three radio addresses on birth control occasioned by the controversy on that subject last fall in New York City. Both of these pamphlets may be obtained from the Paulist Press, 415 West 59th Street, New York City.

EUGENIC STERILIZATION vs. FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS

BY NORMAN M. MACNEILL, M.D.
Philadelphia

EUGENIC sterilization, provided it were ethical, which it is not, as a human betterment program would not be futile, perhaps, if Mendelian principles were strictly predictable in their application to human genetic laws. At present they are not.

For a period following the rediscovery of Mendel's work, it became fashionable to assume that the transmission of certain somatic defects and particularly mental defects, was the product of a single recessive Mendelian factor or gene; a view which is now held untenable in the light of much research and experimentation in heredity carried on during recent years.

To quote Herd: "When two pure bred individuals showing contrasts in respect of one particular character are mated, the first generation usually shows one of the characters only, this character being called the dominant, the other the recessive. In some cases there is an apparent blend of the characters, but that it is not a real blend is shown when the individuals of the first generation are mated together; for the second generation then shows the two original characters again