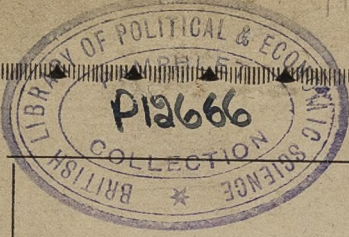


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ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL POSITION  
OF WOMEN IN THE  
CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC.



IMPRIMERIE DE LA »POLITKA«



*I thank very much to all my friends who have helped me in this work and to all corporations and their representatives who have given the necessary material at my disposal.*

*Prague, May 26th 1920.*

*F. Plamínková.*

HQ 1121 (437)

Women in Czecho-Slovakia.



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC.

### I.

Our nation is democratic in its character and filled with love of justice. The whole course of Czech history shows the fine character of Czech women, their goodheartedness, their fine relations to the men, the esteem and hearty collaboration between both sexes.

We have a number of mythical and historical women-characters showing this sound kernel of the people; so the three mythical daughters of Krok: *Libuša*, princess and prophetess in one person, who is believed to have founded Prague; *Teta*, a priestess and *Kazi*, a physician. *Saint Ludmila*, who propagated Christianity, and the prince's daughter *Doubravka* who married a Polish king and so brought Christianity to Poland. Further we may remember many queens and daughters of our royal families, who were great benefactresses of the people. You know *Dagmar*, queen of the Danish king Valdemar, whose memory still lives in the songs of Danish peasant; you know *Anne*, queen of the English king Richard, who was renowned for her good heart and saved by her prayers the life of Wycliff and of the rebellious peasant leaders in the rebellion against the English aristocracy; she was a real mother to the English poor.

The Hussites are famous in the whole world. In this most glorious epoch of Czech history—15th century—the Czech woman was as educated (Aeneas Sylvius, who became later the pope Pius II wrote that every old woman in Tabor knew the Scriptures better than an Italian priest), as full of enthusiasm for the reformation of moral life and as determined to lay down even her life in defence of the known truths and for freedom of thought, as ever was any man. She accompanied her husband into the battle with the whole family, when it became necessary to defend the country and religious freedom.

Bohemian Brethren — a church community, who took their origin in the XVth century and were famous for the purity of their life, their piety and nobleness of mind — educated their women to the same extent as men and in the same schools. The last bishop of this church, whose name became famous throughout the world: *John Amos Komenský (Comenius)* — the great teacher of nations, declared in 1628 that school should be opened to the young people of both sexes



and proclaimed especially in regard of the education of women: "No reason can be given, why women should be excluded from the learning of languages and other wisdom. For they are created in the image of God as men are and will also take part in the Grace and the Kingdom to come; they are equally gifted with mind capable of grasping the wisdom and often more than we capable of seizing the fine shaft of wit; they equally can turn their mind to great things as the administration of people, regions, estates and even whole kingdom and they also are able to give advice to kings and princes, to act as doctors, prophetesses and be instruments in the almighty hand of our Lord, when He wishes to give warning or inflict punishment upon priests and bishops. Why then should we not grant them more than A B C and drive them away from further learning and books?" So wrote a Czech on the women question three hundred years ago.

But this opinion did not prevail. The Czech nation was then already subjugated to slavery. In 1526 the Habsburgs were called to the throne of Bohemia and ever since aimed at the destruction of the peculiar character of Czech civilisation, of Czech personality and endeavoured to break down this peculiarity by a foreign mind, recognizing only the argument of the sword and of violence, where Czech have known science, arts and education. Books were burnt by heaps, educated men and women executed or banished, estates of Czech nobility confiscated and given to foreign hirelings, who helped to subjugate the Czech nation striving for freedom and liberty. We cannot even tell how alien and averse was the spirit, which ruled over the Czechs for 300 years. And in this spirit of violence there was no place for justice to women and so we saw at last, that girls were excluded from Highschools, that they had to fight for their right to visit craftschoools, universities etc.

It was necessary to mention this little portion of history. Only those who know Bohemia as it was in its independence before Habsburg rule, can appreciate the development which has taken place in the Czechoslovak Republic since the revolution of the 28th of October 1918. To all others the liberties with which the Czechoslovak nation invests the people, including the women, may seem too sudden and instable for the future.

In fact all laws passed by the revolutionary Assembly do justice to woman and recognize no difference between her and man. Of course not all Austrian laws could have been supplanted by new ones, in this short time. Therefore we find besides laws perfectly just to the woman, some others which limit her freedom. But by the manner in which the Legislature has proceeded so far we may express our confidence that soon there will be no exceptional laws for women in the Czechoslovak Republic.

It remains to be seen how far the pressure of the old Austrian, malitarist antifeminist views has corrupted the soul of the average Czech man, that means, to what extent it will be possible to turn into practice the justice expressed by progressive law — makers for not everything can be done by simple law-regulations.

To-day we are in the stage of re-birth of society in the Czechoslovak Republic. We shall therefore discuss every problem as it is reflected by the recent past, by the present state of affairs and by the prospects in future.

The basis of all economic and to a certain extent social relations in our republic as well as in old Austria, is given by the Schooleducation — by the certificates of ability. When the women had no possibility of attending some schools they could not apply for positions in respective professions.

Before the revolution they were excluded from the study of law (theology is closed to them even now), the study of technical sciences, from the study of arts and agriculture. High schools (grammar and technical schools serving as preparation for universities) were for a long time closed to girls. In spite of strong protests from women, the government established special schools of a lower degree for girls — lyceums. By *selfhelp* Czech women made it possible for their daughters to prepare for the university: In 1890 the Czech poet *E. Krásnohorská* founded a society grammar school for girls which was the first in whole Austria. She found a follower in *Zdenka Wiedermannová* who founded a girl's grammar school in Moravia. All this was naturally too little for millions of Czech women.

Only in 1910 were the girls allowed to form 5<sup>0</sup>/<sub>10</sub> of the total number of pupils (i. e. 6—8 at most in a class. Therefore the partial opening of universities to women (1897 philosophical branch, 1900 the medical branch) had only a very small significance.

Technical and commercial schools have also been made accessible to girls only these last ten years, so that they were unable to claim a higher position in trade and industry.

The Revolution of 1918 opened all schools to girls. In the present they attend the same schools as the boys and the question is not yet decided whether the education shall be carried on in common schools, where both sexes would be together, or whether the girls shall have separate schools. A special line of women education, besides the girls craft schools, housekeeping — and cookeryschools is represented by the schools for mothers, maid — servants and governesses, which are communal enterprises and have been called into life by women — members of town councils.

Also all handicrafts and trade are accessible in our country only to those who can produce a certificate of apprenticeship (some craftschoools are also entitled to give this certificate to their pupils). It is hardly ten years since girls-apprentices might be accepted also in branches of trade others than those expressly occupied by women (as millinery, dress-making etc.).

To-day there is no opposition in principle against girls apprenticeship in handicrafts; only the hygienic condition of workshops require more precaution, where girls are concerned; therefore it is more difficult to find a workshop suitable for a girl than for a boy. We hope, that the expert-commissions which have been established, will see to it, that the apprentices whether boys or girls, shall not live in conditions pernicious to their moral or physical development.



To recapitulate the whole chapter:

In upbringing and education — general as well as technical — the Czechoslovak Republic, ever since its beginning recognizes no difference between boy and girl.

## II.

### OCCUPATION OF WOMEN.

Condition of women's employment could not be changed as rapidly in the new era of liberty because it requires a longer preparation which in certain callings women under the Austrian regime could not acquire. This was especially true with government and municipal positions where the study of law or high school education was a necessity up to this time. There are no women at the head of any official department or office. Only recently a few women were appointed as deputy heads of local government offices. As court officials or attorneys at law there are no women, but in the juvenile court some women hold positions and according to the law passed in 1919 women are allowed, to sit on a jury. Some of them are at the head of social welfare bureaus. The president of Czechoslovak Red Cross is a woman. Women are appointed guardians of orphans and illegitimate children and also they are at the head of orphans asylums. Government and municipal women employment offices are headed by women. We have women in government commercial departments and shortly women will be introduced into the police service. Women hold positions as special instructors and officials in government departments. Women were appointed to these positions only since the republic was proclaimed.

In the Austrian era the employment of women in official positions was a case of absolute autocracy. Women with corresponding education, employed in leading positions were considered more or less as office help even there, where was no special status for them. The revolution and the entry of women into parliament and municipalities ended this autocracy, amended old wrongs. Now the women are considered in public services according to their qualities.

The principals of schools sometimes even of kindergardens are mostly men. There are since 1870 women teachers on municipal and high schools for girls, but according to an old law, women could not teach boys older than 8 years. As professors in girls lyceums women were introduced in 1904. There is one woman director in a high school. As there is at the present time a great scarcity of men-teachers, women are temporarily appointed as teachers and professors in public and high-schools, but the women demand that this positions should be made permanent. In teachers calling, which is well paid, women have succeeded in keeping an equal footing with the men, but there is a considerable antifeminist feeling on the men's side.

In universities there are so far no women professors or docents but they are not excluded in principle as already there are some women assistants of university professors. Positions of public and high school inspectors are filled with men but there are some women inspectors of kindergardens and industrial schools for

girls. To the priesthood or as preachers no women are admitted. There are many practical women doctors of medicine but they are very rarely nominated as school-doctors or doctors of sick funds, where women are insured. Their juridical and financial position is equal with men's. We have no women engineers, surveyers or constructors, and only one woman architect.

Women are now freely elected to legislatures, school boards, consulting bodies of ministry and similar honorary functions and that on the same conditions as men.

To summarise: Women in principle are to-day not excluded from any government or municipal service and position, if they have the required qualification. In practice they are still not accepted in certain callings, especially for transportation service on railroads and street cars. In the struggle for existence with men women are usually on the losing side especially in the better paid positions. In the majority of bodies the deciding influence rests still with men on account of their numbers but the Czechoslovak woman is constantly gaining in power in her aspirations to be on an equality with men. In private offices, banks offices of industrial enterprise etc. conditions are very different. In some of them women are accepted very willingly in others only from sheer need and that only for services less important: stenographers, translators to foreign languages any like positions are positions women usually hold in them.

The same conditions prevail in commerce, industry and in manual labour. During the war women proved their ability especially in the iron industry, where their quickness and readiness displaced the men's bodily force. After the war women were dismissed from most of the war industry on the men's demand, what was based on the fact, that women had not learned the trade. Where women are still employed in industry it is only as helping hands.

According to the ancient Austrian rules, women are not allowed to work in industry, where the chemical preparations and white lead is used, in painting work, in printing shops, in lithography and the like. Mining is forbidden to them. Women can not be employed in night work (convention of Berne).

At the international Convention of Labour, held in Washington last year the woman delegate from the Czechoslovak Republic, was defending our position that there ought to be an individual liberty for woman to chose any kind of work she likes, of course with sufficient hygienic precautions.

Our Republic in the first days of its existence legalized the 8 hours working day (resp. 48 hours week). That was one of the most precious gifts of the new State to working people, especially to women. From this law are excepted servants and the like, but those have a 12 hours resting time guaranteed by the same law as well as 18 hours resting day on Sundays.

The working conditions of women in the republic are in the hands of Labour unions, which are entitled to negotiate for them with employers. Men were organized a long time ago, but only with the coming of the Republic their organizations have found the full liberty of action and are respected by employers.



In the conditions of women's employment, which usually is only temporary, mostly only for time before woman marries, there could not be a very close bond of women with their organizations and this is a great drawback in the struggle for better condition of working women.

The fact is that the branches in which only women worked and in which they were not organized till quite recently, were in a very bad state in respect of legal and material circumstances, and that too, even in the public services. Such were the women hand-work teachers, teachers of languages in the schools, kindergarden teachers, teachers of sewing and similar departments in girls industrial schools etc.

The republic has removed the worst forms of injustice in a worthy manner. The conditions of the first two categories have been amended effectively by law and further amendments affecting others are in course of preparation.

In other directions too we shall see the same thing, namely that the branches of so-called exclusively woman's-work, household work, domestic service, sewing, sieve-making, typewriting, office work, unskilled labour in factories etc. are branches in which the conditions are miserable.

The fault lies with the women for not organizing themselves and for not thus giving force to their justifiable demands. Lately the organization of women in this respect has much improved in proportion.

#### WAGES IN SOME BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY.

Weekly earnings of women in Prague in October 1919 in 5 different groups of industry:

	w a g e s:	
	maximum	average
Chemical industry	63 K	41 K
Metal	64 K	45 K
Stone	85 K	44 K
Leather	68 K	42 K
Wood	90 K	60 K

Some factories made supplementary payments to skilled and married women. The wages are always  $\frac{1}{3}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  lower than those earned by men.

#### MAID-SERVANTS.

Collective agreement from 25th of February 1920 stipulates: 12 working hours a day; whole board and the following salary per month.

Girls from 14—15 years for lighter work K 30.—.

" " 15 years upwards K 40.—.

Older women, according to work K 40—120. Housekeepers K 180.—.

Nurses in private houses get board and K 10—20 day for 12 hours work.

If they have to be on duty for 24 hours, then they must have 3 hours rest. A new order of the Ministry for National defence grants to trained nurses in military hospitals K 400.— a month and full board; untrained nurses K 300.— and board. Training required: 2 years.

#### CLERKS.

Collective agreement; salary equal for both sexes, for the same grade of education.

*Apprentices and female assistants* to 17 years of age:

1<sup>st</sup> year K 100.—, 2<sup>nd</sup> year K 150.—, 3<sup>d</sup> year K 200.— etc.

#### GRADUATES OF COMMERCIAL SCHOOLS:

1<sup>st</sup> year K 300.—, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  year K 350.—, 2<sup>nd</sup> year K 400.— etc.

*Assistants* (saleswomen, cashiers, untrained and over 17 years of age.)

1<sup>st</sup> year K 300.—, 2<sup>nd</sup> year K 350.— 3<sup>d</sup> year K 400.— after 5 years service K 700.—.

Shop assistants after apprenticeship: 1<sup>st</sup> year K 400.— 10<sup>th</sup> year K 1050.—, married men and women 10<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub> supplement; supplement for lodgings: single K 400.—, married K 800.—.

Bookkeepers, correspondents etc. in private enterprises are trying to bring about a collective agreement. In some branches they had obtained already a good result.

Office girls, female stenographers and typists receive K 200.—, K 500.—, bookkeepers K 600.—, K 1000.—, rare exceptions even more.

Leading office employees K 1000.—. (Men are far better paid.)

#### EMPLOYEES IN METAL INDUSTRY.

Collective agreement from 1920.

Basis: kateg. a) 1<sup>st</sup> year K 8.760.—, 21<sup>st</sup> year K 16.550.— etc.

b) " " K 6.720.—, " " K 13.200.— "

c) " " K 6.240.—, " " K 12.300.— "

d) " " K 5.160.—, " " K 9.300.— "

e) " " K 3.960.—, " " K 7.800.— "

women 10<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub> less.

Supplements 40—50<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub> according to the factory.

#### BANKS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTES, ETC.

Collective agreement from 1920.

1.) With completed education K 2.400.— for beginners; in the 35<sup>th</sup> year K 14.000.—.

2.) With education not completed K 1.600.— for beginners; in the 35<sup>th</sup> year K 8.800.—.

1.) Supplement for lodgings: women 15<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub>; after 6 years service same as men: 30<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub>.

2.) Supplement for lodgings women 15<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub>; after 3 years service same as men: 30<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub>.

Special supplement for the high cost of living; yearly supplement and supplement for clothing K 1.600—8.000.

Women receive the same salaries as men, except the supplement for lodgings as above.



STATE OFFICIALS, PROFESSORS, TRACHERS.

Law 1919. Women receive the same treatment as men.

Basis: K 2.808—28.008, function supplement 35—50%, maximum K 4.000—.

Supplement for the high cost of living K 900—6.720.

Temporary supplements for clothing:

*Office-servants*

K 2.100—4.500.

*Employees*

K 2.208—4.908.

function supplements 35—50%, with maximum K 3.000—, supplements for dearer cost of living.

Those who are in the service of the Country of Bohemia, or the municipality of Prague receive higher salaries, than those in the state service. Women after some struggle have been placed in all these services on a par with men, both in regard to salary and legal position.

Even in the appreciation of women labor in private employment, we see under the Republic a notable improvement.

We have not yet an office for the regulation of labor conditions and wages, but the Ministry for Social Welfare has often and with good results acted as mediator between employers and employees' organisations.

Both bank-employees and bankers directors and have agreed, that women shall have equal rights and salaries, if their qualification is equal to that of men (only the supplement for lodgings differs.) It only remains to insist, that women should be admitted to the important branches of business (Exchange, Bonds, etc.) and when sufficiently qualified appointed as head-clerks and permitted to sign per pro.

Collective agreements of other trades, for instance metal industry, show, that women receive a salary 10% lower than men; it is not a big difference but still the moral effect is a very disagreeable one. In the upper classes the salaries are nominally equal, but then there are no women.

*The workers* are mostly members of socialist parties and these have "equal rights for women" in their programme. But the collective agreements do not always express this principle. So the workers' organisations of the whole world, at their next congress should declare, that they not only claim the right for themselves, but that they give it in the same degree to women. This would be a stimulus to all those, who for their own personal, egoistic interests forget the great principle of social justice.

Collective agreement in the machine industry of Prague, shows the following distressful figures:

I.	II.	III.
Male assistants:	Women assistants:	Skilled women i. e. those, who have worked for at least 3 years in the factory.
younger than 18 years K 1'60 — 1'80	younger than 18 years K 1'10	younger than 20 years K 1'30
18—20 years K 1'80—2'—	older than 18 years K 1'10 — 1'50 per hour.	older than 20 years K 1'50
older than 20 years K 2'— 2'70 per hour.		especially qualified K 1'65 per hour.

The supplement for high cost of living has been raised by K 43— for men and only by 24— for women. Have then the women (even widows and mothers) not the same hunger and the same need to be clothed etc. as men?

Collective agreement of the Prague trade union in the industry of chemicals, building-trade, and brick-yards, stipulates:

assistant-workers up to 17 years K 1'80 per hour

" " 17—19 " K 2'70 " "

" " 19—60 " K 3'— " "

and women, whether young, efficient, mothers of children, widows or old and weak K 2'—.

Only too often we find in the agreements the following sentence: „Women (without definition of age and efficiency) and youngsters up to 18 years — the same salary“.

Collective agreement in the book-binding trade, shows, that besides women workers, who have gone through apprenticeship, there are some untrained workers, who naturally get lower wages, but men *must* go through the apprenticeship and then receive quite a sufficient salary.

Except special cases of great need, it should not be allowed that young people go into the trade without training. It would be better to support families, that they might give their son or daughter into apprenticeship, than to permit young people to be miserable for their whole life. But all the differences mentioned between men's and women's wages are steady diminishing. Socialism is not only propagated, but also carried out in practice. Nevertheless in the industry, women still have much to work and to struggle for before they attain the same footing as men.

MOTHERHOOD AND WAGE-EARNING OF WOMEN.

The right of salaried women to marry was only partially recognized: The women-teachers in the state-schools, could marry and received a paid half-years leave of absence; but they were not very numerous. On the other hand, thousands of women-teachers in the primary schools, who were paid by the different countries (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia) were not allowed to marry. Women employees of the state only received the permission to marry a short time before the revolution and then on their marriage they lost their right for pensions. In the higher categories of private employees it was also not welcome that the women should marry; banks also insisted on the coelibate of their women employees.

Only women workers, obliged to work hard, were not prevented from having a family.

The revolution brought here also a radical change. Teachers celibacy has been abolished by law. For its abolition a part of women-teachers led by F. Plamínková worked hard ever since 1904. In cases, when the woman-teacher by her marriage gives up her situation as teacher, she receives an indemnity (less



than 5 years service  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a year's salary; 5—10 years service a whole year's salary, 10—15 years  $1\frac{1}{2}$  year's salary and after 15 years service 2 year's salary.) Orphans are entitled to support in both cases, when the mother (teacher) or father dies. During pregnancy and after the birth the mother receives leave of absence according to physician's advice.

The celibacy of state employees has not yet been abolished by law but they are permitted to marry. The ministry declared, that the new regulation not only will not prevent the women-employees from marrying, but will provide all arrangements that they will be able to marry.

With communal and bank employees the celibacy has been also *via-facti* abolished. For motherhood it is essential, that the law of 1919 extends the insurance for illness to all workers—including field and house workers. Now all working women have the right to be supported during their motherhood; for 39 weeks before accouchement they are entitled to medical treatment once a week; after accouchement they must not be employed for 6 weeks in any industrial or commercial enterprise; in mines, on special permission of the physician, they might be employed already after 4 weeks. In case of illness they are entitled to further treatment. Woman in childbed receives on the average 60% of her usual wages; and for 12 weeks, 30% of her wages, if she feeds herself her child. This support may be extended by the sick-fund to 20 weeks; also the administration of the sick-fund may pay to the woman a special support for 4 weeks before her delivery, if the physician decides, that she is unable to work. The sickness-insurance of working mothers and fathers makes possible the insurance of whole families, including all other women in the family, which provides for their eventual motherhood. This facultative insurance is in use especially in great centres. The government of the Czechoslovak republic is preparing a reorganization of sickness-insurance, which will include also insurance for motherhood.

During the war it became usual to pay a special supplement to all workers who were married and had children; this really means a support of motherhood, only the money goes into the hands of the man and not of the woman, who must carry the whole burden of parent's duty. Considering the fact, that not only an employee with children is in a far more difficult economic position, than if he has no children, but that the same might be said of an artisan, mechanic, and especially of a widow with children or an unmarried mother, it becomes evident that the supplement for children cannot be calculated by man's wages, but that there must be introduced a uniform support of all mothers.

In the Czechoslovak republic and especially among the Czechoslovak people, there are on the average few women, who are not obliged to earn living, though they do the housekeeping for their family. In Prague alone among a total population of 220,000, there were according to the census of 1910, 88,000 women working for their living. It is self-evident, that a way must be found to make it easier for women to do their duties as mothers, housekeepers, and wage-earners. One of the aids would be the so-called „one-kitchen-houses“. It is erro-

neous to think that this houses (with only one kitchen and laundry for a number of families) would destroy family life. On the contrary, they should make a comfortable family life possible even then, when the woman must aid her husband in earning the living. The Prague City Council — at the instigation of its woman member — has ordered the construction of eight such houses, to which there will be attached a child's home, reading room and play-ground. Other cities are following this example.

#### LAW ON HOME-WORK OF 12<sup>th</sup> OF DECEMBER 1919.

Who knows how completely the home-workers were in the power of their employers and contractors, how arbitrary and ridiculous were the wages (a weaver in Krkonoše [Riesengebirge] district received in prewar time K 5— for a week of diligent labor), who saw the lodgings, where husband, wife and children were working on hairnets, laces or buttons from early in the morning till late in the night, in a bad atmosphere and bad light; who saw all this, must welcome the revolutionary law on home work as a deliverance. Home-workers are now insured against illness and the women also for motherhood. Workshops are placed under the supervision of state authorities; employers must keep records of all employees, of every piece of work, of the wages and conditions of delivery etc. Working conditions must be hung out in the rooms, where work is being distributed. So the workers were delivered from the arbitrary will of blood-suckers.

#### CHILDREN'S WORK.

This sorrow of every woman's heart, has been brought to discussion at the very beginning of one young political liberty.

The new law admits the employment of children, only so far, as their health is not endangered and their physical and moral development not hindered, or their duty to attend schools interfered with. Children from 10—12 years of age may only be employed in agriculture, in other industries only after their 12<sup>th</sup> year. In days on which they have to go to schools, the children must not be employed for more than 2 hours; in their free days for not more than 4 hours; in agriculture and housekeeping 6 hours.

On Sundays and on holidays children may not be employed. Further regulations secure to children freedom from night work, protection with regard to wages, and set out a list of industries in which children are prohibited from working.

*Austrian family law* — is still in force but its reform will certainly be carried out in the very near future. The so-called „paternal authority“ i. e. the right given by law to the father as head of the family, remains intact to this day.

The chief principles of family law so far as the wife is concerned are these: Both parties are under an equal obligation to fulfil conjugal duties, to be true to the marriage vows and to behave to each other in a due and proper manner.

The man is the head of the family, he superintends the home and is bound in return to support his wife properly, and to represent her in public life.



The wife adopts her husband's name. She is bound to live with her husband, to help him in farming or business, to keep the house in order and to see to the execution of her husband's orders.

In marrying a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic, she herself adopts the citizenship of this State. As long as husband and wife live together, the husband has the right of using the dower. If the dower is paid in money, it becomes entirely the propriety of the husband.

After the husband's death, the dower returns to the wife; after the wife's death, it goes to her heirs.

Community of goods is considered as a contract between husband and wife, in case one of them dies. The survivor gets one half of the common fortune.

The fortune acquired during married life remains his or her propriety. If it is not sure, which of them acquired it, the increase of goods is considered as belonging to the husband.

If there is no definite arrangement to the contrary, it is supposed that the wife authorized her husband to be her legal representative, with regard to her fortune; he manages it and is not bound to render account of the gains of this fortune, only of the capital.

The widow has the right of *getting a pension*, if her husband possessed this right. (In case a pensioned functionary marries, his wife does not possess this right.)

*The father* is bound, in the first place, to support his children, as long as they are not able to support themselves. *The mother* cares especially for the physical health of her children.

The right of determining the choice of the children's profession, of managing their fortunes and of representing them in public life is derived from the paternal power.

*Illegitimate children* do not possess the same rights as legitimate ones. They do not adopt the father's name, are not his heirs, and have no part in any other advantage after their father; they get the family-name of their mother. An illegitimate child may claim to be supported by its parents, to be brought up by them, and to make them provide for it according to their financial situation.

The illegitimate child is not placed under the power of its father, but is represented by a guardian.

(The reform of the right of illegitimate children is in preparation).

A *guardian* may be either a man or a woman who is in full possession of his or her rights. (Until 1914, women were excluded from guardianship.) A married woman may accept a guardianship only with the approval of her husband. A man is bound to accept a guardianship, a woman may refuse it (except a mother or grandmother). We have many *professional guardians*, as the voluntary ones did not always fulfill their duties satisfactorily. Since 1916, *general guardians* have been instituted; these are organs of public administration, on whom the duties of guardianship for every illegitimate child of the respective district

pass automatically. (The midwife reports the birth of every illegitimate child directly to the general guardian, so that the child gets at once its legal protector.) This institution is being put into practice only now. General guardians may also be women. For the further protection of these children, there are the *guardianship councils*, composed of representatives of the church, the school, the community and the social works. Their duty consists of investigating whether the minor suffers physically or morally, and of seeing to the removal of the cause of suffering. Many members of these councils are women.

The provisory National Assembly has accomplished at least one improvement in the existing family law by the reform of the *matrimonial law*.

By this law, passed on the 22nd of May 1919, the *indissolubility of marriage* has been abolished. (Admissible causes of divorce are: adultery, conviction for crime [duration of imprisonment at least three years], malicious desertion, intrigues, illtreatment, debauchery, mental disease, dissent, incompatibility of temper). Divorced people are allowed to contract new marriages. If at the divorce there has been no special arrangement concerning the children, these will be assigned to the father or to the mother according to which of them offers a better guaranty for the children's welfare. The new law provides two forms of marriage, the civil and the religious one, both having the same legal results; the citizens may choose either of these two forms.

The law does not recognize any hindrance in the priest's celibacy, therefore the marriage of the Catholic priest is valid before the law. Furthermore, the paragraph stating that the marriage between Christians and persons of another religion or those without a confession is illegal has also been abolished.

These changes are *very important for the wife and the children*. In such matrimonial cases, wife was considered a concubine and the children as illegitimate, according to the Austrian matrimonial law.

After separation as after divorce, the wife and children have the same right of getting alimony.

#### PROSTITUTION.

Austria had introduced and favoured the so-called „*reglementation*“. The keeping of brothels was unconditionally prohibited by the penal law, but in spite of this legal enactment, the police granted licenses for their keeping. At present, the competent factors of the Czechoslovak Republic are in favour of complete abolition. The women deputies of the national socialistic party presented to the National Assembly a very radical motion against prostitution, which became the subject of an investigation, and caused great alarm among the libertines. The Ministry of Public Health has elaborated a comprehensive study and a motion for a law against the „*reglementation*“, for the abolition of brothels, the compulsory submitting to medical examination and treatment at public expense, the punishment of procurers, the building of institutions for prostitutes etc. The new law prosecutes male as well as female offenders.



The law is not to enact the compulsory report of sexual diseases in this respect, it upholds the right of medical men to keep professional secrets. The women workers, however, fight with all their might against these two points of compromise, because efficient protection, cure and control are impossible without compulsory report. It is only by a *thorough attempt* to solve the problem that a healthy general education can be accomplished, and that the whole depth of the evil and danger for the future of the nation can be clearly shown.

Finally, not only the offenders but also innocent people may be contaminated by such diseases; thus the report of contagion is not necessarily a proof of guiltiness.

Most probably the women deputies will have to fight strongly in order to bring about the amendment of the motion which by its claim of abolition represents a tremendous step forward.

#### WOMEN'S WORK AND THE WORK FOR WOMEN.

It is not so very long ago that the social work of women in Bohemia was of little importance. Former Austria did not favour woman's work; and thus, with the exception of a few strong women who had the courage to pursue their own way, in spite of public disfavour, women's activity was limited to so-called charity-teas, garden-parties, entertainments, public distributions of gifts, on which occasions the ladies of „the best“ families allowed their hands to be kissed by the receivers of the gifts — and that was nearly all. Serious women avoided joining in that sort of work.

The spirit of rebellion against Austria brought some life into that stagnation. Women ceased to be passive. For the sake of the good cause, they either joined the men, or invited them to cooperate with the women, or, if necessary, worked alone. And work abounded! After its fall, Austria had left material and intellectual misery in our country; hunger and moral oppression drew the men to thievery and crime, the women and girls to prostitution; the children scarcely resembled human beings, they were poor wretches, underfed, tuberculous, scrofulous, rachitic and suffering from many other diseases. Disunion of families, dislike for work, a complete moral indifference — those were the consequences of the war. At that time, a group of enthusiastic men and women, conducted by the woman writer *Růžena Svobodová*, created a gigantic action, the „*České Srdce*“ („Czech Heart“), in order to diminish the fatal results of lack of food. This association provided food and clothes to thousands of poor children; during the summer, it sent 20.000 children of Prague to the country as „national guests“; it organized children colonies, and founded children homes. In doing this, it saved thousands of lives to the new State. In this respect, women's work was indeed admirable.

The *Czechoslovak Red Cross* has been constituted in the new Republic. Its president is Dr. Alice Masaryková, the soul of Czechoslovak social work. This woman has a deep understanding for the indigent, together with an exceptional talent for organizing and efficiency; she is endowed with a remarkable perspicacity,

and knows how to arouse in men and women the interest for social work and collaboration. She is an expert in social hygiene. Men and women work with her without jealousy. They all try to alleviate the suffering caused by the war, especially in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia an extensive action is being prepared now, in order to help the families of legionaries.

A great change has occurred in women's associations. The aristocrats and high ladies, being of foreign origin, have disappeared, and their places were taken by women of all classes to whom social care is an inward need. At the „cribs“, in the associations providing clothes to children and adolescents, in the societies for the protection of mothers, the rich woman, disposing freely of her day, works together with the poor mother of six children awaiting the return of her eldest daughter who, having finished her wage-earning day's work, will come and sew children's linen till eleven o'clock at night. Certain associations begin to realize the necessity of centralisation; they are uniting and gaining a wider survey.

As soon as American initiative created the *Czechoslovak Relief Action for children*, it found a great understanding among Czechoslovak women. Among 15.000 voluntary workers, the majority are women, who are helping in the local committees and public kitchens.

But what requires much harder work, is to *weed out prostitution*, or at least to diminish it among young girls. This is the aim of the association called „*Záchrana*“ („Rescue“) trying, together with other societies, to rescue girls from injurious influences and surroundings, building homes, where threatened girls may find ready protection, reforming the protective missions at the railway-stations concerned with the guidance of girls coming to Prague to find a position there.

An undertaking unique in its kind is the organisation of educational associations in Prague; girl-students bring together groups of neglected children who avoid going to school or who are backward so that they cannot follow ordinary school-teaching, and instruct them in the children's own homes, having thus the opportunity of studying the social surroundings of the child, and of exercising more influence upon their pupils. In summer, the children work in the open air, (they dig, plant etc.) or they play on the playgrounds.

An extremely important part of to-day's social care is the extensive institution of „*Ochrana matek a kojenců*“ („Protection of Mothers and Nurslings“) which is caring now for 60% of all the nurslings of Bohemia, without counting the other countries of the Czechoslovak Republic. It has its special offices where medical care is given to mothers and nurslings; it controls the development of the nurslings during two years by sending visiting nurses into the families; it educates the mothers for their task by lectures and newspapers, and protects them in every way.

It provides milk, *oat-meal*, fat, sugar, in addition to the portions settled by the government, children's linen, soap etc.

During the war, this activity meant the rescue of thousands of nurslings and mothers from almost certain ruin.



Moreover, women act as voluntary probation officers, supervising juvenile delinquents whose punishment has been conditionally remitted.

Towards the end of the war, a new institution was created, the „Československá ochrana ženských zájmů“ (Czechoslovak Protection of Womens Interests); it is a union of neutral societies and political organisations, working for the protection and support of the Czechoslovak women. It cares for widows and abandoned, ill-treated or abused women, for those who are ill and incapable of working, or who cannot find a position, for all who are in any difficulty or critical situation. Help and advice is given to them at the offices of the association. One of its aims is to establish a common work-room for those women who are not strong enough to occupy a regular position or who have not been trained for wage-earning work or who are too old and weak for household service. This institution keeps a strict eye upon every means of facilitating woman's work in the household, it wants to economize woman's forces, in order to use them properly. It bestows special attention on young girls. The „Ochrana ženských zájmů“ is conducted by the woman writer Mrs. J. Lancová.

There are many more social tasks in which the Czechoslovak woman has taken an active part, and which are awaiting more numerous female collaborators. But these require not only much good will, but also thorough previous training. This is what Dr. Alice Masaryková knows very well. Therefore she founded, already before the war a one year's high training school for girls wishing to devote themselves to social work. In this school expert teachers lecturing on law, hygiene, psychology, pedagogy, do their best to complete the education of women and young girls gathering there from every part of the Republic, in order to become serious social workers knowing how to protect a child, how to help a woman, how to advise any oppressed or weak member of human society.

What has been said in this study shows clearly that the Czechoslovak Republic, in the thort period of its existence — since October 28<sup>th</sup> 1918 — has given a proof of the revival of the old Czech spirit, the spirit of democracy, of efficient charity, of social justice, among all classes of its inhabitants.

It has proved, moreover, that liberty alone is able to unfold all the forces of a nation, and that *in giving equal political rights to all its citizens, men and women*, it found the best way to unite all its forces in the common work for justice.

Czechoslovak women have full confidence in the future!

