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EDITORIAL.

MOTHERS' PENSIONS

A meeting held during National Baby Week, which should have far reaching effect, was that organized by the Women's International League, when Mrs. Pethick Lawrence presided, and Judge Neil, of Chicago, described the system of Mothers' Pensions now in force in 30 of the United States of America.

In 1899 the State of Illinois enacted two laws. The first was known as the Juvenile Court Law, under which the Court has authority to remove children from the mothers who are not caring adequately for them, poverty, as well as crime, being ground for removal if it is considered inimical to the interests of the child.

The second law empowered corporations to establish industrial homes. These homes cost the State 10 dollars per month per child to maintain, in addition to private subscriptions. New York in one year paid 3,200,000 dollars in maintaining such homes.

In 75 per cent. of the cases of children removed to homes the cause was poverty, not crime.

Judge Neil told how he was present in the Juvenile Court in Chicago when a mother with five little children appeared before the judge. The testimony was that the father had died three years before, and the mother had gone out to earn. He learnt later that no frail woman, unskilled in the art of getting money, could endure for more than three years, and this mother had broken down, was unable to earn more, and her landlord had turned her out. The Judge described how he saw the sweat break out on the face of this poor woman, in the agony of her despair, as she heard the order that the children should be sent

to various homes until all the five were disposed of, and he said to the presiding Judge, "Wouldn't it be more humane if you took the mother to the back of the Court House and shot her?" He asked also, "Why don't you give the mother the ten dollars a month per child, which it will cost you to maintain them in an institution, and let her bring up her own children?" He was told that the law did not permit it, and he replied, "Then let's change the law." But the institutions were organized, and had representatives in the legislature, therefore, he said, "If there is no one to represent the mothers I'll do it." His proposal was to obtain an amendment to the Juvenile Court Law, so that the Court might be permitted to pay 10 dollars per month per child to the mother.

The Bill was passed without a dissenting voice, and in 1911 the law went into operation. The taxpayer now hired the mother, instead of some other person, to look after her children, and in 30 States last year over 100,000 children were supported in the United States under this system. In 1915 the State of New York enacted one of the best pension laws in force, and when it got into operation the number of children brought before the Court was reduced by 75 per cent.

Arising out of the subject was the question of paying the mother a minimum amount, and letting her earn the rest. But this part payment did not work. So the mothers were forbidden to go out to earn, and they became efficient mothers when they had sufficient incomes.

The pension, said Judge Neil, is paid by cheque on the first of the month. It is recognized that the mother is not a pauper, but is on "a respectable, dignified job." There is no mark on the envelope, the cheque is just the same kind of cheque as an employer would get.

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