

the State has co-operated by strict marriage and divorce laws. Inevitably, this has meant, through the centuries, that the position of woman has been dignified and elevated. The venerable position accorded to the Virgin Mary, in the Christian religion, has immeasurably raised the place of womankind throughout Christian states.

The principle of family allowance, would appear, to impugn dangerously upon both these fundamental attitudes. If family allowances are necessary in any country or industry, and if they are designed to stimulate the birth rate, by offering economic inducements thereto, it would certainly be open to argument whether the system does not subtly reduce marriage and the marriage relationship, from its high and almost sacramental attributes in our branch of civilization to economic relationships, capable of financial exploitation. Such a development will inevitably depress the position of the woman and mother in the state from her present status of an individual personality, with citizenship rights, to a person who would be cared for and maintained as the slave woman in Rome, or in the United States, in the days preceding emancipation, not for herself and because she had a human body and a divine soul, but because she mattered greatly to industry and the state, as the potential mother of future slaves and employees. It would seem to me, that the whole proposal is one, which might be justifiably regarded by the mass of womanhood across Canada, as fraught with far-reaching and disastrous consequences, which might ultimately result in the entire subversion of the present position and privileges, which they enjoy in almost all the provinces of Canada.

My first objection is therefore registered to the principle of the proposal as inimical to the highest concepts of marriage as a social institution, and to the present position of woman, in all enlightened countries.

THE STATE'S INTEREST—THE ENFORCEMENT OF MAINTENANCE OBLIGATIONS

Yet, while the Christian doctrines of marriage and the position of woman and the necessities of society itself have inter-operated to dignify marriage and the family, as the finest and central institution of our life, always the State's interest has been not in morality and sound family life per se, but because they offered the surest guarantee of the nation's continuance, through their preservation of the child. Therefore the State has written into its laws, both criminal and civil, the obligation of the parent to support and maintain the helpless child as one of the fundamental and most insistent responsibilities, which it demands that its citizens must observe. In the Criminal Code of Canada, in the Civil Code and Revised Statutes of Quebec, in the Children's Protection Acts of all the English speaking provinces, this major insistence upon the child's rights and claims to maintenance and protection runs like a thread of inalienable strength. It is the utter reversion of the attitude prevalent even until recent years, that the child was to be regarded, as an economic asset by the parents for their exploitation in the maintenance of themselves and the family. All progress in child labour, and school attendance legislation and increasingly wider extension of free education rises logically out of this fundamental principle of the obligation of the head of the family to protect and maintain his children during their early years. If that principle be once surrendered, if the obligation of that duty be once abrogated, or shifted, shared with or delegated to the State, then the fundamental basis on which our whole concept of family life and child protection is founded, is doomed.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES UNDERMINE THE BASIS OF FAMILY SOLIDARITY

The family allowance system, by assuming the responsibilities of the head of the family in providing partial maintenance for his children, and in doing so, in increasing proportion, as those obligations develop more and more beyond

[Miss Charlotte Whitton.]