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# MOTHERS OF THE FUTURE

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Pamphlet

Published for the Vienna Conference, 1930, by the International Co-operative  
Women's Guild, Stanfield House, Prince Arthur Road, Hampstead,  
London, N.W.3.

Price 3d.

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## Mothers of the Future.

*(The first two of these papers express the views of the writers and not necessarily of the International Guild Committee.)*

### I.—State Allowances for Mothers at Home.

By MARIE NEČÁSKOVÁ (*Czecho-Slovakia*).

#### Changes in the Position of Women during the last Century.

WITH the introduction of machinery and the technical development of industry, many handicrafts formerly carried on within the home were transformed into industries carried on in factories and workshops. Soap and candles ceased to be made at home, spinning and weaving became industries, the brewing of beer and the making of clothes were undertaken by paid workers. Homework decreased, but women had to leave their homes and take up paid occupations in order to earn money to pay for all those things that they now had to buy in the market. So thousands of women, who up to that time had been mothers and housewives, went into the factories. They had to shoulder a three fold burden, and to be wage-earners, mothers, and housewives.

Among the middle classes, too, the same kind of change took place. Officials, clerks, small handicraftsmen, and small shopkeepers could no longer make provision for their unmarried daughters. It became more and more difficult to amass even a moderate competence, and unmarried daughters could only be maintained after the death of their parents if they had their own profession and themselves earned money. So the girls of this class found their way into commercial and government offices, into the public service and private business. Then came the Great War, and with it an enormous increase in the employment of women.

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### The Position of Women during the War.

After war was declared women were left alone in the towns and villages. They had to undertake all kinds of work for which men were no longer available, and the old prejudice as to their incapacity, and the idea that their place was the home, began to disappear. They were just thrust into the places of the absent men and had to undertake every kind of work: on the railways, in the workshops, and behind the plough in the fields. A woman, the right kind of woman—and there were millions of them in the world—was to be found everywhere; into all her work she put her whole strength, in spite of the fact that day after day she got next to nothing to eat. She was for ever driven on by anxiety for her children; she saw, afar off, death lying in wait for her husband, her child, while she was powerless to help them. From 1914-1918 woman was a heroine to whom nowhere has a memorial yet been erected.

In this press of work she could not devote herself to the care of her children; all her efforts were directed to keeping them alive at all costs, in the hope of some day being able to give them a better life. Women were filled, too, with a burning desire for peace. At long last the terrible war came to an end. Already, in the summer of 1918, the first indications of peace could be sensed, like a strange breath that stirred through the nations. At last the long endured misery was over—in the autumn of 1918 the war ended.

October saw the collapse of Empires. In many countries the people began to take charge of their own destiny. This brought to women, too, a measure of freedom, for not only had they equal duties in the community, but they were accorded equal rights. Men came back from all parts of the world, and what they longed for most was a peaceful home and the helping hand of a loving wife to enable them to forget the past.

### Increase in the Number of Marriages.

This eager wish caused hundreds of young people to marry without forethought and without counting the cost. The housing shortage was acute, married couples had to live apart, and only gradually could they acquire a home of their own. The cost of living was high, rents in many countries almost prohibitive, and it was impossible for a man to earn enough to keep his family. Many women continued their employment even after the war, and the men who were gone were more and more replaced by women workers.

In the factories and workshops women work as hard as men. They have the same eight-hour working day, but in many industries

they are not paid the same rate of wages. Their sisters work in offices and have to be exceptionally capable in order to be any better off in this respect. In most cases their salary is only half that of their male colleagues, and they have to combat the intrigues of the latter, who are still convinced that they alone have a right to the better paid posts. Even a brilliant woman is only reckoned as the equal of a moderately gifted man. It is a serious indictment of the present state of society that women have still to fight so hard against the prejudices of the past.

So the life of many married couples is just an endless fight for existence. Often it is only in the evenings that husband and wife can be together to exchange experiences and gain fresh strength for the unceasing struggle.

### The Birth of a Child.

And then, as a welcome but unlooked-for gift, comes Nature's greatest wonder—a child—a new and binding tie between husband and wife. Soon after her confinement, however, the mother must leave her child and go back to work in order to be able to give him a better chance in life. A relation, or perhaps a stranger, will bring the child to his mother to be nursed. All day long she is full of anxiety for her child; in many cases she is prevented from nursing him herself and he has to be artificially fed from birth, often with serious consequences to his general health.

### When the Child is Ill.

When the child is ill the mother is almost unbearably worried and anxious. Wherever she may be working her thoughts are with the child, perhaps lying between life and death at home or in hospital, with no mother to ease his pain and give him a sense of security and comfort by her presence. These are days graven with black letters in the life of the mother. For although the nurses in the hospital may do their duty, they cannot give the child that love which, especially in illness, is so indispensable.

### Motherhood and a Career.

The question then arises: Is it possible for any woman to fulfil adequately these two callings, each of which really needs her undivided attention? Frau Dr. Gagg, in her book *Women in Swiss Industries*, declares that one can only be followed at the expense of the other. To-day, millions of women, because they are wage-earners, have to put the duties of motherhood in the background; work comes first, and their family and their own health second. Statistics show that there is much more illness

among married women working in factories as compared, not only with men, but with unmarried women. Doubtless, this is partly due to under-nourishment, a weak constitution, and excessive strain, but these same influences also affect other sections of working women. Factory work is particularly harmful to pregnant women. The overburdening of our women through both industrial work and housework, together with the lack of rest and recreation, may be fatal not only to the women themselves but also to the unborn child. It is true that protective laws have been framed to secure a modicum of rest and quiet to women at these times, but these laws have not been put into force in all countries.

#### Career and Family.

Not only the mother herself, but the whole family, suffers when she is unable to devote all her energies to promoting their physical and moral well-being, and, tired and exhausted, must endeavour to fulfil the duty of caring for and bringing up her children in the few brief hours she has at home. If, after she returns from work, a mother has to do all her housework with her own hands—to do her own washing, to mend the clothes—then a legal eight-hour day avails nothing, for *her* working hours will always be too long. Yet somehow she must find time to devote herself to her children, to teach them and help them. The assertions of famous poets and other well-known men show what a very great influence a mother exerts over the lives of her children. For instance, President Masaryk once said: "I have built up my whole conception of women upon the model of my wife; indeed, my wife has been the best and most decisive influence in the formation of my views and character."

#### Ways and Means of Lightening the Burden of the Wage-earning Woman.

It was realised in nearly all countries, even before the War, how harmful it was that mothers should have to bear a three-fold burden. If the mother is physically unfit it is impossible for her to bear healthy children. For this reason, even before the War, working men and women and everyone concerned with social welfare were fighting for the protection of motherhood. The first International Labour Conference after the War, which took place in Washington, recommended all countries to build up a system for the protection of motherhood, and to ensure to every working mother the right to remain at home for six weeks before and six weeks after her confinement. Most of the great industrial countries have not yet adopted this convention, and even in those cases where it has been ratified by Parliament, the employers

do all in their power to get round the law by discharging their women workers before they can benefit by the right which the law affords them. For this reason, women the world over must make ever-renewed efforts for the organised protection of mothers and infants in order that the community may help to ensure the health of the mother and, through her, the vitality of the whole nation.

But even if this protection should become universal and the law be everywhere respected, still the mother's care is withdrawn from the child after six weeks. It has been proved that infants thrive better when they are cared for by their own mothers; indeed that it is even better for them to be in the care of a stranger than to be brought up in even the best and most modern institutions. This is why efforts are now being made to find a way of making it possible for children to have their mother's care after the specified time has gone by.

#### Communal Services.

To ease the burden for women it has been suggested that houses should be erected with a common kitchen, where meals will be cooked for all the tenants. This arrangement would work out as expensive as if the occupants lived in a hotel. No one now lives permanently in hotels, and we have seen in the case of the emigrants to Russia how thankful they were when the women were able once more to cook for their families. American children often have their breakfast in automatic restaurants, with the result that doctors are now urging mothers again to look after their children themselves, because the restaurant breakfast means under-nourishment.

Neither must the fact be overlooked of how greatly family life is affected when each member has meals in a different place. Moreover, the experiments which have been made with communal State-run homes for children are not very reassuring. The mother's place cannot be filled adequately by strangers. Even the best homes will never really compensate for the lack of family life. Ellen Key, the famous Swedish writer, says: "It is the happiness of the child that he spreads happiness around him, that his smiles call forth an answering tenderness in which he is enveloped, and that he is proud and secure in the knowledge that he possesses a father and mother. Do not rob the child of his birthright—his feeling of home, his memories of this home. A communal upbringing by the State has the same effect on children as feeding them with pasteurised milk in the orphanages. They get ill because of the lack of certain essential food elements. People reared on the milk of communal care, in the atmosphere of a hard and fast régime, nourished by machine methods, and brought up at school, doing their work like bees in a great human

hive, these would give anything to achieve a new home-life for humanity." Criminal statistics also give instructive evidence of how important is the part which the mother plays in the child's development. For some months I have been following the press columns of the Courts, and the cases of young offenders. Fifty per cent of these young people had had no mother and, as small children, had been under the care of strangers.

The children are not the sole property of the mother; they are the future workers of the community, and it is the duty of the community to help the mothers. At the present time it does not fulfil this duty as it should; for the most part it does not trouble about the mothers and reserves its praise and appreciation of them for special occasions. Their troubles, sorrows, and pangs leave State and society cold. Women must solve their own problems and realise for what they must and ought to strive.

#### Income and Wage-earning.

Some women engaged in intellectual pursuits have chosen to follow their career from love of the work. But the great majority of married women who are engaged in manual work are only wage-earners because their husbands are not in a position to provide for the children. If women are to be given the freedom and the right to be mothers, they must not simply be forbidden paid work, as many people would like, but must receive material assistance. The woman of to-day is a citizen. If she is to fulfil all her duties adequately she must be accorded that greater personal independence which she desires. It is our wish that everyone should be free; therefore a way must be found to secure economic independence for women as mothers. The mother must receive a regular weekly allowance in consideration of her work, her trouble, and anxiety in connection with the bearing and rearing of children, so that she can be relieved of the need for undertaking paid work until such time as her children no longer need her. This allowance should be paid to the mother and not to the father, because a woman should be economically independent of her husband. For the free and harmonious development of character and personality is only possible for those who have a certain measure of economic freedom. Whether this allowance should take the form of insurance of motherhood or of an allowance from the State or municipality is a question which each country must decide for itself.

It is of the greatest importance that women should educate public opinion to recognise the necessity of this reform, and that they themselves should help in the preliminary work necessary for its practical realisation. Women now have votes, and therefore it is easier than ever before for them to secure their demands.

Speaking not only for myself, but for the great majority of the Co-operative women of Czecho-Slovakia, I can affirm that we consider it of the greatest possible importance that the children should have their mother with them as long as possible in order that she may be a real friend to them. It is only in this way that she can imbue them with her own ideals. When the children are older the mother will always be able to find time for work in the service of the community. For there is no higher or nobler aim for a woman than to bring up her children to be a joy to herself and of worth to society, and to ensure that their childhood is a bright and happy one. In carrying out reforms care must be taken not to choke up springs that may be valuable for the development of future generations.

## II.—Communal Services for Mothers at Work.

By HELEN BUTUZOVA (U.S.S.R.).

IN trying to give an answer to the question of what is to be the future of the working mother—whether she must consecrate herself entirely to housework and to the bringing up of children or whether she must step out on the broad scene of the class struggle and victories, thus securing for herself political rights and economic independence—it is interesting to show what is the position occupied by working-class women in the U.S.S.R.

### I.

The October revolution gave the women of the U.S.S.R. full political and economic equality. Not a trace has been left of the old inequality. Lenin's slogan "Every cook must be able to govern the State" has been widely applied in the practical life of the U.S.S.R.

The rapid industrialisation of the country and the development of collective agriculture is leading not only to the disappearance of unemployment but to a general increase in employment, including the employment of women.

The equal rights granted to women in every domain of life and their economic independence under the conditions of the Soviet system are two fundamental factors in the liberation of women which pave the way to their full and genuine emancipation from domestic slavery by means of the introduction of large-scale socialised housework in place of small individual domestic economy. The change from domestic to socialised economy frees the woman and places her on a footing of equality with the man. The wife's wages no longer take the place of the wages of the unemployed husband or serve as an addition to the husband's wages required in view of the lowering of the standard of living. Her wages enable her to dispense with housework, to take part in social, political, trade union, and co-operative work, to increase her skill, participate actively in the building of Socialism, and become an independent member of society.

### II.

The protection of maternity and infancy not only enables women to combine motherhood with productive labour but gives them also time for social work. The organisation of nurseries constitutes one of the basic tasks of the protection of

maternity and infancy in the U.S.S.R. The work of the institutions for the protection of maternity and infancy has the object of insuring the mother and protecting the labour of the women; the marriage and family laws are directed to protecting the interests of women; and special institutions have been organised to protect the health of women and children. The peculiarity of the Soviet system of protecting maternity and infancy consists in the fact that *it is directed not only to caring for the health of the women and children (the struggle against infant mortality, medical aid to women at confinement, &c.) but to creating conditions for the participation of women in industry, in the class struggle, in the building up of a new cultural life without any injury to the biological functions of the mother.*

The institutions for the protection of maternity and infancy help pregnant women, and despite the fact that abortions in the U.S.S.R. are not illegal, their number is considerably smaller than in pre-revolutionary Russia, and is constantly decreasing every year. At the same time the birth rate in the U.S.S.R. exceeds that in capitalist countries where abortions are prohibited. This is due partly to the fact that the Soviet Power does everything to give nursing mothers money allowances and holidays from work, and to organise the nursing of infants, but chiefly to the fact that the standard of living of the workers in the U.S.S.R. is rising from year to year, and the number of institutions socialising family life is growing. The help given to expectant mothers in the U.S.S.R. differs essentially from that in the West. In the U.S.S.R. all insured women and wives of insured persons, as well as peasant women, are given medical aid during confinement free of charge. The protection of maternity and infancy begins with protection of female labour. In the U.S.S.R. the maximum working day does not exceed eight hours, while in a number of industries the seven-hour day has already been introduced. In all unhealthy occupations female labour is prohibited. Children below the age of sixteen are not allowed to work in industry.

The social insurance of mothers in the U.S.S.R. is as follows: Every working woman receives a two months' holiday before and two months' holiday after confinement; the birth of a child entitles the working mother, or the wife of the worker who is insured, to a definite allowance at the time of birth, as well as in the course of the first nine months after the birth of the child. The contributions to the social insurance which pays the allowance are made by the employers alone. The employer must allow the working mother half an hour once every three hours to nurse the child.

The Soviet family and marriage laws are based solely upon the interests of the mother and child.

Every attention is given to the development of the system of restaurants at and near the factories as well as in large blocks of dwellings, so as to release the women from kitchen work. A number of mechanical laundries (co-operative and municipal) have been built to free the women from this hard and unhealthy work.

During the last few years the final emancipation of women in the national regions of the U.S.S.R. has made considerable progress and much propaganda is being conducted for the removal of the veil. The drawing of women into the government of the country has found its reflection not only in their work as elected officials in the soviets, trade unions, and co-operative societies, but also in their appointment to responsible offices in Government and public institutions.

The development of collective agriculture which has already affected about 15 million peasant households (55 per cent of the total), frees the peasant woman from her hard and dirty housework, and from the care of the cattle under the primitive conditions of individual farming. *The collective farm in the village opens to the peasant women the same prospects as those facing the working women in the city.* That is why the working peasant women actively participate in this work and frequently act as the leaders of the collective movement.

The five-year plan, the first year of which already lies behind us, marks a gigantic step in the direction of Socialism.

The industrialisation of the country and the collectivisation of agriculture—these powerful levers of Socialist reconstruction—create the necessary basis for the material and cultural advance of the workers of the city and village. New factory cities are being built along Socialist lines. In these cities there will be no individual kitchens, no home washing, &c. In the new houses of the Socialist cities, nurseries and kindergartens will be built in which the child will be taken care of twenty-four hours per day, so that the mother will be able to work and actively participate in the public and political life of the country. Public dining-rooms, public laundries, and public repair shops will finally free the women from domestic slavery. The speedy development of collective agriculture will make it possible to socialise the daily life of the village also, by the end of the five-year period.

Of particular importance in the building of Socialism is the part played by the Co-operative movement. The consumers' Co-operative movement does not limit itself to meeting the economic needs of its members, but serves as an essential organ of the Socialist reorganisation of daily life. In this connection the public dining-rooms, public laundries, co-operative children's institutions, &c., gain a special importance.

At the present time the consumers' Co-operative movement of the U.S.S.R. comprises eight million working women. There are hundreds of thousands of active women Co-operators, many of whom hold leading positions in the Co-operative societies. At the present time between 20-25 per cent of the members of the boards of management of Co-operative societies are women (30 per cent in the cities and 15 per cent in the villages). Important work is being carried on for the preparation of women for responsible positions in the Co-operative movement. This is done by the organisation of special women's schools as well as by drawing women into the general schools.

Female labour under capitalist conditions has always been, and still remains, cheap; women represent the most accessible object of capitalist exploitation.

The present period of capitalist monopoly is characterised by an intensification of the offensive against the workers, taking shape in the form of chronic unemployment, mass lock-outs, a deterioration of working conditions, a reduction of wages, a lengthening of the working hours, a degradation of the social insurance laws, a rise in prices, an increase of taxation upon the masses, an abridgement of the political rights of the working classes, &c.

Extensive capitalist rationalisation and technical progress have led to a constant decrease in the number of workers employed in production. The skilled workers are becoming largely superfluous and considerable numbers of unskilled workers are being employed. *This change in the composition of labour power leads to an unprecedented employment in the capitalist countries of cheap unorganised female labour.*

### III.

The extensive employment of women in industry destroys the old family life, converting the woman from a housewife, restricted to her domestic duties, into a worker of the big capitalist factory, without, however, releasing her from her domestic duties. *Women become an object of double exploitation: They are exploited both in the factory and in the home, and while they are at work their children remain without proper care.*

Lenin has characterised the housework of a woman as "the most inefficient, the most absurd and difficult labour carried on by women. It is petty work, which carries within itself absolutely nothing contributing to the development of the woman."

## IV.

The idea advanced by reformist women's organisations, that women must remain at home and engage in domestic duties and the care of the children, *leads to the enslavement of women to domestic drudgery, their isolation from public and political life, their eternal economic dependence upon their husbands, the impossibility of raising their cultural level. We therefore oppose the employment of women in housework which prevents them from ever gaining real freedom.*

How can working women secure real equality and a "better future?" Is it possible to reorganise the life of working women under capitalist conditions?

All experience shows that no such thing can be achieved.

Under the present ever degrading position of the working class in capitalist countries there can be no talk of allowing women a choice between factory work and housework. The grave economic situation of the working classes forces the women to work in factories, for their families cannot exist without their wages.

Capitalist society, based upon the exploitation of the great mass of the people, is interested in keeping the workers unconscious, and diverting them from public life and the class struggle. The bourgeoisie, which is interested in cheap labour power, makes every effort to keep women in darkness and ignorance.

The attempt of the reformist women's organisations to improve the condition of women by means of compromises under capitalism always has the character of charity. No philanthropic efforts calculated to give the mother an opportunity to remain at home can prevent women from being attracted into industry. *Women will secure real equality only after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the capture of power by the workers and peasants, when the means of production will be taken over by the workers' state.*

## CONCLUSIONS.

The constant degradation of the conditions of the working classes in the capitalist countries leads to the women being drawn into industry. The women's wages are insufficient to cover the general requirements, so that the women are unable to be relieved of their housework while employed in industry. Communal institutions are inaccessible to the working women. Protection of maternity exists mostly on paper. In most cases the economic conditions cause the working women themselves to refuse to take advantage of the rights to which they are

entitled by law, since these rights are not backed by proper material conditions. The protection of infancy, the possibility of leaving the child in the care of someone else during work, &c., are at the present time inaccessible things to the working women in all the capitalist countries. The women are doubly exploited, in the factory and in the home. The reformist activity of the women's organisations touches only the surface of these problems, and owing to their policy of compromises they can never free the women from exploitation. The activity of the reformist organisations leads in reality to the distraction of the women from the real struggle against exploitation.

There are only two roads: the enslavement of women or the revolutionary mass struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist system of exploitation, and the establishment of a Soviet system which places women on a footing of equality with men in every walk of life, gives them real economic independence, finally abolishes the exploitation of labour and leads to Socialism.

Working women in the capitalist countries can secure emancipation only by participation in the struggle of the entire revolutionary labour movement for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the Socialist system.



### III.—State Allowances or Communal Services: Which Do Women Want?

*Prepared for the Committee, International Co-operative  
Women's Guild.*

By EMMY FREUNDLICH (*President*).

THE two preceding papers can only be considered as setting forth the two opposing points of view. The International Co-operative Women's Guild does not adopt either of the two reports as representing its own standpoint on the solution of the problem of how best to relieve the working woman of the threefold burden of being housewife, mother, and industrial worker at the same time. The Guild considers it its duty to give this most important social problem further study and to collect all possible data which may facilitate its solution. It also feels that it is necessary to summarise the various factors which must be taken into consideration when discussing this question in order to ensure a satisfactory debate at the Conference itself and to give a lead to the national organisations as to the lines of their discussion and work.

#### I.

Women of the working classes have never been able to devote themselves *solely* to their children and family; even before modern developments in industry they were obliged to work for the community as well as fulfil their family duties; the wife of the slave and of the serf, the wives of the free peasants during the next stage of evolution, like those of to-day, not only performed the duties of housewives and mothers, but also helped their husbands in their calling.

The craftsmen's wives, too, worked and still work to forward the interests and increase the earnings of their husbands. Formerly, however, the man, too, carried on his trade within the home, and man and wife shared the work between them. But both society and the women themselves only began to realise that women were bearing a double burden when homecrafts became the exception and were replaced in the majority of cases by occupations carried on outside the home, in factories and workshops.

#### II.

The primitive economic system of the past has been replaced during the last few centuries by a commercial system. Food-stuffs are no longer home productions, but have become goods that must be purchased. Under these circumstances the man's wages do not suffice for the family needs, and so women are forced to become wage-earners in order to supplement the family income. Also, since machinery has been able to do work formerly done by human hands, and nervous energy—which even the physically weak possess—has more and more replaced the need for muscular strength, women have become far more useful in industry.

These two tendencies, both of which are the result of a universal social development, have combined to produce a constant increase in the employment of women.

#### III.

Women's work is indispensable to industry in many of its branches. Often women cannot be replaced by men, as these have not the necessary qualifications or aptitude for the kind of work required. For this reason it is quite impossible to forbid all kinds of women's employment. They will also be indispensable in any future society. No organisation could at the present time put a complete stop to the employment of women, nor is there any wish to do so except here and there where people are in favour of forbidding married women's employment. For centuries women have fought for the right to follow the same callings as men; for the right of entry to schools and colleges formerly reserved for men. Now that women have, in a great measure, though not yet completely, attained this freedom, now that many of them are following their chosen careers with enthusiasm and devotion, they will never willingly forego these rights. Nobody forbids a career to young girls even where their father earns a substantial income, so how would it be possible to forbid a career to married women? Employment of women cannot be prevented, because women themselves like to work and many women to-day deliberately prefer their career to marriage. These facts are of decisive importance in trying to solve the problem of how to combine wage-earning with women's other duties.

#### IV.

Experience has shown that the care of the mother for her baby cannot be adequately replaced by any other kind of care; even the very best children's homes cannot take the place of a mother. On the other hand older children can be brought up

quite satisfactorily in homes, although such a bringing-up always lacks something that family life and a mother's care provide. Children brought up even in the best environment, but without a mother, generally feel all their life through that they have missed something valuable and beautiful which other children have enjoyed. Children should have a mother.

## V.

Women have become citizens; they must come into contact with public affairs; must have the opportunity of forming their own ideas and opinions; must be able themselves to influence the constitution of public bodies and of governments. Woman to-day has a new feeling of responsibility. She wants to have the equal right with men to decide questions which are important for the welfare of her children. For this it is essential that she should be active outside the home, not as a wage-earner, but as a collaborator in various institutions and in public life. How would it be possible to forbid women to have a career if their work took the form of voluntary collaboration in public affairs? How could the work of married women be prohibited when they are elected Members of Parliament and appointed to ministerial posts? Women no longer wish to be the passive objects of legislation and the community's care, but to take an active part in determining these. Most women of to-day would not tolerate a return to the limited sphere of the housewife.

## VI.

This striving towards independence leads a woman also to wish to be materially independent of her husband and children. This she can only be if she provides for herself, if she has her own money which she can spend as she pleases. To earn enough money really to provide for her own needs, however, a woman must depend upon her own efforts, and must have a career of her own, for it would appear that no other aid will suffice to give her true economic independence. There is no doubt that the present commercialised economic system of capitalist society, which forces each one to earn in order to live, is responsible for this discord in the life of the woman of to-day. She wants children, she wants motherhood, but she must pay for this by giving up her economic, and in many cases her personal, freedom.

## VII.

Children are not born for the family but for society. As members of the community they must learn to adapt themselves to a wider life than that of the family circle. Factory life, participation in the administration of the State, the gratification of

many personal interests—such as sport, for instance—are only possible in an organised community. Now that the family is no longer the economic unit a different education is necessary, and this education cannot be provided by the mother. For this reason school attendance has become compulsory in all socially progressive countries, and from their sixth year children must spend the greater part of their life outside the house where their mother lives. It appears certain that in time attendance at nursery schools will also become compulsory, as it is generally recognised that children who have been at a kindergarten are better prepared for school life. Social training, training for an organised community—which for Co-operators is particularly essential—this the family cannot provide; it must be gained in the community itself and especially in a community of children.

## VIII.

At the present time efforts are being made to ease, through legislation, the burden that women bear as mothers, housewives, and wage-earners. But legislation differs very much both in the various European countries and in other parts of the world, and the carrying through of the laws can only be assured in those countries which have a trade union organisation strong enough to enforce them. And the resultant problems are still a long way from solution. The Washington Convention on the Protection of Motherhood constitutes the model for all national legislation on this subject, but it is far from having been ratified by all countries, particularly by the most powerful industrial countries. The Convention proposes protection for the mother for six weeks before and six weeks after her confinement, and seeks to ensure her facilities for suckling her child. In countries with compulsory health insurance, mothers usually receive full sick pay during the whole of the time that the law allows them to remain away from work. In some countries they also receive half-pay as a nursing allowance in order that they may be able to remain longer with their children. The International Co-operative Women's Guild has been trying for some time to induce the League of Nations to undertake an exhaustive inquiry in conjunction with the International Labour Office with a view to ascertaining what arrangements exist in the different countries, outside those actually required by law, for the protection of non-wage-earning as well as wage-earning mothers. But there are still problems connected with the assistance to mothers through insurance and legislation which call for solution. In the opinion of many doctors, mothers should remain at home for longer than six weeks before their confinement, and stay longer with the child if he is to have all the care he needs. If a woman is absent for too long a period, however, men are unwilling to take over her work, and the costliness of

longer maintenance allowances is another obstacle to the extension of assistance to the pregnant and nursing mother. For this reason many countries are pressing for the insurance of motherhood, which would bring in its train far-reaching welfare services for mothers and children.

The freeing of women from unnecessary and heavy housework must go hand-in-hand with the relief and protection of motherhood. In this age of machinery it is only in the rarest cases that housewives are able to make use of mechanical labour-saving devices. Think of the millions of women who still do the washing with their own hands, who still cook with old-fashioned smoky ranges! All domestic work could be made very much easier. Here is another important problem for women to solve.

Would they prefer to keep the system where each household does its own housekeeping or would they rather have communal houses where all the families are supplied with meals from one large kitchen and where one central organisation provides for all the family needs? Or, again, would they prefer to keep the small individual houses and make more use of labour-saving devices? Here habit, tradition, and personal inclination count for much. The question of cost, both to the family exchequer and the national exchequer must also be taken into consideration.

These questions directly affect Co-operative organisations, for the housing societies and the municipalities will have to build the houses and equip them with all the mechanical devices which will lighten labour in the small house, and only a housing society which extends its functions to housekeeping will be able to organise a communal housing scheme; so that the organisation of domestic economy affects the whole development of the consumers' movement. Family housekeeping necessitates a different kind of service from communal housekeeping and this will mean the ultimate extension of Co-operative stores into centres of production and service for domestic requirements.

In this connection data have not been collected; indeed in many countries no such experiments have been made. A study of the whole question is of the utmost importance to our national guilds. The life of the family, of women, and of the community as a whole will have to be adapted in accordance with whatever solution is chosen.

## IX.

The economic independence of married women must be sought along various roads. Firstly by giving equal family rights to the wife and the husband. If both are treated as equal representatives of the family, with a like control over the family income, the

economic dependence of married women is mitigated. Through her work as housewife and mother the woman fulfils her share of the duty of providing for the children, just as the man fulfils his by means of the money he earns. This fact is not recognised at the present time in any civil code dealing with family law.

The demand for state allowances for mothers is a completion of the newly-won legal equality, and will enable the mother to provide for her children herself, without help from her husband. In this connection also there are weighty problems to be solved. The prevailing opinion, even among the workers themselves, is that wages should not be determined in accordance with the size of the family, but according to the qualifications of the worker. Otherwise there is a danger that the man with six children, although his labour is not as valuable, will earn more than the highly skilled worker who is indispensable to the industry. For this reason the allowance must be given to the family. But the family is not recognised as a legal "person," and because of this difficulties will arise. In point of fact the allowance ought to be paid to whichever parent is best qualified to bring up the children. This, however, is not always easy to determine satisfactorily, and for this reason, and also because it is only in exceptional cases that a mother deserts her children or fails to look after them properly, we desire that it should be paid to the mother. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this will bring many other problems in its train which will need solution. If women demand complete equality of rights they must be prepared to fulfil equal duties, and this will entail the giving up of many advantages and privileges which they now enjoy, e.g., the payment of separation allowances by husbands, and the granting of pensions to women who have no children.

## CONCLUSION.

There can scarcely be a women's organisation to-day which could decide, without qualification, which development it desires: that mothers should return to their children and give up paid work, or continue their paid occupations and have their duties as housewives and mothers lightened. Women stand between two social epochs, and so, while some wish for the speedy and complete transformation of family life, others would try to bring yesterday and to-day into harmony one with the other. It is for this reason that the two opposing points of view have been contrasted in these two papers, with the object of promoting the study of the whole question. We have made a short summary of the points for and against the different solutions, and we hope that all our affiliated national organisations, and all other national and international organisations who are willing to assist us, will

consider the question in all its bearings. Its study should include the following tasks:—

- (1). The collection of the experiences of different countries which favour one method or the other.
- (2). The discussion of the problems connected with the question, so as to clarify the opinion of women and lay all the arguments on both sides clearly before them.
- (3). The stimulation of public interest in the subject, so that public discussion, particularly in the press, may throw further light on the different points of view.
- (4). The systematic collation of national experiences by the International Guild for the information of all organisations and the world Press.
- (5). Preparations for a conclusive discussion at a future International Women's Conference.
- (6). The publication of printed matter dealing with these problems.

