

Canada Must Have Mothers' Pensions

As a Record of Service Rendered and a Safe-guard for the Nation of Tomorrow

(Everywoman's World.)

In the whole Dominion of Canada, there is only one province that has legislated to any measurable degree in favor of mothers. That province is Manitoba. In June, 1916, the Winnipeg Mothers' Allowances Committee was responsible for the passing of a bill providing for mothers' pensions.

More vital consideration is there for any government in any country at this particular time. Canada especially—a young country, where the youth of the nation are for so much—is there any law at all that would be more conducive to future than one which, in affecting others, directly benefits children? Is it a fact that the other provinces in the Dominion are utterly ignorant of the existence of such a measure, or are they merely uninterested? In either case, an indictment is a grievous one.

The people of the province of Manitoba realized the principle that the future of the nation depends upon the proper training of the child, and as this thing can be most efficiently given through the family unit, that the conservation of national unity depends upon the conservation of the home.

Since the establishment of the Winnipeg Mothers' Allowances Committee in 1916, \$10,855.48 has been expended by the province and the city through the provincial commission in recognition of this principle and the Winnipeg committee at the present time fifty-one mothers are trying to create capable, conscientious citizens out of their one hundred and eighty-one children. Their month-wages through the commission amount to \$2,080.

The act is carried out as simply as possible. The mother comes herself to the office and tells of her need. The purpose of the act—to conserve the home, it is in danger of being disrupted, because of the death of the bread-winner, carefully explained. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the allowance is a grant granted her by the city and province, in return for which she must undertake to perform the task of rearing her children, and if she fails in the proper bringing of her children, by not providing for their physical, mental and moral welfare, the payments must cease. The general public is beginning to realize that the allowance granted to mothers under the act is a salary for service rendered, and not a charity; that primarily it is a children's act, not a mother's act. Reports and investigations show that many mothers are applying to would otherwise rather starve than accept charity.

It is not so, that what has proven necessary and successful in the province of Manitoba would work out similarly in any other province of the Dominion? Is there any special reason why Manitoba mothers should continue to take

section of the Dominion? None—save that the government officials there are more energetic, enterprising, may we should or the bill might better be known as widows' pensions.

Why every Canada follow? Why can she not act now—help to lead the way. In Australia they have gone even farther in this matter. Five years ago, a measure was brought into existence there without much publicity, following no agitation—simply because an enterprising and sensible government saw the wisdom of it.

The Australian maternity allowance is a free gift of the nation to those to whom it is ever in debt—the mothers of its children.

Judge Henry Neil—"Father of the mothers' pensions scheme," makes plain its workings thus:

"To every woman who gives birth to a child, either in Australia or on board a ship proceeding from one port to another in the territories of the commonwealth, a sum of \$2 is paid by the commonwealth treasury. Most state grants are loaded with many 'buts.' The maternity allowance has only those which are needed to safeguard it from imposition. It asks for no contribution from the recipient, either before or after the event."

"Simply it is laid down that it shall be payable only to women who are inhabitants of Australia or intend to settle in that favored country. And the allowance is naturally made only in respect of a child born alive, or certified as 'viable'—i.e., capable of sustaining life. But the essential point of the scheme is that the money is paid to the mother. Simple means are provided for conveying the money to her."

"The act of the federal parliament which initiated the grant, was introduced in 1912 by the prime minister, the Right Hon. Andrew Fisher, now the high commissioner of his country in London."

"In the first year of its operation, 1913, 38,475 claims were paid, amounting to \$247,375. In 1914, 184,968 claims, amounting to \$274,980. In 1915, 188,855 claims, amounting to \$294,275; in 1916, 181,948 claims, amounting to \$284,716. The cost of administration amounts to something like 12-3 per cent. The allowance is available to all classes in Australia. It is administered at a minimum of expense, and with a maximum of facility."

Judge Neil has led the way. He has blazed the trail. He should have followers—many of them. In every country of the civilized world the measure is a necessity.

Even our enemy is not behind in devoting attention to this question. Germany is making preparation for a strong nation of tomorrow—if indeed there will be a nation at all, at the termination of the present calamity! There, work relating to child welfare has been following up with full recognition of its importance for a country at war. Infant mortality figures show that the death rate of babies whose mothers worked out was 227.5, while that of mothers who remained at home with their babies was 91.7 per thousand births.

And what of Canada?

We are concerned with saving food, and yet we are allowing children—the

rarest of assets—to go to waste. Who will "father" the measure in Canada?

Manitoba's example? Why will not woman's organizations and the press insist upon it as they have insisted upon and won other measures of importance? The press could indeed do much. We—Everywoman's World—

will be glad to "mother the act." The widows, the mothers of the Dominion of Canada, may count upon us.

Then act. Mothers' pensions, Canada needs, and mothers' pensions Canada must have.

The Canadian-American fisheries conference will meet in Seattle on April 24.



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