

Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Germany
Holsteinischestr. 36
bei Prippenow
Monday, April 23rd.

[928]

Dearest Margaret:

You are perhaps impatient because you expected to hear from me a week ago. But the old Geheimrat Professor who had intended to be on our B.C. Committee became very ill and had to withdraw, and we had to postpone the meeting until the last Friday. Added to this was Jo Bennett's serious illness that kept me in the hospital much of the day; and then came the cables from my publishers in New York that I am to revise some parts of my book so that it can be published in the Autumn. So, rushed on all sides, I did not write. I also wished to wait and write everything to you at the same time.

I enclose herewith a letter of introduction for you to Dr. Scheffel, the Russian representative of the Soviet Health Department in New York City, who will help you get an invitation and a visum to go to Russia. The letter is from a friend of his, our own Frau Dr. Wolf. She has put a sentence in the letter that I do not like--about finances. She says in it that so far as she knows you live in comfortable circumstances and so that plays no great role. But that you can take up with Dr. Scheffel (or Scheftel) if you wish.

I enclose also a ~~personal~~ letter to you from Frau Dr. Wolf, and also the Protocol of our first Birth Control Committee meeting. Both are in German, but knowing that you have people in the office who know German, I am not translating.

Enclosed is also an article by you--your lecture in Berlin--which I typed and had published in the Indian press. Anything else you ever write I should be glad to have. Please see that your secretary sends me a carbon copy of any article you write. In India such articles carry a thousand times more weight than they do in the west, for there we enter a field so far almost untouched.

Now then as for business:

Your check for 1.1254.18 came, also the Duplicate, and I turned it over to Frau Dr. Wolf, our Secretary-Treasurer. Of it M600 will be used to set up our Clinic and the rest used to keep it going during the month of May and June. ~~Thanking~~ As the Protocol will show, our Birth Control Committee --that is the name we have chosen-- consists of

Health Commissioner, Dr. med. Richard Schmincke. President.
Frau Dr. Helene Stoecker, 2nd ~~Vize~~-Pres.
Dr. med. Max Hodann, City Physician, 3rd Pres.
Agnes Smedley, representative of Margaret Sanger.
Frau Dr. med. Martha Rubens-Wolf, Secty.-Treasurer
Dr. med. Leo Friedlaender, Practicing physician.

Dr. Friedlaender, last-named- , is the physician who will be in charge of the Birth Control Clinic to be opened from May 1st also by the International Workers' Aid, and he is our connecting link , ideologically, with that Clinic. Frau Dr. Stoecker is our connecting

link with the League for the Protection of Mothers, with their Marriage ~~and~~ Advice Bureaus in Germany. Organizationally, neither organization is connected with us.

The Committee decided to found the Clinic, from May 1st, and to call it "Beratungsstelle fuer Geburtenregelung", ~~xxxxxx~~ or Advice Center for Birth Control, or better expressed, Birth Control Center. We translated directly the words "Birth Control". Frau Dr. Winternitz, whom we first had on the Committee, will not be on the Committee but, instead, will be the physician in charge of the Clinic. We have also engaged a nurse, who was also present. Her name is Frl. Rosenbergs. She is just now taking her final examinations as a trained nurse, her specialty having been pregnancy and infant cases.

Despite my attempts to the contrary, the Committee decided to open the Clinic only twice a week to begin with, two hours in the evening and two hours in the morning. They all thought we should start with this and then lengthen it at any moment that the demand called for it, first to half a day if necessary, and later still more.

Dr. Schmincke is the Director of the Clinic. He has also offered us furniture to fit up the Clinic--furniture of his own. He is also trying to secure free rooms for us--two--in the City building in Neukölln for advice to mothers and the care of infants. We hope to get two rooms right next to the advice department for the care of infants. But we are not certain if we can get them free. We have sanctioned M60 a month only for room rent.

We start the Clinic as a private institution, for to get it recognized as a ~~state~~ institution would mean waiting for a decision months from now. Dr. Stoecker argued for ~~state~~ recognition, saying it would bring the movement one step further; but the others held for private to start with, and to work for its recognition and support by the City municipality during the year.

As for finances--apart from your support each month, we intend to begin the collection of money from individuals and organizations. Some of our members are in touch with various trade unions. They divided up the work of approaching, for monthly contributions, various unions in which women workers predominate, such as textiles, food-stuffs, etc. Also the employees association. Since many of our members are active in the labour movement, they will undoubtedly succeed.

We did another important thing that will interest you: appointed a Questionnaire Committee of three (Hodann, Winternitz, Friedlaener) which is to draw up the forms by which we are to keep careful records of every case that comes to us, including follow-up cases. I laid before them all your forms from the Clinic there, together with those little printed cards, letters, etc. Dr. Hodann had brought back forms used in Russia, and Dr. Stoecker had brought forms used in her work. With these three groups of questionnaires, they intend to draw up a complete form to be used here in our Clinic. We then intend to try and have all Advice Bureaus or other Clinics started or starting here to adopt the same forms as we have, to keep statistics, and to follow our methods. In this way we hope to unify birth control work in Germany and to mass together much economic and health information.

As for publicity: We have decided to start with a public mass meeting at which ~~Dr~~ Frau Dr. Winternitz, Frau Dr. Wolf, and Dr. Hodann will speak. ~~Then we will~~

Then we will do publicity in the working class press, in the illustrated workers press, etc., and if the bourgeois press will publish what we write, in their pages also. We know we are going to have one hell of a fight from the Catholics and the Nationalists from the very beginning, but we have a peach of a Committee.

I wish you could have seen the seriousness and the interest with which these men and women started to work. All are physicians except myself and Frau Dr. Stoecker. I feel frightfully superfluous there, but sit there as your representative only. And since most of them (this is confidential for you only) are Communists, they won't care one bit about attacks from Catholics. And since the Clinic is in the heart of the workers section, they will care still less for "Right" attacks.

Dr. Winternitz, who is the woman physician in charge, is, as I wrote you, one of the physicians in the Charité Hospital, the huge city and university hospital in Berlin. She says she is willing to give up her ~~physician~~ position there and ~~take over~~ give her entire time to the Clinic if that is necessary. But she prefers to work one more year in the Charité, for she is a young woman (between 30 and ~~33~~ 33, I suppose) and has such a great opportunity there to make operations. But even that she would give up if necessary.

I am sending you a short account for publication. This letter is personal.

Confidential:

It is strange, Margaret, but when I met Frau Dr. Stoecker during our Committee meeting, she seemed very hostile. I do not know why. I know that when Frau Dr. Wolf approached her about coming on our Committee, she was very much excited because we were starting a new Clinic and wanted to know why we did not work with those already started by her. Dr. Wolf talked her into it all, telling her that we wanted ~~an~~ out-and-out B.C. Clinic, and not one of advice on motherhood and sex, etc. I am very sensitive to these things--in fact, can feel them a mile away, and I wonder if her hostility to me was not because of all this. She worked whole-heartedly and enthusiastically with our Committee, but of course she knows she is the pioneer in Germany and she perhaps feels this an imposition engineered by me. But even if she does, and tries to stare me out of existence and not even answer my questions, as she did, still I must say she is a trump for her lack of pettiness. For she is 2nd ~~Vice~~ President and she gave enthusiastic help and suggestions. At the same time she is publishing that article of yours on your Clinic in N.Y. I did not give it to the magazine of the Assn. of German Women Physicians, because their lady-like lack of interest in the Clinic idea repelled me. So I've given it to Dr. Stoecker. It has been translated for us by the husband of Frau Dr. Winternitz.

Thanks for the medical journal. Three of our Committee has already read it and I intend to try and have it done into German.

(over)

Then we will do publicity in the working class press, in the labor press, and in the bourgeois press.

I was working on an article for the B.C. Review, but have had to stop it and turn to other work. The forming of the Committee and such things has taken a number of private interviews also--with Frau Dr. Wolf and Frau Dr. Winternitz. I have spent evenings with them both before our ~~meeting~~ committee meeting was held. But most of all is the fact that I have to work on my book manuscript. Some ten days ago I heard from Coward-McCann publishers that they wished to publish my book in the Autumn, but that I should, if I thought it best after hearing their opinions, change and revise certain parts of it. I am glad to be able to do it, and now am doing little else night and day. Sometimes I work until 2 and 3 in the morning, revising, and during the day I re-type.

Your cable also came saying you could not finance the film-- or help finance it. Jo Bennett said she expected you to say that, and she agreed with you, for she does not think Wiesner has any clear idea of what he wants to do. He is an enthusiastic, good man, but he flies off in his enthusiasm from a dozen different angles, and we could not get him down to a plan of what he wanted in the film. Jo had many sessions with him and came back all fuzzy-minded about it. Jo has just now come from the hospital where she lay for nearly three weeks, a part of the time seriously ill with influenza. She is very weak now and can hardly walk. But she will recover soon. She is to lecture in that hall in the University where I spoke; she is choose "The Woman's Movement in America" as a title, but is devoting a large part of it to the B.C. movement. So she says. I told her they had refused to let you speak; but she says she will. Won't I get it afterwards, though! Well, I don't care. And then I am almost certain to lose my position there now when the names of our B.C. Committee and Clinic are published, and we are attacked. I'll lose sooner or later anyway. Just wait until my book appears also! Well, it is better to be discharged for a good cause than for incompetency or dullness in teaching.

My health is much better. My sleeplessness, that so tortured me for weeks, has gone. I am well except for a pain that remains in the back. And then it seems the knots where the appendix was bound have not yet dissolved. I have gone to the doctor for examination because of a pain there and he says it is the knots not yet dissolved. But these are minor things. I am also continuing treatment under the high suns rays machine, and then I have occasional massages. Just at the present I am feeling none too well, but that is from over-work. My book exhausts me emotionally and physically. I hate to re-read my life, with the misery of it and my mother's death and my brothers being picked off like that. It depresses me too much.

So that's that Margaret.

Love

Agnes

We get gossip here, Margaret. Jo has a letter from her mother and Tan, in which they say the mother has been called to a Committee meeting when they return to New York; the idea, they write, is that they are going to deprive you of all power. I mean the Committee--not Tan or Jo's mother. They are both against it, and Jo made some bitter remarks. I find Jo an awfully fine soul. And she stands behind you always in everything. So many people say little things here and there, but she has never once said anything against you; it is all admiration and defense.

PS% In my article I have not written that you are supporting the Clinic. This I left out deliberately because of two things: first, over half of our Committee are Communists, and I did not wish to connect your name like that without your permission. Secondly, because our Committee discussed the future fight we know the Catholics and Monarchists will put up against us. They will say we are a foreign institution supported by foreign money; that Americans want to reduce the German birth-rate, etc. We laughed at all this, but it was raised, and it was decided in Committee meeting that in all publicity we would say we are "supported by private funds". Later, after we have weathered the storm, we will be freer.

We expect some fight because of the new propaganda here for a huge birth rate, and because of the growing strength of the reactionary movement. And also because we have for the first time come out openly and used the words "Birth Control" instead of hiding behind the words "Marriage and Sexual Advice". That is going to cause a row.