THE
DECLINING BIRTH-RATE

ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS

[*Being the Report of and the chief evidence taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, instituted, with official recognition, by the National Council of Public Morals—for the Promotion of Race Regeneration —Spiritual, Moral and Physical.*]

Witness examined: MR. J. A. Hobson

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Meeting.—May 6, 1914.

Chairman.—The Very Rev. DEAN INGE, D.D.

Witness examined.—MR. J. A. HOBSON, M.A.

THE SECRETARY. Mr. J. A. Hobson has prepared a statement, which he proposes to read in the first place, and then answer any questions which members may wish to put.—*A.* I am afraid this statement does not consist to any appreciable degree of absolute facts or statements of figures, but is rather of the nature of inference, interpretation, and opinion. But it did seem to me that it might be a good thing that some one should attempt to set before the Commission a general survey of the situation. I approach it primarily from the economic, or the socio-economic, standpoint, which does not exclude the moral aspect of the question.

First of all, as to the motives which seem to operate to bring about the restriction of the birth-rate as practised in different grades of society, distinguishing the wealthy from the middle and working classes. Among the rich, the interference with personal comfort and freedom, the risk, pain and inconvenience of child-bearing, dislike of the care and responsibility of children, especially among the women —the selfish motive in its strictly non-economic form counts most. Even among the rich the "expense" of rearing, educating and providing for children probably tends appreciably to restriction. With these mainly selfish motives others less purely selfish are blended—the cultivation of intellectual, social and other non-domestic interests by wives, the greater regard for the health and comfort of their wives by husbands, a greater desire to do the best for a smaller family, and possibly some qualms regarding their capacity for rearing children properly.

Among the middle classes the economic strain of keeping up a good social position in a society where a secure income adequate to the position is exceptional, is probably the chief direct motive to restriction in the middle classes. The improved education, the increase of salaried or other economic employment, the larger liberty, the increased cultivation of interests outside the home by middle-class married women, contribute appreciably to restriction of families. Greater legitimate regard for health, fear of producing diseased or weakly children, and a reasonable doubt

regarding their personal and financial ability to give the best advantages to a large number of children, probably weigh heavily with many parents of the educated middle classes.

Though the workers are also affected by the strictly non-economic motives, the economic are evidently paramount. Insecurity or fluctuation of income in their case are such as to cause reasonable fear of physical want. The weekly wages of about one-third of the adult male workers in the United Kingdom are below 25*s.*, while that of some 10 per cent. are below a pound a week, a sum wholly insufficient to provide the necessaries of an efficient life for an average family. The average amount of unemployment (omitting time lost from sickness and leakages between jobs) during the last ten years is 5·4 per cent. for trade unionists. For a very large proportion of the workers real wages have fallen since the beginning of the century—at all events prior to the last twelve months. The high prices of food must have operated directly as a check upon the birth-rate in these classes. A still more potent deterrent is the rise of rent, and the growing difficulty of obtaining convenient house accommodation at any price within their means for a family of young children.

What we confront is a general weakening of the feelings which support the full human Family and the Home. Formerly the normal idea and practice were that a young man and a young woman soon after adolescence was attained should marry, set up a home, and fill it with children as fast as they happened to come. Early marriages were considered natural and right, the man was willing to undertake the trouble and risks of maintenance, the woman was willing to bear and rear as many children as came. Those children that survived were accustomed to help in the maintenance of the home as soon as they could be put to work, the boys as wage labourers or apprentices, the girls in the performance of domestic or other work within the home.

Popular education has made the working-classes more conscious of the poverty and insecurity of their position. Though most grades of workers are absolutely better off than was the last generation, their felt wants have grown faster than their means of satisfaction. But there is more forethought, more anxiety for the future, as the risks of working-class life are more adequately realized.

Associated with this more reflective attitude towards life is an increased general regard for the nurture and education of children, for the quality of child-life. Though

this increasing regard for the true interests of the child makes many working-class parents acquiesce cheerfully in the legal restrictions of child-labour, there can be no doubt that the prolonged burden of their maintenance and the deprivation of the wages which they might have earned have operated as a check upon large families.

The old religious belief that, since children were sent by an outside Providence, Providence might be left to look after them has vanished as parents have come to realize that the size of the family lies within their own control.

With these distinctively reasonable considerations co-operate certain changes of feeling and habit more mixed in character.

(*a*) The growth of luxurious expenditure, and the love of recreation, common in different degrees to all classes, especially in towns, affects the home and the family in various ways.

(*b*) I think that the growth of large-town life carries with it an increased unwillingness to undergo the physical risks and pains involved in child-bearing and child-rearing.

(*c*) This is perhaps in a measure associated with the feminist movement.

Such considerations compel us to perceive that we must regard the standpoint of the conscious regulation of the growth of population and of the birth-rate as an accepted policy.

We have seen what the chief motives are which determine individual families in the regulation of their births. The most clear and powerful motive in the great majority of cases is financial economy, based on the consideration of a given income which will yield more security, welfare and satisfaction to parents, and perhaps to the family at large, if the size of the family is kept small. It will generally be held that in this country the gradual reduction of birth-rate in working-class families has not caused any fall of wages, but has been accompanied by some rise in the standard of living of most grades of workers, especially during the period 1876–96.

The Neo-Malthusian contention, however, lays chief stress not upon the gain to the individual family from a reduction of its size below the normal, but upon the gain to the labouring classes in general by following a policy which, by restricting the supply of labour, raises its market price. It is a crusade against poverty.

Now the advocacy of restriction as a labour policy rests on one or both of two assumptions.

1st. That a reduction in the growth of the labouring population will be accompanied by a larger production of wealth per head than would have taken place under a more rapid growth of population. This in effect is a re-statement of the broad plea for restriction as a remedy for over-population. For we cannot for the purposes of our inquiry accept the old definition of over-population for a nation as the pressure of population upon the food supply. Starvation was the old test of over-population; reduction in the sum of economic wealth per head is the modern test. It is true that a certain proportion of this economic wealth must be realized in the form of food and other material necessaries, and that if a nation were confined to its own area of land for the supply of these materials, such a country as Great Britain would at the present time be over-populated. But given commercial intercourse with other countries, a country is not over-populated so long as its growth of wealth (available for conversion into foods and other necessaries or conveniences) is at least as rapid as its growth of population. Now the most authoritative estimates of the growth of wealth in Great Britain show that the rate of growth has during the last half-century been far faster than the growth of population. The following table, in which *The Economist* brought up to date for 1909 earlier estimates by Sir R. Giffen, will establish this—

	Wealth of Great Britain.[1]		Population.
	£		
1865	6,113,000,000	1861	28,927,485
1875	8,548,000,000	1871	31,484,661
1885	10,037,000,000	1881	34,884,848
1895	10,663,000,000	1891	37,732,922
1905	13,036,000,000	1901	41,458,721
1909	13,986,000,000	1911	45,216,665

In a word, wealth has grown considerably faster than population.

But, it may reasonably be urged, the evidence of the growth of national wealth and income faster than the growth of population is not decisive against the labour policy of restriction. The income of labour may not have kept pace with the growth of the labouring population. The increase of income may have gone entirely or mainly

[1] Paton's *Progress of the Nations*, pp. 3 and 703.

to the landlords, capitalists, professional and business men.

Now the question of the distribution of modern incomes is too special for close treatment here. It will be best for me to content myself with the following brief reference to the general result of a calculation by Professor Bowley [1]—

	Rates of Money Wages.	Prices.	Real Wages.
1852–70	Rising fast	Rising	Rising considerably in the whole period
1870–73	Rising very fast	Rising fast	Rising fast
1873–79	Falling fast	Falling fast	Nearly stationary
1879–87	Nearly stationary	Falling	Rising
1887–92	Rising	Rising and falling	Rising
1892–97	Nearly stationary	Falling	Rising
1897–1900	Rising fast	Rising	Rising
1900–14	Falling a little	Falling and rising	Stationary

The rapid rise of prices from 1906 on brought about a fall of real wages during the next six years, with a partial recovery during the last two years. During this century it is probable that there has been no increase in the working-class real income per head, real wages barely keeping pace with the working-class population.

What light does such evidence shed upon the question of working-class over-population? During the whole period 1852–73, when the birth-rate was unrestricted and population was growing rapidly, real wages were rising fast; they continued to rise, though not quite so fast, from 1873 to 1900, when restriction was coming into vogue. Since that time, while restriction is growing tighter, real wages have made no advance. Although in a matter where causation is so complex and so difficult to prove it would be foolish to lay much stress upon the point, it appears that the unrestricted birth-rate of a generation or two ago did not prevent a rise of real wages, while the recent restriction has not prevented stagnation or a fall.

Taking a general survey of the evidence, I am disposed to urge that it is not proved—

1st, that there exists over-population in the sense that the real income of the nation is failing to keep pace with its population;

2nd, that real wages and employment are falling as a result of a definite over-supply of labour.

[1] *Elementary Manual of Statistics*, p. 148.

Over by far the longest part of the period under consideration, the wages of labour in general, and the standard of living of the working-classes, have been rising, and there is no evidence that unemployment is on the increase. This seems to me to point to the conclusion that the growth of population in this country has not been excessive, in the sense of preventing a growth of wealth which yields an increase of real income per head of the population.

But this view, even if sound, by no means disposes of the question of present and future policy. It may well be the case that during the great period of expanding manufactures and commerce, when Great Britain was in advance of the rest of the industrial world, a rapid growth of population was an economic advantage, but that so rapid a growth has now ceased to be economically advantageous. I think some weighty evidence in support of this view might be derived from a study of the statistics of occupations. We may be, I am disposed to think we are, entering a period in which the growth of wealth produced in this country is slowing down. This is quite consistent with the maintenance of a growth of national income as large as ever, for a large and ever-growing share of our national income comes in as interest and profits from investments and business enterprises in other countries.

If this be so, it may account in part for the admitted failure of wages in general to keep pace with the growth of national wealth during recent years. If the production of our national income in the future is going to be derived to an increasing extent from industries conducted in foreign lands with foreign labour, it may be a sound economic instinct which impels the working-classes here to refuse to multiply at the former rate. It is, I think, quite reasonably arguable that a return to the former birth-rate would mean a redundancy of working-class population which would show itself in low wages, less reliable employment, and growing emigration.

I regard the rapid adoption of anti-conceptive methods by the workers as a half-conscious defence of their progressive standard of wages against the new economic forces which are weakening their position.

This brings us to the second of the two assumptions which I said underlay the Neo-Malthusian advocacy of restriction, viz. that only by producing a relative scarcity of labourers can the wage-earners get an adequate share of the national income. Labour may gain either by getting

in wages the same proportion as before of an increasing product, or by getting a larger proportion than before of the same product. It appears obvious common sense to any grade or class of workers that, if they can restrict the supply of their labour, they will, other things equal, get a higher price for it. This is at the bottom of all trade union rules respecting apprenticeship or qualification of membership. In a country where land and capital are abundant, or where either of these requisites is abundant as compared with labour, the remuneration of labour is high. If, then, the working-classes as a whole in this country, where capital is abundant, keep down the supply of workers, each worker will be able to get a higher price for his labour. He may get it at the expense of landlords, capitalists or employers, *i. e.* he may be able to divert to wages a portion of what otherwise would have gone as rent, interest or profit. A good deal of the distribution of wealth is determined by the relative scarcity of the parties among whom it is divided. If labour can make itself more scarce, it will get a larger share. But there are two other sources from which scarce labour may draw its gain. The initial rise of piece or time wages, stimulated by a shortage of labour, will promote improved economic efficiency. This higher skill and efficiency means a larger output of productivity per worker. In other words, a smaller number of better-paid workers may produce as much wealth as a larger number of low-paid, inefficient workers would have produced. Their higher earnings may be in part, not the result of scarcity of labour, but the higher net remuneration of workers working more productively at the same piece-rate as before.

But there is a third source of gain. Though in the regular skilled trades there is no large normal amount of unemployment, the case is far otherwise with the low skilled and casual labour markets. The waste from normal excess of supply over demand at subsistence wages, from leakages and from low efficiency, is in these low grades of the working-class population enormous. All the worst evils of sweating, overcrowding and other economic and moral injuries press most hardly on these grades. Even if the growth of the working-class population as a whole were not excessive, it seems manifest that the growth of this class is excessive. Its children can seldom acquire sufficient skill or efficiency to earn a decent and regular livelihood. They represent a chronic failure of civilization. As a class they do not earn their full keep; they are in many injurious

ways parasitic on the other classes. A marked restriction of their rate of growth would have two beneficial effects. It would raise the value of the low-skilled services they render, thus improving their standard of efficiency and life, while it would relieve the body of the workers from the burden of contributing to their maintenance.

The strongest formal position of Neo-Malthusianism undoubtedly is its insistence that so long as these grades of the population multiply freely, the problems of casual labour and slum life remain unsolved. Their weakest practical position has hitherto been the fact that the poverty, ignorance and recklessness of life among these grades have made them less likely than any others to adopt and apply preventive methods. Though there is sure evidence that the knowledge of preventive methods is reaching them, it is pretty certain that the restriction of the birth-rate in these grades is far less effective than in the higher grades. Here one might refer to Dr. Dunlop's Scottish Analysis, and also to the Analysis in the current issue of the *Statistical Journal* of the cases in Great Ormond Street Hospital.

If the members of the low-skilled, low-paid and irregularly employed classes restricted considerably their rate of growth, there is reasonable ground for holding that they would make a double economic gain, being paid at a higher rate for more efficient and more regular work. The overcrowding and misery of the slum life which is theirs would be abated in two ways: a smaller average family would have a larger and more reliable income to live upon. It is hardly possible for any open-minded reformer to work among the poorer grades of workers in town or country without recognizing how heavily a large family hampers them, not merely as individuals, but as a class, and how the practical impossibility of bringing up such families decently injures the nation. But granting that the individual working-class family, or the low-skilled labouring class as a whole, or even the working-classes in the aggregate, may gain economically and otherwise by the present or a still greater restriction of the birth-rate, does this finally settle the wider question of policy for the nation, the empire, or for mankind? Might it not be the case that the motives of self-interest, which impel the individual family or even whole classes to restrict their increase, collide with the economic or the human interests of the nation, or of society at large?

What is the socially desirable increase of population for such a nation as ours in the early future? What birth-rate

will furnish such an increase? In what proportions would it be desirable that different classes, races or other divisions of the population should contribute to the required growth?

I am rather sorry that this Commission, which by intention and in effect is considering the whole population question, should by its title and preliminary statement have thrown chief emphasis upon the purely quantitative aspect of the problem. For though the decline of the birth-rate has naturally focused attention on the quantitative aspect, it is also true that the trend of serious thought has inclined continually to lay more stress upon the qualitative aspect, under the title of Eugenics. That means subordinating the question of the birth-rate to the question of securing the conditions of health and happiness, the qualitative control of life. To put this issue concretely, I should personally hold that, given the existing economic and social arrangements in this country, a closely restricted birth-rate for the working-classes as a whole, and for large sections of the middle classes, was defensible and desirable, not merely in their own family and class interests, but in the interest of the nation as a whole. A return to the reckless breeding of former times would cause increased poverty, distress, overcrowding, infant mortality, inefficiency and demoralization.

On the other hand, if important changes in the general economic and social arrangements could be brought about, which would strengthen the basis of family life for all classes, by giving security of an income adequate to all sound family requirements, with full access to educational and economic opportunities, and with full public provision against all emergencies to which individual or family efforts are incompetent—if, in addition to these general improvements, society, whether by direct legislative action or by indirect educative action, were giving adequate encouragement to admittedly efficient family stock and discouragement to inefficient stock—under such improved arrangements I should desire to see the maintenance of a birth-rate not much lower than that which exists to-day.

Now, so far as the restriction of the birth-rate is a conscious intellectual process, the most potent motives are the social-economic. If it be deemed desirable to encourage young persons to marry at a reasonably early age, and to have as many children as they are agreed upon desiring, certain fundamental reforms of a distinctively economic nature are indispensable. I can here but barely indicate the nature of these reforms.

The first group relate to the establishment of a minimum standard of work and living for the working-classes. A weekly wage sufficient to provide food, clothing, housing, and other requirements for a family of the socially desirable size is the first essential for the defence of the family and home. With it must be coupled sufficient leisure time to enable both parents to do their duty by the home. Security of regular employment, or of sufficient maintenance during periods of unemployment, is needed to give to parents that confidence in the future which is essential to sound family life. Adequate assistance, medical and financial, to mothers, before, during and after a confinement, must be given by an extension of public health and insurance services. Local authorities must have larger legal and financial powers to deal with the various aspects of the housing problem.

But these and other reforms, relating to a minimum standard, by no means cover all the ground. They hardly touch the restriction of the birth-rate and the weakening of family life among the middle and upper classes. Here the accepted standards of life and conduct are inimical to the production and care of children and the cultivation of home life. Many well-to-do people of the professional and commercial or the leisured classes do not want to marry and settle down when they are young; when they do marry they do not want even a moderate family.

Biology and ethics alike give prominence to the maintenance of the species as the prime object of the individual life. Organic and social life are both evolved largely in order to make better provision for posterity. The fuller individuality and personality of man is not designed by Nature solely or chiefly as an end in itself, but largely as a means for forwarding the progressive purpose of the species. When, by the cultivation of the arts of industry, a large and growing command over the resources of external nature is obtained by man, he is enabled at once to enrich his own personality and to make larger provision for the life of his offspring. But when any individual, class or generation seizes and devotes exclusively to its own private enjoyment all the resources of wealth, leisure and liberty which its command of current industry places within its power, unwilling even to provide for the existence of a posterity, they are sinning against the supreme law of Nature.

No moral teaching, I submit, will cure this malady, unless it is accompanied by thoroughgoing reforms of industry and property which shall distribute work on the

one hand, wealth upon the other, in a more reasonable and equitable way.

One other main line of reform demands separate attention. The economic, legal and conventional position of woman in this country obliges most women to marry as the only or the easiest way of getting a living: their choice of husband is exceedingly restricted, and they have little to say regarding the number of children they shall have. So long as so many women are not free to choose or to refuse marriage, there is no adequate security for sexual affinity, mutual affection and respect, or, in a word, for any of the conditions which make marriage and parenthood a success. It may be urged that this enlarged liberty of woman will not raise the birth-rate, may indeed reduce it further, by abstention from marriage and maternity on the part of some who marry now, and by a larger limitation of the size of the family by the wife and mother. I am not concerned to deny that this may be the case, but only to urge that the qualitative gain to the family and the home, by placing marriage on a more truly voluntary basis than at present, is of vastly greater social importance.

Legislation can do little directly to influence the birth-rate, though it may interfere advantageously with some of the injurious methods of restriction employed. Education, carefully and courageously applied to the formation of an instructed public opinion, might do much for the qualitative character of births. It might even do something to spread a better sense of the dignity and public service of sound parenthood, instilling in healthy parents a recognition of a race duty. But better economic arrangements will do more for the sound solution alike of the qualitative and the quantitative problem.

It must be admitted to be *prima facie* likely that our social reforms may conduce to a further reduction of the birth-rate. This reduction is not necessarily a source of regret. It would be accompanied by a better sexual selection, which would eliminate many bad types of union and offspring. The fewer children actually born would be better born and better nurtured. The quality and efficiency of the nation would be raised. This statement includes moral efficiency, unless it can seriously be maintained that the use of physically innocuous preventives, which will certainly be the chief means of restriction, involves so high a measure of moral degradation as to outweigh all the eugenic and educational benefits.

I do not desire to see a return to the era of large, un-

restricted families with its tale of poverty, dirt, immorality, and infantile mortality. Restriction, achieved wholly or mainly by moral restraint, I hold to be a thoroughly impracticable and futile suggestion. We ought not, therefore, I submit, to commit ourselves to any indiscriminate condemnation of preventive methods.

I hold it unlikely that this nation will proceed to the extremity of regulation practised at present in France and perhaps in certain small sections of our own population. A general and established sense of security of employment and of sufficient livelihood for men and women will encourage earlier marriages, remove some economic obstacles to families, such as the price of house accommodation, give freer play to the philoprogenitive instincts, and enable a larger proportion of children born to be reared successfully.

I would, in conclusion, like to add one word of economic and vital warning to those, if any, who are opposed on moral or on other grounds to all regulation of the size of family, save on grounds of poverty and by methods of moral restraint. If the ordinary man and woman is to win sufficient freedom from the drudgery of routine industry, sufficient leisure for the education and cultivation of the taste and interests which enrich personality and raise the value of life, this can only be obtained on condition of some limitation of the number of mouths to be fed and bodies to be clothed and housed.

THE CHAIRMAN. I suppose we may take it that there is no doubt that there is a natural limit to the number of people that can be supported in the world, nor that if the birth-rate had no restrictions upon it in any part of the world that limit would be reached in less than a century? The productiveness of the human race would appear to have been evolved in such a way as to meet the losses due to war, famine, pestilence and other causes. In the Middle Ages, for instance, the birth-rate was about 45, and the death-rate about the same. Within the last century the death-rate has been reduced from the mediæval level to 14, and if the birth-rate were maintained at anything like its natural level, about 40, all over the world, the population of the globe, which now is 1,700 millions, would in 120 years have reached 27,000 millions, or about ten times as great a number as the earth could probably support. That, it seems to me, is the fundamental fact we have to recognize, and one that makes a drastic limitation of the birth-rate an absolute necessity.

Then, with regard to our own country, can any one think

it a desirable state of things that this country should contain 60, or 70, or 80 millions of persons, entirely divorced from the land, employed in large towns in producing commodities under rather cheap conditions, because they have to undersell other nations in order to pay for the food to feed them which must be brought in from the other side of the world? Is that a state of things which could possibly produce a healthy or satisfactory nation?—*A.* These are two very large and important points, I quite agree. I did not deal exhaustively with the world problem partly because it would be quite possible for us to take a national view, the nation which is our own, and which we value most highly, and say we are not going to abrogate our right to perform our share in the population and control of the world in the future, and that if we are simply to say, "We will keep down our birth-rate, and reduce ourselves to the position of France, and let other nations go ahead," we shall by doing that allow those other nations to multiply a little faster because we have restricted our population. With regard to the second point, as to whether we are over-populated now because of the divorce of so large a proportion of our population from the soil, I do not know; I have not any fixed view about that. It is not obvious to me that the life of a townsman or citizen in a country like this, social, political and other arrangements being well made, is a worse life than that of an ordinary person pursuing agricultural avocations, or that "bread labour," as Tolstoy called it, is essentially part of the life of every man.

DR. FREMANTLE. May I, keeping to the two points which Mr. Dean has raised, ask Mr. Hobson whether it is conceivable to consider any possibility of the world's resources being entirely used up? How far is it possible to say there is such a definite limitation as he says there is?—*A.* I did not understand the Dean as saying there was a *definite* limitation. Reforms in agriculture are taking place which are increasing the available resources of the food supply of the world. But the point is whether that improved productivity of Nature does tend to go along as fast as the pace at which the population left to itself will increase. It is entirely a question of relative pace. There must be a limit ultimately, of course; that everybody will admit, unless you can get some method of chemical feeding.

THE CHAIRMAN. The limit will be reached long before my 27,000 millions?—*A.* Yes.

DR. FREMANTLE. Do you mean "Yes"? Is it a prac-

tical question that we have got to take into consideration—the possibility of the vast, untenanted areas of the Empire and the outer world being absorbed in the near future? Does it really enter into our present economic considerations?—*A.* Personally, I should say no. There is no doubt there has been an increase in the population of the world which has gone on a wheat basis, but that is a very different question; you have to consider that there is certainly in Canada and South America, as well as in Siberia and possibly the Sahara, the potentiality of enormous supplies of food. I do not myself think that the growth of the population of the world is likely in the early future to press very insistently upon the food supply. I see no reason, for instance, why, within the next twenty years, the railways we are building with our spare capital all over the world may not increase the supply of food per head of the population even of the world.

DR. GREENWOOD. With regard to the eugenics question, I think you said it would be a very good thing if the best stocks would breed in large numbers. May there not be some contradiction in terms there? I mean in this way—that the kind of people the Eugenists wish to reproduce may be just the people who cannot be persuaded to reproduce by any kind of inducements in the shape of benefits or allowances?—*A.* That may be a practical disability in the applicability of the art of the Eugenist, but it would not necessarily invalidate his theories.

Q. The next thing I was going to ask you, with regard to these people who do not nurse their own children, and who send them to school at the earliest possible moment—whether they should be entirely condemned, or whether there might not be some dissociation between the maternal instinct and the nursing instinct? That is to say, certain persons may be very good parents, and yet very inefficient, and consciously inefficient, directors and trainers-up of children.—*A.* And be conscious of their inefficiency?

Q. I was thinking of the analogy of the bee-hive.—*A.* The analogy of the bee-hive rather lends itself to Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's view of the crèche and the expert, does it not—that the ordinary mother does not know anything about it at all; that the mere fact of her having borne children does not qualify her in the least for taking care of them, and they ought to be put out to people who have studied the art of taking care of children from the earliest times?

Q. I am not putting that as a general opinion, but I

mean that we should have to take that into account before condemning that course of action.—*A.* Yes. Those parents, in a properly regulated community, would not be able to put out their children; they would be obliged to learn to afford them some sort of parental care, and to apply such degree of efficiency as they could command to the rearing of their children.

Q. Then in that organized State you would rather stop the breeding of the professional type of woman?—*A.* I was not looking forward to such a mechanical society as that. There ought to be a certain amount of elasticity. I think, of course, in a society where it was recognized that the production and rearing of children was the obviously finest of the arts, those women who preferred to devote their entire lives to other professional causes would have some very special reason or genius for doing so, or some special desire not to take part in the normal life of the sex.

PRINCIPAL GARVIE. That is one point on which I would like to get a clear expression of opinion from you. Did you suggest that the progress of womanhood implied that every woman, though a wife and mother, should also have some sort of profession of her own which would give her economic independence?—*A.* My assumption was that every woman should have such an economic equipment as would enable her at all times of her life to have an alternative to living in the home and being kept by the wages or income of the husband. If she was brought up in such a way as to be able to earn her own living, she would choose the time of her marriage and she would choose the husband whom she wished to marry. There are many grave difficulties in detail, no doubt, but I do not think they would prove insuperable in a society that understood how to organize itself.

Q. You did not mean that motherhood and the regular pursuit of her profession or other economic calling should normally go together?—*A.* Oh, no, not at all. I think it is not so normally.

Q. I entirely agree with the argument for women's independence; I only wanted to know whether Mr. Hobson would make motherhood a kind of by-product of a woman's life, while she was at the same time engaged in some other occupation?—*A.* No, that was not my view.

DR. SCHARLIEB. Have you an idea that there might be something in the nature of State endowment of motherhood—some allowance to be continued so long as the child was alive, and to cease when the child died?—*A.* I have

not made up my mind about that. My general views incline me very strongly in favour of some such course, but I see such extraordinarily great difficulties, financial, political and other, that I hesitate to commit myself to it. I do not know what would be the condition of things supposing the national Exchequer said, "We will give a weekly bonus for every child that is born in a family." I should hesitate to support offhand any view of that kind, partly on the ground that it might over-stimulate the population, partly that it would stimulate population in certain types of families. I cannot regard it as a present practical problem.

DR. FREMANTLE. I take it that your views are founded entirely on an economic basis, and that you exclude from consideration the question of attempting in any way to restrict the knowledge of preventives?—*A.* Well, I think I indicated in what I read where the point as to information regarding preventives comes in.

Q. As a whole you take it as an impossible solution of the problem that there should be any attempt to try to restrict the information or knowledge of preventives?—*A.* Yes; I have assumed that it is impracticable to do so.

Q. We will not discuss it; we will assume it. You said as regards the wealthy classes that the selfish motives ranked highest with them. Do you not think that is rather a sweeping generalization?—*A.* I think I said if you take the different classes and their motives, what I should call the selfish motives bulked larger in the richer than in the poorer classes.

Q. I understand that the general trend of your economic evidence shows that it is largely a question, in the working-classes, of the margin between income and necessary expenditure—the pressure of the margin between income and the necessary or desirable expenditure?—*A.* Yes.

DR. SAVILL. Do you think the general employment of women would lead to a reduction in the wages of men? After all, if women are going to be economically independent, must it not react upon the men?—*A.* It might under certain circumstances do that, supposing a number of industries and professions which are at the present time by law or by regulation shut to women were suddenly thrown open to them on free terms. Women having at present to support a lower standard of living, and to contribute less to the upkeep of the family than men have, the immediate effect might be, in some of those trades, to lower the standard wage or the piece-rate applicable to both men and women. That might be the immediate effect.

Q. Of course you take that into consideration when you advocate the employment of women?—*A.* Yes; when I advocate increased economic independence for women, I in my mind keep it in touch with a fuller organization of the work of the country, so as to ensure that nobody should be employed at all below a certain level of wage and all other working conditions; that is to say, that there should not be permitted in this country to be such a thing as a sweated industry.

PRINCIPAL GARVIE. You do not advocate the competition of women with men at lower wages?—*A.* I do not advocate that at all.

Q. There is one very important question. I think you said that the survival rate of the lowest class was highest, as well as the birth-rate?—*A.* I think it is.

Q. That is to say, actually more children survive, and they contribute more to the total population?—*A.* I believe that is so. There is no question about the birth-rate. The difference in the survival rate is smaller, but is still, I believe, highest in the lowest grade.

Q. Is there direct evidence of that?—*A.* I think so.

DR. GREENWOOD. I think the number of surviving children is greatest in the lowest class, and although, as Mr. Hobson points out, the difference in the case of the survival rates is nothing like so large as in the case of the birth-rate, it still appears that the net additions made by the lower classes of the population are proportionately greater than those of the upper classes.

The Witness withdrew.

Meeting.—November 13, 1914.

Chairman.—The Very Rev. DEAN INGE, D.D.

Witness examined.—DR. GEORGE REID, M.D., D.P.H., County Medical Officer of Health for Staffordshire.

PRÉCIS.

My evidence deals with the question of the effect of the employment of married women in factories on infantile mortality, and also the effect of men and women working in lead processes on miscarriage and still-birth rates.