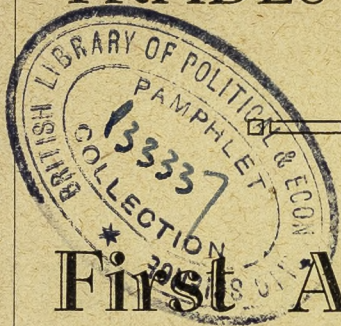


TRADES UNION CONGRESS.



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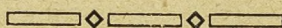
First Annual Women's
Trade Union Conference

TO BE HELD IN THE

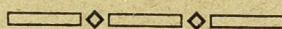
GRAND HALL, TOWN HALL,
— BOURNEMOUTH, —

ON

Tuesday, September 7th, 1926, at 6 p.m.



Miss MARGARET BONDFIELD, M.P.,
Chairman of the Women's Group, will preside.



LONDON:
Co-operative Printing Society Limited, Tudor Street, New Bridge Street, E.C. 4,
and at Manchester and Newcastle.—52632.

1926.

B.C.—26/24.

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6—1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS : Miss M. BONDFIELD, M.P.

6.15—2. PRESENTATION OF GOLD BADGE by Mr. ARTHUR PUGH,
President of the Trades Union Congress.

3. RESOLUTIONS.

6.30—1. "Organising Campaign."

"This Conference of Trade Union women, believing that the interests of women in industry and occupations generally can best be served by bringing them within their appropriate Trade Unions, pledges itself to render all possible support to the campaign for the organisation of women, initiated by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress."

Mover—Mr. A. CONLEY.

Amendments :—

Add: "Further, this Conference urges all Trade Unions to encourage their women members to take a greater share in the administration and control of the union machine, by including women in their delegations, negotiations, and on their governing bodies."—ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN CLERKS AND SECRETARIES.

After the word "of" on line 2, insert the words "men and."

Delete all from the word "generally" on line 2 to the word "appropriate" on line 3, and insert "are indissolubly linked together, urges that mutual effort shall be made to consolidate the ranks of labour by enrolling the women workers in their."

After the word "Unions" on line 3 insert the word "and."—

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION.

7—2. "Women's Trade Union Guilds."

"This Conference advocates the formation of Women's Guilds in connection with Trade Unions for the wives and other women relatives of Trade Unionists, as a means of linking them up with the Trade Union Movement and encouraging the study and spread of the principles of Trade Unionism among women, and recommends the formation of such Guilds on the lines suggested in the Report of the Women's Group of the General Council. Women eligible to join a Trade Union should be required to show their Union Card before being admitted to a Guild to ensure that the Guild Card may not be regarded as an excuse for not joining the Union." (See Model Rules and Constitution on page 11).

Mover—Miss MARY QUAILE.

7.30—3. "Education in Trade Unionism."

"This Conference emphasises the importance and necessity for educating potential workers in the principles of Trade Unions, the value of their Trade Union heritage and their obligations to the Movement, and calls upon all parents and those concerned with the upbringing of young people to see to it that boys and girls on commencing work are linked up with the appropriate union."

Mover—Mr. J. R. LESLIE.

7.45—4. "Equal Pay."

"This Conference asserts that, for the better protection of the general standard of life, industry should pay the full economic price for women's labour, to enable women to occupy a position of self-respect and independence, and to this end demands the establishment of a guaranteed minimum wage and the fixing of rates irrespective of sex."

Mover—Mr. J. W. OGDEN.

Amendments :—

Add : "This Conference further calls upon all Trade Unions to act in accordance with the general policy of the Labour Movement with regard to equality of opportunity irrespective of sex."—ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN CLERKS AND SECRETARIES.

Delete the words "full economic price for women's labour" and substitute "such wages as"—TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION.

8.15—4. DISCUSSION ON THE FAMILY ALLOWANCE SYSTEM :

Opener—Mr. BEN TURNER.

The following memorandum on the Family Allowance System has been prepared for the information of Delegates :—

PART I.

1. The Family Allowance System is now in operation in one form or another in most of the leading European countries as well as in parts of Australasia and America. While in some countries there has been a tendency for the system to disappear during the last three or four years, in other countries, "notably Belgium, France, Germany and Holland, considerable progress has been made in its application during the last few years."* In certain States in the United States and in Australia also the system appears to have come to stay. In all European countries, opinion in the Labour and Socialist Movement has hitherto been against the schemes in operation, though it is said that latterly there have been signs that this attitude is being modified. In Holland, the Workers' Movement participates in the operation of the schemes, as the principle of joint control by workers and employers is generally recognised.

2. The principles underlying the Family Allowance idea may perhaps be illustrated from the experience of Australia. There the system arose out of a campaign for a National Minimum Wage. Elaborate investigations were made to find what would be a fair minimum wage which would be sufficient to maintain all workers and their families on a reasonable standard of living. When the cost of living investigation was completed, the intention was to fix a minimum wage in accordance with the results of the inquiry, and to pay every adult man a wage sufficient to maintain a family. It was found, however, that the total product of industry was insufficient to pay the desired wage. Attention was drawn to the fact that the calculations had assumed each adult man to have dependent on him an average-sized family. This assumption was, of course, not correct. The question was then raised whether the fairer system would not be to allow a wage for each man in accordance with the result of the cost of living report, paying an additional amount for a wife and each child. In this way the desired standard of living could be maintained out of the existing product of industry. This was the way in which Australia approached the problem. Thus instead of £5 16s. a week, which the cost of

* Family Allowances in Practice, p. 2, by H. R. Vibart. P. S. King, 1926.

living studies had shown to be necessary, at the existing prices, to maintain a family of five, it was proposed to regard £4 as being for the man and wife, with 12s. per week for each child. The basic minimum of £4 was thus reached, with additional allowances of 12s. a week for each child. A scheme based on this principle was introduced for Federal Government employees in 1920, but attempts in various States to extend it to industry generally have so far failed.

3. It is often said that the basis of the Family Allowance System is really the familiar Socialist maxim, "To each according to his needs." It is pointed out that under a Socialist régime as under any other, a family of seven would need more than a family of two, and it is therefore common justice to differentiate in the income paid to families of different sizes. It may be said here that Labour opposition hitherto does not appear to have been opposition to the principle, but rather to the way in which it has been applied in the schemes actually adopted.

4. One source of opposition to the principle is the opposing principle of payment according to the value of the work done rather than according to the needs of the recipient. Against this it is argued :—

(a) That it is in point of fact impossible to assess the value of any work except on the basis that the value is what the worker can get for his labour.

(b) That the principle of wages being payment for work done is not violated if the family allowance is paid direct to the mother and not regarded as part of wages.

5. Many people support or oppose Family Allowances on the ground of their alleged effects on the growth of the population. It is often held that the payment of Family Allowances is likely to lead to a higher birth rate. Those, who on general grounds deplore the fall of the birth rate therefore support the Family Allowance System, while those who welcome the falling birth rate oppose the system. On the other hand investigation shows that the system has no appreciable effect on the birth rate. It is pointed out that judging by experience any raising of the standard of living by an increase in income tends to discourage an increase in the birth rate.

6. Criticism has been directed against the system on the ground that it depresses the wage level. It is for this reason very largely that in most countries the allowance is not regarded as part of wages and is paid to the mother direct. Even in Germany and Holland, where the allowance is regarded as part of wages and is paid to the wage earner it appears on investigation that the wage level has not been lowered, but some people argue that it might have been higher than it is had not the system been in operation. It is clear, of course, that the payment of allowances means that the necessary funds come either from profits or from wages, unless the consumer pays through higher prices, or the State contributes from taxation. It will hardly be pretended that in general the necessary funds come out of profits, though some employers claim that this does happen. Where the workers are not strongly organised the funds may come in part from wages, in the sense that the existing aggregate amount is redistributed, giving the single man less and the married man more than was formerly received. The general opinion however, seems to be that under existing schemes the funds come mainly from the consumer in the form of a slightly higher price charged for the goods made.

7. It was at first thought that the payment of allowances would militate against the employment of men with families if the employer had to pay such men a higher total wage. This defect has been surmounted by the establishment of **Equalisation Funds**. This means that every employer under the scheme pays into a central fund so much for every worker employed, married or unmarried, or alternatively, so much of his total wage bill. The allowances are paid from this fund. Since the employer has to pay for all workers alike, there is no inducement for him to prefer single men.

8. In most of the Continental schemes, the funds come entirely from the employers, who in the majority of cases, as we have said, pass the burden on to the consumer. In these cases also, the employers almost invariably have sole control of the schemes. This has been the Socialists' biggest criticism of the whole system. If the employers control the schemes they can penalise their employees, and in France they have penalised workers who have gone on strike.

Certainly from a Labour point of view control by the employers would be a fatal objection to any scheme. In Germany and Holland, as has been said, joint control by committees of employers and employed is the rule.

9. On the Continent the schemes vary very much in the area they cover. In some cases schemes are formed for industries as a whole over the entire country, or for industries for a particular locality. In other cases schemes are set up on a geographical basis, not an industry basis.

Mr. J. L. Cohen has suggested that Family Allowances might be incorporated in the scheme of National Insurance, the funds being raised by contributions from the State, the employers and the workers, as in the case of the existing insurance against unemployment and sickness. While the allowances would be a legal right, and not as in most existing schemes abroad, a voluntary gift, yet at the same time the Labour Movement would have to oppose very strongly the contributory principle. It is part of declared Labour policy that schemes of social insurance, etc., should be non-contributory as far as the workers are concerned.

10. It is also part of general Labour policy that allowances in any social insurance scheme should be a legal right. In many cases in Germany and Holland the allowances, though not a legal right, are laid down in collective agreements.

11. A Special Committee which was set up by the Joint Research and Information Department of the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, issued a report in 1922 on the question of Motherhood Endowment. This Committee advocated that apart from pensions for widowed mothers (a beginning in which has already been made by Act of Parliament), further provision should be made "to ease and equalise the burden of large and small families." It was suggested that it would be advisable to pay "what may be broadly termed Children's Pensions from birth to working life, but this," said the report, "would require for its successful and economic administration considerable changes in the wages system as well as very great increase in taxation, and must, therefore, be held over for later consideration when Labour in power has been able to reorganise and stabilise society on a better basis. Therefore, in this report direct money payments are only recommended to meet special needs of a temporary character, and endowment in kind rather than endowment in money is favoured as the next step."

12. At the National Conference of Labour Women in 1922, when this report was presented, one of the branches moved a resolution opposing the

principle of payment in kind as set forth in the report. "This Conference," said the resolution, "looks forward to such readjustment of the economic structure as shall secure to the mothers of dependent children the direct control of a money income proportionate to their family obligation, and calls upon the Labour Party to establish its policy on these lines." It will be seen that this amendment was an affirmation of the principle of the Family Allowance system. After a long discussion the amendment was defeated, and the main report was adopted as embodying a satisfactory interim policy.

13. Since that time our knowledge and experience of Family Allowance schemes abroad has been very much widened, and this consideration must necessarily affect any discussion of the subject at the present day.

PART II.

14. **France.**—Beginning with Civil Servants, the Family Allowance system has been extended to cover municipal employes in many towns, the railway, mining, and a fairly large number of engineering and other workers. It is estimated that by July, 1925, over 3,000,000 employed persons in France were working under a Family Wage scheme, the total amount paid in allowances and cost of administration being over a thousand million francs a year. A later estimate (February, 1926) gave the number of workers as three and a-half million, or five-sevenths of the industrially occupied population. In 1920 a Bill to make the Family Wage compulsory on all employers was keenly opposed and finally shelved. As a rule the administration of the funds is entirely in the hands of the employers, and there has been much opposition from organised Labour on this account, since the Family Wage system has been used to discriminate against strikers. The allowance has been usually regarded as **not** forming part of wages and as **not** being an allowance to which workers are legally entitled. The amount of the payment is, generally, not adjusted to any real standard of living or to the expense of rearing a child; as a rule it varies from 10 to 25 francs per month for the first child. The majority of the funds give less to the first and second than to subsequent children, and the allowance is in most cases paid direct to the mother. Most of the French schemes cover only a small area, and not an entire industry.

15. **Belgium.**—Post Office workers were the first group to come under a Family Wage system in Belgium, and municipal employes, miners, agricultural, and other workers have since been included in schemes set up. By the autumn of 1925, there were about 600,000 employed persons covered by some 17 funds. This number includes the entire mining industry with over 150,000 employes. The employers tend to regard the allowance as a voluntary gift, and it is usual to pay more for each successive child. At Liege, for instance, the allowance is 10 francs a month for the first child, 20 for the second, 30 for the third, and 40 for the fourth. Most of the funds are administered entirely by the employers.

16. **Holland.**—Like other countries Holland started the system with Civil Servants. Teachers, railwaymen, miners, and others have since been included in various schemes. In several industries (textile, boot and shoe, cigar, baking) collective agreements provide for allowances. In the baking trade the administration in each Commune is in the hands of a Joint Committee of employers and employed. Joint control, in fact, is quite a feature of the system in Holland. Allowances are usually very small and start with the third or fourth child, not with the first. There is a tendency to regard allowances as part of wages, and to look upon their receipt as a right of the employe, and not an act of generosity on the part of the employer. The establishment of

Family Allowance schemes in Holland has been especially marked in the Roman Catholic provinces.

17. **Germany.**—Municipal schemes for Family Wages preceded the setting up of schemes in industry, generally. Railwaymen, Civil Servants, miners, and metalworkers were subsequently covered by schemes. The transport, building and timber industries have hardly been touched by the system as yet. In mining, engineering and chemicals, the system is practically universal, and it is common in the textile and paper industries. There are not, however, many equalisation funds, the present number being only nine, the total number of workers covered by them being 300,000. In Germany the allowance is regarded as part of wages, and not as a voluntary gift by the employers. It is usually provided for in the collective agreements covering the sections concerned. It is common for allowances to continue during short time, and sometimes a larger allowance is paid during these periods. It is common also for a wife or household allowance to be paid, even where there are no children. The amount of the Family Wage is only a small proportion of wages, usually not more than 2 or 3 per cent. Allowances are usually paid to the wage earner, and most funds are administered entirely by the employers.

18. **Austria.**—Civil Servants, Miners, Bank Officials and salaried commercial employees are usually paid Family Allowances.

19. **Czechoslovakia.**—Salaried employees frequently receive Family Allowances but there has been a tendency, fostered by the employers, for the system to lapse among manual workers.

20. **Denmark.**—Civil Servants and Municipal employees receive Family Allowances but in other industries they have practically all disappeared.

21. **Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland.**—Except in some cases for Civil Servants and Municipal employees, Family Allowances have almost disappeared in these countries.

22. **Poland.**—The system is common in the Mining, Petroleum, and Iron and Steel industries, and in the Civil Service.

PART III.

23.—We may sum up by summarising briefly the arguments for and against the system, and by mentioning safeguards that have been suggested in case a scheme were advocated for this country.

AGAINST THE SYSTEM.

24. (a) If regarded as part of wages the payment of allowances tends to depress the wage level. (Para. 6).

(b) The allowances must eventually come out of the pockets of the workers. (Para. 6).

(c) The payment of allowances may be used against the workers in the case, for instance, of strikes, where strikers' families may be deprived of the payments for a period even after the strike is finished. (Para. 8).

(d) The payment of Family Allowances introduces needless complications into negotiations of wage rates and working conditions.

(e) Allowances are generally given in the spirit of paternalism, which is strongly resented by the workers. (Para. 10).

(f) The payment of allowances would cause too great an increase in the population, particularly among the least desirable class of workers. (Para. 5).

(g) The system would encourage men out-of-work not to seek employment so energetically, and would encourage workers not to work so hard at their jobs.

(h) The system would create a great feeling of resentment among single persons, who would be getting less than married persons doing similar work. (Para. 4).

FOR THE SYSTEM.

25. (a) Allowances need not and should not be regarded as part of wages, but should be paid direct to the mother, so that there would be no interference with the wage level. (Para. 6).

(b) If organised labour is strong enough the allowances need not come out of the workers' pockets. They can come from the State or from the consumer. (Para. 6).

(c) If schemes are controlled by workers and employers jointly, or by the State, there can be no discrimination against the workers, and no penalisation in case of strikes. (Para. 8).

(d) If allowances are paid to the mother on a uniform scale and are not regarded as part of wages, the unions need have nothing whatever to do with such allowances in their negotiations.

(e) There is no paternalism or benevolence in a scheme set up by collective agreement or by Act of Parliament, and all schemes should come under one of these two heads. (Para. 10).

(f) There is no evidence that the allowances paid have any effect on the birthrate, and it can hardly be maintained that under any scheme the allowances would be sufficiently large to have such an effect. (Para. 5).

(g) This is a familiar capitalist argument whenever it is proposed to remove any part of the burden of poverty. It is always urged, for example, against Unemployment Benefits.

(h) No resentment would be caused among single men, provided the allowances were paid direct to the mother and not regarded as part of wages. In such cases married men would receive precisely the same wage as single men. Single men could not object to the total income of a married man's family being greater than his own, since the needs of a family are obviously greater than those of a single person. (Para. 3 and 4).

SAFEGUARDS.

26. The following safeguards have been suggested by advocates of the scheme in case it were proposed to introduce the system in this country.

(a) A Family Allowance scheme should be established by Act of Parliament rather than by independent voluntary action of industries or localities. This is particularly the case in a country like Britain, which is well organised on the side of the workers, and which has already in operation National Health and Unemployment Insurance, and Widows' Pensions.

(b) It would be possible to work a Family Allowance System through the same machinery as that now used for Unemployment Insurance, rejecting the

idea of workers' contributions. The total cost could be met either by a contribution of one-third from the employers (to be paid by stamping a card), and two-thirds from the State, or else by the State alone.

(c) A start could be made on the basis of the present Unemployment Insurance Benefits. In other words, there could be a payment of 5s. a week for the wife, and 2s. a week for each child, not only during the unemployment of the man, but continuously, whether he were employed or unemployed. If larger amounts could be obtained so much the better. While it would be possible from the administrative point of view to continue to pay these amounts through the Unemployment Exchanges it would be quite possible, if thought desirable, to pay them through the Post Office instead, as in the case of Widows' Pensions.

(d) A scheme worked in this way, it is said, would avoid the disadvantages of schemes initiated by and controlled by employers, as it would have no connection with wages, it could not depress the wage level any more than Unemployment and Health Insurance have that effect, and it would not interfere in any way with Trade Union negotiations, or with the principle of equal wages for similar work.

MODEL RULES AND CONSTITUTION FOR WOMEN'S TRADE UNION GUILDS.

1. The name of the Guild shall be.....

OBJECTS.

2. The objects of the Women's Trade Union Guild shall be :—

- (a) To study and spread the principles of Trade Unionism among women in co-operation with the Unions.
- (b) To seek to organise women in their appropriate Unions.
- (c) To afford means of social intercourse for the wives and other women relatives of Trade Unionists.
- (d) To render such assistance to any of the members as may be necessary.
- (e) To co-operate with other women workers and to help in the cause of the workers generally.

CONSTITUTION.

3. The Guild shall consist of women who are

- (a) Wives or other relatives of Trade Unionists not eligible for membership of Trade Unions.
- (b) Associate members (i.e., women who are members of their appropriate Trade Unions).

NOTE.—women eligible for Trade Union membership will be required to show their Trade Union card before being admitted to the Guild.

CONTRIBUTIONS.

4. There shall be an entrance fee of.....and an annual subscription of.....

OFFICERS.

5. The Guild shall formulate its own rules for the election of officers, and Executive Committee to carry out the work of the Guild in accordance with the objects outlined above.

