

BSn
x

IS WOMAN'S PLACE THE HOME ?

BY
WINIFRED HORRABIN

Illustrated by J. F. HORRABIN



ISSUED BY
THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE
3, Victoria Street, S.W.1

2d

PAMPHLET

LONDON GUILDHALL UNIVERSITY
FAWCETT LIBRARY

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

is an organisation of convinced Socialists, fulfilling the conditions of membership of the Labour Movement laid down below, who believe that Socialism can come only through the conscious and determined action of the working-class movement in this and other countries and who believe further that only through such action, can the dangers of Fascism and reaction in every country be averted.

Its members, accordingly, are pledged, as units within their Labour Parties, Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies, to do everything in their power to further the discussion and ultimate realisation of a militant Socialist programme and policy.

They are linked together in the Socialist League in order to equip themselves more effectively for the work of Socialist education.

The Socialist League runs Socialist Forums, Study Groups, Discussion Circles, etc., for the discussion of practical Socialist problems.

It organises Week-end Conferences and Summer Schools for longer and more detailed discussion.

It publishes books and pamphlets in order to stimulate discussion and action throughout the Movement.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE LEAGUE

Membership of the Socialist League is open to all Socialists who are either individual or politically affiliated members of the Labour Party and who accept the League's constitution, rules and policy.

Members of the League must, if eligible, be members of their Trade Unions; and, if possible, be members of the Co-operative Movement. All members are expected to become individual members of their Constituency Labour Parties.

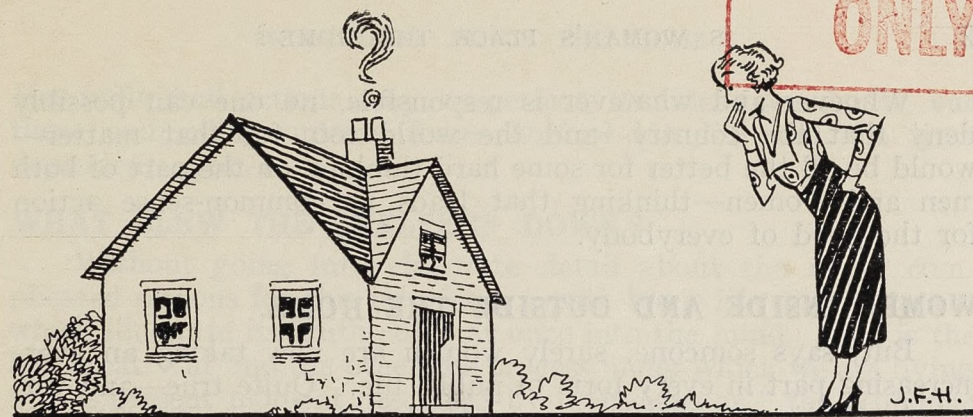
Applications for membership and all enquiries should be addressed to the:—

GENERAL SECRETARY, THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

3, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Telephone: Victoria 4063.

320.082



IS WOMAN'S PLACE THE HOME?

By WINIFRED HERRABIN.

If you go to the door, and open it to find a stranger there who proceeds to argue with you about politics, you are probably annoyed and very often bored. It is only very rarely that the stranger is clever enough to hold your attention till the washing-up water gets cold or the potatoes burn! And the stranger who can not only interest you but is able to convince you that his or her politics are worth hearing about is a genius.

We cannot promise to be that. But the written word has one great advantage over the spoken. You can always stop reading and resume those household duties which, after all, are the very beginning of politics, since men and women must live and eat before they can take an interest in anything at all. And so this pamphlet, in place of the stranger who talks about politics, has one great virtue—it need not unduly interfere.

THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS.

If you think that everything is well with your own home and with the world at large, then do not read any further. But if the mess and muddle around us, the foolish waste and the injustice on every side annoy or distress you, or even interest you—well, can we talk things over?

To anyone who thinks at all, the present state of the world is appalling. No matter what political party you belong to—or even if you are just one of those women who “do not understand politics”, who belong to no special party, women seem to get the blame for whatever happens! You will remember that when a Labour Government was returned, the Tories said it was the “flapper” vote heading us toward Socialism and ruin. Again, when the Labour Government was heavily defeated by what for the purpose of the election was labelled “patriotism”, then some of the Socialist and Labour men said it was all due to the uneducated women who had voted solid Tory and so plunged the country into reaction and oppression!

39 4007671 4



Whoever and whatever is responsible, no one can possibly deny that the country—and the world too, for that matter—would be all the better for some hard thinking on the part of both men and women—thinking that leads to common-sense action for the good of everybody.

WOMEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HOME.

But, says someone, surely women are now taking an ever-increasing part in every form of public life. Quite true—and yet, it is interesting to note, even now to the great majority of people the personal aspect of women's lives seems most important.

As the daily press knows so well, the daily habits of the woman M.P. (those little dinners she cooks in her bachelor apartment), the home life of the cinema star (the colour of her dining-room curtains), or the domestic reactions of the woman flier's husband, are quite as important and more interesting to the general public than their speeches, the practice of their art, or their record flights. Why?

Because people still think in terms of the past, especially with regard to women. They still think of the home as the proper domain for women, a sheltered place with a ring-fence around it where all reactions are personal and individual ones.

There still exists, in spite of the fact that thousands of women have to earn a living (sometimes support a family or parents), a feeling that women are protected in some special way, that the home is a separate little sheltered place and that therefore women are either incapable or unwilling to take any real interest in politics.

IS THE HOME A SHELTERED PLACE?

Let us see then if, in the modern world, that shelter called the home really does keep the draught off women.

Is it quite true that nothing interferes in home life except the individual actions and ideas of the members of any one home? We know that it is not true.

Women are forced by circumstances utterly beyond their own control (just as men are) outside the home to earn a living and to compete with other men and women. No special consideration is given them just because they are women; indeed, it is often exactly the opposite that takes place, and they have to compete heavily handicapped. Not only is this the case, but the home itself is constantly invaded by outside forces completely altering it and very often destroying it altogether.

The home-loving, home-building woman in our complicated modern world sooner or later finds that her work is part of a much wider thing and finds too that there is so little stability in the conditions of the world that her home is constantly menaced.

Her individual actions may be perfect, her ideas wonderful, but those compelling outside forces control her life and the lives dependent upon her.

WHAT BLEW THE SHELTERS DOWN?

Without going into elaborate detail about the many complicated reasons for this interference with home life, two instances which illustrate its truth come at once into the mind. One is the last great War and the other the process under which we are living at the present moment described by politicians as "the economic blizzard". The one affected every home in the land in an individual way, and the other affects them all in a general way. Just as during the war the mainstay of the home might be "called up"



and the home altered, and in some case permanently altered, so the operation of the blizzard and bad times generally may at any moment blow down the walls of the home and expose its occupants to the cold wind of poverty. Here are two samples of outside forces controlling the individual lives of people.

THE WAR TO END WAR!

Let us take the war first and try to remember—it is all too easy to forget—what happened to thousands and thousands of homes in this and other countries. The men were taken away; there is no need to stress what *that* meant; then women were forced by economic pressure, or by motives of patriotism or national need, into the factories to make munitions. The women who a few years before the war were called "unsexed viragos" for wanting the vote were praised to the skies for taking on all kinds of work for which everyone had said for years they were utterly unfitted. The individual home was the very least of the nation's concerns.

Then food was rationed and rents controlled. In every department of human life "freedom" disappeared and the good of country (the community) took its place. No one was free except to work for what was believed to be the common good.

One might almost say that most people behaved as Socialists during the war. They acted for the sake of the community that is, not for themselves.

The War soon let women know how much of a protection were the walls of their little separate homes.

THE "ECONOMIC BLIZZARD."

And now that the war is over and almost forgotten there is another big "outside" force at work. It has been called the "economic blizzard" and it is rapidly breaking down walls and tearing up the foundations of many homes. It is indeed influencing all but a very few. Indeed, in the application of the "Means Test" it is breaking up homes as actually as the war did.

Think of it, not in general terms, but as it affects your own individual life, the things you see around you—not only the things you read about or are told about. It is quite probable that the factory at the end of the road, which supplied work for years to the whole district, has suddenly had to close down, or the mine that was the core of all the life in a village has been abandoned, although the coal is still abundant and the workers are ready to work. Ships do not sail, shops shut up for good, and into the shelter of the home blows the icy wind of want, so poetically called by the politicians a "blizzard".

They call it a blizzard, in order to suggest that it is a great natural happening like a storm. But is it? We shall see later that it is not; but all the same the presence in the world of that so-called blizzard carries a lesson. It demonstrates the fact that even if women wanted to keep their homes separate and protected there is no sort of stability on which they can build.

NO CASTLES FOR ENGLISHMEN—OR WOMEN!

Furthermore, that home so proudly referred to as the Englishman's "castle" is no longer able to keep behind its closed window blinds the ills and joys that are experienced therein. That thing called the community steps over every threshold without knocking first, and alters in some way or other the lives of its inhabitants. And, in the modern world, it is not only in times of war, or "economic blizzards", that this takes place.

In ordinary everyday life it will be seen at once that no individual woman, however capable and efficient she is, can say that her home is quite separate from the rest of the community and immune from any kind of interference. This is, of course, more true and especially clear to the women of the working classes who are "interfered" with by all kinds of representatives of the community, such as health visitors, district nurses, school inspectors, sanitary inspectors and the like. Not to mention the application of the Means Test, which may dictate the sort of life that is possible in a home.

Not only are women driven out of their homes by sheer economic necessity, but those women who want to bring up their children in what they call "peace and quietness" are not allowed to do so. It is no use protesting that matters can better be settled in a private way inside a capably run home, the community makes certain demands and the citizeness is forced to obey.

THE WORLD
IS
PRETTY SICK —



Is it sensible, then, for women to ignore these facts and leave to others the conduct of the life of the community? Is it far-sighted to acquiesce without protest in a world that is so unstable that ordered planning is impossible and one's home and children are at the mercy of dark forces that may destroy them?

POLITICS THINKS ABOUT YOU.

No matter what you think about politics, the effect of political action is constantly coming into the lives of everyone. The community we live in may be just the village, or the big town where we are like drops in a bucket, or the nation where we have lost our identity, or even the world where we matter only as much as a coral insect matters when it builds its dead body into a reef—in numberless ways the community alters and moulds our lives.

Politics, or the affairs of the community, are our common concern, and to every man or woman who says, "I don't understand politics", or "I don't think politics matter", the community has a reply in one form or another. It may insist that one's child shall be taken away when infectious disease is suspected, or it may only be a question of what tax is to be imposed (rather an important question in these days of high taxes), or again it may be in that really important matter when a country or community says, "Come and die for me". You may not want to think about politics, but politics thinks about you. Or, rather, the politicians do.

So whatever we think, or don't think, about politics—that muddled expression of the interest of the community—we are forced to admit that it is impossible to separate ourselves entirely from them.

Living as we do under "outside" laws, then, isn't it better that we try to understand them, try to find out what is alterable for the benefit of us all?

It is not a question of separating the world's problems into two halves, one for men and one for women. Woman's place, now that the walls are down (it is a moot point whether they ever really existed), is side by side with man trying to build up a community where some kind of permanent shelter is possible. It is as if we must lose our homes to gain a better, safer home for everyone.

"ORPHANS OF THE STORM."

It looks then as though women to-day were in a position rather like that of the heroine in an old-fashioned melodrama—a helpless creature with a child in her arms driven out into the blinding snow. The snowstorm in our lives is a world snowstorm and *like the snowstorm in the melodrama, it is artificial—produced by man.*

The so-called "Economic Blizzard" is a man-created artificial snowstorm produced by forces that can be readily understood and subsequently controlled.

Man has solved the problem of producing more than enough to satisfy the wants of the people on the earth, he has not yet solved the problem of their distribution. The earth is now capable of supporting and feeding its children, but the common-sense distribution of that food is still a problem. And it is the problem that is behind the artificial snowstorm that we are struggling through at the present time. Further, it is that problem which in future politics will be most concerned with. It has even been called a "bread and butter" problem, a homely simile, easily understandable by anyone trying to run a household and clear enough to any woman in charge of a well-run one.

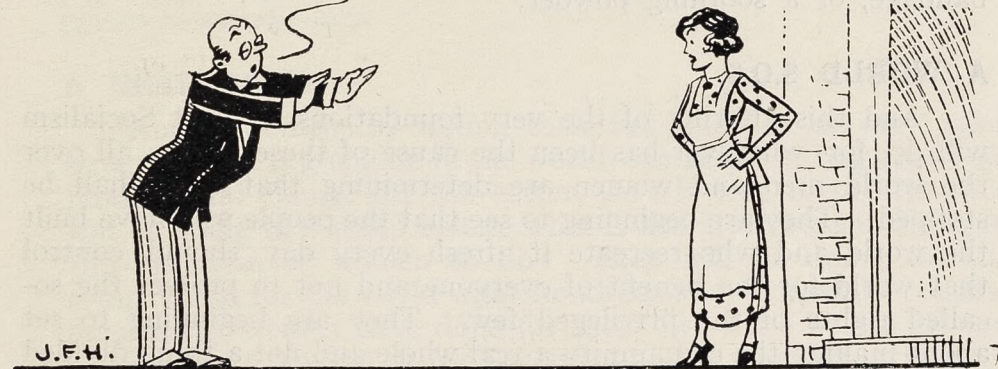
PULLING DOWN TO BUILD UP.

The house of the State, say the critics of our present system, not only has a leaky roof, rotten foundations and broken windows, but the drains are out of order, and so the children are always getting fever, and it is impossible to live in the drawing-room because of the smell from the drains! But, say the older political parties, if we shut the windows and put some scent on our handkerchiefs and all stop grumbling, everything will seem all right and anyhow spring cleaning makes such a mess. We cannot afford to take up the foundations even if there is a dead rat in the drain. We must just make the best of it.

The Socialists, the newer political parties, because they mostly have to live in the kitchen of the house of State, cannot forget

those drains and have no money for scent. They say that nothing will ever be right until the foundations are altered and the drainage put right.

"DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DRAINS — USE EAU DE COLOGNE !!!"



Again, in the wider home, the world, the Socialists have something very definite to say.

And here the lesson is plain. Just think for a moment. The waste and muddle in the world is appalling. If a thing cannot be sold at a profit it is not used at all, however much labour may have been spent in producing it, even if it is as necessary or important as wheat. Read in any newspaper (Tory, Liberal or Labour) of the oranges thrown into the sea in Spain—read of corn burnt—of peach trees ploughed into the ground in America, of herrings used as manure or thrown back into the sea, here at home in England. If everybody was well fed, this might be just a silly mistake in calculation which might easily be adjusted; but what can one call it in a world where thousands go short of necessary food, and hundreds are driven to crime and even to death because of the bad times.

Is it because people will not be bothered with politics that the muddle seems to get worse, or is the problem too big and too complicated for human beings to solve? In a world where far harder problems have already been solved, the answer is obvious.

CLEARING UP THE MUDDLE.

There are, of course, many proffered solutions of this great world problem. One group advocates one thing, another group something utterly different, but the group which wishes to make a really fundamental alteration, not only in the laws by which we are governed, but also in the actual economic system under which we live, are the Socialists. And Socialism grew up because of the inability of the present system to run the house of the community so as to feed all its children and maintain them in health and security. The older political parties see only the results of

the muddle and waste produced by the present system. But Socialism goes right down to the root of the disease, believing that the cause of the present muddle lies far below the surface and needs a drastic cure (perhaps even an operation), not merely a bandage, or a soothing powder.

A WORLD S.O.S.

And this altering of the very foundations is what Socialism will do, for, whatever has been the cause of these things, all over the world men and women are determining that they shall be stopped. They are beginning to see that the people who have built the world and who recreate it afresh every day should control that world for the benefit of everyone and not to protect the so-called rights of the privileged few. They are beginning to set about making the community a real whole and not a thing divided into two; to make that community, which, as we have seen, plays such a large part on the lives of everyone, a reality. And in a real community there must be common ownership of the means of production and communal distribution for the benefit of all.

WOMEN'S WORK?

We have seen that even now in our "divided" community individuals are at the mercy of forces outside themselves and that the shelter of the home is more or less an imaginary thing, so that it becomes clear we must understand and control those forces. More especially is this the case as far as women are concerned for the very reason that theirs is the job of raising and caring for the next generation. If the community interferes with us, then we must, in turn, interfere with the community—interesting ourselves and taking our full share in those things that not only govern us but also the lives of those dependent on us. A good housewife has a plan in her own home; she does not muddle through. The world plan which offers the most security, the most stability, is Socialism.

THE WORLD IS WAITING.

We live literally and truthfully like people on the sides of a volcano. Around us the dust rises, above hang dark clouds and we listen to the rumbling under our feet—can we wait till the ashes begin to fall before we do anything? Pills for earthquakes are no remedy. We must try something more drastic. The hidden forces upon which our community rests have already begun to move. Already in one country the people have completely altered the life of the community. We have got to understand these things, or perish.

We cannot afford to go on living in a planless world, in a planless country. Socialism we believe to be capable of producing a plan. And it can be done twice as quickly and twice as well if women make themselves ready to understand and to take their places alongside men.

A REAL HOME.

And if women, by taking their full share in the new reconstruction that is going on in the world, can help to bring about that fundamental change for the better, isn't it true to say that they will be doing in a wider sphere what it has always been the dream and ambition of women to do? They will be doing for their country and for the world what hundreds and thousands, countless numbers of women have done for their own little homes all down the ages. If they work for Socialism and a planned system they will be protecting, in the best of all possible ways, the welfare of their children and home.

And that is not a job that will come to an end when the children grow up!

So much of women's work in home-building seems wasted now. When children grow up and no longer need care, how often it seems that the home was built on sand and that the woman who built it is superfluous, not needed any more.

But work done for Socialism, the work the world needs and is asking for, is permanently useful and lasting. That is one of its chief joys.

It will not be an easy task. It will call for patience, for fortitude, clear vision, staying power and, above all, courage . . . has anyone ever dared to say, amongst all the uncomplimentary things that have been said about women, that none of these qualities are to be found among women at the present time?

The world needs Socialism and Socialism needs the help of women.

NOTE.—Signed pamphlets are from time to time published by the League to stimulate discussion on important subjects. It must not be taken that all the views expressed by individual authors are necessarily those of the Socialist League.

Socialist League Publications.

SOCIALIST PROGRAMME SERIES. Edited by G. D. H. COLE and G. R. MITCHISON.

- No. 1. **The Need for a Socialist Programme.** By G. D. H. COLE and G. R. MITCHISON. *Price 3d.*
No. 2. **The Labour Party and the Constitution.** By HAROLD J. LASKI. *Price 6d.*
No. 3. **Banking.** By G. R. MITCHISON. *Price 6d.*

PROBLEMS OF A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT (London Socialist Forum Series). *Price 2d. each.*

- No. 1. **The Challenge to Capitalism.** By SIR CHARLES TREVELYAN.
No. 2. **Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Methods?** By SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS.
No. 3. **The Control of Finance and the Financiers.** By E. F. WISE.
No. 4. **The Break with Imperialism.** By J. F. HERRABIN.
No. 5. **The Claim of the Unemployed.** By WILLIAM MELLOR.
No. 6. **Socialist Control of Industry.** By G. D. H. COLE.
No. 7. **Local Government and Socialism.** By C. R. ATTLEE.
No. 8. **Workers' Control.** By HAROLD CLAY.
No. 9. **The Problem of the Food Supply.** By DR. C. ADDISON.

Quantity Rates on Application.

OTHER PAMPHLETS.

- Socialism in Pictures and Figures.** By J. F. HERRABIN and G. D. H. COLE. *Price 2d.*
Is Woman's Place the Home? By WINIFRED HERRABIN. Illustrated by J. F. HERRABIN. *Price 2d.*
The Choice Before the Labour Party. By R. H. TAWNEY. *Price 2d.*
A Countryman Talks about Socialism. By H. B. POINTING. *Price 2d.*

STUDY GUIDES FOR SOCIALISTS. *Price 2d. each, or 10/- a hundred.* With Bibliographies and Hints for Circle Leaders.

- A Study Guide on Socialist Policy.** By G. D. H. COLE.
No. 1. **The Gold Standard.** By G. D. H. COLE.
No. 2. **The Bank of England.** "
No. 3. **Banks and Credit.** "
No. 4. **The Socialisation of Banking.** "
No. 5. **How Capitalism Works.** "
No. 6. **The Principles of Socialism.** "
No. 7. **Forms of Public Control.** By MICHAEL STEWART.

For single copies please enclose postage.

LIBRARY

Class 320.082.....

(92) 13 JAN 1995
Date

Acc. No 4 007671A.....

SOCIALIST LEAGUE NEWS AND VIEWS

appear regularly in **THE NEW CLARION**: that lively weekly which has already established itself as Labour's leading propaganda journal.

SOCIALIST LEAGUE NEWS AND VIEWS

and many other features have given it that position: politics with a punch, books, films, the theatre, sport, radio, the open air, short stories, women's pages . . . You can't afford to miss

Labour's Liveliest Weekly

THE NEW CLARION

Every Thursday,
2d.

2, Carmelite Street,
E.C.4.

PAMPHLET