



WILEY

Review

Author(s): Millicent Garrett Fawcett

Review by: Millicent Garrett Fawcett

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 74 (Jun., 1909), pp. 228-233

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2221430>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 06:57 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Economic Society, *Wiley* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
The Economic Journal

minor measures, such as the systematic distribution of public work, greater elasticity of wages, and the removal of the surplus created by decasualisation.

Such is Mr. Beveridge's book, and it is beyond doubt a great one. The treatment is forcible and often striking, as in the description of casual labour as "an indirect form of sweating"; the analysis is systematic and complete; and the varied statistical tables are marvellously interesting, and must have entailed an immense amount of work. The appendices contain reprints of two of the author's previous articles, on "Public Labour Exchanges in Germany," and on "Methods of Seeking Employment in Great Britain." There is also a very serviceable index, and an admirable bibliography of the subject, but the printing is rather small and close. The work itself, however, supplies in the best manner possible what would soon have become a serious public want. For it will be to the question of unemployment what *The Wealth of Nations* has been to the theory of political economy generally.

N. B. DEARLE

Women in Industry from Seven Points of View. By GERTRUDE TUCKWELL, CONSTANCE SMITH, MARY MACARTHUR, MAY TENNANT, NETTIE ADLER, ADELAIDE ANDERSON, CLEMENTINA BLACK, with a Preface by D. J. SHACKLETON, M.P. (London: Duckworth and Co., 1908. Pp. 217.)

THE general drift of these seven essays by experts on the position of women in industry is frankly Socialistic. The writers are deeply and inevitably impressed by the misery, loss of health, and destruction of infant life fairly attributable to the terribly low wages earned by large groups of women in industrial life. There are exceptions. The well-organised textile industry in which the women outnumber the men, being a total of 689,000 out of 1,171,000, presents a favourable contrast to nearly all other women's employments. Women's wages here, taken all round, average 15s. per week; or, if the cotton trade is taken by itself, the average rises to the respectable figure of 18s. 8d. per week (Report on "Earnings and Hours in the Textile Trade," 1908). This represents the high-water mark of women's position in industry in this country, and Miss Anderson, H.M. Principal Lady Inspector of Factories, give an interesting sketch in her essay on factory and workshop law, of how the Factory Acts have been built up, and how they have improved the position of the

workers, male and female, without injuring the trades to which they apply. The textile workers rely on self-help as well as on the protection of the State. They have a powerful Trades Union, the majority of the members of which are women. But the State help and the self-help are becoming inextricably intertwined. The Trade Unions, as Mr. Shackleton, M.P., explains in his Preface to the present volume, are following up the resolutions they arrive at in their congresses, by "definite action in Parliament." The self-protective energy of the operative expresses itself now much more than in earlier years by political action. This appears to me to constitute a very strong claim from the economic point of view for the removal of the sex disability in regard to the Parliamentary vote. Women who have their own living to earn have political as well as economic interests to protect, and should be able to take action in the political as well as in the economic field. The comparative prosperity of the woman textile worker is contrasted by several of the writers of these essays with the terrible position of women in the "sweated" industries. Miss Clementina Black tells of a woman in London who made holland skirts for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ each. She had to provide her own machine and probably the cotton. Miss Constance Smith tells of a woman, helped by a whole family of children, whose combined wages never exceeded $4s. 3d.$ a week. Wages in these sweated trades show no tendency to improve; on the contrary, they are going down. Instances are given of a jacket-maker in West Ham who used to get, fifteen years ago, $17s. 6d.$ a dozen for making jackets, and now gets $5s. 6d.$ for exactly the same work, and several other cases of a similar fall in the rate of pay are quoted. Nearly all the authors of these essays recommend the institution of Wages Boards to fix a minimum wage. But none of the writers appear to have grappled with the difficulties which stand in the way in this country of the successful working of these Boards. Miss C. Smith (pp. 42—50) describes the working of the Wages Boards in the Colony of Victoria, where they have been in existence since 1896, and have increased in number from the five, with which the experiment was started, to forty-nine at the present time. The first Act passed by the Victorian Legislature was temporary; it was intended to be in operation for four years only. It has since become permanent, and Miss Smith assures her readers that the opposition of employers has almost entirely ceased, many of them, in fact, were "eager to secure the re-enactment" of the measure. The actual rise in wages brought about by the Boards has not been startling, but it has been decided, and there has been an advance all along.

There has been no diminution of output, and no increase in unemployment (p. 49). The only trades in which the Wages Boards in Victoria have been a failure are those, such as carriage and furniture factories, in which Chinamen are employed. However diligently the Parliamentary draughtsmen of Victoria tried to apply the Act to the Chinaman, their efforts appear to have met with failure (p. 50).

Now, does the success of Wages Boards in Victoria warrant us in believing that they would be a success here? Victoria has always been a Protectionist Colony; therefore it is possible by an adjustment of import duties to exclude foreign competition, and that places the question of the maintenance of a minimum wage in a position of comparative security. The real difficulty comes in where the operation of a Wages Board raises the cost of production, and so far gives an advantage, under a Free Trade system, to the foreign competitor in the home market. Miss Constance Smith attempts to meet this difficulty by saying that there must be an international agreement, and she appears confident that there will be no insuperable difficulty in the way of this. She says that the greater nations of Europe are much concerned by the national evils created by sweated labour and starvation wages; low vitality, high death-rates, low *moral*, and declining birth-rates are the direct product of such wages as have just been quoted. But in such a matter as this, even if international agreement were as simple and easy to create as a practical reality as it is to write down the words, the competition would be not only with "the greater nations of Europe," but with China, Japan, and other Eastern peoples who, it may be almost certainly assumed, would stand outside any international agreement, and would be able to frustrate its aims. If Belfast manufacturers can get their linen embroidered cheaper in Japan or in the Canary Islands than in Donegal, they will send their orders there. It must, we fear, be faced that the Wages Board system can only be made effective by the help of protective import duties shutting out foreign competition.

The sounder solution of the difficulties and dangers arising from the sweating system is indicated in a very able paper by Miss MacArthur on Trades Unions. She is full of hopefulness in respect of the spread of Trade Unionism among women. Women have come into industry to stay; the wiser among the men Trade Unionists recognise that the women cannot be driven out, and that it is to the interest of the men, as well as of the women, to secure for them a satisfactory living wage. She quotes, it is true,

a letter from a men's Trade Union requesting the Women's Trade Union League to send down an organiser to a certain Midland town to induce the women there to form a union; this letter concluded with the words: "Please send the organiser immediately, for our Amalgamated Society has decided that if the women of this town cannot be organised they *must be exterminated*" (p. 65). (The italics are ours.) The extermination of the women would present practical difficulties and probable disadvantages to their exterminators; but the quotation is interesting as showing how far even the crudest of Trade Unionists has grasped the fact that it is to his interest to raise the industrial condition of women. Miss MacArthur's outlook on the prospect of Trade Unionism among women is hopeful. She says there are more women Trade Unionists to-day than there were men represented at the first Trade Union Congress held at Sheffield nearly forty years ago. She combats the notion that the probability of marriage is an insurmountable bar to women's Trade Unionism, and states that the last five years have seen a remarkable wave of progress in the women's Trade Union movement. Unionism among women has borne fruit in the development of many women leaders among the workers themselves. "Women who," to quote Miss MacArthur, "imbued with the justice of their cause and realising the great issues involved, have become enthusiastic missionaries preaching the gospel of combination to their fellow-workers in the factory, mill, and workshop" (p. 81). The Unions are thus acting as a great moral and educational agency, teaching women self-reliance, as well as reliance on, and loyalty to, each other.

Mrs. Tennant's essay on infant mortality raises many controversial questions. She apparently advocates the municipalisation of mothers. "The State should, directly or indirectly, protect her, should see that she suffers no loss" (p. 91) from losing her employment before and after the birth of her children. The maintenance of the mother before and after child-birth is not to be the responsibility of the father, but of the municipality or the State. Anything more anti-social than this type of Socialism it would be difficult to imagine. It would be the final break-up of home life as we know it now. Mrs. Tennant maintains that the enormously high infant mortality which still unhappily prevails is mainly due to the employment of women before and after child-birth. She quotes the *British Medical Journal* of November 17th, 1894, as being responsible for a statement that during the Lancashire cotton famine, 1862 to 1865, "the infant death-rate was

greatly lessened owing to mothers being compelled to suckle their infants" (p. 93). No information is given on the important point of how the Lancashire cotton famine affected the birth-rate. If the great poverty of the textile workers during the famine materially diminished the birth-rate among them, there would naturally be a diminution in the infantile death-rate, without any real improvement having been effected; but on this highly important element in the situation the essay is silent. I am able to quote figures supplied to me by Miss Jenner which bear upon the accuracy of the statement Mrs. Tennant quotes from the *British Medical Journal* :—

Year.	Deaths per thousand under one year in Manchester.	Year.	Deaths per thousand under one year in Manchester.
1857	211	1862	177
1858	200	1863	187
1859	182	1864	179
1860	170	1865	217
1861	168		
	Cotton famine begins.	1866	209
			Cotton famine ends.

These figures are very far from justifying the bald statement which has been quoted. They require amplification, and especially, as has been said, comparison with the birth-rate during the same period.

Mrs. Tennant is one of those social reformers who want a short cut to the millennium. She will have it that the factory mother stands outside all educative influences which would help her to rear her child successfully during the first perilous months of its existence, although she fully acknowledges that a terribly high rate of infant mortality exists in districts where there is little or no factory employment for women. Educative influences dealing with the problem of infant mortality have only within the last few years been brought into existence. It may possibly be too soon, the experience gained of their efficiency too brief, to justify us in attributing the improvement of the last few years to their agency. The Registrar-General warns us in his report that a cool summer may have more effect in preventing the waste of infant life than educative measures. Still, when one sees a table like that which Mrs. Tennant gives us (p. 115) of the infant mortality in the third quarter (the most deadly) of the years 1904–5–6 in St. Pancras, and finds that whereas St. Pancras in the earlier year was 24 worse than the rest of London and 42 worse than the whole of England and Wales, but that in 1906 it had become 28 better than the rest of London, and 13 better than the whole of England and Wales, no one is justified in treating educative influences as a

negligible quantity. The ignorance of mothers is almost unfathomable, but all health visitors assure us that their maternal love is equally profound. They have only to be taught to do the right thing, in such a way as to carry conviction, and for the most part they do it. When babies are habitually drugged (see Mrs. Tennant, p. 95) or fed on tinned salmon or pickled herring or beefsteak, an enormously high infant mortality is the inevitable result. The last Registrar-General's report (see *Times*, January 30th, 1909) showed that since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been an appreciable decline in infant mortality. For the year 1907 it was at the rate of 118 per 1,000 (partly due to a cool summer), as compared with 145 as the average for the ten years 1897-1906.

Next to the crass and lamentable ignorance of mothers, the chief cause of high infant mortality, insanitary housing conditions hold the next place. Mr. John Burns quoted in the House of Commons on April 5th of this year a town in which the mortality of children under five reached the enormous total of 570 per 1,000, and he attributed this mainly to the prevalence of back-to-back houses.

When we lament, as everyone must, the great waste of infant life which prevails, and seek remedies for it, it should be remembered that vital statistics have only been kept for a comparatively short period, and therefore we have no means of comparing the death-rate of infants in our own time, dominated as it is by factory labour and overcrowded town life, with the death-rate of infants two, three, or four hundred years ago. But isolated facts are sometimes illuminative as to social conditions, and the following seem to be so:—(1) The father of Dean Colet, the founder of St. Paul's School, was a wealthy citizen, and in his time Lord Mayor of London. He and his wife had twenty-two children; all except John Colet died in infancy. (2) Queen Anne was the mother of seventeen children; all but one died in infancy, and the survivor never reached adolescence. Here are instances of infant mortality among the wealthy and well-placed which could hardly be paralleled to-day in the worst slums of Liverpool; and it may be asked if rich people had this sort of death-rate among their infant children, how did any poor survive at all? It can hardly be doubted that ignorance was the cause of this slaughter of the innocents, and ignorance is still the enemy that has to be faced. The health visitors and the schools for mothers are facing it, and are beginning to be rewarded by seeing it retreat.

MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT