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WOMEN AS WAGE-EARNERS
AND THE SIGNIFICANCE THEREOF IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC THEORY

BY

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C. R. FAY

IT would not be so very far from the truth to say that political economy was born in Charles II's London out of taxes, plagues and envy of the Dutch. Inside Sir William Petty's *Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662) there is a core of economic theory—a preliminary statement of the law of rent, and that famous first effort after an immutable standard of value which runs: "all things ought to be valued by two natural denominations, which is land and labour . . . so as we might express the value by either of them alone as well or better than by both, and reduce one into the other as easily as we reduce pence into pounds" (Petty's *Works*, ed. C. H. Hull, 44-45). In the same year, 1662, came John Graunt's *Observations on the Bills of Mortality*, an epoch-making pioneer work in vital statistics. The bills were for London, and the series began in 1603. They recorded christenings and burials, and the causes of death, as reported by the searchers, who "are ancient matrons sworn to their office"—a grim employment indeed. The reason for the compilation was the periodic ravage caused by the plague, and by studying aggregates over the long period from 1603 to 1664 (for the great plague of 1665 led to a second edition in that year), Graunt was able to observe their peculiar properties, to become in fact the first statistician. He found that there were more males than females in the tables, and "that the one exceed the other by a thirteenth part." Nevertheless, "the said thirteenth part difference



bringeth the business but to such a pass that every woman may have an husband without the allowance of polygamy"—and for these reasons:—"More men die violent deaths than women, that is, more are slain in wars, die by mischance, drowned at sea, and die by the Hand of Justice; moreover, more men go to Colonies, and travel into Foreign parts, than women; and lastly, more remain unmarried than of women, as Fellows of Colleges, and apprentices above eighteen." (*op. cit.*, ed. Hull, II, 375: this edition of Petty includes Graunt.)

To the statistician, as contrasted with the lawyer or economist, there is no question of bias for or against women. To him males and females are like black and white, odd and even, which in sufficiently large number exhibit laws.

But the political economists of the Restoration, though they might discourse on taxation and vital statistics, were interested in the main in the characteristics of nations, in the differences between the wealth and policy of England, Holland, France and Spain. Holland was the envy and the pattern of seventeenth-century England. Of set purpose England followed her in the pursuit of commerce and manufactures; and out of this pursuit a century later emerged the industrial revolution, with its profound reactions upon the economic status of the family and in particular of the women and children in it.

When Adam Smith was lecturing in Glasgow, and even when he published the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, the industrial revolution was in its very early stage. In the *Lectures*, as we have them, probably for the session of 1762-3 or 1763-4, women occupy a prominent position, but it is a legal and not an economic prominence. He lectured over the wide field of Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms. Under Justice he dealt with domestic law,

in relation to Roman jurisprudence. In such a view woman is a subordinate. He observes quaintly—and we may remember that he never married—"though there was little or no regard paid to women in the first state of society as objects of pleasure, yet there never was more regard paid to them as rational creatures. In North America [he is referring to the native Indians] the women are consulted concerning the carrying out of war, and in every important undertaking. The respect paid to women in modern times is very small; they are only put to no trouble for spoiling of their beauty. A man will not exempt his friend from a laborious piece of business, but he will spare his mistress" (*Lectures*, p. 76).

The conception of women as a plaything and ornament is not just a cynicism of Adam Smith. It reflects the age, and comes midway between the savages' use of women as a beast of burden and their modern position, as competitors with men in the world's work. For the advisory function of Adam Smith's Indian women was strictly incidental.

When we turn from the *Lectures* to the *Wealth of Nations*, we find numerous allusions to women. Two, which come to the mind, are the Highland woman and widows in America. "A half-starved Highland woman frequently bears more than twenty children, while a pampered fine lady is often incapable of bearing any, and is generally exhausted by two or three" (ed. Cannan, I, 81). Again in America, where labour is so well rewarded that children are a source of opulence to their parents, "a young widow with four or five young children, who, among the middling or inferior ranks of people in Europe, would have so little chance for a second husband, is (there) frequently courted as a sort of fortune" (I, 72). In both these references it is the woman as a mother of

children that draws the economist's attention. If we turn to the index itself, all that we find under Women is, "women's education contains nothing fantastical"—the passage reading: "There are no public institutions for the education of women, and there is accordingly nothing useless, absurd or fantastical in the common course of their education. They are taught what their parents or guardians judge it necessary or useful for them to learn; and they are taught nothing else. . . . In every part of her life a woman feels some conveniency or advantage from every part of her education. It seldom happens that a man, in any part of his life, derives any conveniency or advantage from some of the most laborious or troublesome parts of his education" (II, 266-7).

In fine, in the eighteenth century, woman was studied legally in relation to the authority of the husband and economically in relation to population. There was, however, no prejudice against her employment in industry. Indeed the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had a craving to set everybody to work, from infants to grandams, for as long as possible at as low a wage as possible in some form or other of productive employment; and with the industrial revolution the opportunities thereto were multiplied.

Thanks to the scholarly and comprehensive work of Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (1930), we can now view as a whole the fortunes of women workers, their conditions and earnings in the first century of the new industrialism. She presents them first in agriculture, and then in industry and trade. In the latter the sub-divisions are significantly long—textile industries, spinning and weaving; the smaller domestic industries from lace to buttons; women's work in mines and the metal trades; craftswomen and business

women. After reading this survey, we feel more than ever that the industrial revolution is well named. If the excision of an occupation once so ubiquitous as hand-spinning, and the replacement of the father, the skilled hand-weaver, working at home, by daughters working in a power-driven loom-shop be not revolution, then nothing in the economic world is. This does not commit us to the view that pre-1760 was paradise. Here the researches of Dorothy George are complementary. As the pace quickened towards the machine age, the lot of women became increasingly hard indoors and out-of-doors. Spinning by hand, tramping the country for material or with work, she toiled more and more, as production increased; and she suffered further, when domestic industry collapsed, by extrusion into industries for which she was unfitted, such as mining and coarse labour on the land. When machinery was at last general (and in weaving and knitting it was not general till the late 1840's), it brought nearly always a balance of advantage to the family. For the intensification of domestic industry was destroying the home. Only when home and workshop were separated, was it possible to regulate the workshop and recreate the home. Coal-mining, like chimney-sweeping, has a history to itself. In 1842 women's labour underground was abolished. Their employment here was not universal, but in certain districts it was of old standing, and it became grossly inhuman as the depths of mines and the intensity of exploitation increased, as well as unnecessary, since without great cost (precisely as in chimney-sweeping) machinery could be used instead. At every turn Miss Pinchbeck's study warns against hasty generalisation. If the industrial revolution widened the field of women's employment here, it also narrowed it there. In the dairy and in retail trade the women of the eighteenth

century seem to have found more satisfying careers than their emancipated sisters of a century later.

With this book to guide us let us observe the impact of the new facts on economic doctrine. We shall begin with women writers themselves, and then pass to the classical political economy, as represented by Mill and Marshall.

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) was small of stature and all but succumbed as a child to attempts to increase her stature by mechanical devices (it was the birthday of the mechanical arts), including hanging by the neck. She was the remarkable daughter of a remarkable father—he married five times (one mock and four genuine) and invented most things from a velocipede to electric telegraphs—and she too invented something, the didactic novel. Almost at one jump she took fiction from the tempestuous realism of Smollett and Fielding into the sheltered waters of utility and virtue. She published in 1801 her *Moral Tales*. *The Prussian Vase*, “designed”, in her father’s words, “principally for young gentlemen who are intended for the bar”, concludes with the Englishman in the story saying: “You will observe that this trial by jury, which is a matter of favour to you Prussians, is a matter of right to us Englishmen. Much as I admire your king of Prussia, I admire our English constitution more.” Miss Edgeworth’s biographer, Helen Zimmern, says of the *Tales*: “Like all Miss Edgeworth’s writings, they found instant favour and were translated into French and German. With no desire to detract from their merits, we cannot avoid the inference that the circumstance points to a great lack of contemporary foreign fiction of a pure and attractive kind.” This is a biography of 1883! The strange thing is that she really wrote considerable novels. *Castle Rackrent*, *The Absentee*, *Ennui* are thor-

oughly readable, because of their faithful and humorous portraiture of Irish life, as seen from a country hall. For, helping her father to manage his estate at Edgeworthstown in Ireland, she wrote at first hand. Scott told her that she had inspired him to do the same for Scotland in *Waverley*. She was the friend of Sydney Smith and of Bentham’s editor Dumont, and the intimate friend of Ricardo, with whom she stayed at Gatcomb. She was, according to Mackintosh, “at one time courted by all persons of distinction in London with an avidity almost without example” (*Life II*, 262).

A few years later, to be precise in 1816, just after Ricardo and Edward West had presented to the world their laws of rent and diminishing returns, Mrs. Marcet, the wife of Dr. Marcet, published her *Conversations on Political Economy*. Of all the luscious tit-bits, two must suffice.

Caroline. But if population be constantly kept within the limits of subsistence, would it not always remain stationary?

Mrs. B. Certainly not; if the people are industrious, capital will increase; and the increase of population will follow of course, and with advantage.

Caroline. I now see evidently, that population should never be encouraged but where there is plenty of subsistence and employment (p. 150).

Caroline, you must understand, was the maiden under instruction and Mrs. B. the teacher.

But the thrill of 1815 was diminishing returns. Caroline objected to importing corn. It was better, she thought, to depend upon our own produce, but she was wrong:

Mrs. B. The more corn-land we cultivate, the higher will be the price of corn in average seasons.

You start, Caroline [and this, be it remembered, was the age when hysteria was a feminine accomplishment] but . . . the more corn is grown in a country, the greater will be the quantity of inferior land brought into cultivation (p. 386); and so on in the true classical style.

Mrs. Marcet had been inspired by Miss Edgeworth. For at the outset Mrs. B. observes, "If they [mothers] could convey such lessons of political economy as Miss Edgeworth gives in her story of the Cherry Orchard no one I should think would esteem such information beyond the capacity of a child" (p. 12). In turn, she inspired a lady more famous still. Miss Harriet Martineau in her *Autobiography* (I, 138) says of the *Conversations*, "I took up the book chiefly to see what political economy principally was; and great was my surprise to find that I had been teaching it unawares in my stories about machinery and wages." The outcome of 1832-4 was the series of *Tales illustrating Political Economy and Taxation* (the title of the Ricardian bible). The burden of her themes was population, the virtue of thrift and the wickedness of strikes. When she was writing the number on Population: "The perspiration [not sweat, of course] many a time streamed down my face, though I knew there was not a line of it which might not be read in any family" (I, 200). She was "tomahawked" in the *Quarterly*, but Malthus comforted her. After one number he called round to thank her for her beautiful picture of domestic felicity. What would one not give to have been present at that scene! He with his hare lip, she with her ear-trumpet; he a bachelor, she a maid; but the two, nevertheless, in such affinity that she did not need her trumpet to catch his mild and resonant vowels!

I confess with shame that I have not yet read

Political Economy for Beginners by Dame Millicent Fawcett.

As an economist John Stuart Mill is not in the rank of Adam Smith or Ricardo before him, or of Jevons and Marshall after him. But he is the pattern of all that was finest in Victorian liberalism. It is as Mill the reformer that James Bonar talks with him in his delightful portraiture of economists in *Elysium (The Tables Turned, 1931)*. For the author of the *Principles of Political Economy* of 1848 was the author of the *Essay on the Subjection of Women* of 1869. One great slavery had just been abolished by the issue of the American Civil War. Another and more unholy remained. If not you, at any rate your mothers or grandmothers, will have read the *Essay*. I have perused the soiled copy in the Library of the Cambridge Union. Mill wrote (p. 26), "There is never any want of women who complain of ill-usage by their husbands." Marginal comment, "Yet the wives love those husbands who beat them most." Marginal comment on the comment, "You degraded — fool." Mill demands complete equality, pleading for marriage as an equal partnership; and in the course of his argument pays the famous tribute to the lady who had been his wife: "Who can tell how many of the most original thoughts put forth by male writers belong to a woman by suggestion, to themselves only by verifying and working out? If I may judge by my own case a very large proportion indeed" (p. 132). And he goes on: "A man who is married to a woman his inferior in intelligence, finds her a perpetual dead-weight" (p. 166). Upon which I remember Professor Marshall observing, "I believe Mrs. Mill was a very ordinary woman, indeed." Be this as it may, Mill gave the impetus to the legal reforms which cause the Union Society's copy to be annotated again and

again with "no longer", "not now". He died in 1873 at Avignon at the height of his doctrinal influence, very near to socialism in the sphere of property and inheritance, but still passionately individualist in the sphere of personal relations. Hence arose the paradox that this great champion of women provoked a movement which for over twenty years sought to upset the protection by law of women employed in factories. From the *Essay* we turn to his *Principles* (Book V, chap. xi, sec. 9: People's Edition 1865) to read, "The classing together, for this and other purposes, of women and children, appears to me both indefensible in principle and mischievous in practice. . . . For improving the conditions of women, it should . . . be an object to give them the readiest access to independent industrial employment, instead of closing, either entirely or partially, that which is open to them." Did Mill, one wonders, seriously lament the Mines Act of 1842? The sequel you may read in Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*, chap. ix, The Women's Rights Opposition. The opposition movement declared itself over the factory bill of 1873. "Exactly how and when this movement began it is difficult to say," observe the authors (*Factory Legislation*, p. 185). But with Mill saying in his *Principles* what he had always said, and with the *Essay on Subjection* as the new gage flung into the social arena, it is unnecessary surely, in this year of Mill's death, to look elsewhere for doctrinal cause. The occasion also is no less clear. It was the extension by sympathy into the industrial field of the agitation launched in 1870 by Josephine Butler against the Contagious Diseases Acts, which penalized women for the protection of men.

The opposition, though it could not upset the factory acts, delayed their application to employments where

protection was urgently needed, e.g. in laundries: for, whatever its intention, it was in effect, as these authors say, "a blank and unfruitful individualism." But it was the merit as well as the defect of Mill that he was utterly void of class feeling. He once told an audience of workingmen that they were liars, and they cheered him for it. Miss Millicent Garrett was at the meeting. "Did you write this?" he was asked. "I did," he replied; and "I did" won him the election. He wrote to an American friend in 1869, "The emancipation of women and co-operative production are the two great changes that will regenerate society." He had neither sex feeling nor class feeling, that is to say. Copartnership of men and women, copartnership of masters and men: for this he lived and wrote. He was a doctrinaire. And, however unfruitful such a one may be for present policy, he has a place in ultimate thought. For when men have been tamed by women, and masters have been tamed by men, will there not be a need for a partnership that is both peaceful and positive? It is easier to fight social abuses than to use society socially. I have sometimes thought that soldiers and sailors will be more content with universal peace than bodies which the world calls militant. When Joan of Arc tried to return to life, the Tommy was her only pal. The Church Militant was aghast.

Alfred Marshall in *Principles of Economics* (first edition, 1890; periodically revised to the eighth edition of 1920) makes no special contribution to the theory of women's work and wages. He notes, however: (1) that, while domestic services are increasing fast, the domestic servant is not so important, since some of her work is passing out of the home to the laundry, the hotel and tradesmen (p. 277); (2) that in attempts to estimate the value of a people, such as Sir William Petty was the first

to essay, allowance must be made, in reckoning the value of immigrants, for the unpaid services which women render as mothers, wives and sisters (p. 565*n*); (3) that as the result of machinery and new technique, the wages of women, as well as of boys and girls, are rising fast relatively to those of men—"this is a great gain, in so far as it tends to develop their faculties; but an injury in so far as it tempts them to neglect their duty of building up a true home, and of investing their efforts in the personal capital of their children's character and abilities" (p. 685); (4) that "the coming generation is interested in the rescue of men, and still more in that of women, from excessive work at least as much as it is in the handing down to it of a good stock of material wealth" (p. 694); (5) that the new restraints on free enterprise are chiefly in the interests of women and children (p. 751). This attitude I would term Victorianism ennobled. The truth is, Marshall was a knight in homespun. He was equally romantic in his conception of the business world: witness his last public address to it, *Social Possibilities of Economic Chivalry* (1907). Similarly his conception of the relation between master and disciple was an affectionate tyranny, for which they adored him. His pupils felt toward him much as Robert Owen's disciples felt toward Owen a hundred years ago.

In the early eighteen-nineties a flood of new light was thrown on the economic position of women by Miss Collet's Board of Trade Report on the Employment of Women and Girls, 1894, by the Report on the Employment of Women in the Royal Commission of Labour, 1893; as well as by the findings of the Lords' Committee on Sweating, 1890, and the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 1895. Miss Collet reported: (1) that the employment of married women has decreased, casual

employment has diminished, and the slight increase in the employment of women and girls generally is due to the increased number of young women and girls under twenty-five with definite occupations and to the increased employment of middle-class women; (2) that "no fact comes out more clearly in this Report than that the occupations in which women and girls have been employed on work hitherto done by men or boys, are those in which the employment of the latter has increased at an abnormal rate."

In 1898, Mrs. Bosanquet, in her book of essays *The Standard of Life*, built on this new knowledge, and called for a continuation and broadening of the significant improvements that were at last taking place in women's education. Teach us, she says, not accomplishments, but real knowledge. The cure for sweated industries is the training of a race of women who are educated above the drudgery of slaving and beyond the impossible competition of the needle with the machine. If women are feared by men as a cheap substitute, make them expensive by industrial training and able thus to command more. She calls on the economists to support her in her view that there is no more a fixed quantity of work to go round than there is a fixed fund of wages.

Mrs. Bosanquet looked for progress within the atmosphere and assumptions of the established order. Mr. and Mrs. Webb in their *Industrial Democracy* (1897) launched a critique on the order itself, calling for the weapons of standardization and organization, for standardization of rates and organization of workers, female as well as male. Women, if unorganized, cannot help undermining the position of men (and the injurious result of failure to organize the women is well brought out in W. H. Warburton's *History of Trade Union Organization in the North*

Staffordshire Potteries, 1931). Subsequently in her Minority Report of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, 1919, Mrs. Webb carried the argument of industrial democracy to its conclusion, demanding an occupational rate, *i.e.* a standard rate for the job, whether done by men or women.

So far as I know, the first academic economist to give a special section to women's wages in a general text book was Edwin Cannan in his *Wealth* (1914). In chap. xii, "Incomes from Work", he discusses inequalities of earnings, and among the causes gives prominence to inequality due to sex. How may this inequality be diminished? First, by the better education of women; second, by the modification of consumers' demand in the direction of goods and services which women are in a favourable position to supply; third, and mainly, by the enlargement of the field of women's employment, which is at present restricted by the inertia of employers and the active opposition of male workers. The two key statements are:

"An increase of women's output, if it was confined to the employments in which women alone are at present employed, might very probably reduce their earnings by cheapening the unit of output more than the amount per head increased" (p. 207).

"It [*i.e.* the enlargement of the field] is hindered too by the cry for equal wages for men and women, as the most powerful lever for increasing the opportunities of women is taken away, if they are not allowed to do the work cheaper" (p. 206).

The implication in the second statement is controversial. But it is not tartly meant. It accords with the general view of the demand for labour which Professor Cannan expounded in his presidential address of 1932 to the Royal Economic Society. He says there in conclusion:

"The public should learn to distinguish between the false 'economy' effected by stopping quite desirable work without putting any other in its place, and the real economy effected when rates of pay are reduced so that more persons are employed and production increased" (*Economic Journal*, Sept., 1932, p. 370).

Perhaps the leading treatise on the large scale since Marshall's *Principles* is Professor Pigou's *Economics of Welfare*. At any rate the *American Economic Review* of March, 1926, reviewed the second edition of 1924 in a leading article, entitled *Economics at its Best*. Professor Pigou discusses women's wages in Part III, chapters xiv to xvii, in relation to fair wages; and I shall group the remainder of my observations around him. His analysis, however, contains in a subordinate sentence an assumption which I question. He says: "Even though women's natural endowments of mind and muscle were equal to those of men, which on the average they are not, it would be surprising" etc. (p. 564).

"Natural endowment of mind." It is possible that there is in man some sort of creative restlessness which goes to the very root of sex, but of this we know hardly anything. When I think of my own subject, Economic History, I frankly can see no inferiority. I think of such names as Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Hammond, Mrs. Knowles, Miss Bateson, Miss McArthur, Miss Power, and I cannot for one moment allow that original historical research is not as punishing and as excellent as original mathematical analysis; though I am willing to concede that both are inferior as mental accomplishment to the highest poetry and art. That there are in all fewer women than men of eminence is only natural in view of the newness of the higher education of women and the fact that for some women research may be interrupted by marriage or motherhood.

"Natural endowment of muscle." It is true that men can run faster, fight more powerfully and lift greater weights; and true also that physiologically the body of a woman, like that of a Japanese, if we compare these with Englishmen, can be kept in a state of efficiency on less food. But the mastodon perished, because it was too big. The horse is perishing, because power generated by oats in an animal frame is less effective for industry than power generated by petrol in an internal combustion engine. We live as never before in an age of power production. I sometimes fear a conclusion in which increasing millions of men will be as the horses, with this difference. Horses will survive for sport only, men will survive for sport and the dole, because being human beings they cannot be allowed to starve. Professor Cannan's point of demand changing in favour of women comes in here. There is no demand for men in housework; and in the compound form of demand for machine products there is some reason for thinking that the swing is now towards others than adult men. For machinery, as it improves, tends to become automatic and to call for minding and speed rather than for strength and creative skill. Let me give one example (not forgetting that machinery is also economizing the demand for women's labour, though not, so far as I know, in the direction of replacing it by men's). The firm of Rowntree found that in the process of rationalization they had to dispense with certain men, or boys becoming men. They tried therefore to find them other jobs. First they sent some to London, but these strayed back out of loneliness, though a few took root at Welwyn Garden City. The next step, therefore, was to bring new industries to York; and with difficulty they founded and financed there: (1) a chemical process, (2) the reconditioning of rubber, (3) the making of buttons from casein on a Dutch

process. My friend Peter Rowntree is in charge; and he has told me that he was again coming up against the old problem. These industries, which had been selected with a view to employing males, were developing as the chocolate business itself. If he kept the plant up-to-date, he might be introducing machines which displaced men. But it is objected, "Men will be employed to make the machines." I agree, but what proof is there that the new employment will approach the employment lost? I suggest that to-day the kind of wants which private enterprise knows best how to supply, are just those which make a diminishing call on the kind of labour in which male muscle is an asset; and what else but muscle in the main have, literally, millions of men to offer? We may remember that in the world's history women have done the mass of the work, in the house and in the fields; while men have gone out to hunt and fight. There is virtually no hunting left, save for sport: there are no new continents for white men to colonize: seafaring and foreign trade are in decline: we hope to abolish war, that one certain absorbent of male labour. What, then, is our final use? "Garn, don't you answer me, who earns the dole?"

Professor Pigou postpones to a later chapter the influence of wages on capacity. He is concerned initially with capacity as it is; and he distinguishes between two kinds of unfair wage:—(1) Where the employer pays less than the employee is worth to him. This is called "exploitation" wage, and I return to it later. (2) Where owing to ignorance or obstacles to mobility, the wages in one industry are out of line with those in others. And here enters a special point about women's wages. For a wage, fair as between women in different industries, may be unfair as between men and women in a given industry.

Now wages are fair, not when they are equal in money,

but when they are proportional to efficiency, and apart altogether from differences of natural ability we must expect the wages of women to be less than those of men, for a variety of reasons: most of their work is easily learnt, repetitive work; it is normally interrupted by marriage; it is not supported by so good an education. However, if there is free movement between industries, we may expect a situation in which some occupations are entirely male, some entirely female; and others partly male and partly female. The last is the test group; and here wages will tend to be proportionate to efficiency, as the result of substitution between men and women. Piece rates, as they allow for differences of efficiency, will tend to be equal for men and women. Unfairness, however, would not exist here, if men apparently on the same job got higher pay, because they can be used for other work in an emergency or at night, or because they are easier for a male employer to discipline (easier to "swear at", Professor Pigou suggests), or because they economize machinery by doing the job in less time: and so on.

But unfairness will arise if, by custom or trade union pressure, or the decision of government in public employments, the entry of women into a trade is restricted. In this case a wage, fair with regard to men within the privileged trade, will be unfair with regard to women outside it. Should women in such a case hold out for the higher wage? He inclines, I gather, to the negative; for if they do, women will be tempted to crowd around the privileged job, without power to enter it, so that there will be a waste through the enforced idleness of women vaguely attached to the industry but not definitely employed in it. And he quotes with approval Mr. Cannan's remark about enlarging the field of employment by the lever of cheapness.

These circumstances, he seems to consider, are respon-

sible for the main differences between men's and women's wages. And he dismisses as "very superficial", "the common idea that women are paid less than men because men's wages have in general to support a family, while women's wages have only to support the women themselves" (p. 564). We may grant this for the bulk of competitive industry. But in the case of the educational profession, if the authorities who allot the funds share this "common idea", will not the lower salaries of women be due in part to this belief?

Then there is a further point. Is there not something essentially parasitical in wages paid to a girl who is partly supported at home? No, he replies, not if the alternatives are being employed in some other trade at the same rate or not being employed at all. True parasitism arises when the wage in one industry is less than in others for work of the same type.

This brings us back to the question of exploitation, in case (1) above. Such exploitation may arise through the facts that workers, male or female, are unorganized, or are so poor that they have no bargaining power, or live at home in isolation, or are employed casually. These handicaps are present cumulatively in the class of industries which the late nineteenth century knew as sweated industries, and they were largely recruited from women. To check the exploitation, trade boards were established in 1909, and a minimum wage was established by law. In 1915 the machinery was extended from trades in which wages were *exceptionally* low to trades in which the workers were unorganized and the wages *unduly* low. This set up a new criterion, which was in harmony with the demand that arose after the war for the public guarantee of a decent existence. The great rise in the cost of living made the living wage a lively issue, especially in Aus-

tralia, where most wages are the subject of official awards; and it involved the question of male and female, when the wage was to be based on what would suffice to support in decency a man with a normal family. In 1924, Miss Eleanor Rathbone focussed the issue in her study *The Disinherited Family*. The normal family, she urged, is a statistical fiction. What modern society wants is a minimum wage, sufficient for two adults, and supplemented by family allowances for children, as were the separation allowances of the war. She appealed to the example of the mining industry in France and Belgium.

In England, she argues, two problems among others must be faced. The first is "Who is to bear the cost?" She replies, the industry or the state: and adds, "as in the long run the allowances must come out of the product of industry, the question whether they do so directly or are passed through the National Exchequer seems one of method rather than of principle" (p. 276). This was a too easy generalization from war-time experience, when unemployment did not exist. To take out enormous sums from industry and pass it through the National Exchequer to the recipients is a task of great complication, liable to all manner of unintended consequences, and of a difficulty proportionate to the intensity of the taxation and the amount of the contributions passing already through the channel of the state. The two latter, because of unemployment, have mounted steeply since 1924. What will be the attitude of labour? She argues against opponents in this quarter by retorting that they would "take the sting out of poverty for the easygoing individuals whose misfortunes are half their own fault, while the bulk of the working-class mothers, proud, sensitive and self-reliant, are left to struggle with their impossible task of making bricks

without clay" (p. 303). She does not suffer gladly the "Turk" complex in man, be he of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

The late Professor Edgeworth, who gave the presidential address to Section F of the British Association at Hull in, 1922, on "Equal Pay to Men and Women for Equal Work", and whose approach resembles in method and conclusion that of Professor Pigou, stressed the distributional aspect of the Family Endowment programme. Much of the popularity which the scheme enjoys in labour circles (he said) is probably due to the prospect of transferring hundreds of millions from the income-tax paying classes to the families of working-people" (*Economic Journal*, 1922, p. 453). But if redistribution only is desired, "it is open to any association of men, a trades union for example, to resolve that each member of the association should contribute a quota of his earnings towards the formation of a fund which is to be distributed among the wives of members in accordance with the size of the families" (*ibid.*, p. 457). It is only necessary to put it thus to see that it would not, indeed could not be accepted. I suggest that the success of the principle in France and Belgium was more apparent than real. It saved wages for employers. It arose in a period of rapid currency inflation, when without family assistance workers with large families would have suffered extreme privation. And this is not England's problem even now.

I conclude with a reference to Mr. H. G. Wells' chapter on women in his *Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932). For statistically it is still true, as it was in Miss Collet's day, that the increased employment of women is not a main cause of the increased unemployment of men. He says: "If the pre-war rates of employment held to-day there would be about a hundred thousand

more men and about a hundred thousand less women employed. That is all. A large part of the increased industrial employment of women has nothing to do with men; it is a transfer of women from domestic to industrial life, because work that was formerly done in the home, laundry work, sewing, baking, urban lunch and tea services, is now supplied outside" (p. 532).

All, then, that I am justified in contending (and the contention, I grant, is open to dispute) is that the trend is in favour of women, in so far as machinery sets the pace of employment. And whether I am right or wrong here, I should oppose withdrawing women in order to give men a chance. The first thing in the present crisis is to secure work and wages, whether by the man or the woman, in order that as much as possible of the national income may pass to the working-class family in the form of wages earned and not of allowances granted. In the long run the interest of men and women must be complementary, because, unlike the factor of machinery, they are living members of an abiding reality, the human family. I do not wish to appear a pessimist. I do hold, however, that the problem which society has not yet mastered is the problem of power production and of finance in relation to this. I agree fundamentally with the diagnosis of Fred Henderson in his *Economic Consequences of Power Production* (1931). The world is up against a monstrous paradox. There was, first, the tyranny of human slavery. A second tyranny Mill helped to destroy. The third and final tyranny it remains for us to dispel, or to beg a humble pardon from the prophetic author of *Erewhon*.

