

The University of Chicago
Libraries



GIFT OF

Francis Neilson

WOMEN AND THE LABOUR PARTY

EDITED BY
Dr. MARION PHILLIPS

CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Mrs. Sidney Webb	Mary R. Macarthur
Margaret Llewelyn Davies	Margaret McMillan
Mrs. Bruce Glasier	A. Susan Lawrence
Margaret Bondfield	Rebecca West
Mrs. Sanderson Furniss	Mary Longman

NEW YORK :
B. W. HUEBSCH
MCMXVIII

FIFTY CENTS NET

WOMEN AND
THE LABOUR
PARTY

WOMEN
AND
THE LABOUR PARTY

BY
VARIOUS WOMEN WRITERS

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
DR. MARION PHILLIPS

AND A FOREWORD BY
THE RT. HON. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P.



NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH

MCMXVIII

FOREWORD.

BY

THE RT. HON. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P.

BOTH as citizens and as workers women have now established a definite place for themselves. They have won political freedom, and in industry they have shown themselves to be adaptable, efficient, and enthusiastic workers: their right to full equality of opportunity with men in industry and in politics, with equal pay for equal work, cannot be disputed. What practical use women will make of the political and industrial freedom they have gained this book is in part an attempt to show. The writers approach the several problems with which they deal from the point of view of democracy rather than of feminism. The book offers an interpretation of Labour policy by women for women, and is published with the hearty approval of the Labour Party, in the hope that the great mass of women, particularly those belonging to the wage-earning class, will find in its pages evidence that the party is working for the creation of a democratic order of society, in which men and women can live and work together on a footing of complete equality and co-operate politically for the common end of good government. The Labour Party has always advocated the claims of women on the ground of sex-equality; and the women of our movement have consistently opposed every development of the feminist agitation which tended to emphasise the unhappy sex-antagonisms produced by the long and

bitter struggle for the franchise. In the coming era of social reconstruction, likewise, the organised working class movement which includes both men and women, has evolved a policy intended to promote the common interests of both sexes, and we believe that when this policy is properly understood by the bulk of the enfranchised women they will recognise that separate sex organisations are fundamentally undemocratic and wholly reactionary.

There are one or two proposals and suggestions in this book upon which Labour opinion is still in a state of solution, and they must be taken as the expression of a personal rather than of the party's view ; but the prime purpose of the volume is to stimulate discussion among women, to shape opinion as well as to define policy, and to indicate the nature of the problems which await solution as well as to formulate remedies for them. As such I commend the volume to the serious attention of the women of this country and invite them to study its pages in the light of the programme of organised Labour.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	Rt. Hon. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P. 5
INTRODUCTION	MARION PHILLIPS, D.Sc. (Econ.) 9
THE WOMEN TRADE UNIONISTS' POINT OF VIEW	MARY R. MACARTHUR 18
THE CLAIMS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN	MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES 29
THE NURSERY OF TO-MORROW	MARGARET McMILLAN 40
THE END OF THE POOR LAW	BEATRICE WEBB, D.Litt. 50
WOMEN AS BRAINWORKERS	REBECCA WEST 57
WOMEN AS DOMESTIC WORKERS	MARGARET G. BONDFIELD 66
THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE	AVERIL D. SANDERSON FURNISS 74
THE LABOUR WOMAN'S BATTLE WITH DIRT	KATHARINE BRUCE GLASIER, B.A. 86
THE WOMAN WAGE EARNER	A. SUSAN LAWRENCE, L.C.C. 94
WOMEN AND INTERNATIONALISM	MARY LONGMAN 102

INTRODUCTION.

BY

MARION PHILLIPS, D.Sc. (Econ.)

THE War has profoundly altered the attitude of women towards public affairs. They have been compelled to realise how deeply the daily life of each family and each individual has been modified as a result of the political ideas and actions of those who wield power in the State. Apart altogether from the politically and industrially organised women, wherever a few come together, whether at their own door-steps, in social intercourse within their homes, or in the long waiting queues outside the shops, the talk necessarily centres more or less consciously upon the political events of the times. The claims of military service have bereft many homes of their menfolk and burdened the women with an undivided responsibility for the care of their families, which has increased their independence of opinion and decision of action, and this in turn is reflected in their growing readiness to form political judgments. The higher value placed upon their work in industry has aided their emancipation, and the Representation of the People Act, in granting the rights of citizenship to women, has led them well upon the way towards complete political emancipation.

It is to these newly enfranchised women that this book makes a special appeal. Its object is to bring before them the contribution which the Labour Party has to make upon questions that are peculiarly the concern of women. These hitherto unconsidered

citizens have begun to think on political issues ; they naturally ask how they shall act. In the short papers of which this book is composed, women of the Labour movement have described the work which lies before the people when the world is once more at peace. It is for those who read to decide whether the Labour Party meets their needs, understands their problems, and merits their support. In order to bring the size and therefore the cost of the book within reasonable limits, it has been necessary to exercise a ruthless power of selection, and the treatment of the subjects given does not pretend to be exhaustive ; many important matters, such as the whole question of food supplies, have been omitted altogether though they may be held to have a special interest for women ; others have been omitted because they affect men and women in equal degree, and can therefore be studied in many other publications of the Labour Party. Thus nothing is said in these pages of Labour policy for a Peace Settlement and the establishment of a League of Nations, though at this moment there is no question of such pressing and universal interest to the whole population.

While a distinction may well be drawn between men's and women's questions, it may easily be pressed too far. Essentially the interests of men and women are one and indivisible. But there are certain matters in which the experience of women is far wider and closer than that of men can ever be ; those matters, for example, which most intimately concern home life, the nurture of the young, the care

of the sick and weakly, the planning of the dwelling itself, are especially women's questions, not because their right solution does not closely affect the well-being of men as well as women, but because it is only by women turning their own experience into the common knowledge of all that the right solutions can be found.

While in its broadest significance, the aim of the Labour Party is the creation of goodwill, it must be realised that this aim cannot be reached until the mass of the people gain a higher level of general well-being, and their progress is dependent upon the alleviation of those degrading and oppressive material conditions which are an outcome of our present social system. Men and women together must find the methods by which our Society can be reconstructed in the years following peace ; but there are many problems which men cannot solve alone, because their experience has lain outside them, and the Labour Party has always realised the need of women's help and sought to gain it. At the same time, the united efforts of all the workers in the community are necessary if the future is to see anything but a repetition of the old social confusion and misery. Thus from two points of view the Labour Party has recognised the importance of women's participation in its work ; women must give their best thinking power to the solution of the problems which lie nearest to them, which grow out of the very centre of their existence in the family group, and they must also play their part as human beings in the great task of democracy, that of making the life of the worker

fruitful and happy, of developing a finer citizenship, and raising the level of national existence.

The reconstruction of the Party which has just been accomplished is a result of the War, in awakening the conscience of democracy, but it is no new idea in the Labour Movement to believe in the enfranchisement of women as a necessary step to achieving democratic government. Labour has always demanded political freedom for women as well as men, and will not be satisfied until the franchise has been completely democratised, and the vote become the right of every man and woman of adult age. The refusal to enfranchise women under thirty is regarded by the Party as a serious blot upon the recent Act. One of the first measures of a Parliament dominated by Labour would be the amendment of this Act in order to secure voting rights for all on an absolutely equal footing as human beings. In the Labour Party Constitution this principle is carried out very completely, and the only exceptions made to it are in favour of women. Thus women must have at least four of the seats on the National Executive, and they may have more ; in the constitution of the Local Labour Parties a certain number must also be placed upon the Executive Committees. By throwing open to all men and women the right of individual membership the position of women in the Party has been greatly improved, and though the men's and women's sections of individual members in each of the Local Labour Parties are placed upon an exactly equal footing, special attention is being given to the organisation

of women and special care taken to develop the work of the Women's Sections. The reason for this bias towards the women (if it may be called a bias), and for the decision to give special representation on the Executive Committees, is a simple one : it is felt that women are so newly come into political life that their development will be hindered and forced along the ordinary lines of political thought amongst men, thus losing the value of women's rich experience, if the whole of their work is conducted in organisations including both sexes. The present scheme of separation is partial, for in general men and women work together in the Party's organisation, but it is sufficient to give full opportunity for the special qualities of women to make themselves felt in every constituency. The development of District Conferences for Women's Sections in the constituencies will do much to assist in the growth of political independence amongst them, and the fact that the only journal at present published by the Labour Party is the monthly paper, *The Labour Woman*, shows how important the views of women are becoming within the Movement.

In the past the political Labour Movement has only appealed to a small number of women of exceptional qualities, for those interested in public questions have been rare, and the great majority have taken little heed of the political struggles of our day. Their influence on public affairs has been out of proportion to the smallness of their numbers, and many of the women who have so kindly yielded to our request and contributed these articles have not

only national but even international reputations. The Labour Party may well be proud of the record of its womenfolk, their high achievements and distinction of brain and character. But behind those whose names are known so well to the whole community, there are the millions of working women who have made the revolt of Labour a possibility.

The industrial movement has only been possible because the women in the homes were steadfast ; in many of those strikes which were the ultimate battles by which the industrial freedom of the last century was achieved, and which heralded the new movement towards industrial control in the years preceding the war, success has depended upon the staunch loyalty of the women at home. It is a commonplace of the Trade Unionist that no men can stand out, no matter how good the cause of their quarrel, unless their women-folk will give them encouragement in the struggle. But such action has been less the conscious result of the need for industrial unity than a form of blind and brave loyalty to the individual. More than this is asked of women to-day. It is for them to take their part, not only in creating an invulnerable solidarity of the workers politically and industrially, but also in shaping the policy upon which they shall act. The Labour Party asks women to vote for its candidates ; but it asks for more than that ; it asks them to take a full share in solving the problems of democratic government and of the reconstruction of the whole of our social fabric.

At first it seems absurd to the millions of women hitherto without political interests but now voters

and potential voters (for they all expect to be thirty some time !) to place any value upon themselves as thinkers. Their inclination is to let others do that part of the work and to follow a lead rather than give it. The Labour Party will fail to be a People's Party if it leaves its thinking to a few. It must not become a caucus of superior persons but must in truth be broad-based upon the people's will. Essentially, it deals with the simple primary needs of life, —desire for home and shelter, security and sufficiency of material needs, control over the framework of life, in order that nobility of action and thought, joy, beauty, and the gift of service may be the rule for all. Love of the cheery humanity of common things makes the background of its political work.

Politics are but one aspect of our daily lives, and those who live the common life must always be the real power in a democracy. The men and women of finest fibre and finest intellect inspire the work, interpret the common facts, the common knowledge of us all ; but they are dependent upon the common men and women who bring the direct knowledge gained by experience for them to interpret and transform. We are too apt to think of politics as though its whole subject matter was abstract ideas. In reality it is only another side of our everyday human activities, and the provision of bathrooms may become a political issue of real importance in creating a finer race, just as the League of Nations has a direct human bearing on the individual home where a mother to-day mourns for her conscript son. It is for this

reason that every woman should take her place in the ranks, ready to give her thoughts as well as her vote for the representatives in whose policy she believes.

Politically women have a clean slate. They cannot bear any direct responsibility for the catastrophe which has overwhelmed Europe, and drawn the whole world towards disaster. But in this country individual women, some of whom have contributed to this book, have borne a prominent part in seeking to humanise our civilisation. Their work will be immeasurably strengthened when their numbers are reinforced and thousands of women stand beside them. So far as the Labour Movement is concerned, it will strive to remove every artificial barrier which now restricts the public service of women to the state ; it will support their right, not only to be electors on the same terms as men, but it will also support their right to be elected as representatives. Women are included in the Party's approved list of Parliamentary candidates, and one has already been duly selected by the Labour organisations of a constituency. Others will follow, while the number of women on Local Governing bodies steadily increases.

With the new responsibilities there must be increased support from the great mass of women, who have up till now been unorganised and politically untouched. If this book helps to bring home to the new woman electors any idea of the splendid future which lies before the people if they seize what opportunity now places in their hands, its contributors will feel that their work has been worth the doing.

The time spent upon it has been rather time stolen from other tasks than leisure hours, for all are women leading busy lives in the service of the community ; but they realise keenly, as these pages will show, that the working woman keeping her home endures a continuous round of drudgery against which Labour must be unremitting in its protests. The nation has not yet attempted to repay the debt it owes for the patient toil of tired women, a toil that could with thought and determination be replaced by lives in which happy hours of work alternated with the joys of fruitful leisure.

THE WOMEN TRADE-UNIONISTS' POINT OF VIEW.

BY

MARY R. MACARTHUR.

OF all the changes worked by the war none has been greater than the change in the status and position of women: and yet it is not so much that woman herself has changed, as that man's conception of her has changed. We are all familiar with the old ideal that woman's place is the home, and I am sufficiently old-fashioned to agree that there is something to be said for it. In the ideal world as I conceive it a woman would not be driven from home and children by economic necessity, and her home would be a home in every sense of the word, and not a mere shelter from which she might quite justifiably desire to escape on every possible occasion.

Nevertheless it is impossible to deny that even in pre-war days women got rather tired of hearing the parrot cry that their place was in the home. They had begun to realise that those who talked of the home really meant the kitchen, and they naturally objected to any such arbitrary limitation of their sphere. But since these far-off, dimly remembered days, a revolution has taken place; and the very people who cried most shrilly and incessantly that woman's place was the home, now declare with equal shrillness and persistence that her place is the field, factory or workshop. No longer are we told that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." To-day it

is the hand that drills the shell that determines the destiny of the world ; and those who did not hesitate to refuse the rights of citizenship to the mothers of men, are ready and anxious to concede these rights to the makers of machine-guns.

Meantime the ranks of women engaged in industrial and commercial occupations have been increased by over 40 per cent. since the outbreak of the war, and well over a million and a quarter women are now doing work formerly done by men. This influx has not been altogether an unmixed blessing, although for the moment its advantages are the more apparent. From the point of view of output the work of women, speaking generally, has proved satisfactory. The status of women has been raised, and the standard of women's remuneration has been improved.

On the other hand, a proportion of the work allotted to women has been unsuitable and has been performed under unsuitable conditions. They have worked altogether excessive hours, at too high and constant a pressure. The atmosphere has frequently been unhealthy: much of the work has been exceedingly dangerous, and some of the processes poisonous.

It is impossible yet to gauge the price that may eventually have to be paid for this from the point of view of the welfare of the race. In the enthusiasm for new and frequently ill-judged welfare experiments, the scrapping of much of our factory code was almost unnoticed. During the first year of munitions activity, night work and Sunday work were practically universal, and the former is still

customary. Many cases were revealed in which women were working for seven days a week with one Sunday off a month. We had twenty-eight consecutive twelve-hour days and thirty consecutive twelve-hour nights. We had shifts of sixteen hours at a stretch. We had instances of the eight-hour day being accompanied by the eight-hour break: Women left one shift at 10.30 at night and resumed at 6.30 the next morning. When allowance is made for the time spent in getting to and from the factory, on supper and breakfast, on washing and dressing, frequently less than four hours were left for sleeping. The physical effects of much of this overwork began to be manifest even as early as the end of 1915.

Another disadvantage which is entailed by this sudden and wholesale substitution is the after-war menace to the man's standard of wages, which in many trades has been painfully built up by years of effort and sacrifice, and always on the basis of the family rather than the individual.

Consideration of the problems so created brings us to the question: what is to be the place of women in the reconstructed industrial and commercial world?

I am quite clear as to what our aim should be: to secure as wide a sphere as is possible, consistent with the maintainence of health and the welfare of the race, and without in any way lowering the existing standards.

To realise our aim, women should be employed (a) at wages sufficient to ensure their maintenance in health and comfort, (b) at wages equal to those paid to men for equal work, (c) at approximate wages

for approximate work, (*d*) under conditions which will promote and not retard their physical and mental development.

There are two methods by which this can be accomplished: (*a*) by effective trade union organisation, (*b*) by State action. In my opinion both these methods must be used, but the test of any proposed State action should be whether it will encourage or retard Trade Union organisation.

Trade Unionism amongst women has undoubtedly made great strides during the War. Since August, 1914, the number of women Trade Unionists has at least doubled. It is estimated that at the present time (May, 1918), there are something like three-quarters of a million women organised.

It is generally agreed that where women are employed in the same trade as the men they should be organised in the same Trade Union. Care should be taken, however, that they are not merely paper members. They should be encouraged to take part in the administrative work of the Trade Union, and in the framing of its policy. . . .

The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, in its report on the position of Women after the War, suggests that in mixed Unions special provision should be made in the rules for the representation of women on the governing bodies of the Unions, and that there should be inside the Union special machinery for dealing with the organisation of the women in the trade, and with their special needs and grievances. It suggests that this might be done either by the forming of a Women's

Council, whose decisions and work might be subject to the General Executive Council: or that it might be done by a special Committee of the Executive Council.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers has been severely criticised for its refusal to admit women to membership. The A.S.E. has doubtless its own good reasons for its attitude, and in any case there was the technical one that the rules of the Society could be only so altered at the quinquennial delegate meeting. But however disposed the friends of women workers might be to criticise the policy of the Engineers in this matter, they are bound to admit that the result of this policy may not be such a bad thing for women in the long run as it at first appeared.

Although it did not admit women to membership, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, through its Executive Council, have had since the early days of the war an informal alliance with the National Federation of Women Workers, in whose ranks it helped to organise the women who poured into the various branches of the engineering trades. If they had been immediately admitted to the men's union they would not have been qualified by experience or knowledge to take a proper share in the management and policy of the organisation. Nor is there the slightest probability that they would have attempted to do so. They could only have been paper members.

In the Federation, however, they have had to take official positions. They have had to conduct the business of their branches and districts, either as officials, collectors or shop stewards.. They have had

to play their part in framing the policy of their organisation. And the Federation, has therefore, been a school in which they have graduated : and should the Engineers at a later date decide to open their ranks to women, the women will come in as fully-fledged trade unionists prepared to take their full share in the work of the organisation.

On the whole the attitude of the Engineers is to be preferred to the attitude adopted by some other men Trade Unionists, who, while admitting women to membership of their Union and accepting contributions from them, have at the same time used the organisation to which the women belonged—without consultation with the women who were members—to declare that under no circumstances whatsoever should women continue to be employed in their trade after the war. It is not to be wondered at that such an introduction to trade unionism should leave the women puzzled and bewildered, and even ignorant of the elementary principles of trade union organisation. There is no permanent value in such a form of Unionism ; and the educational loss to the women is not compensated for by any material improvement in their wages or conditions.

Lancashire has often been said to be an object lesson in Trade Unionism. There the majority of workers in the textile trade are women. They form the majority of the trade union membership, and they receive the same rates of pay for the same work as men. But until quite recently the women have been content to leave the management of their organisation almost entirely to men. And, although I should be the

last to minimise in any way the value of the splendid work done by the men of Lancashire on behalf of their women members, I am bound to deplore the loss of the knowledge and experience which could have been secured if the women had taken a larger share in the running of their own organisation. When all is said and done the greatest function of the trade union movement is its function of education, a function more than ever important now when women are at last to be given the rights and duties of citizenship.

Women Trade Unionists will play a very important and, indeed, essential part in the solution of the problems which will immediately present themselves upon the declaration of peace. Rightly or wrongly, certain definite pledges, including the restoration of trade union customs and conditions, were given by the Government, in consideration of the agreement by the unions to their temporary suspension, and there can be no doubt that these pledges can only be modified by consent: and although the women were never consulted when the pledges were given, I cannot imagine that any organisation of women would think of asking that the pledges should not be redeemed. I am also certain that no individual woman would desire to retain the job of any soldier or sailor who may return to claim it. It is true that women will continue to demand a place in the sun, but that does not necessarily mean, for instance, a place inside a ship's boiler before it is cold—one of the many undesirable positions in which women workers have found themselves to-day. It cannot be too clearly understood that in the opinion of the women trade

unionists, suitability and not cheapness should be the determining factor in deciding whether certain work should be done by women or by men.

The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations in their Report have suggested the appointment of an Inter-Departmental Committee, consisting of representatives of trade unionists, including women, and doctors, including women doctors, and other persons experienced in the inspection of factories and the employment of women, to consider these vexed questions, and to make recommendations thereon to the Government.

To prohibit the employment of women in any trade, even by the decision of such a Committee, has been criticised: and so representative and respected a publicist as Mrs. Creighton has criticised the proposal as "slavery." But in the opinion of the Joint Committee, the alternative of leaving the women a prey to economic necessity and unscrupulous employers would simply be an endorsement of slavery. Under the old Munitions Act, fortunately now amended, we have had women forced to work against their will in dangerous and poisonous processes. We have had them heavily fined for refusing to do so, and in addition, penalised by six weeks unemployment before being allowed to take work elsewhere. This is a state of things to which the term "slavery" could much more justly be applied: and, indeed, if Mrs. Creighton's contention is followed to its logical conclusion, much of our admittedly beneficent factory legislation would merit condemnation on the same ground.

The organised women are clear that trade unionism must continue to be supplemented by State regulation of industrial conditions: and they are not content to urge, so far as factory laws are concerned, merely the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*, although on that they are naturally determined. They want in addition a new and improved consolidating Factory Act—legislation long overdue, for the last consolidating Act was passed in 1901. They require, to begin with, the reduction of the hours of labour to a maximum of forty-eight per week, a demand which is modest when compared with Lord Leverhulme's proposal of six hours a day. Their other demands include the abolition of all fines and deductions from wages: the abolition of all systems of truck: the improvement of sanitary standards: and the compulsory provision of fully-equipped cloak, rest and dining rooms,. They ask the very fullest precautions against all poisonous processes and dangerous trades: the replacement of the Certifying Factory Surgeon by the School Medical Officer—a very necessary reform—and a large increase in the woman factory inspectorate.

But Factory Act reform must be accompanied by an improved Trade Boards Act, and a legal minimum wage sufficient to maintain the worker in health and efficiency must be fixed in all trades and industries. Adequate provision must be made for motherhood. For at least three months before child birth and three months afterwards an adequate state allowance should be made. No pregnant woman or nursing mother should be driven by need to risk her own

health and the health of her child by following a gainful occupation. Working women are united in demanding a Ministry of Health, and are not prepared to allow the vested interests of the great Industrial Approved Societies to bar the way to this urgent reform. The present system of Unemployment Insurance should be replaced by a new and comprehensive non-contributory scheme. Women should not be allowed to deteriorate during forced periods of idleness. It is as much in the interests of the nation as a whole as of the individual woman that these periods should be used for recuperation and training.

Educational reform must include the raising of the school age to sixteen and part-time education up to eighteen. The part-time education should be directed towards the development of the bodies, minds and characters of the pupils and not devoted to mere trade and technical instruction. Trade and technical schools should be limited to full time and older evening students, and should not in any way be accepted in place of general education for students under eighteen.*

No survey of the industrial future of women would be complete without reference to the effect of their political enfranchisement. I have never be-

* [The concession made by the Minister of Education to the clamour of those interested in securing an abundant supply of cheap juvenile labour has, in this respect, practically destroyed the value of the Education Bill now before Parliament. Local education authorities have been given power to reduce the number of hours for children in continuation schools from 320 to 280; and the operation of the clause requiring compulsory attendance at these schools of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 has been suspended for seven years from the date of the Act.—EDITOR.]

lieved that the extension of the vote to women would mean either a new heaven or a new earth. Women in the main will vote pretty much as men have voted. Nevertheless, their enfranchisement is bound to bring about a great change. Politicians are certain to take more interest in the questions that specially interest women, but any attempt to exploit feminism from whatever source it comes, and it may come from several, is foredoomed to failure. Women are at heart conservative, but conservative in the best sense of the word. They desire above all else to conserve the race. Big questions of domestic policy will appeal most to women in so far as they affect the welfare of children: and I venture to prophesy that this point of view will be reflected in new schemes of public health and housing, and in legislation which aims at the protection of the mothers of the future.

THE CLAIMS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN.

BY

MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.

IT is only of late years that the married working-woman has spoken directly for herself and made herself felt as a national force. Hidden behind the thick curtain that falls on her married life, her work as wife, mother, and home-maker has been carried on in isolation and obscurity, often under conditions of a terribly disadvantageous kind.

Poverty is the root cause of the majority of her difficulties, but the woman has also been at the mercy of ideas derived from laws which assumed she was the property of her husband, taught her to regard subjection to him as a duty, and surrounded her with customs which imposed a disastrous silence and ignorance on all questions connected with sex.

It says much for human nature that men and women have on the whole been able to rise above the difficulties placed in the way of harmonious and satisfactory married lives. But often where there is an appearance of harmony, it is gained by a loss of physical and spiritual energy on the part of the woman, which lessens the value of the union to both husband and wife and re-acts on the children's lives.

The need for fundamental changes is revealing itself more and more. This is partly due to the fact that women are themselves raising the curtain and are coming forward and asking for the power of "self-determination" which can alone create the

finest individual and family life. Further, the high infantile death-rate, the prevalence of venereal disease, the large number of separated persons who are neither married nor un-married, and the disregard of the marriage tie which has grown up since the war are affecting public opinion. A state of things, in fact, is seen to exist only too frequently in connection with marital relations and motherhood which is intolerable to those sensitive to human suffering, entirely out of keeping with democratic ideals of freedom, justice and equality, and fatal to the well-being of the nation. The Labour Party stands for these ideals, and women look to it to right these wrongs.

The enfranchisement of women has come none too soon. To the wives and mothers of the land the various problems in the solution of which they will now have a voice, do not present themselves in terms of a necessary population for waging war, or earning profits for capitalists, nor do women seek a solution along the lines of mediæval ecclesiastical teaching, nor accept a masculine view of human needs. And they do not lose sight of the individual in thinking of the race. Their methods of approach are practical and human. Their primary concern is with the welfare of their children. At the same time is heard a daily-growing cry on their own behalf, for relief from unnecessary suffering, overwork and monetary dependence—a cry that freedom must be added to responsibility and that an equal comradeship in the home, the factory, the store and the state may be granted to them. It is by the regard

shown for individual lives, that the welfare of society will be achieved. Reformers will defeat their own ends by any sacrifice of the individual woman's own life. The progress of the race can best be served by raising motherhood to a position of power and equality, so that the rights of parenthood may be shared by both men and women. For this we shall find that comprehensive reforms are needed, which will entail national provision for the practical needs of motherhood and infancy, the wiping out of old laws, and the passing of others consistent with modern ideas.

Some persons might be disposed to urge that the way to meet the problem of the needs of maternity is to raise men's wages. But no increase, even to a height which would certainly be thought fantastic and impractical, would really meet the case satisfactorily. Such a change would still take no account of the number in a family, of the differences between skilled and unskilled rates, and the women would still be left financially dependent, and without the special help needed at the particular moment.

SERVICES AND ENDOWMENT FOR MOTHERHOOD.

There are broadly two effective ways, both of which are necessary, of overcoming the poverty which is the complex cause of the evils that destroy the health and well-being of mothers and infants. One is by provision of Common Services and institutional treatment, and the other is by placing more money in the hands of the mothers.

We are steadily progressing away from the old

charitable and poor law methods, such as maternity bags, infirmaries, rescue homes and philanthropically-supported lying-in hospitals. The development of maternity and infancy work under the Public Health authorities, with its foundation principle of *prevention*, is one of the most hopeful and satisfactory lines of advance as regards Common Services, while the Maternity and Pregnancy Sickness Benefits of the Insurance Acts are important steps in the direction of the mothers' economic independence. With the advent of a Ministry of Health, in connection with which we hope to see a strong Maternity and Infancy Department, largely staffed by women, an opportunity arises for deciding the relation which Public Health and Insurance should have in provision for maternity.

Another proposal now being put forward makes an immediate consideration of the whole question necessary, and opens up the way for a great imaginative scheme. This proposal is the National Endowment of mothers and children, and so impressive are the arguments in its favour, that a concentrated effort should be made to secure it without delay. All sides of the national care of maternity ought to be looked at in the light of this reform, and no new steps taken which would not fit in with it.

The Maternity Benefit is at present totally inadequate to give a woman the right conditions for bearing children. She needs more chance of rest before and after confinement, she needs power to provide help in her home, to be able to take advantage of institutional treatment, and she needs

money to obtain additional food and clothing for herself and child. But Maternity Benefit has been an epoch-making reform, not only because it is the recognition by the State of the claims of motherhood, but because it has been made the mother's own property. A further experiment in providing married women with money of their own has been made in Separation Allowances. These allowances have shown the valuable results of a regular, reliable sum of money being at the mother's disposal, and go far to prove the case for general Endowment.

An argument which should be of great weight with all those who are concerned to raise the position of labour, is that Endowment would mean a drastic change in the distribution of the national wealth. One of the effects of the war, if things are left unchecked, will be to increase the amount of wealth in a few hands. At the same time, high prices will cause a low general demand. With the endowment of motherhood, the transference of wealth to the workers would create effective and steady demand for necessities among the people. While steadying trade, the situation as regards employment would be eased. For we should expect to see the withdrawal of most married women from the wage market. This would tend to keep up the standard rate, which will be perilously inclined to drop ; while in any industrial struggle, the position of the men would be greatly strengthened by the fear of the starvation of the family being partially removed.

If the advantages of Endowment are seen to be so great as to merit immediate action, what should be

its relation to Insurance and to Public Health services ?

The fact that certain classes are excluded from Maternity Benefit makes Insurance an obviously unjust method of endowment. Again, the Committees of Approved Societies are unsuitable bodies to administer the benefit, and it has long been felt that the administration of Maternity and Pregnancy Sickness benefits should be linked up with Public Health work. But with the endowment of motherhood, there would be no purpose in retaining these benefits under the Insurance Act, either for men's or women's insurance, the weekly contribution being reduced accordingly.

Some provision in the scheme of Insurance would however have to be made for married women, both for the few who might remain in industry throughout married life, and for those who returned to it after the period of endowment was over. It is probable that these would belong chiefly to the homemaker and casual class, since few women would return to continuous employment after a long period of absence from industry. All married women should therefore be transferred to a special State Society, which should have powers of dealing with this most difficult class of insured persons according to their peculiar needs and circumstances.

As regards Public Health Services, the need for these will remain, and the only questions are what further developments are needed, and whether the services should be on a free or paid basis. The institution of a fine Midwifery Service throughout the

country is one of primary importance. Any improvement in the status of midwives, implying better training and a living wage, necessitates a State service of some kind. This could be carried out either by a salaried staff or by midwives paid a fee per case, or by a combination of both methods; and a grant of 75 per cent. for this special service should be made to local authorities.

In the opinion of working women another greatly needed service—more wanted than maternity nurses—is that of trained women available to look after the house and children while the mother is laid up at home or in any institution. Without such “Home Helps” much of the value of doctors and midwives and of maternity hospitals and homes is wasted.

The provision of Maternity Homes is urgent owing to our bad housing, and is made still more so at the present moment by the employment of married women away from home in munition factories; and the opportunity should be taken for such homes to be started on a municipal basis.

Again, a feature of every maternity centre should be the provision of Dinners and Milk, given *as treatment* on the recommendation of a doctor or Public Health Official, for expectant and nursing mothers. It is for Labour to see that the new Ministry of Health starts with a clean record as regards distinctions, enquiries, and recovery of payment. There are strong reasons for establishing an entirely free midwifery service open to all who wish to take advantage of it; and dinners and milk should be free, like other minor treatment, at maternity

centres. But with Endowment, a charge might be made for Home Helps, and possibly for Maternity Homes—services which could undoubtedly easily become self-supporting.

A tribute must be paid to the Local Government Board for its pioneer and democratic recommendation that working women should be placed on Public Health Maternity Committees and so associated in the administration of work which specially concerns them. The new Maternity and Child Welfare Act, making Maternity Committees compulsory, will give an opportunity of which they must hurry to take advantage*. Another principle which has fortunately always had the support of the L.G.B. is that no distinction should be made in the treatment of married and unmarried mothers. The grounds for help are greater in the case of the latter, and the death-rate of illegitimate children is peculiarly high.

ILLEGITIMACY.

But in dealing with the question of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, it is not only a case of rendering practical help in the times of need. The injustice of our laws has to be undone and new laws giving equal parental responsibility and removing the stigma from the child must be introduced. Norway has given a lead to other European countries in the remarkable laws passed in 1916 and 1917. These aim, in the words of Mr. Castberg, the statesman to whom they are due, "at crushing the

* This Act was passed in August, 1918, and a Circular was issued by the Local Government Board on 9th August 1918, which gives full details of the powers of the Local Authorities. It is published at a cost of 1d.

system of concealment and lies, in which paternity is now allowed to be shrouded and which is in itself an offence against wifehood and marriage."

Sex equality is the new principle dimly discerned behind the chief provisions of the Norwegian laws. This principle roused hot feelings in the parliamentary debate preceding their passage. On the one side was the "old domination of man, with his contempt for 'natural' motherhood; on the other, the feeling of respect and desire to protect motherhood for its own sake." Outside parliament, there was a battle between better-class women desiring protection for their family from the shame and sorrow they pictured would occur, and working women who fought for truth and justice, the latter winning a triumphant victory.

MARRIAGE LAW REFORM.

Nor is it only the position of the unmarried wife that calls for reform. The legal position of the married woman is responsible for great suffering and injustice, ill-health and death.

When a marriage has become an unhappy one from whatever cause, and mutual love is dead, there is nothing gained by refusing the possibility of retrieving a tragic mistake. The enforced continuance of a formal and exterior bond when the inner reality has gone, lowers the whole ideal of marriage. By upholding as moral and respectable a "grievous continuance" we are doing far more to break and degrade marriage, than by opening a door (which none need go through unless

they like) for release from a misfortune. Nor does such a bond unless voluntarily accepted, conduce to the moral growth of husband, wife or children. "Without happiness a husband and wife are better apart," writes a working woman, "if for nothing else than the sake of the children . . . I feel strongly that when a husband and wife are living together as comrades it is a marriage in the sight of God, and when they are living together as husband and wife and there is no respect or affection, then in the sight of the Father it is immoral." The conviction is fast gaining ground that it is the child's right to be born and brought up in love—and the plea that we must keep husband and wife tied together "for the sake of the children" is seen to be a hollow one.

Labour M.P.s are helping in the reform of the marriage law which is now being advocated by members of both Houses of Parliament. The large number of separation orders and the state of things produced by the war are being especially put forward in its support. There is little doubt that the only reasonable, decent and human solution will before long be accepted that legal or voluntary separation, with adequate safeguards, after a certain number of years, should be a ground for divorce. It will be seen at once how beneficently the Endowment of Motherhood would act in giving working women a possibility of escape from degrading conditions of life, for they have been far more at the mercy of bad marriage relations than rich women, through having no money of their own.

It is obvious that an inspiring programme of reforms is opening out for married women. These reforms are required in the interests of men and women alike, and are an application of the democratic principles which it is the object of the Labour Party to secure.

THE NURSERY OF TO-MORROW.

BY

MARGARET McMILLAN.

“Educate every child as if he were your own”

Rachel McMillan.

“**W**HY do you want nurseries?” asks the woman in the street? Why? “Why,” we make answer, “is there a nursery in every rich man’s house? Why are there, it may be, three or four rooms even set apart to the children, and their attendants, nurses, maids, and governesses? Is it not because they are needed? Rooms and nurses are needed by the children?” “But shouldn’t a mother do everything for her little ones?” we are asked. “No,” we make answer again, “She cannot do *everything*.” She may feed, wash, mend, cook, earn wages, and be a slave to her family, but even then she cannot do everything. The big things, the great human tasks she must then leave undone, or leave to others. Can she teach, train, inspire, and develop the soul of her child after a day at the wash-tub or in the factory?

Dear women of England, you have now the vote. It is time to go into this whole question of nurture with the object of finding out what the child of the poorest home needs: and also what is possible, or impossible, for any woman. The rich man has a motor-car and we ride in trams and buses. The rich have great libraries, baths to every bedroom, tutors and governesses. The poor have public

libraries, public baths, and Council Schools. But all have these things privately or publicly, because they *need* them. Well now, looking at our small and crowded homes, our ailing children, our dangerous and it maybe dirty courts where little ones play, we say, "We want nurseries for all children because *they are badly needed.*"

Having granted so much let us then ask, What kind of nursery should we have? How can we build them and link them to home life? How should we staff them? How train the nurse-teachers who shall work in them? And what will they cost? These questions are urgent, because we cannot take the answering of any of them as a piece-meal task. It is not possible for us to do any real good to the coming generation if we put one oasis-nursery here and there and then sit down to see what will happen. The bill now before the House of Commons asks, in its first line, for a system of Nurseries or Nursery Schools, preferably open-air. And just as, in 1870, it became law that every area should have a school, so it will be law soon that every Mother can have a nursery. We shall have to put up not one or twenty, but four or five thousand. And we need not spend years in building. Within four weeks, we could, if labour were released as it must be at last from the calls of the army and the war, put up many thousands of beautiful nurseries. "How long," we said to our builder last June, "would it have taken to put up not only our larger nurseries for 120 children but also the bungalow, where our staff is housed, in the year 1914." "How long?" he answered,

“ Why ! If we put our full strength of men on, as we would have done then, we could have finished the whole job in three to four weeks.”

Women have the vote now, and they will soon have power to influence the building of homes, and there could not be a better introduction to this than is the present and urgent matter of getting nurseries built. To begin with, the nursery should be, so far as possible, an extension of the home itself. The Deptford Crèche is overlooked by many windows—it has homes on every side, but the street or entrance, and even here we are going to put open palings. It would be easy to put up covered “ ways ” leading out of every house door so that babies and toddlers could be taken right in to their bath room without any exposure. And that is done so far as we could do it now. That is to say, the covered nursery is *part of the home* so far as the building of the old houses will allow. Of course if we had *planned* the building of the home itself the covered nursery would be just a suite of covered rooms representing the common nursery of all the homes.

The nursery buildings are of poêlite, a non-inflammable material, of a soft, pretty grey colour. It was very cheap before the war as compared with bricks and mortar, and with wood framing of strong blue it makes a very pretty building. The big sheds are of corrugated iron, whitewashed, and all the rafters and open timbers above are white. In front is a very long awning up which the roses are beginning to climb. The sun flood falls on every part except on very *dingy* days, for we face due south. The

things we want for young children are not so very costly, Sunshine and fair colours, free flowing air and yet shelter from biting wind and rain, *space* (O space! the glorious thing our children never had before), the sky, flowers, and vegetables, birds and trees, music and gay voices, a hot-water supply, sleep, a good diet, regular hours, play. We can get them all, if we plan our nurseries as out-door places. I don't see how we can get them all in any mere *house*, of bricks and mortars—not even if the house were a royal residence.

Before the war our buildings, which are ample for 120 children, could have been put up for £450. In war-time the extension cost £850. But our finest shelter, built early in 1914 cost £120. That is to say, before the war our capital expenditure on buildings would have been something between two to three pounds sterling per head. Even in war-time they cost less than £8 per head, and we have to remember that the average cost of a School-place is £14 to £15 per head on a pre-war estimate! We ought at once to make a survey, not of buildings, but of land space, so that in every area we might know what land is held up—whether as dumping ground or waste or as unused building sites. Many of these held up sites lie in the most thickly settled areas. They are walled up for twenty and thirty years. From the railway train we can in travelling often survey rows of back yards that are to-day all fenced off with separate and individual rubbish heaps. No one has ever tried to get the tenants to come to any agreement about them. Apart from these,

however, we could point to many thousands of acres that make no return of any kind to-day.

Take, for example, our own nursery. We are in one of the most crowded parts of a thickly settled district. But we have an acre of nursery ground. In front of us is a triangle of waste-ground walled in by ugly planks. A little to the right there is a waste or dumping ground. Our boys' camp was cleared of tin cans and bread crusts and ashes, and cats and gave no rent to its owner. But now we pay him £20 a year.

Of course, surveys *are* made already. The London County Council for example, makes the most careful survey not only of the streets but of the houses. I used to be electrified by the surveyors who came down here. They knew every window of every house and every back yard and hidden alley. But their surveys were not made in the interest of the children under seven in all the country! *They* didn't furnish every Education Minister and Local Authority with a survey designed to show him where he *could* turn dumping grounds into human gardens.

To come now to the question of staff. At first Infant mistresses were afraid of the new Bill, but I believe they now realise that it does not propose to dismiss them. It proposes to add a new army of nurse-teachers who will have charge of a work never hitherto attempted.

When the war broke out the Government were of opinion that munition workers' babies should be looked after by hospital trained matrons and nurses. We have seen that illusion vanish; hospitals and

their training are one thing, nurseries for sane and normal little children are another. Nurseries should be under the charge of teachers—if possible women of University training. You cannot have too lofty or too wide a culture for the women who are to give its first direction to the genius and vital energy of the race. The Principal should of course know how to take care of babies. She should even have a *crèche* trained sister under her, trained in psychological method as it is taught for example in the clinic of Dr. Eric Pritchard. It is permissible for me to say here that we never had any kind of satisfactory result in the physical care of our babies till we got a specially trained and educated psychologist to look after them. Their feeding as well as their training improved only when the person in charge was a student and a trained observer as well as a nurse. In short, we cannot put our educational demands too high in choosing the heads of our nurseries.

But the rank and file staff will not be paid nurses. They will be probationers—that is students. I hope we shall draw them in the future from every class of society that can show any bright and fair girl and womanhood. They will not receive a salary. If well-to-do they should pay a large premium ranging (according to their conditions) from £30 to £50 per annum. There should be one probationer to every six children. And a prettier sight than is furnished by these young girls of sixteen to twenty-eight, clad in blue and white uniforms flitting about among the groups of pinafores children in the sunshine I do not

want to see. They give new beauty and meaning to the simple but spacious rooms, the fresh grassy places and the gardens. No one who has seen them could forbear to cry out: "What a pretty scene! Who could have believed it!"

And I am almost tempted here to tell you about some of our children, who in fair colours and embroideries take to the new life like ducks to water. There is Frank for example, a dark-eyed boy of four, with wide brow, steady dark eyes, and a firm chin. There used to be something tragic in his clever face. (His mother is a drunkard). But now it has softened into a wonderful gravity, calm and strong and hopeful. "The two sides of this thing are the same," said a lovely probationer to him yesterday.

"I will measure it *myself*," said Frank, "Then I will know."

The education of the probationers is expensive. But that is only because we are giving them the best, and the best was yesterday only for very rich people who could pay a fancy price to great specialists. The course of study for our ten probationers, now called Rachel McMillan nurses is as follows: Monday, Chemistry; Tuesday, Designing and Drawing (both applied to the making of garments and the teaching of drawing and writing); Wednesday, Physiology and Drill; Thursday, a lecture from the Clinic Dentist and later voice-production from Miss Kate Behuke; Friday, French, with French History and Literature. Half the probationers' time is spent in Nursery or Nursery School, and half in Study. Probationers also attend in the

School Clinic and Bathing Centre to learn about the methods employed for cure. Their own work, however, is preventive.

Finally, there is the question of cost. The cost of putting up say 4,500 nurseries, which would serve roughly for half a million children, would be well under three millions or the price of eight or nine hours' war. The salaries of the Principal and Sister in a nursery with twenty babies, forty toddlers, and sixty children between three and seven would be say, £150 and *all found*. The up-keep in food for a staff of fourteen (including cook, and cleaner and a student-teacher) and for 80 to 100 children is, in war-time, £10 a week. Of this the children's parents pay £6 to £7 a week in the 2s. charge per child, which in some areas however, could be raised to 4s. or even 5s. In this case the entire food-bill would be paid in fees.*

The heavy items include gas or heating to-day and also payment for probationers' lectures and training from specialists. The former is unavoidable (we pay over £100 a year for heating and lighting). The latter is a new departure. But we must stick to it that the *best* teaching must be given now or never. To start right—that is the great problem. No nursery will ever be so expensive as this one. For not only did we buy our knowledge by bitter experience, we had to pay at first in order to make a start possible.

* [The practice of taking payments from parents has been adopted at Deptford, but Labour opinion, as expressed in conference resolutions, is generally in favour of free provision for all children.—EDITOR.]

We even had to pay a small salary of £12 to our first eight probationers. Roughly speaking the cost of the nursery, exclusive of training for teachers, is about £10 per head or 5s. per week. The training schools cost about £300 or nearly £40 per head for instruction. The salaries of staff £240. The Government backs the movement now, even though the Bill not having yet passed, it is useless to apply for any grant for the training or for the nursery school. It will give through the Ministry of Munitions a grant of 7d. per day for every child (under six) of a munition-working mother. So that any small body of earnest men or women can open a nursery without much risk, provided they are not going to take children over five or give any training to probationers.

But of course this kind of nursery is only a fore-runner of something much more beautiful and more radical. The nursery and nursery school should be linked together, and be under one head. The leaving age should be seven, otherwise it is hardly to be called an educational centre at all.

As for the existing Infant Mistresses and Infant Schools they will by and by adapt themselves to the new order of things. The present buildings and playgrounds can be changed at small cost so as to meet the needs of little children. The present race of Infant Mistresses will also, doubtless, supply the heads of many of the New out-door schools. One of our own specialists is the head of an elementary school.

There is no need for panic : no proposal to ignore what is best in the existing order. Only we must *all*

prepare to march onward. For us no halting pace, no foolish and weak indecision, no easy platitudes any more. In Bradford, in 1896, we built school baths and then England talked a little about cleanliness for twenty years. Germany built *thousands* of baths in half a score of years, and not a word spoken. No "wait and see" policy there. They prepared for war. Shall we be less brave and rapid in preparing for peace? Stormy the dawn before us, but to the brave a light shines through the storm-cloud. To the fearless comes strange and radiant joy. "Not in Me," says the sphinx-like face of Nature and Fate, "the cause of your long degradation and sorrow. It is within you, the Power that needs not fumble nor wait." Up! now and save your children. Up women of the New Day. The path lies firm though steep before you. Tread it swiftly. Thought is matured already on some questions and there are goals which are never reached at all unless we reach them "as if on wings."

THE END OF THE POOR LAW.

BY
BEATRICE WEBB.

THE women of the Labour Movement, in their enthusiasm for exercising the hard-won parliamentary franchise, and for playing their new part in the coming parliamentary election, must not forget their responsibility for the local government of their immediate neighbourhood. The proceedings of Parliament figure so largely in the press, and the title of M.P. adds so much to the personal importance of our men friends, that we are tempted to forget that it is not to Parliament or to our local M.P. that we look for any great improvement in the circumstances of our lives, or any great increase in chances for our children. Parliament may pass laws, but it is the local authority that executes them. Our own health, our children's education, the beauty and healthfulness of our surroundings, and nearly all the opportunities for advancement in our children's lives (such as scholarships and university education) are dependent on the soundness of our local government, on the good sense and public spirit of our local councillors, on the integrity and the expertness of our local officials, whether these be doctors, teachers, engineers, or other municipal employees. As it happens, the new Franchise Act has enormously extended the responsibilities of women for good local government. Prior to this Act only the small fraction of the women inhabitants who were inde-

pendent householders were entitled to vote or to be elected ; now, in addition to these, the vast majority of women over thirty will exercise the county and municipal vote. Moreover, while it is doubtful whether women may yet sit in Parliament or become Cabinet Ministers, they are free to take their full share in the work of local government, whether as councillors, as mayors, as aldermen, or as officials.

The most pressing question connected with local government at the present time is the proposed abolition of the Poor Law and the distribution of the services now exercised by the Boards of Guardians among the specialised committees of the town council or other local authority. This reform, which for the last ten years has been a plank in the programme of the Labour Party, has now been accepted by a powerful Government Committee, and it is understood that the Cabinet has decided to introduce a measure giving effect to the recommendations of this committee if sufficient pressure is brought to bear by the democratic movement to counteract the intrigues of the vested interests. The issue is a crucial one. Are we to continue the present system of marking off all persons who are " destitute "—whether these be infants, children, sick, mentally afflicted, or unemployed—as a class apart, so as to degrade them in the eyes of their fellow citizens, and give them the kind of treatment which will " deter " them from applying for relief in their necessity ? Are we to continue to elect an *ad hoc* body which is confined to dealing with destitute persons, and with them only during the period when they are

“ destitute ” ? Any capable member of a Board of Guardians knows how severely this essential Poor Law limitation narrows its power for good.

The alternative is a simple one. Why not abolish the Destitution Authority ? In 1834, when the Boards of Guardians were set up, there existed no public authority giving education to children, or medical treatment to sick persons, or providing work or training for the unemployed. Now we have everywhere a fully equipped Local Education Authority which is providing schooling for the vast majority of our children, and feeding a few of them ; why should not this authority give education, together with subsistence, to the children of destitute persons ? We have now a Public Health Authority charged with the duty of giving medical treatment to all citizens when afflicted by certain diseases, such as infectious fevers and tuberculosis, as well as for providing a certain amount of medical care for infants and mothers. Why should not this Public Health Authority be charged with giving all the medical treatment, with accompanying subsistence, which is required in sickness by destitute persons ? On the outbreak of peace we shall have the unemployed again amongst us. Are we going to relegate these unemployed men and women—some of them ex-soldiers and ex-sailors, and many of them ex-munition workers—to the able-bodied workhouse test and the casual ward ? Even in 1905 the Labour Movement hotly resented such treatment for the unemployed, and insisted on the passage of the Unemployed Workmen Act, appointing a Distress Committee of

the Town Council with limited powers. Why not extend the powers of these Distress Committees, or, better still, set up new Committees of the Town Council themselves, for the prevention of unemployment and training, to take over the work of the Distress Committee, and to see to it that all unemployed persons are found either work or full subsistence, with any training that may be required to fit them for new occupations? The fact is that we have no longer any need for a special Poor Law or "Destitution" Authority. All we require is an extension of the powers of the Local Education Authority, the Local Health Authority, the Local Lunacy Authority, and the setting up of a fully equipped local authority for dealing with the unemployed—the whole organisation forming part of, and being absolutely dependent on, the directly elected Town or County or District Council.

The women of the Labour Movement, more especially those who are organising the new body of women electors, would do well to get and study the Report of the Local Government Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, which gives in technical detail these proposals for "breaking up the Poor Law," and sweeping away the special class of "destitute persons." These proposals meet, in an ingenious way, the objection always advanced by the upholders of the Poor Law to any attempt to supersede it by more preventive and humane services. During the Minority Report campaign of 1909-11 we were always met by the opponent who declared that we wanted "to break up the family and destroy the

home." He cited the hypothetical case of a destitute family—the father unemployed, the mother sick, one child mentally deficient and another capable of winning a scholarship. Under the new scheme, it was urged, each member of the family would be dealt with by a separate Committee of the Town Council—they would severally be whisked away to institutions belonging to these separate Committees—to the farm colony, to the hospital, to the lunatic asylum, and to a boarding school for scholarship children. How was it possible to bring all these people together again? They might completely lose sight of each other. The objector always forgot that this "breaking up of the family" might happen, and does in fact happen to-day—the wife, if she is suffering from infectious disease, is carried off to the isolation hospital; the lunatic member, to the county asylum; the normal child, to the Poor Law boarding school, and the unemployed man to the workhouse, by the Board of Guardians refusing adequate outdoor relief. In order to prevent not only any such fanciful "breaking up of the family," but also to guard against the more practical danger of families being denied cash allowances in the home, or of some members of the family being neglected because of the apathy of one of the authorities, a new committee of the Town Council is to be set up, called the Home Assistance Committee. This Committee, which is to inherit the Poor Law obligation of seeing that no person dies of starvation, is to be definitely charged with the maintenance of the home. It is to be restricted to

giving allowances or pensions in the homes of the people. It is not to be permitted to set up any institution whatsoever, lest this should be used as a workhouse test. I said that this committee will be a new committee, but what it will actually be is a committee which will combine new work with work already performed by other committees. At the present time there is an Old Age Pensions Committee of the County or County Borough Council and a Local War Pensions Committee—both giving allowances to persons living in their own homes. It is suggested that the Home Assistance Committee should not only give all the necessary allowances to maintain the homes of destitute persons, but should also administer the Old Age Pensions Act, the War Pensions Act and any new powers for Mothers' Pensions. It is also proposed that this Committee should alone undertake enquiries as to pecuniary means wherever the law enforces a charge for service rendered (as in the case of well-to-do lunatics taken into the county asylums), or wherever the assistance legally depends on a certain limit of means (as in the case of Old Age Pensions, or in some cases, of scholarships). This concentration in a single committee of the powers of the local authority to give allowances in the homes, and their obligation to make enquiries into means, will diminish the number of officials and protect the homes of the poor from the present multiplication of enquiry agents.

It is to be hoped that the local Labour Parties, and especially the women members of these local organisations, will see to it that every candidate for

Parliament is asked whether or not he is in favour of the abolition of the Poor Law ; whether he will push forward the necessary extension of the Education Acts to enable the Local Education Authority to give subsistence as well as training to such children as need it ; whether he will promote such an extension of the Public Health Acts as will enable the local Health Authority to give medical treatment and any subsistence that is required to the sick, the infirm and the infants ; whether he will insist on the Government setting up a new committee of the Town Council, instead of the Distress Committee, with much extended powers, to find either situations or maintenance under training for able-bodied men and women unable to get work.

But the passage into law of any such measure will only be the beginning of the work of the public-spirited Labour woman. Energetic steps must be taken to see that women are effectively represented on local authorities. Hitherto such women as have secured election on local authorities or who have been added by co-option, have been drawn almost exclusively from the propertied class, and have, in many instances, been hostile to any increased public provision, whether of schools, of hospitals, or of general public assistance. This one-sided representation has to be remedied, and it can only be remedied by the women of the Labour Movement. It must be one of the first duties of the women's sections of the local Labour Parties to organise for securing full representation, by some of their own members, on all the local authorities.

WOMEN AS BRAINWORKERS.

BY
REBECCA WEST.

NOW that the State has admitted that women are citizens, we are relieved of the tiresome necessity of proving that we exist. Previously, since we were considered inferior to men, it was our duty to imitate and surpass all the activities by which men are esteemed among themselves; just as, if we had been considered inferior to monkeys, it would have been our duty to dance on barrel-organs and hold out caps to passers-by for pennies. Any woman who was a doctor, a lawyer, or a University graduate, or who took a prominent part in any political movement or in local government, effectively disproved the Anti-Suffrage theories that all women are imbeciles, or at least liable to attacks of periodical insanity, and in any case are continuously engaged in child-bearing. The State has now admitted that we exist and are sane, and we need no longer continue the argument. We can now afford to qualify our demand that women should be active by the condition that their activities must be directed to the right ends.

This makes a difference to our policy. Yesterday the presence of a certain lady on the London County Council was helpful to us because she performed her duties as efficiently as any man of her party. To-day we can admit, remembering her remark that the L.C.C. ought not to pay their school nurses more than £70 a year, because if they gave more they would not get women with the missionary spirit, that her help-

fulness was of a purely temporary character. Now that she has proved our point of the equality of the sexes she must go ; for the arguments of oppression are not less dangerous from the lips of women than they are from men. It is a test we must apply to all the activities of women now. The Feminist's heart instinctively swells with pride at the thought that Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell has been appointed a British Commissioner in Palestine. But Miss Bell was a member of the Anti-Suffrage League and a personal friend of the late Lord Cromer ; what if she be the first of a female tribe of Cromers ? Denshaw would be no lovelier incident if it had happened in a land under a woman's rule. There is a very serious danger that the admission of women to political life may give a fresh lease of life to the party mechanisms that seemed as though they were running down, to the dark old traditions of diplomacy and our foreign and colonial policy. Without doubt women will be able to represent snobbery, prejudice, the desire to gain a simulacrum of true power by the cheap means of persecuting weak and unhappy classes or peoples, just as well as men have done. But we want women to represent something quite different : a love of life that will let no child starve, no sick person suffer for lack of any help that human hands can bring, no old man die except in ease, and that will fight for conditions which make health and serenity the common lot, with the same obstinate fervour with which the protection of privilege and the rights of capitalism are fought for to-day.

The only Party that guarantees that women shall

perform this function is the Labour Party. It will do it in two ways. Firstly, it will form a critical and well informed electorate which will control the machinery of government so firmly that competent administrators will be allowed to give the State nothing but their competence. At present the governing classes refuse to give us their services unless they may also give us their vices. Mr. Balfour, for instance, has a certain charm, the result of having blossomed into a world unchilled by care, which is doubtless of great use in diplomatic conversations ; but he recently made a speech in the House of Commons which amounted to a declaration that he and his kind would not use their gift unless they were also allowed to shape the diplomatic policy of this country, a responsibility for which the very carelessness, which is the source of their charm, absolutely unfits them. All this must be changed. We, the people, are the owners of England. But we have been in the position of a shopkeeper who, owing to ill-health, has had to employ some smart assistants to do the work, and is so dependent on them that he has had to allow them to manage the business as they like and help themselves from the till. We have been getting better for some time ; by the development of our Parliamentary institutions we have, as it were, replaced the till by a cash register. But we must go on to insist that our administration act for us as the managers of multiple shops act for their company, according to a fixed policy and under the obligation of rendering exact accounts. When the electorate has proclaimed its resolve that the

only government it will permit is that which upholds the principles of liberty and justice, and insists on the government publishing all its proceedings, so that it can be judged whether it is fulfilling this condition, then administration will be protected from the temptations of rashness and dishonesty. They will have to behave well to keep their places. Then we can cheerfully avail ourselves of the gifts which, as the present war has remarkably demonstrated, are possessed by the women of the upper and middle classes whom the custom of the past would have compelled to spend their lives as parasites. Then we can be sure that they will give the State their individual talents and the general wisdom of their sex, but not their class greeds and prejudices. But unless we form this vigilant electorate we may yet see as the result of the enfranchisement of women a female Sir Edward Carson, a female Lord Milner, or, to look on the funny side of things, a female Lord Curzon.

Secondly, the Labour Party will form an army of brainworkers from which we will draw our leaders by the facilities for development which it will give to people whom the State at present diagnoses as rubbish, because they happen to have been born into poverty. It will do it directly by offering brainworkers reasonable conditions of life ; by offering a free field to initiative (by the establishment of equitable copyright laws and the liberal endowment of scientific research, for instance) and by guaranteeing suitable minimum wages to those whose work follows a routine. But more important still will be the

indirect methods by which it will encourage intellect to make a stand for itself, when it has the misfortune to be born into the ranks of the dispossessed: the means it will take to ensure that every human being can claim as a right as much of the best possible education he or she proves herself capable of receiving, and that the material conditions of the people shall be improved until health becomes one of the rights of citizenship.

We have had an impressive demonstration of the earnestness of democracy on the subject of education in the appointment of Mr. H. A. L. Fisher as Minister of Education with licence to prepare a generous educational programme. Had the cultured classes still been in undisputed power over the legislative machine the office would probably have been given to someone like Viscount Chaplin, the gentleman who owes his position as a British statesman to the fact that he once owned a horse with a Burberry finish who was able to win the Derby in a snowstorm. But since the rude and ignorant lower classes had formed themselves into a party, and the Government needed the support of that party, they were obliged to give the office to a scholar and educationist. The resultant Act promises to unseal the fountains of learning to the people; but the vigilance of the Labour Party will be required to defeat the attempts that every vested interest will make to prevent enlightenment spreading to the masses. There is one attempt they will have to defeat which specially concerns women. It is a matter of enormous significance that every year Sir George

Newman includes in his annual report made as Medical Officer to the Board of Education the infamous assertion that infant mortality is chiefly due to maternal ignorance, and urges that more time be given in schools to the teaching of "mothercraft" and domestic subjects. It is hardly necessary to point out that no facts and figures referring to infant mortality come before Sir George Newman, and that the statement is part of a campaign to deprive the lower classes of education "that will only unsettle them," and to train them to be useful servants and ignorant wives and mothers whose ignorance is likely to encourage their husbands and sons to sing "God bless the squire and his relations and keep us in our proper stations." There must, of course be instruction in mothercraft and domestic subjects in the ideal girls' school, but like all vocational training it must be subordinate to a sound general education, which will allow every human being to see just what he or she is doing in the State and what the State is doing to him or her, and to show whatever capacity he or she possesses, whether it leads kitchenwards or thronewards. The Labour Party, with its ideal of the fullest development of every individual, will insist on this; and it will do even more. It will increase the attractiveness of education by providing that teaching shall no longer be a sweated industry. Many bright children leave school as soon as they can and waste their youthful brightness in precocious excursions into the adventurous but cruel world of commerce and industry because "school is so dull." And it very often is. The reason is that teaching is a

sweated industry. How can one expect teachers who are sometimes underfed and seriously harassed by material discomforts, and who are hardly ever paid enough to enable them to have that free contact with books, pictures, and the products of culture which is necessary above all else to a teacher, to radiate enthusiasm for the difficult way of learning? To this also will the Labour Party attend.

While this generous educational system is detecting every seed of talent in the brain of the people and nursing it to fruition, the improvement of material conditions will prevent the destruction by poverty of the intelligence of married women. At present we murder the brains of all married women not of the prosperous classes. There is no inherent reason why the adoption of the career of wife and mother should prevent a woman taking in middle age whatever place in public life her brains entitle her to, any more than a middle-aged man is prevented from entering Parliament by the years he has spent in following law or commerce. Indeed, unless there is something horribly perverse in the order of things, fifteen years spent in bearing and rearing children ought to be a better preparation for the business of governing one's fellow-creatures than an equal space of time spent in cross-examining scoundrels. Yet in present conditions it is not. For to-day the State says to the mother, "So you are going to fulfil the sacred duty of motherhood. I regret to say that while of course it is your duty, we cannot possibly give you the slightest financial assistance; and we will not intervene between you and the capitalist system,

which will perpetually make war on you and your children. You will have to live in an unhealthy house, in which it will be difficult to keep your children clean, in a polluted atmosphere that will bring out any little tendency to tuberculosis that happens to be in the family, among social surroundings where the prevalence of alcoholism and prostitution will encourage any little moral taint to develop. Not only will we refuse to give you any money, but we will not guarantee that you will get value for the money which you and your husband manage to scrape together. For instance, we will abuse you for your ignorance if you don't buy your children milk, but we will not guarantee that it will be anything but poisonously dirty when you have paid your sevenpence-halfpenny. Well, carry on." The end of this *mater contra mundum* controversy is frequently the survival of the children at the cost of the mental death of the mother. But mothers who had found their task made easy at the beginning by the endowment of motherhood and a good medical service, and whom the world had encouraged by giving good housing, clean air, and pure food, would not be so exhausted. Their intelligence would, as before their marriage, be at the service of their country; and would, unless the human emotions are considerably overrated, be enriched by their experience.

The acquisition of political power by women may mean either of two things. If the Labour Party forms an army of brainworkers by fostering intellect in girls by a liberal education, and preventing it from

being destroyed in women by the capitalist war on mothers, and if it controls government so firmly that no administrator of any class will be able to do other than the right, then it may turn England into Paradise. But if all it means is that the female of the species which governs us at present is to be allowed to get up and stand beside the male, then it will turn England into a Primrose League picnic. For reasonable beings there is no choice.

WOMEN AS DOMESTIC WORKERS.

BY

MARGARET G. BONDFIELD.

LABOUR Women have studied the question of domestic work from two points of view —(1) That of the paid worker and (2) that of the vast body of unpaid workers :—the housewives and home-makers. The basis of discontent which affects and unconsciously irritates both paid and unpaid workers, is the utter lack of any attempt so to adjust the household work as to enable the worker to attain the best results, with the least waste of time and least expenditure of energy. In the fact that women engaged in housework are becoming conscious of this lack, lies the greatest hope of revolutionary change.

(1).

At a recent interview between some unemployed munition workers and a few members of Parliament, the subject of alternative employment was discussed.

“ My wife says she cannot get servants,” urged an elderly M.P., “ wouldn’t you like to go back to domestic service ”?

“ No ” ! was the prompt reply “ *would you ?* ’—and then followed an animated description of pre-war servitude—long hours—many spent in the dark ill-equipped kitchens, unhealthy sleeping rooms, poor pay, the petty tyranny of little minds, and above all the consciousness of inferior status, which had been endured while they knew no other life, but which had

become intolerable after the experience of the greater freedom of factory life.

The ex-domestic, who, during the war, has worked at harder, dirtier work in the factory than any cook or housemaid has had to undertake, who has worked alternate night and day shifts of twelve hours, who has taken uncomfortable journeys in all winds and weathers, who has lived dangerously in filling factories and in air-raid areas—revolts from the thought of a return to “the shelter of quiet domestic life,” as she knew it before the war. For the majority, paid domestic service is an unregulated, sweated industry, conducted by ill-trained, unorganised employers and work-people. It has remained unorganised largely because the employing class could draw upon an almost unlimited supply of cheap, and for the most part docile young labour: because in fact there still existed a servile class, and a class which desired servile labour.

To avoid misunderstanding it may be well to state that we are quite aware there still exists a class of “gentleman’s servants”, who look down from the Olympian Heights upon mere labour folk, and to whom nothing in this chapter would apply. There is also a large class of really happily placed domestic workers, between whom and their mistresses there exists a feeling of mutual dependence and good-will, loyal service lovingly rendered to those who appreciate and suitably reward such service.

The former group we have no time nor inclination to consider, and the latter group we have no desire to disturb; we are concerned with those whose lives

are made miserable and ineffective by conditions of service which can be vastly improved to the advantage of the employer, employed and the community at large.

In 1913 an adventurous group of domestic workers in Scotland issued a programme of reform *viz* :—

A twelve hour working day : half holiday once a week : fixed meal times : wages to be paid fortnightly (instead of monthly or quarterly) : all public holidays : two hours out of each day for themselves : sanitary bedrooms : a graded scale of wages.

Readers may well ponder on the state of existence in which such a programme would bring relief.

Because domestic service has borne the mark of servitude, *lack of education* has been welcomed as a sign of the good servant. The more uneducated, the less likely they were to “ have ideas above their station in life.” A woman of the suburbs once said to the writer, “ If I had my way I would not allow any schooling for the domestic servant class ; they would be better servants if they had never learnt to read or write—as it is they think they are as good as we are ! ” As a matter of fact it is just the lack of trained intelligence and an educated outlook applied to domestic affairs which has perpetuated the shocking waste, muddle and discontent in this occupation.

Labour women stand for a revolution in ideas on the subject of domestic service—to make it a well regulated industry, in which the social status of its workers will be equal to that of any other section of labour, an industry in which human energy will be

conserved to minister to human needs, and really to make our homes places of rest and refreshment. The work of cooking and cleaning, etc., is honourable, necessary work, and if only the right relationship of mutual service and equality of status be established, it should provide worthy employment for a large body of educated women.

The most urgent reforms appear to be the regulation of the hours of work to a maximum eight hour day, and the abolition of living in as a condition of employment ; in cases where for mutual convenience board and lodging is given by the employer as part payment, the value of such accommodation should be stated in terms of money, to enable the worker to compare it with charges for accommodation outside the house. This knowledge would remove the suspicion that unfair advantage was being taken under the " Truck " system of payment.

Another necessary condition, is that in her own time the worker's right to privacy and non-interference must be respected. Such a programme involves a radical change of attitude on the part of the average mistress. *The bell ringing habit must be broken.* Human energy must not be wasted in running up and downstairs in obedience to the whims and fancies of idlers.

A great safeguard of the liberties and independence of the paid domestic will be found in a system of non-residential daily service. A memorandum issued by the Women's Industrial Council in January, 1918, outlines a practical scheme which deserves support and should certainly be widely discussed.

The scheme includes :—

The establishment of domestic centres.

Daily workers, who will live either in hostels or in their own homes, to be supplied to households by the hour.

A Committee of Management to be attached to each centre, composed of representatives of employers and workers who will decide rates of pay, hours of work, holidays, etc. It is proposed to start with a minimum wage of 30s. for a forty-eight hour week.

Domestic workers to be paid a fixed weekly wage by the Centre and all fees to be paid by the employers to the Manager.

Complaints about the conduct or inefficiency of the workers to be made to the Manager.

Domestic training courses to be established in connection with the centre ; learners to be sent out in charge of skilled workers.

One essential condition of success for such a scheme would be sound Trade Union Organisation. The paid domestic workers must take their proper place with skilled and unskilled labour in the Trade Union and Labour movements.

(II).

At a West Country Conference the future development of domestic work was being discussed : a Trade Union comrade arose and impatiently dismissed the subject with “ Why we do waste time discussing domestic service—we workers never have domestic service—we can’t afford it ! ” He was promptly

told by the housewives present that he got domestic service all right, *but he paid nothing for it!* The reply was very effective but not quite true—workpeople pay heavily in waste of time and energy and get the worst possible results, by adhering to a system of aggressive individualism long after communal effort has become possible.

The main problem of the unpaid house mother has its roots in defective housing conditions. As in this little book housing has a chapter to itself this point need not be elaborated here.

Co-operation is necessary to secure the freedom and development of the unpaid house mother. A secondary reason which is forcing co-operation is the need for national food economy. This will hasten the extensive development of the co-operative kitchen. Already busy women who are fortunate enough to be in reach of a well-managed communal kitchen, wonder how they existed without it for so long—for it means not only release from the actual preparation and cooking of food, but also from the growing burden of shopping and the queue-horror.

It has been demonstrated by practical experiments that there will be a greater variety in the food, less waste and greater nourishment, by the use under co-operative methods of communal kitchens.

Co-operative wash-houses, electric power, central heating, co-operative nurseries and trained nurses for the wee babies, and Montessori or Kindergarten schools for the toddlers, are all aids to the simplification of domestic work possible in any national Housing Schemes,

The intolerably long working day of the average house mother can be reduced to about one third of the time taken up under the bad, old way. The house mother will then have leisure to bring her gifts to the common stock: her administrative capacity will no longer be confined to the little house: it may be available for the local administrative bodies and for the legislative chamber. She will be able to render social service of a high order by companioning her children. Housework under the new conditions will not be a drudgery but a pride and joy.

It may be said that working women do not desire to take part in public life, and if the household duties can be done in a third of the time women will abuse their leisure. That argument has been used against every body of workers who have tried to reduce the working day. Why are so many house mothers dull and petty minded? Because they have had no time to cultivate their minds and to plan their lives on large, spacious lines; because they have become slaves to the household and in time even their own children think little of them except as the household drudge. The competent housewife may not want to act on public bodies as men act to-day, but she will be thorough in her cleaning up and she will find that in addition to her co-operative washing and cooking arrangements she must needs learn how to use other accessories of good laws impartially administered for the common-wealth.

The fable of "one in charge of a lighthouse who gave to the poor in the cabins the oil of the mighty lanterns that served to illumine the sea," is especially

one for housewives. "The humblest mother who allows her whole life to be crushed, saddened, absorbed by the less important of her motherly duties, is giving her oil to the poor ; and her children will suffer the whole of their lives from there not having been in the soul of their mother the radiance it might have acquired."

When women have reached this large social consciousness there will be such home building as the world has never known, and it is towards this goal that the women of the Labour Party have set their will.

THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE.

BY

A. D. SANDERSON FURNISS.

IT is often said that "the Woman's workshop is the home," ; and at that the world in general has been content to leave it, caring little what are the conditions obtaining in the workshop, what are the hours of work for the worker, what her remuneration and her reward. Suggestions of adequate assistance, on the part of a State which is indebted to her for the very lives of its citizens, have been met from one quarter or another by outbursts of indignation. The Feeding of School Children, the establishment of a complete State Medical Service, the Endowment of Motherhood,—these, and other like reforms have been fought on the ground that they will have the effect of "destroying parental responsibility" and of "cutting at the root of family life." The British home is one of the glories of our country, but, as an instance of its splendour, we are referred to the type of picture found in mid-Victorian books and on the walls of mid-Victorian homes—the picture of the "cottage home" with the man and his wife sitting on either side of the fireplace, he smoking, she sewing, while as many children as the size of the picture will allow are crowded round the table reading while one nurses the inevitable baby. That the roof is low, the room small, the windows narrow-framed, giving little light and air, matters not at all to our sentimentalists, to whom the cottage home is always seen through the roseate spectacles of Victorian art, representing all that is best and most

fundamental in our traditions. It is not the purpose of these pages to minimise the value to the nation of its home life, or to suggest that there is not something very real and tangible in the feeling which grips the heart of every man in foreign parts when he thinks of home. On the contrary—there is something in British home life so vital and so deeply imbedded in the life of the nation, that it is surely its duty to see that there is nothing in the setting of the home which can mar its perfection. But the ultimate responsibility for its well-being rests on the shoulders of the woman, and it is with the home as it affects the woman that this chapter is concerned.

There have been many experiments in housing made during the past hundred years, and there are probably few subjects which arouse so much interest among reformers as the housing of the people. Doctors, sanitary inspectors, medical officers of health, teachers, have all borne witness to the fact that our hospitals and asylums continue to be filled largely as the result of bad housing conditions, and the high infant mortality among the poorest class can be traced almost directly to the same cause. But though many schemes have been set on foot and many experiments made, the nation as a whole has never come to grips with the problem, and housing has been left in the main to the speculative builder. Long narrow streets have been allowed to grow up on the outskirts of our large towns, open spaces have been built over, and the presence of the slums has been regarded as a regrettable, but necessary, evil. In the country districts, old cottages have been

patched up and roofs made more or less water-tight, when their structure and internal arrangements were such that it was impossible to render them fit places for the upbringing of healthy children. New building has as a rule, been unconnected with any scheme of town or village planning, and the local authorities themselves have made little use of the powers they possess.

In the period of reconstruction after the war, an opportunity arises for a complete revolution in our housing system ; owing to the fact that building has practically ceased since the commencement of the war (except in a few munition areas) and that it is estimated that 1,000,000 new houses will be required, it will obviously be necessary for the State to take the matter in hand, and to see that a very comprehensive scheme of housing is undertaken during the years immediately following the declaration of peace. The opportunity is one which is not likely to occur again in this generation, or indeed for many generations to come, and any real effort in the direction of drastic reform should receive the support of the whole nation.

But if the housing of the people is to be put on a secure and satisfactory basis it is obvious that women must take their share in the planning and arranging of their homes, and, as far as working class houses are concerned, it is surely the working woman who has the right to speak, and who should be urged to give the matter her most serious consideration. She alone knows what the drudgery of her life has been in the past, and how the inconven-

iences found in the houses provided have affected the lives of herself and her children. That she has been for so long inarticulate on the subject is no matter for surprise. Her opinion has not been asked nor her criticism invited, and, unenfranchised, she has not felt any encouragement to look upon herself in any capacity but that of housewife. That this is her most natural, as well as most important, function is not denied, but the granting to her of the vote will lead her to consider her duties as a citizen of the State as well as mother of the race, and to a higher conception of her duties in both capacities. Regarding herself as a homekeeper, she will learn to take interest in the homes of the whole community, and one of her first duties in citizenship will certainly be in the direction of housing reform.

It is often asserted that working women are quite content with their houses, and that modern conveniences, as such, do not appeal to them. "Why give working women a bath," say well-meaning middle-class people, "it will only be used for coal." "Why go to the expense of a parlour," they cry; "it's only used on Sundays." It is time the working woman gave her own views and that she made it clear that her so-called "content" arises merely from lack of opportunity to express her opinion. This opportunity has lately been given her by the Housing Campaign of the Women's Labour League,* now being carried on by the Labour Party, and it is my purpose here to give a short account of the results of that campaign.

* See note on page III.

In the autumn of 1917, a sub-committee was appointed and commenced an enquiry, the object of which was to ascertain the opinions of working women all over the country, in rural as well as urban districts, on what they considered to be the best kind of house, from the point of view of the housewife and mother, both as regards external planning and internal arrangements. To this end a leaflet was prepared entitled "The Working Woman's House" containing two very simple cottage plans which the Committee thought would provide a good basis for discussion, and which had many qualities not usually found in working class houses. The leaflet also contained a short questionnaire dealing with the most essential features of a well-planned and well-fitted house. This leaflet has been, and is still being, sold in very large numbers, is finding its way into all parts of the country, and such bodies as Schools for Mothers, Women Citizen's Associations, as well as Trade Unions, Womens' Co-operative Guilds and Women's sections of Local Labour Parties are making it the basis of discussion at meetings. Answers to the questionnaire are returned in large number while many women into whose hands the leaflet falls are writing long letters giving their views as to the defects in their present homes, and suggesting many interesting and most valuable reforms. Conferences, too, have been arranged all over the country, at which women join eagerly in the discussions and express themselves with much decision. All the evidence at present collected by the Committee tends to show that working women are speaking on the subject with

the authority born of long experience, and as the result of much thought and study of housing conditions.

On certain points they are unanimous both in town and country. That all agree in the necessity of a bath is not surprising, nor is the fact that all condemn the bath in the scullery, demanding a bath in a separate bath-room. It is of the utmost importance that architects should recognise this, and should make a point in future planning to avoid it. Women seem to be agreed that the bathroom is far more convenient upstairs and this for two reasons: children can be bathed and taken straight to bed without any risk of draughts and cold, and with a good lavatory basin all washing can be done in the bathroom and other washing arrangements be dispensed with.

Where, however, as is sometimes the case in country districts, it is found necessary that the bathroom should be on the ground floor, it is regarded as essential that it should be a separate room with a door opening into the entrance lobby and not approached through the living-room or scullery. That this is important from the point of view of convenience, will be easily recognised, for the scullery baths are usually fitted with a table top, and this has to be cleared every time the bath is used, involving much labour to the woman. A man usually prefers to take his bath immediately on returning from work, and this at a time when the housewife is preparing the supper and requires her scullery for her work. The objection usually made to the bathroom being upstairs is that in mining districts,

the man must at once have his bath, and the dirt contracted in the mine should not be taken upstairs. To this, however, we would answer that baths should be provided at the pit head and that it is not fair to the woman that her husband should return to his home in his mining clothes, involving her in much unnecessary work.

From the evidence received by the Sub-Committee it appears that working women think their houses should contain three rooms on the ground floor, parlour, living room, and scullery-kitchen with a larder, and in this connection it is important to emphasise the fact that the houses of the future should be built with a wide frontage, thus making it possible for the rooms to be well-lighted and with good aspects. The long, narrow house found in most of our large towns to-day is dark, cheerless and difficult to run, the long passages giving an infinite number of unnecessary journeys between the rooms. Cooking in the future will tend to be done in the scullery-kitchen, and this should be of good size, and well equipped. It should contain a deep porcelain sink, placed not under the window but on a side wall with a good light, with draining boards and a plate rack over it, which should in all cases be a fixture. There should be a convenient cupboard, compact and with plenty of shelves, and here it would be well to adopt the American device of a "cook's cupboard" with inverted bins for the usual cooking requisites, *viz.*, flour, sugar, salt, etc., and with a let-down table which would make it possible for the housewife to sit while mixing or

making pastry. The flooring should be of tiles, and there should be a gas stove of the most modern kind, which, however, should only be looked upon as a temporary arrangement and care should be taken that when electricity comes within reach of all members of the community, it should be possible to fit all the houses with electricity for lighting, cooking, and cleaning. Hot water should of course be laid on in all houses. The working woman regards this as essential to her comfort and where, as in country districts, a water supply is a difficulty, the State should take the matter in hand and should see that all its citizens are supplied with this most necessary commodity. The tap up the village street or the well in the garden should be a thing of the past if housing reform is going to mean anything but pious resolutions, and an adequate water supply with hot water laid on in every house is the first need of the country districts. The larder should open out of the scullery, and should be large enough to hold a good store of provisions, and lighted by a window, ventilators being most unsatisfactory. The living-room of the houses of the future will serve as dining-room and nursery and must therefore be large, light and well-shaped. The old fashioned kitchen range can be dispensed with, and should be substituted by an Inter-oven which provides a cheerful fire and can also be used for cooking when necessary. Dressers, too, are condemned by working women. Many shelves mean much dusting and glass and crockery look well and keep clean in a cupboard with glass doors such as is found in some of the new

garden suburbs. A good window seat is a cheerful addition to the living-room, and a box under it provides a cupboard where children can keep their toys. It is difficult to see how they can be taught to be tidy if they have no place of their own, and people whose children are under the charge of trained nurses, often forget, when condemning the working man's child for lack of discipline, that the mother has not the time to train them in tidy and careful habits, nor the space to encourage them to take a pride in keeping their toys and books in order. One of the vexed questions of the future houses is to be that of the provision of a parlour. Many architects and reformers are inclined to think that this is an unnecessary room in the working woman's house, and that it would be far more to her comfort to throw all the space into a really good living-room. This may be so in the case of old people, childless couples and single women, but as far as the ordinary family is concerned, working women are unanimous in their demand for a parlour. The contention that this room is only used on Sunday is becoming more and more out of date, and surely the fact that women feel the need of the room should be enough to ensure that it is provided for them. Where, if not in the parlour, can those of the family who wish to study, find peace and quiet? And again, where, asks the sensible mother, can the young people bring their friends in the evening for games and music if a parlour is not provided? She knows the dangers of the streets and country lanes for the adolescent boy and girl, knows too that young people do not always want to

be with their elders when entertaining their friends. The parlour should be planned especially for these purposes, and though it is not necessary to make it as large as the living room it should be a bright sunny room fitted with bookshelves and with door and window and fireplace so arranged that comfort may be found.

Three bedrooms are essential as a minimum, but some houses should be built with an extra bedroom for a large family, while some small houses with fewer bedrooms would provide sufficient accommodation for old and childless couples. The three bedrooms, however, should be carefully thought out and two at least should be capable of containing two beds. A good hanging cupboard with a shelf for boots at the bottom and two shelves at the top, should be fitted into each bedroom, thus avoiding the necessity of a wardrobe, a cumbersome and expensive piece of furniture. With these cupboards and the lavatory basin in the bathroom, the working man will be relieved of the expense of two pieces of furniture, besides gaining the advantage of an extra amount of space, while infinite labour will be saved to his wife. The difficulty of obtaining plate glass after the war will probably lead to casement windows being substituted for sash windows in the new houses, and these can be made perfectly satisfactory by the top panes being made to open outwards or by a revolving pane, and by the casements themselves opening in reverse ways. Flooring, too, is becoming a problem owing to the lack of timber, and it is satisfactory to know that the Committee of the

Ministry of Reconstruction which is considering the subject of new materials, is endeavouring to find a way to meet this difficulty by the substitution of some material other than hard wood, which is of course the only material at present known for perfectly satisfactory flooring.

But building in the future must be considered also from a larger standpoint than that of the mere convenience of the home. Towns are already too large for health or comfort, country villages too far remote for social life. The noble traditions of English architecture have been ignored and our later developments in building reveal something of the spirit of a "nation of shopkeepers." The speculative builder has been allowed to run up houses everywhere in a haphazard manner, with no regard for open space and with no broad design. In the new world after the war we need new towns, planned on broad and generous lines, taken out into the country, with factories "as beautiful as cathedrals," with houses in small groups, with tree-planted streets, with green places and large gardens, bringing the life of the town into the country. And our villages too must be planned with regard to the conditions of the district and to the nature of its architecture in the past. Social life must be taken into account, and it is surely not too much to hope that the day will come when each village shall contain its own small theatre, its reading room with a good library, its well-planned hall, where the workers' own educational needs shall find a home, and where country dances and country

songs can add pleasure and gaiety to their gatherings. Here, too, exhibitions of the arts and crafts of the district can be held and expression given to the artistic sense which, in spite of the materialism of the past days, still exists in many parts of the country.

The demand of the Labour Party that the people shall be properly housed is not exorbitant. It is merely one step in the direction of building up a healthy and happy community, with the possibility of the good life for all.

Light, air, space, sunshine, room in which to breathe freely and live decently, these would seem to be necessities for the citizens of a great democratic country. Under our present conditions, with their lives one long tale of drudgery, working women grow old before their time. What wonder that their daughters hesitate to marry, cease to take that joy and pride in housewifery which is their right, and shrink from the responsibility of bringing children into a world where the inequalities of life are so great, and where there is literally no room for them in the home ?

Remove the inequalities, build nobly on the true foundations of beauty and justice, and the woman of our country will prove her right to the name of housewife, and be given at last throughout the land the opportunity of becoming the perfect homekeeper of the race. She asks now, as in the days when a wise mother taught the great prophecy to her son, King Lemuel, that the world should " Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own work praise her in the gates."

THE LABOUR WOMAN'S BATTLE WITH DIRT.

BY

KATHARINE BRUCE GLASIER.

NO one knows better than the Labour Woman that there are two kinds of dirt, clean dirt and—the other.

A healthy mother, living in the country, can gather a child in, after a day spent in the sunshine and fresh air, muddy from head to foot, and experience no sickening of heart : if she be wise she will rejoice rather. But in our modern industrial villages and towns, in our cities “ built in black air ” this is not so. The smoke cloud not only robs the people and plants living under it of the sunshine essential to vigorous health, but its incessant soot-fall represents a tax of toil upon the working wives and mothers, crueller far than any levied upon his captives by the taskmasters of some old-world Pharaoh. For it robs the women who bend under its burden not only of their own but of their children's loveliness and so of half the joy of life.

Most working mothers in “ the smoke belt ” give up the attempt to see either themselves or their children clean more than once a day. Their outer clothing cannot be clean even then, unless it is just fresh from the wash-tub. And when to the work of the children there is added that of the home, however simple, with all its window-panes and curtains, its doorsteps and hearths, its floors and furnishings (not to speak of its pots and pans), it is literally true that

to be clean, in the midst of factory chimneys, represents a never-ending battle with dirt,—unclean dirt,—dirt that ought never to have been,—that need not be and that will, we hope, at no distant day, *not be allowed to be*.

Needless to say, therefore, all national and local efforts at smoke abatement, with the exchange of the wasteful open coal fires for gas or electricity, together with decent sanitary systems and efficient daily street and yard cleansing by scientifically equipped municipal services have had, and will have still more in the future, the Labour woman's enthusiastic support.

Insanitary dust heaps, open ash-pits, ill-drained and badly paved yards and streets, grimy gutters, all these, like polluted streams, have been served with notice to quit by the same active influence. Moreover, as the chapter in this volume on housing will bear abundant witness, the shame of the social system which has left just those who actually fight the battle with dirt (the greater part of it, like the smoke-cloud, socially created) the least well furnished with hot water and other essential means for their own and their homes' cleansing, is a shame no longer to be endured by anyone of sensitive conscience. Cleanliness may be next to Godliness, but although in twenty-five years in the Labour movement the writer has met not a few God-like men and women among those whose hands and garments were work-soiled, never yet has she known one among those who, being outwardly spotless, had yet no care for the plight of those by whose ministry their cleanliness was won. More and more it is being recognised that to

be willing to live "clean" oneself in airy, spacious dwellings, and to do nothing to help cleanse the world for others is simply to be "unclean" in soul.

During the last ten years this new social conscience has been specially directed by Labour women to what has been termed "Industrial Dirt."

Let us make no mistake about it. On this question Great Britain lags far behind the United States, Canada, Australia (of late), and most of the western countries of Europe. The citizens of continental cities, of New York and Montreal, and Sydney, have long ago made up their minds that *the grime and grease, the flue and dust, that is incurred by workers in the factories, machine sheds, mills and mines*, ought not to be brought out into the streets, and the trams and trains,—and most assuredly should not be allowed to enter the homes of the people.

Students of political psychology might do well to inquire whether a really free and democratic citizenship,—built on the self-respect and frank sense of essential equality between the different citizens—can ever be built up without this reform.

The Women's Labour League began their crusade to this end, for it was nothing less,—with "Baths for Miners."*

In every mining village in Wales, Scotland and England the members had found conditions existing which meant black slavery in the home for the brave wives and mothers.

All over the country *there were not three miners' houses in a hundred fitted even with a hot and cold water tap over the sink!*

* See note on page III.

In Durham and many of the older coal fields there are still tens of hundreds of one and two roomed homes without even a sink, and with sometimes scant water supply.

But even where the home was comfortable, and fitted with a bath-room with hot and cold water, the coming in daily of a black, abominable burden of coal dust on the muddy and often foully smelling clothing, of, probably, in such a home, *several* miners (with those clothes also needing to be washed by the women at home), involved a battle with the intruding pit dirt that ought never to have been.

Our contention was and is that the whole of this pit dirt ought to be left at the pit head: and that it ought to be an integral part of the duty, *enforced upon the employers by law*, wherever an industry soils the persons or clothing of the workers to provide ample means for their cleansing: for it is not only the persons of our workers, their working clothes have to be thought of as well.

Robert Smillie, who from the first was one of the most active of our supporters among the miners' leaders, wrote in one of the Womens' Labour League pamphlets, that he had himself seen the sick mother or little children under the care of the doctor, living in the room where all the bathing of the men and boys from the pit had to be done, and where the foul smelling pit clothes had to be dried before the common fire. Medical men had told him that in many of our miner's houses (one and two roomed *cabins* were a better name) serious and even minor operations which had to be performed in the homes,

became a very difficult matter, because of the poisonous fumes from germ-laden pit clothes dried in the house. Wounds *could* not be kept clean in such an atmosphere.

If that be true of pit clothes what must be the condition of the clothing of open ash pit emptiers or of "artificial manure" workers?

"When it has been a wet day and my husband's working clothes have had to be dried in front of the kitchen fire, the children and I are nearly driven out of the house by the stench," an ash-pit man's wife told a member of the League. In many other trades, sorrowfully many to-day in our unnatural age, noisome and even dangerously poisonous dust is continually falling upon the workers.

What, then, is the remedy?—The answer was fully set forth in a series of illustrated pamphlets, issued by the Women's Labour League under the title "Baths at the Pit Head and the Works."

These pamphlets, which were sold literally in the tens of thousands in mining and industrial communities, pressed home the special possibilities and advantages of hot and cold spray bath installations, arranged with private cubicles, and carefully designed for the drying of damp clothes.

They also advocated the use of special working clothes or overalls which could be washed and mended as well as dried at wash houses attached to these installations. In many pits in Belgium before the war, as in several of the great industrial establishments of the United States, where such "betterment" has attained to a fine art, each worker has

two sets of working clothes with a stamped number or name attached. For a small charge soap and towels are provided by the management, and women are employed to wash, dry and mend the overalls,—with scientific laundry appliances to help them.

But in Britain, when first pit head baths were advocated, in spite of the apparently obvious advantages, the prejudices against such an innovation were fierce,—even among the kindly wives of the miners. They had no clear understanding of the scheme, and moreover an ill-considered clause (77) in the Mines Act of 1911, making the use of such pithead baths when provided, *compulsory*, naturally offended against the older fashioned British sense of personal liberty.

But the W.L.L. educative agitation was actively backed by all the intelligent miners' leaders, headed by Robert Smillie who had personally visited the installations in Belgium and France, and the less attractive ones of Germany.

Finally, a Ruskin-taught and exceptionally broad-minded firm of colliery proprietors, Messrs. Fletcher, Burrows & Co., of the Atherton Collieries in Lancashire, put up first a small experimental installation, and then in September, 1915, a large and fully equipped pit bath establishment for 400 men.

After the first six months the success of these baths was being proclaimed all through the mining world. The testimony alike of the miners and their wives, and of enlightened employers and inspectors was unanimous. In the early summer of 1914 the movement to obtain the two-thirds majority vote

which was necessary under the Act to compel the employers at any given mine to set up similar installations was spreading through Lancashire. In South Wales, the Ocean Collieries of Rhondda Valley were specially active.

Messrs. Brunner, Mond & Co. had previously set up a fine set of spray baths for their chemical workers, at Winnington. The more elaborate spray and swimming baths of Messrs. Cadbury and Rowntree and other benevolent employers are well known. One or two municipalities have made a beginning, notably Poplar, with spray baths for their destructor men: and Wallasey Borough Council, as a result of the W.L.L. agitation, provided their dust-cart men with brown overalls.

But when we compare what has been done with, for one instance, New York where the town's dust-men, road-sweepers, etc., are provided *daily* with a clean white suit of overalls, and look their part as servants of Public Health as attractively as our hospital nurses, we realise how our own country, before the war, can hardly be said even to have begun their thinking on this matter.

But although the war has stopped the actual building of pithead baths it has in no wise stopped the agitation for their erection. Tens of thousands of our soldiers too, have learned in hospitals and at the base centres the practical meaning and marvellous restorative powers of spray baths. The dirty and often dangerous nature of the work for munitions has compelled the use of overalls, and wise Welfare Workers are everywhere backing

Trade Union leaders in insisting on the necessity of abundant and pleasant as well as, shall we say, dignified means of cleansing. The mingling of classes among the women especially has "tuned up" the workers to higher standards in outward appearances which we hope may deepen into spiritual realities.

The dirt in the air is no less important a problem. Partly, it is the result of our faulty coal grates and can be cured by better fire-places and slow-combustion well-fires.

So far as it is the result of industrial causes, the Public Health Act, 1875, in an "optional" clause, made the emission of black smoke by factory chimneys (except for a strictly limited "firing up" period) an indictable offence—but black smoke persists because local authorities will not move against the vested interests of smoke producers.

The men and women of the Labour Party have everywhere put up a brave battle for better wages and shorter hours, for wholesome food and healthier houses. Let them now pledge themselves to war to the death with "dirt," in the sky, in the river, in the street, on the human body, in the home. For dirt has been rightly defined as "matter in the wrong place." It is always an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual disgrace either in the individual or in our social system.

When human beings finally find their rightful places one with another in a world-wide fellowship we prophecy fearlessly,—dirt will have disappeared.

THE WOMAN WAGE EARNER.

BY

A. SUSAN LAWRENCE, L.C.C.

FOR the woman wage earner the success of the Labour Party is no matter of remote or academic interest. Her whole position will be determined by the one question of whether or not there will be a strong party in Parliament prepared to make the interests of the workers its first concern.

The position of the woman wage earner will be one of great difficulty immediately after the war. Trade may or may not revive rapidly. The best judges anticipate a period of reorganisation and industrial confusion, followed by a short trade boom, followed, in its turn, by a long period of depression. The first of these periods is certain whatever may be the case with the others.

There *must* be a period, short or long, of disorganisation and unemployment, when the great munition contracts cease and the country turns from the arts of war to those of peace.

Supposing, to take the most favourable view, that we are as busy a year after peace, as we were the year after the declaration of war. Even in that case, we may expect and must be prepared for a time comparable to the last months of 1914, and the first months of 1915, a time of acute distress and unemployment, when women will find their old occupations gone and the new not ready.

We have had some little foretaste of what we

have to expect. In the first months of this year, the demand for certain classes of munitions had slackened, owing, apparently, to the facts that Russia needed no more cartridges, and that stocks of small shell had been accumulated. At the same time, the demand for other classes of munitions was still very great.

The government, faced with this temporary falling off in demand, had no thought but to get rid of the workers as quickly as possible. They turned them off—as a contemporary says—exactly as one turns off the gas. At least one national factory was closed. We know how in a month or two the demand for munitions again became urgent. It is impossible not to believe that the loss of the factory in question, and the disorganisation of so many others, was a serious loss to the country. If this was done—in war-time—when the future need for munitions was certain—what have the workers to expect when peace really comes ?

Unless the workers can have the protection of a party of their own, they will be left to face, unaided, all the evils of unemployment.

Women will be the greatest sufferers during the period of change, for the very simple reason that they have—far more than men—been drafted into new and temporary occupations.

This interval will not only be a time of suffering for those concerned, but must, if matters are left to themselves, result in a degradation of the whole standard of life.

For the woman wage earner, the two great and pressing questions are what should be done to

protect their standard of life, and to mitigate the evils of unemployment.

With regard to wages, our course is clear.

We have had in the past partial and imperfect wages legislation. That legislation bears in every line the marks of its history—a history, that is, of concessions extorted piece-meal by a permanent minority.

It is easy however to show that women have benefited greatly by what has already been done. It is still easier to sketch the great improvements which might be made if labour were, for the first time, free to act for itself and on its own plans.

At the present moment the wages of great masses of women are in a sense artificial wages—wages regulated, that is, not solely by industrial bargaining or by supply and demand, but by laws and by statutory orders. This is true of the larger part of women subject to the Munitions Acts, and of those (probably about 300,000 in number) who come under the operations of the Trade Board Acts. The Munitions Acts are temporary war measures, and the protection afforded to wages by their orders will terminate with the war. The protection afforded by the Trade Board Acts is permanent. The orders affecting wages under both sets of enactments are largely due to the action of organised Labour and of the Labour Party.

Whatever have been the deficiencies of these Acts, both in structure and administration, it is nevertheless true that the wages of the women have been very greatly improved, both in comparison with what they

formerly earned and in comparison with unprotected workers doing similar work.

The following table gives the wages in certain representative munitions firms before and after the application of the orders.

	<i>Rate before application of orders.</i>	<i>Present rate.</i>
Powder work	2½d. an hour ; 3d. an hour and ¼d. danger money.	5½d. an hour and ½d. danger money, plus 6s. a week.
Cartridge work ..	3d. an hour.	5½d. an hour plus 6s. a week.
Fuses ..	2½d. an hour Premium bonus basis rate. 3d. an hour Premium bonus basis rate.	4¾d. an hour Premium bonus rate plus 6s. a week. 5d. an hour Premium bonus rate plus 6s. a week.
Aeroplane canvas work ..	2½d. an hour Premium bonus basis rate.	4¾d. an hour Premium bonus basis rate, plus 6s. a week.
Woodwork ..	2½d. and 3d. an hour.	6d. an hour Premium bonus basis rate, plus 6s. a week.
Electric accessories	2½d. and 3d. an hour (during war).	5½d. an hour plus 6s. a week.
Shell ..	15s. and 12s. a week in 1915.	Min. for day work, 6d. an hour, plus 6s. a week, with min. of 30s. a week. Men's piece prices equivalent to about £2 10s. to £3 a week.
Foundries ..	10s., 11s., and 12s. a week.	5½d. an hour and 6s. a week.

A couple of instances will show how impossible it is to suppose that we are here dealing with a spontaneous rise in wages.

Messrs. A. B., Staffordshire employers, were engaged on Admiralty work. In November, 1917, the wages paid to adult women varied from 18s. 8d. to 15s. 4d. for a fifty-three hour week. The workers received in December the 3s. 6d. a week given by a general order of the Ministry to munition workers, and subsequently proceedings were taken by their organisation under Part I. of the Munitions Act. An award was obtained giving weekly wages in some cases of £1 10s. 3d. and in the remainder of £1 12s. 6d.

Messrs. C. D. (employed on parts of mine mechanism), held a meeting of their workers in January, 1918, and obtained the consent of the workers in writing to a scale of wages for adult women commencing at 15s. per week of fifty-three hours. By arbitration under Part I. of the Act, an award was obtained of hourly rates from 5½d. to 6d. an hour, plus a war advance of 2s. 6d. per week.

Similarly, we can compare the wages earned by women munition workers with those of the Women's Land Army. Until a recent date, this wage was only 18s. a week, and has now been raised to £1.

The wages in industries under the Trade Boards are not so good, but nevertheless in most instances substantial protection to the workers has been secured. Rates of 5½d. an hour have been fixed for tailoring and shirt-making, and a strong movement is on foot among the workers to obtain an increase. We can perhaps measure best what has been achieved by comparing the course of wages in two analogous trades, the laundry trade, for which the employers successfully resisted a trade board, and

the confectionery and jam trade in which a board was established shortly before the war. The class of workers employed in the lower branches of jam work and laundry work were very similar, and the wages were alike, varying from about 9s. to 12s. per week. The jam workers have now a minimum wage of 4½d. an hour, while the wages actually paid to laundry workers are in some cases as low as 14s. 6d. in London and 12s. in the provinces. (The scale of wages recommended by the Laundry Employers' Association are better than these latter figures, but are by no means universally paid). The rate of 4½d. is, of course, in itself an unsatisfactory rate, and proposals for a rate of 5d. have now been issued by the Trade Board—the comparison, however, may fairly be taken to show that even a weak trade board is considerably better than no board at all.

Legislation with regard to wages can, therefore, produce good results. That it may, in the wrong hands, produce very unfortunate results, can be seen by the action of Parliament with regard to agricultural labour. A minimum was there fixed at 25s. a week, with prices at war level, and in the midst of the greatest boom that the farming industry has ever known.*

Now, wages legislation on a large scale is absolutely necessary for women workers; and everything for them will depend upon whether the scope of this

* [This minimum may be raised by the Agricultural Wages Board, and up to the present no district wage has been fixed at so low a level as 25s.—a proof of the value of the Trade Union organisation behind the workers' representatives on the Central and District Boards.—EDITOR.]

legislation is sufficiently large and its spirit sufficiently sympathetic. The Munitions Acts are war measures, and the protection given by the wages orders under that Act are temporary, and as each firm turns over to private work, it will be enabled to strike a fresh bargain with its employees, perhaps on the lines of the instances quoted above.

War conditions have resulted in lifting whole trades from sweated conditions, to a position where a reasonable minimum is paid. If these are not to revert to their previous states, and if all the remaining poorly paid women's trades are to be raised, we shall want trade boards on an altogether unprecedented scale. There will be much opposition to this. The trades which particularly need some attention will bring every device to bear, and an early safeguard is that there shall be a party in Parliament strong enough to overbear the activity and zeal of those whose interest is concerned. The Labour Party policy is to amend the Trade Board Act, and *to secure its extension to all employments where any considerable number employed receive less than 30s. a week.*

Such measures are necessary if the standard of life is to be permanently maintained. They will not help the distress of the worker who is out of work.

The Labour Party stands for two great principles : first that it is the duty of the government to find suitable work for all, and secondly, that wherever it is unable to fulfil this obligation, it must provide the worker with maintenance.

Very few words are needed on the second point. The principle has been admitted,—though the

practice is niggardly and partial. For some workers, (as far as women are concerned few except munition workers) an entirely inadequate unemployment benefit of 7s. is paid. All workers should have a sufficient unemployment benefit—they should not be allowed to run out of unemployment benefit, and that benefit should be administered for trade unionists through their trade unions.

The case against adequate unemployment benefit is, avowedly, that given such a benefit women would not be ready to accept any sort of work at any sort of wages. That is an argument which does not appeal to the Labour Party.

The other duty of the State, that of providing work for the unemployed is not recognised by any of the other political parties. The Labour Party asserts that there is enough work to be done to occupy the workers ; that in times of slack trade, public works, such as housing and roads, should be undertaken, and that the various purchasing departments should then accumulate stock. The government demand for many classes of articles can be accurately foreseen in normal times. Nothing—except that rarest of all things—a little foresight, prevents the whole of that demand being concentrated in the times of slack trade.

The woman wage-earner wants security—security against sweating—security against unemployment. She wants other things besides—but she wants this first. If the Labour Party succeeds she will obtain this—and many other good things will be added unto her

WOMEN AND INTERNATIONALISM.

BY
MARY LONGMAN.

LABOUR women have always been keenly interested in internationalism, and have considered the unity of nations and their peaceful co-operation as one of the first objects of Labour policy. Mrs. Ramsay MacDonald, speaking at the inaugural conference of the Women's Labour League in 1906, sounded the international note, and at every succeeding conference it has been heard again, both from the lips of fraternal delegates and visitors from other countries, as well as in the record of the League's work.

Co-operating with men on equal terms, as they have always done in the Labour movement, women have taken their share in the successive International Socialist Congresses, of which the British Labour Party forms a part. As the special organisation of women developed in the different countries, it was natural that the idea of a woman's international conference should also take shape. The International Socialist Congress of 1907 gave a favourable opportunity for such an experiment, as it was held in Stuttgart, the home of Frau Clara Zetkin, the leader of the German women, and the best known woman leader of the working class movement in any country.

At that time there was no formal women's international organisation, but Frau Zetkin sent invitations to the women in each country to send delegates to a conference to be held shortly before the International Socialist Congress, and a very interesting

and useful meeting was held. The Women's Labour League, though then barely a year old, was glad to send delegates, some of whom took a prominent part in the discussions, and the Independent Labour Party and Social Democratic Party also sent representatives from among their women members. This conference marks the beginning of the international organisation of Labour Women. Frau Zetkin was appointed International Secretary, the women's organisations in each country were invited to maintain communication with her, and gladly entered into correspondence. When the next International Conference was held at Copenhagen three years later, the reports from different countries showed that the organisation of women had already made considerable progress.

At this conference there were present strong delegations from Germany and Austria and each of the Scandinavian countries. The Finnish delegation included women members of Parliament. There were several Russians, but the only representative from any Latin country was a delegate from the Portuguese Tailoresses' Union. The British delegation was numerically strong, and consisted of members of the Women's Labour League, the Independent Labour Party, and the Social Democratic Party.

As these bodies in the British delegation had not at that time any common organisation, and differed on certain matters of policy, it was difficult for them to speak with a common voice. So strongly did those present feel that this division handicapped them in international deliberations that on their return to England they determined to form a joint body which

should be able to speak in international affairs in the name of the women of the British Labour and Socialist movement. A meeting of delegates was accordingly held in November, 1910, at which it was resolved "to form an International Committee of British Women Socialists to include women representatives of socialist societies and trade unions, and other bodies eligible for affiliation to the Labour Party and International Socialist Congress." The body formed in accordance with this resolution was named "The Women's International Council of Socialist and Labour Organisations, British Section," this rather clumsy title being chosen in order to define the scope of the Council. Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald was the first Secretary. The Women's Labour League, Independent Labour Party, Social Democratic Party and Women's Trade Union League affiliated to it from the beginning, and various trade unions and other bodies joined afterwards.

This section was founded on certain definite principles which have been faithfully adhered to in its work. These recognised that such a body, representative of all sides of the Labour movement, must necessarily include many shades of opinion. But as the object of the section has been to express the views of that movement as a whole, it has always aimed at guiding its public policy, after frank discussion with its own ranks, by agreed decisions. Another of its principles has been never to take sides or express judgment on questions which might arise within the working class movement of another nation, but to maintain correspondence, so far as circumstances might allow, with each section. These two principles have each been of

immense service during a difficult time, in maintaining unity respectively between the women of the British Labour Movement, and within the Women's International as a whole.

The international work of women in this country has grown from small beginnings, but has always been of considerable importance. Its two main branches are (1) discussion of matters of public interest, with a view to coming to agreement between ourselves, and formulating reports and resolutions for international conferences, whenever these might take place, and (2) by constant correspondence with the International Secretary, and correspondents in other countries, to exchange opinions and information, and to improve our knowledge of each other. This correspondence has provided material for many interesting reports, as well as for the notes which are published monthly in *The Labour Woman*, the official organ of the section. In 1913 a suggestion was made that a working women's visit to Germany might be organised with valuable results. This plan aroused considerable interest and was discussed with Frau Zetkin. It was postponed at the time, however, and since then has naturally been impossible. In the same year Mrs. Kate Richards O'Hare visited England, as one of the United States delegates to the International Socialist Bureau, and English Labour and Socialist women had great pleasure in entertaining her at a women's luncheon.

The first half of 1914 was a very busy time, with preparations for the Women's International Conference, which was to have been held in August of that

year. The Secretary of the British Section visited Germany during the spring, and was present at the meeting of delegates from various countries which discussed the arrangements for this conference.

The outbreak of the war put a sudden end to all these preparations. During the anxious days of July Labour women watched developments from hour to hour, hoping against hope that war might be averted. Wishing to do anything they could to prevent it, they proposed a great meeting of women to advocate England's neutrality. At our suggestion, this proposal was taken up by other women's organisations, and a wonderfully impressive demonstration was held at the Kingsway Hall. We could not then foresee all that was to come, but the meeting expressed a united will to peace and sense of international responsibility. But hope of neutrality had even then disappeared and the meeting was held under the very shadow of the ultimatum to Germany on the violation of Belgium.

During the first weeks of the war, intercourse with other nations was at a complete standstill. We afterwards learnt that Frau Zetkin had endeavoured to communicate with the correspondents in each country, but her letters were returned to her months later through the post. In November the British Section determined to break through the wall of silence, and to express their continued sense of international solidarity, even at a time of temporary separation. They drew up a manifesto which was published in *The Labour Woman*, and sent to every correspondent in allied and neutral countries, with a request that the

neutral correspondents would do their best to convey our message to those whom we could not reach directly. This enterprise was successful. Our message was received with the warmest cordiality and provoked an immediate response from neutrals and belligerents alike. British women are proud to have been the first after the outbreak of the war (even though their priority was due only to the accident of the post) to convey a message of sympathy and hope for future peace to the working women of all nations.

Since that time our international communications have never been entirely cut off. With the women of allied and neutral countries we have naturally been able to maintain a correspondence, though even that is subject to the many uncertainties of post in war time. And our neutral comrades have done their utmost to preserve communication between the working women of belligerent countries. Letters have necessarily become rarer and less informative as the war went on, but we are still able to exchange our papers, and do so gladly. We know that *The Labour Woman* is still read in Germany, and not infrequently see quotations from it in the organ of the the women of the German Minority Socialists.

After a few months of war, women of the Labour and Socialist movement felt a longing to express their unity and mutual sympathy in a more concrete form, and the plan of a woman's international conference took shape. The idea sprang up simultaneously in various quarters, and as soon as mooted it was welcomed. The conference was convened by Frau Zetkin, the acknowledged leader of the Women's

International, and was arranged by the help of comrades in two neutral countries, Holland and Switzerland. It took place in Berne, in March 1915, and formed a historical gathering of the utmost significance. It was necessarily small, but eight nations were represented in a conference of about thirty delegates, and it was the most impressive gathering in which those present had ever taken part. Our delegates returned full of hope, and bearing with them the text of agreed resolutions expressing the united mind of the Conference.

It was a wonderful gathering. The German women had come at great risk to themselves and knew that on their return to their own country they might have to suffer imprisonment ; but the comradeship of those few days was worth the danger they faced. All of them belonged to that brave group of men and women led by Liebknecht who have throughout the war carried on a ceaseless struggle against the reactionary and militarist forces in their unhappy land. They were at that time full of hope that in their own party they would prevail and that German Social Democracy might be united in the task of bringing about an honourable end to the terrible war that was devastating Europe. The resolutions of the conference showed an agreement which was achieved without difficulty, and the only dissentients to any of the propositions put forward were to be found in the small group of Leninites among the Russian delegation.

This Conference of women adopted thus early in the war the policy which is now accepted by the whole

of the Socialist and Labour Movements in the Allied countries. It showed that belligerents can meet and discuss the situation; it was a forerunner of the gathering of the whole International for which the Allied Socialist and Labour Movement is now asking. Its peace demands are also re-echoed in the Memorandum recently adopted by the Allied Socialist and Labour Conference in London. We need only quote the following few lines to prove how the ideas set forth by the women, have after more than two years been reiterated by the whole of the democratic forces of Allied countries :—

“The Conference asks the immediate end of this horrible strife between peoples and a peace without annexation or conquest. It asks for a peace that recognises the rights of peoples and nations, both large and small, to independence and self-government, that enforces no humiliating and insupportable conditions upon any country, that requires expiation of the wrong inflicted upon Belgium, thus clearing the way for the peaceful, friendly co-operation of the nations. Such a peace is a necessary condition, in order that in the belligerent countries the workers may awake from the spell of a capitalist conception of nationalism, and that the Socialist and Labour organisations may assume their task as the conscious vanguard of progress, gathering and uniting the masses in a solid phalanx round the flag of international socialism.”

Since April, 1915, the women have looked forward to the holding of another conference when the war shall have come to an end. The Council is already

preparing the resolutions and reports which will be put forward, and in every country concerned active preparations are on foot. The bonds of union which were laid before the world was overwhelmed by war have gained in strength ; they have not only borne the strain but are firmer and more tightly drawn. Women realise more clearly than before the need not only of understanding but of close interaction, the need not only for the exchange of opinions, but for the adoption of a common policy binding together towards the same ends the women of all nations throughout the world. Labour women have taken a definite part in maintaining the union of the workers of the world and being women and non-combatants they may have found it easier than men to remain comrades of their sisters in all countries. They have had a share in saving internationalism from being wrecked in the storms of war, and when peace comes they will have a large responsibility in the tasks of re-building a society in which international sentiment is expressed in terms of international organisation.

NOTE.

See pages 47, 61, 99.

Until January, 1918, the Women's Labour League was the only political organisation of Women within the Labour Party. At the Conference of the League held in that month it was resolved that when the new Labour Party constitution was adopted, which provided for individual membership of Local Labour Parties for men and women, the separate existence of the Women's Labour League should cease and its members be urged to join the Women's Sections of the Local Labour Parties in their constituencies. The past activities of the Women's Labour League are referred to several times in the foregoing pages. Arrangements are now being made for the transference of these activities to the Labour Party, which is itself carrying on the work of political organisation amongst women.

Pamphlets on Reconstruction.

By *RE. HON. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P.*

THE AIMS OF LABOUR.

50 CENTS.

"This little booklet is probably the most epoch-marking if not epoch-making document that has ever been given to the world, not excepting the English Magna Charta or the American Declaration of Independence. Never, indeed, since the greatest labor-leader of all ages issued his manifesto to the rulers of Egypt on behalf of the oppressed Israelites, have the privileged classes been addressed in terms so peremptory and unmistakable, and in language so well adapted to their understanding."—ALEX. MACKENZIE in *The Public*.

By *SIDNEY WEBB.*

THE RESTORATION OF TRADE UNION CONDITIONS.

50 CENTS.

"Without exception the wisest and weightiest pronouncement on these issues that has come from an English publicist."

H. J. LASKI in *The New Republic*.

Published by

B. W. HUEBSCH, NEW YORK.