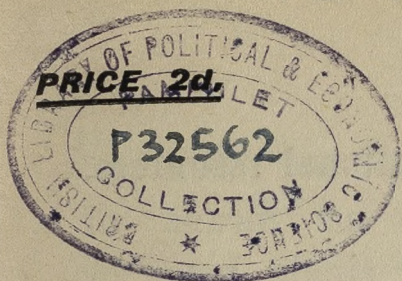


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WHY WOMEN'S SOCIETIES SHOULD WORK FOR FAMILY ENDOWMENT.

By

ELEANOR F. RATHBONE

AND

MARY D. STOCKS.

1.—Women are finding, as working men found a generation ago, that political freedom is not enough. It must be followed by economic freedom, and as about five out of six women marry some time, this freedom must include wives and mothers, as well as wage earners.

Hence the economic status of married women and the economic provision for children vitally concerns the woman's movement.

2.—At present, society makes no economic provision for wives and children, except indirectly through wages. It is assumed that men ought to be able to earn enough to keep their families. But this method of making provision works out badly for several reasons :—

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3.—**First : it is wasteful of national resources.**

The present wage system provides no means of distinguishing between married and single men, or large and small families. It involves, therefore, the assumption that all men must be paid as though they had families, and as though all families were of the same size. Hence the childless man enjoys a surplus and the large family goes short. No one would grudge the childless man his surplus if the country could afford to pay it without stinting the family, but unfortunately this does not seem possible. The Australian Government has recently tried to estimate through a Royal Commission the cost of maintaining a family of five at an adequate standard of comfort, and of paying all men workers on this basis. Its report led to the conclusion that even if employers' profits were wholly obliterated, the product of industry is not sufficient to produce the required sum. The researches of Professor A. L. Bowley and Sir Josiah Stamp in this country point in the same direction.

[N.B.—For a fuller development of this point, see "Wages plus Family Allowances," by E. F. Rathbone, 2d; "The Division of the Product of Industry," by A. L. Bowley, 2s 6d; "The Next Step" A. B. Piddington (Chairman of the Australian Commission on the Basic Wage), 1s. These can be obtained from the Family Endowment Council, 62, Oxford Street, W.1.]

4.—**Secondly : the system is unfair to the woman wage earner,** because it raises a well nigh impassable obstacle to the achievement of "equal pay for equal work, and equal opportunities in industry." It is not merely that it gives employers a plausible excuse for paying women less, and Trade Unions a plausible excuse for opposing the entry of women.

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There is also the real difficulty that if the country cannot afford to pay every man enough for the adequate maintenance of five persons, still less will it be able to meet this claim if it is extended to women.

Consider for example, the teaching profession. Of every ten teachers it is probable that eight are women, one a childless man, and one a man with children. Must we pay a family wage to the nine for the sake of the one? Or must we, by lowering the wages of all to the needs of the nine, stint the family, and deter men from entering the teaching profession? Our present scale is an illogical compromise between both standards, which neither satisfies the principle of equality nor provides for the needs of the family.

5.—**Thirdly : the system is unfair to the mother,** because although her work is called "mothercraft," and is recognized as "work of national importance," she is dependent for its efficient performance on two conditions, over which she has no control; first, the amount of her husband's wage, and secondly, the proportion of his wage he chooses to allow her. Even if the latter point were met (as done in Sweden) by giving the wife a legal claim to a share of the husband's income, this would not affect the point that the amount of that income bears no relation either to the quantity or quality of the mother's work. The efficient mother of six children may have less money to spend on them than the inefficient mother of one child, if the former happens to be the wife of an unskilled and the latter of a skilled

workman. Would such conditions be tolerated by the members of any other "craft"? Why should women tolerate an arrangement by which the product of industry is distributed on the assumption that the service of the mother gives her no direct claim on it, and that her maintenance and that of the children is a private concern of the husband and father?

6.—**Fourthly: the system is unfair to the children.** It is not right that their chance in life should be so completely dependent on the capacity and goodwill of any one person, even the father; that they should be regarded merely as a charge on men's pocket money, which other men are free to spend on amusements; that the first brunt of every vicissitude in industrial well-being should fall on them.

7.—**Finally: the system is an infraction of the principle that every human being is an end in himself or herself,** and should not be regarded merely as an appendage to another human being, and an incentive to that other's industry. The human dignity of mothers and children, as well as their economic value to future generations requires that their equipment should be made a direct charge upon the product of industry.

HOW CAN THE WAGE SYSTEM BE ALTERED TO MEET THESE OBJECTIONS?

There are several alternatives, but the simplest is that known as the Australian scheme. This could be applied either nationally, e.g., to Government and Municipal employees; or to any great industry that is

nationally organized, and sufficiently specialised to be recruited from its lower ranks, and not subject to the incursion of adult workers from other industries. It should be applied equally to women and men employees, at any rate in those occupations where men and women compete.

Put as briefly as possible, the plan is as follows:—

Let the basic minimum wage for adults be "a living wage" for two persons, determined annually according to the cost of living. This allows for the maintenance of the wife, parent, landlady, or other "home maker" of the industrial worker.

Subject to this basic minimum wage, let the actual wage paid for every grade of worker be determined as at present by the usual machinery of negotiation between employers and employed.

Provide for the children separately as follows:— Let the number of children of employees in the industry or industries included in the arrangement be estimated annually; also the minimum cost of a child's maintenance.

The total sum needed having thus been ascertained, let every employer be required to pay his share of it, calculated according to the number of his adult employees, **whether men or women, married or single,** into a central fund called "The Children's Fund." Out of this fund, let an allowance be paid monthly on behalf of every employee's child to its mother or acting female guardian.

The advantages of this plan are :—

(A) It relieves industry of the burden of attempting to pay a family wage to every man, whether he has a family or not. (It is calculated that in Australia the saving effected would be £6,000,000 per annum, as compared with the cost of paying all men on the five member family basis.)

(B) It secures to every worker and his wife or other "home maker" an income at least adequate to the needs of healthy physical subsistence.

(C) It secures that the money intended for the maintenance of the children is paid directly to the mother.

(D) It gives the employer no inducement to prefer single to married men, or women to men, or men to women, but leaves him free to select the best worker for the job.

(E) By removing the chief obstacle to "equal pay for equal work," it enables industry to make full use of the industrial capacities of women, without injustice to men.

Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from the Family Endowment Council, Evelyn House, 6, Oxford Street, W.1. The Council exists for the purpose of investigating the question of Family Endowment from various points of view, and takes no responsibility for the opinion expressed by individual members.

The following literature can also be obtained from the office :—

What is a Living Wage? or Wages Plus Family Allowances, Eleanor F. Rathbone. 2d.

National Family Endowment. 2d.

National Endowment of Motherhood. A. Maude Royden. 2d.

Equal Pay and The Family, 1s.

The Meaning of Family Endowment. M. D. Stocks. 1s.

The Next Step: A Family Basic Income. A. B. Piddington, K.C. (Chairman, Australian Royal Commission on the Basic Wage) 1s.

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North John Street, Liverpool.
