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# History of Mothers' Pensions.



“ JUSTICE ”

APPEALS TO THE NATION.

The State's Duty is to provide for the Widows  
and the Fatherless.

By **FREDERICK CUTHBERT POTTER,**

71, Corporation Road, Cardiff.

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*Mothers' Pensions*



Yours sincerely,

FREDERICK GUTHBERT POTTER.

## The Welfare of the Blind.

STATE TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS.

Kindly advocate by every conceivable means in your power, State Training, Workshops and Pay, with full responsibility for the welfare of the Blind.

Apparently by the statements of one of their Organisers, we have a grave miscarriage of justice in the voluntary system, as ten thousand of these helpless Blind out of forty-five thousand are now in our Workhouses.

This Scandal, Parliament and the Government, with our help, must end for ever in justice to these helpless ones.

Old Age Pensions should not be less than £1 per week at 60 years of age.

[OVER.]

*With the Compliments of*

FREDERICK CUTHBERT POTTER,  
71, CORPORATION ROAD,  
CARDIFF.

Kindly read the enclosed and then write your Local Authority, Members of Parliament and the Government to concede adequate

### **Mother's Pensions—**

the Magna Charta of Widows and the Fatherless.

Mother's Pensions will concede justice to all, and are in the best interests of the whole community.

The amounts suggested are the same that the War Widows and their fatherless children now receive.

The payment of these sums will save many from the clutches of the sweating employer and the trafficker in immorality, and bring into the lives of the helpless ones the ray of sunshine that God intended for all.

F. C. POTTER.

[OVER.]

## **MOTHERS' PENSIONS.**

*To the Government, Parliament, and others in Authority.*

GENTLEMEN,

The first Mother's Pension that was ever paid we find in the first nine verses of the 2nd chapter of Exodus, when the daughter of Pharaoh, upon finding Moses in the bulrushes, sent for his own mother, and said, "Take this child and care for it, and I will give thee thy wages."

Moses' mother then took her own child, and brought him up, and inspired him with ambition, and he became a Prime Minister.

This is the lesson of Mothers' Pensions; no foster parent can ever inspire her foster children as the natural mother can. Why? the answer is natural and simple, as the child is part of the mother, so that there is natural sympathy, love, and wireless telegraphy between the two that no foster parent can ever supply.

This extract from the *World's Work* of January, 1918, by Mr. James Wilson, is interesting, as it is a record of an interview with Judge Neil, of Chicago, the Father of Mother's Pensions:—

Judge Neil informed Mr. Wilson that it was a waste of public money to hire another woman to look after children when their own mother can do it for less.

You can pay for magnificent Institutions, but you cannot buy a mother's love to go with them.—  
*Judge Neil.*

Mr. James Wilson, the eminent writer, continues that in an engaging pleasant way, I recently heard Judge Neil, of Chicago, describe a remarkable developement of social effort in the United States, in recent years—the scheme (which through the Judge's efforts thirty-five States have adopted) to substitute the Home for institutional methods in bringing up the children of parents too poor to provide them with adequate food, clothing, and shelter. The story was told with quite a fascinating simplicity.

Judge Neil then explained that in 1899, and the immediate ensuing years, various States established industrial schools for children. For the maintenance of each child ten dollars (£2) per month were found by the Government, and an equal amount out of private subscriptions.

The Institutions as the schools were called, became the legal guardians of the children admitted, the parents losing all further right to them, and, in many cases, never knowing what became of them.

The children were passed on to the institutions, then the Juvenile Courts, and were afterwards placed with foster parents, mostly Western farmers, who were forbidden by law to give the parent, or parents of the child any information about their offspring.

The children were thus taken away simply because (the father being usually dead) the mother could not afford to provide them with sufficient food, clothing, and shelter.

The speaker described the tender twitching and tearful emotion of such children in Institutions when spoken to about their mother.

Going one day into the Chicago Juvenile Court, he saw a weakly worn-out widow with five children; she had broken down under the strain of the double job of working all day, and then coming home to take care of her children at night. This woman was in an agony of despair at the thought of her children being taken away from her "for ever."

Judge Neil stepped forward and said to the officers, "Why don't you give this mother the ten dollars a month for each child?" "The law would not allow it," they said; "the institutions were strongly organised, they had many jobs and contracts to give out, every five children meant a job for one more person."

As it was clear that no one went to the Legislature to represent the mother, he (Judge Neil) decided to do so. He told the story to the State Legislature in 1911, declaring they were wasting public money in hiring another woman to look after the children when their own mother could do it for less. They might he said pay for magnificent Institutions, but could not buy a mother's love to go with them, that was not for sale anywhere, so he moved an amendment to the 1899 law that in effect ran: "If the mother is fit, the best interests of the child is in remaining at home."

That was to stop children being taken away for no other cause on the parents' part than poverty.

The Illinois Legislature passed that Bill unanimously, and in July, 1911, the first mother was pensioned.

Judge Neil travelled from Legislature to Legislature till thirty of the more densely populated States adopted Mothers' Pension schemes. Last year over 100,000 mothers and children were being supported in that way.

The speaker narrated how New York State spent 10,000 dollars (£2,000) on a Commission to investigate the Mothers' pension system, and adopted it after receiving a 500 page report overwhelmingly in its favour, as a saving to the taxpayers, apart from all sentimental considerations.

The New York Mothers' Pension law, adopted in 1915, is one of the best in the States.

This reform was not accomplished, however, till the prejudice of the private charitable organisations had been overcome.

When he expressed surprise to a New York woman at keeping her six children so well on 60 dollars (£12) a month, she replied: "Tell me how I did it when I hadn't the 60 dollars." When her husband was alive his highest possible earnings as a teamster were 59½ dollars a month.

"We found," said the Judge, "that when we gave mothers an insufficient amount we simply spent more money than the difference on inspectors to try and prod the woman into doing im-

possible things. We decided also that if the employer did not pay the father when alive enough to live on to support his wife and children, when the State took over the job that was no reason for the State paying insufficient wages."

There was no taint of charity, or philanthropy about the monthly cheque received by the mother. The State simply hired and paid her for attending to a responsible job for which she was beholden to no one. Fewer mothers now went to the bad because of overwork, and fewer young criminals came into the Juvenile Courts. It paid the taxpayer to remove in this way what was largely a cause of Juvenile crime.

The "double job" for the woman was like the horse in shafts of an overladen wagon struggling to get uphill, for overdriving or beating it the carman would be arrested. If the load was half removed the horse would be willing and glad to pull it, and this Pension system, he had sometimes called "Horses' rights for Mothers."

The story told here should MAKE EVERY MAN AND WOMAN DETERMINED TO ALTER THE LAW LIKE JUDGE NEIL DID IN 1911, so that all widows and the fatherless shall obtain their "MAGNA CHARTA." Adequate Mothers' Pensions should be the same as is now paid to the widows and fatherless of our War Veterans who fell in the Great War, as the needs of the Industrial Widow and the fatherless children are the same.

In the London Institutions by what we read in the press, £1 a week is now paid for the maintenance of the children in these institutions,

so that the Government and the Nation, as a whole would effect substantial savings by paying the widow on the same lines as the war widows.

For the widows 28/6 a week, for the first child ten shillings, the second 7s. 6d., and the third 6s., these amounts with a mother's love and care would enable her to keep her little home together, and to bring up her children as law abiding and self respecting Citizens, a credit and an asset to the State.

The following extracts from my 1914 pamphlets will interest you :

It is a well-known fact that the parsimonious treatment of widows is driving many into a life of crime and shame, and is compelling others to provide sweated labour, generally producing and perpetuating pauperism.

Statistics prove that it costs more to keep the widow and her fatherless children in the Workhouse than an adequate Pension would outside.

My appeal is to your sense of justice, and to your humanity, as we are all responsible if we allow this state of affairs to continue, and it is our bounden duty for all to see justice given to these helpless mothers and their fatherless children, otherwise we are responsible for wrecked and wasted lives that fill our slums, workhouses, and prisons with the submerged tenth, the products of our unjust system that tolerates and condones the sweater, who lives on the wrecks of humanity.

Remember the adage, "train up a child in the way it should go, and it will not depart from it."

Now how can you expect healthy children to be reared in the environment of the slums with their underfed bodies and minds. Can you wonder at what the world calls "wasters." or the submerged tenth being turned out in their thousands? Can you wonder at their filling the slums, workhouses, prisons, asylums, and other questionable resorts, when all this could be altered if the State but did its duty.

Which is the cheapest, to give pensions to create an healthy virile race, or later in life for these fatherless children to fill workhouses, prisons, houses of ill-fame, or the asylums, and in many cases to die of disease, consumption, or suicide.

The good and humane Judge Lindsey, of Denver, Colorado, says of the Mothers' Pension Act of that State, passed in 1912, that the final provision of the Act is to my mind one of the best: "This Act shall be liberally construed for the protection of the child, the home, and the State, and in the interests of public morals, and for the PREVENTION OF POVERTY, AND CRIME."

It is a recognition by the State that the aid is rendered, not as a charity, but as a right, as justice due. Mothers whose work in rearing their children is a work for the State, as much as that of the soldier who is paid for his services on the battlefield.

It is a recognition for the first time by society that the State is responsible in a measure for the plight of the mother, and acknowledges its responsibility by sharing the burden of poverty

that is created largely by the conditions that the State allows to exist.

Then this good Judge points out the great need of great reforms in our social, economic, and industrial system, that will give us a real hope for the abolition of poverty and crime, and the reign of justice, freedom, happiness, and joy in the lives of men."

Respectfully signed,

BEN. B. LINDSEY, Chairman.

Judge MacMaster, of Salt Lake City, Utah, also informed me in 1914, that the Mother's Pension Act there had been worked successfully.

New Zealand also paid Mothers' Pensions on March 31st, 1913.

While other States and Provinces that now pay Mothers' Pensions are Denmark, Queensland, Australia, Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Canada. British Columbia has Mothers' Pensions under consideration, while Nova Scotia, and Ontario has appointed a Committee from its House of Assembly, to deal with Mothers' Pensions, and very likely ere this is in print both Nova Scotia and Ontario will have Mothers' Pensions as well. Newfoundland, South Africa, also have the question of Mothers' Pensions in hand, also other parts of Australia, and it is up to us as we are the heart of our Empire to go at once to the heart of the widows and fatherless by conceding them JUSTICE, adequate Mothers' Pensions, their MAGNA CHARTA means JUSTICE TO ALL.

The American States that have already conceded Mothers' Pensions are Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and others.

The Illinois Laws of 1913 provides fifteen dollars a month for the mother and first child, fifty dollars per month for one family, but for children after the first child ten dollars a month up to fourteen years of age.

Michigan Pension Laws, 1913, provides three dollars per week for each child up to seventeen years of age.

Ohio Laws, 1913, grants Pensions to needy mothers whose husbands are dead, incapacitated for work, or by reason of mental or physical infirmity, or whose husbands are prisoners, the amount allowed for the mother and the first child is fifteen dollars a month, and seven dollars per month for every child afterwards until it leaves school.

The Province of Ontario has received a special report of a Commission on the subject of Mothers' Pensions, and will act upon that report at the next session of the Legislature in February, 1920. This report will provide for Mothers' Pensions.

Now, Gentlemen, I will submit for your consideration two resolutions in favour of Mothers'

Pensions passed by the great Trade Union Congress, held in Glasgow, in September, 1919.—

1. "That this Congress recognizing the value of home life in relation to the upbringing of children, demands that the Government provide Pensions for mothers on the principle of the schemes now in operation in many of the States of America, and instructs the Parliamentary Committee to approach the Prime Minister with a view to giving effect to the opinion of the Congress."
2. "That this Congress is of the opinion that Old Age Pensions should be one pound per week for all persons 60 years of age and upwards, and approves of the abolition of the Poor Law, and further demands an adequate scheme for Mothers, Widows, and Orphans' Pensions."‡

Mothers' Pensions will save many of these victims of our present unjust system from entering the Workhouse, Prisons, Asylums, and Slums, with their attendant horrors of overcrowding and the aftermath of disease and consumption.

Great credit is due to many of the members of the House of Commons, and the Lords for their whole-hearted support and replies; also to Mr. Will. Thorne, M.P., who in 1914, raised the question of Mothers' Pensions (before the War), also to Mr. Tyson Wilson, who led the debate on April 8th of this year for Mothers' Pensions.

The State Aid Association, and many other public bodies have also come forward over a period

of years, and have sent in letters to the Government, and in other cases live deputations have interviewed the Government, or members of it, in favour of Mothers' Pensions, and will suggest that as the debate on Mothers' Pensions was one that every section in the House agreed to on April 8th, 1919, that to facilitate Mothers' Pensions, that an agreed Bill will be carried at the very earliest opportunity, as an act of Justice to the widows and fatherless.

These few lines are very appropriate: "That it may please thee to provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed."

These lines should appeal to every right-thinking man and woman, and the great need of Mothers' Pensions is here shown in a cutting out of the Daily Herald of the date of September 19th, 1919.

#### "THE WIDOW'S PENSIONS."

To the Editor of the "Daily Herald."

SIR,

I would be pleased to know when are the poor widows to get that long-watched pension. I see by yesterday's issue they brought it forward in Congress.

I am one of the widows striving to rear six children for the last three and a half years, my health is broken down from the strain. My husband was killed in the rebellion. The very good Government awarded me £73 to rear six children, the eldest being twelve years, the youngest a baby three months old.



What a boon and blessing a pension would be to us facing a hard winter. I do wish they would press hard for its being put in force this coming winter, it would mean Heaven for us.

*Dublin.*

MARY MURRAY.

This is a concrete case for Mothers' Pensions AT ONCE, the State Children Association can supply the Government and Parliament with many more, and if Mothers' Pensions had been the law of the land when I was a child my own mother would have had a more comfortable life. Mother to keep herself, grandmother, and three children worked eighteen and twenty hours a day, so that for many years now Mother has been a paralysed and helpless invalid, and is now in her eighty-fourth year.

May the God over all answer this Dublin Widow's appeal with the six children, so that adequate Mothers' Pensions as an act of justice to and for all will become the law of the land this autumn or winter.

Adequate Mothers' Pensions will give the widow and the fatherless their fighting chance in life to remain respected citizens, a credit, and an asset to the State.

Adequate Mothers' Pensions will lay the Foundation stone of the New World that the Prime Minister spoke of in his birthday message, and it will mean the greatest reform of the century to the widows and the fatherless, as it will concede their MAGNA CHARTA, and will save many from becoming the Mary Magdalenes of our slums through their poverty, or the prey of the sweater.

Mothers' Pensions goes to the root of child welfare, as it will allow the widow sufficient to keep her little home together; this the Poor Law has often in the past failed to do, as the amounts allowed to the widow was inadequate to keep body and soul together, the result, mother and children in many cases sought the Workhouse, and became paupers for life. The Guardians to-day have the power to grant adequate relief to enable the widow to keep her little home together, but in many cases THE GUARDIANS REFUSE TO CONCEDE THIS ADEQUATE RELIEF for this reason, as an act of justice to one and all.

Adequate Mothers' Pensions must become the law of the land at a very early date. The United States lead the way with her thirty-five States that concedes adequate Mothers' Pensions, then we have the three Provinces out of the nine in Canada that pay Mothers' Pensions, Saskatchewan pays three dollars a week for each child, 12s. 6d., and New Zealand allows £30 a year for the widow with children under the 1913 Act, while Queensland, Australia, allows fifteen shillings per week for all widows, and from eight to ten shillings per week for each child. Denmark allows a smaller amount.

There is no reasonable excuse for Britain to delay any longer in conceding justice to these helpless Industrial Widows and their fatherless children, as the principle of Mothers' Pensions have already been conceded when Mothers' Pensions was first paid to the War widows and their fatherless children; and if the greatest and

the richest Empire that the world has ever seen can pay seven or eight millions a day to destroy life in the Great War, surely Britain can pay ten or twelve millions a year to preserve the life of the greatest asset that Britain owns to-day—HER CHILDREN.

The widow who can bring her children up as respectable and law-abiding citizens, deserves something better than INADEQUATE POOR LAW RELIEF, OR THE WORKHOUSE, for this, if no other reason, my appeal to all sections of the House of Commons is for an agreed Bill with the same amounts as the war widows receive.

In conclusion, the ladies who have helped Mothers' Pensions deserve a word of praise—the Prime Minister's wife, Duchess of Marlborough, Lady Rhondda, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, Helen R. Macdonald, The Woman's International League Sylvia Pankhurst in the *Suffragette*, and many other ladies too numerous to mention have done a great work in advocating and in forwarding by writings, &c. Mothers' Pensions, so that to-day after six years of active propaganda work Mothers' Pensions will soon become the law of the land. Why? Because it will concede justice to all widows, and the fatherless, and will mean their MAGNA CHARTA, that will secure their future in the greater interest of the whole community, and the full life that God intended for all.

Thanking you in anticipation of your favourable consideration,

I am, yours sincerely,

**FREDERICK CUTHBERT POTTER.**