

COMMITTEE ROOM 375,

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

TUESDAY, April 30, 1929.

The Select Standing Committee on Industrial and International Relations met at 10.30 o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Mr. C. R. McIntosh, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: We were supposed to start this morning at 11 o'clock on some new evidence. I suppose it will be satisfactory to present this report, which has just been passed, to the House to-morrow, after we get it re-typewritten and in shape.

The evidence to-day is on family allowances. The first name I have here is that of Miss Charlotte Whitton. If Miss Whitton will come forward now we will have her sworn to give evidence on this subject.

MISS CHARLOTTE WHITTON, called and sworn.

The CHAIRMAN: I think, Miss Whitton, you understand the subject to be discussed, and we would like to have an expression of your views before the Committee. After that we will ask you any necessary questions.

The WITNESS: Mr. Chairman, I might explain first the order of our presentation of this evidence. The social workers who are here, the people who are giving evidence to-day, represent the Social Service Council of Canada. I might explain that I shall deal first with the general aspects of the problem and then more specifically. Then Mr. Mills, of the Children's Aid Society, of Toronto, will follow on some other aspects. Then Mrs. Kensit, of the Children's Bureau, in Montreal, will deal with some other aspects. (Reading):

"In principle the proponents of family allowances argue that this system will improve the standard of living of working families, lighten the cost of rearing children, and so encourage marriage and increase the birth rate. It would therefore seem the responsibility of any inquiry dealing with the system to ascertain whether the system, where tried, has actually brought about such conditions, and whether, if it has done so, or even if it has not, it does not sacrifice other principles, the loss or endangering of which would more than offset any possible advantage. From impartial examination of the question, throughout the countries of Europe, where it has been tried and comparative study of living, health and child welfare conditions in this continent, there would appear to be a grave question of the system having accomplished all those things claimed for it, and there seems to be equally grave doubt as to whether it would be applicable, or desirable in Canada, and whether, in fact, it would not be utterly subversive of the fundamental principles which have brought our present standard of family life and living conditions to such a decent level in this Dominion.

The basis of the State's interest in family life is that every child is entitled to a reasonably safe, decent and adequate guardianship, during his childhood years if he is to grow into the sound manhood, which the State requires for its own permanency. In our branch of civilization no finer or better institution has been evolved, to which this duty and responsibility can be entrusted than the family. Therefore, both Church and State have surrounded marriage—the entrance to the family state—with every safeguard, which each can provide. The Church has sought to raise marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, and

[Miss Charlotte Whitton.]