

Marie Stopes

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Advocacy of Eugenics

Stopes was a prominent campaigner for the implementation of policies inspired by [eugenics](#), then not a discredited science. In her *Radiant Motherhood* (1920) she called for the "sterilisation of those totally unfit for parenthood (to) be made an immediate possibility, indeed made compulsory." She also bemoaned the abolition of child labour for the lower classes:

"Crushed by the burden of taxation which they have not the resources to meet and to provide for children also: crushed by the national cost of the too numerous children of those who do not contribute to the public funds by taxation, yet who recklessly bring forth from an inferior stock individuals who are not self-supporting, the middle and superior artisan classes have, without perceiving it, come almost to take the position of that ancient slave population."

In 1935 Stopes attended the International Congress for Population Science in [Berlin](#), held under the [Nazi](#) regime^[1]. She also campaigned for selective breeding to achieve racial purity, a passion she shared with [Adolf Hitler](#) in letters and poems that she sent the leader of the Third Reich^[citation needed], and was more than once accused of being [anti-Semitic](#) by other pioneers of the birth control movement such as [Havelock Ellis](#)^[2]

Stopes even cut her son Harry out of her will after he married a [near-sighted](#) woman - [Mary Eyre Wallis](#), later Mary Stopes-Roe, the daughter of the noted engineer [Barnes Wallis](#). Stopes complained that prospective grandchildren might inherit the affliction. ^[3]

Supporters of Stopes generally concede that she made such remarks, but argue that they should be read in their historical context; such attitudes were not uncommon at the time. For example, the author [Virginia Woolf](#) once wrote in her diary "On the tow path we met and had to pass a long line of imbeciles...They should certainly be killed."^[4] Following Stopes' death in 1958, a large part of her personal fortune went to the [Eugenics Society](#)^[citation needed].

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The modern Marie Stopes International organisation

From the 1920s onward, Marie Stopes gradually built up a small network of clinics that were initially very successful, but by the early 1970s were in financial difficulties. In 1975 the clinics went into voluntary receivership. The modern organisation that bears Marie Stopes' name was established a year later, taking over responsibility for the main clinic, and in 1978 it began its work overseas in [New Delhi](#). Since then the organisation has grown steadily and today the [Marie Stopes International](#) (MSI) global partnership

works in 38 countries, has 452 clinics worldwide and has offices in [London](#), [Brussels](#), [Melbourne](#) and [USA](#).

In 2006 alone, the organisation provided services to 4.6 million clients and by 2010 aims to protect 20 million couples from unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortion. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}