

keep as part of their wages. They won their independence from their employer years ago as the domestic worker is winning it now. In the past, of course, the life of the live-in servant was by no means always unpleasant. She was generally one of a large staff of servants, often both male and female, who had a life and interests of their own in the servants' quarters. A girl who started as a between-maid could aspire ultimately to rise to be a parlour-maid or head housemaid with considerable authority over the junior members of the staff. But to-day the domestic worker in a private home has little advancement to look forward to, as she is generally the one and only. Also she is in the difficult position of living among the family and, to a certain extent, subordinating her interests to theirs without ever being quite one of them. For the employer, too, there are difficulties. It is hard enough for two people, unless they are friends in the first place, to live and work together. When their interest are as divergent as those of mistress and maid often are, continual close association in the small modern home can be very trying. Therefore I think we have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that domestic work will be on a daily or hourly basis and must be done under conditions that reduce the dependence of the employed person to a minimum.

One way of achieving this would be through the organisation of cleaning companies. Have you ever heard of these? I saw an account the other day of one operating in America. The idea is that a number of workers—three or four perhaps—all come to your house at the same time bringing their own cleaning equipment. Then between them (once a week or so) they "do" the house, or as much of it as they are employed to do. The scrubbing, polishing, sweeping, dusting and cleaning of windows and silver, in fact everything but the more personal work, could be done in a few hours. If there were companies of this sort to do the heavy cleaning the normal household could then manage without other domestic help. In fact, I think it should be the aim of the average household to be self-reliant except for this routine cleaning. I should say the organisation of cleaning companies might well be a commercial venture, though the State or local bodies should also have their own companies to clean their institutions and offices; and most important, to provide a free weekly visit to all pregnant women.

Compulsory Domestic Service?

The situation would then be that home helps would only be needed in families where there was sickness, where there were young babies or where people were too old to look after themselves. The Government Domestic Aid scheme is planned to meet just these emergencies. The difficulty seems to be in getting sufficient women to take up this work. If the shortage of workers continues the only solution I can see would be to make all girls serve a period of domestic service equivalent to a period of military or national service called for from boys. I would not object to this for my children. Would you? In this case there would be no payment to girls by the people they worked for and therefore no feeling of dependence on them. The girls could be boarded in State hostels and be sent to houses where there was sickness, where people were incapacitated by old age and, last but not least, where there were young

babies. I think that every mother with a baby under a year old should be entitled to a helper if she wished to have one.

We hear so much nowadays about the virtues of breast feeding babies; but the modern mother simply does not have the peace and rest necessary for this. No cow could be expected to function that did as much running about as a housewife! And I don't think it does a baby much good to be fed by an over-worked, tired mother. Some women find it no effort to feed a baby; but to most it is an exhausting business, and when this is added to all their other jobs, it leaves them perpetually tired. Some of us remember the first year of our babies' lives chiefly by the feeling of being always tired and never having enough sleep. Karitane nurses, of course, have been a great stand-by to mothers in New Zealand. But they are in such short supply now that it is not possible for a mother to have the one all the time she is feeding a baby, even if she could afford it. And don't you agree that if a baby is healthy the mother should have the joy and the responsibility of looking after it? To pass the baby to a nurse and perhaps put it on to bottles because there is no one but the mother to look after the other children and do the cleaning, cooking, shopping and washing seems to be a tragedy. The ideal surely is for the mother to look after her children and for someone else to help with the housework.

As for families with children over a year old but under school age, the permanent play centre seems the solution to the mothers' problems. I wish a children's centre, such as there is at Karori, were attached to every town primary school. Then mothers could leave their pre-school children there at least one day a week. Once a week they could go shopping without bundling babies and push-chairs on and off trams, and return home without having tired children, as well as heavy parcels, to cope with. They could go to a picture, or play a game of tennis, and have a meal that they did not have to prepare and wash up themselves.

The Karori Children's Centre is divided into a nursery staffed by Karitanes and a Kindergarten staffed by trained teachers, with a matron in charge of both sections. If this very good system were generally adopted it would mean that a regular morning Kindergarten would be run in conjunction with primary schools. The Kindergarten hours at Karori are from 9-12; but the children can have dinner there followed by a sleep and stay on to play until five o'clock.

For many people all over Wellington this Children's Centre has solved the difficult problem of what to do with pre-school children when mothers are ill. Fathers, or elder children, take the little ones at nine o'clock and collect them at five. Still another advantage of the centre is that children who are in the primers at school can have a hot mid-day dinner there and come back to play after school if their mothers are not going to be at home. Of course these things have to be paid for, but they are such a tremendous help to parents that they pay willingly.

All these things that I have mentioned, cleaning companies, home helps and children's centres would affect not only the well-being of the home and the woman's attitude to it; but also the attitude of parents towards the size of their family.

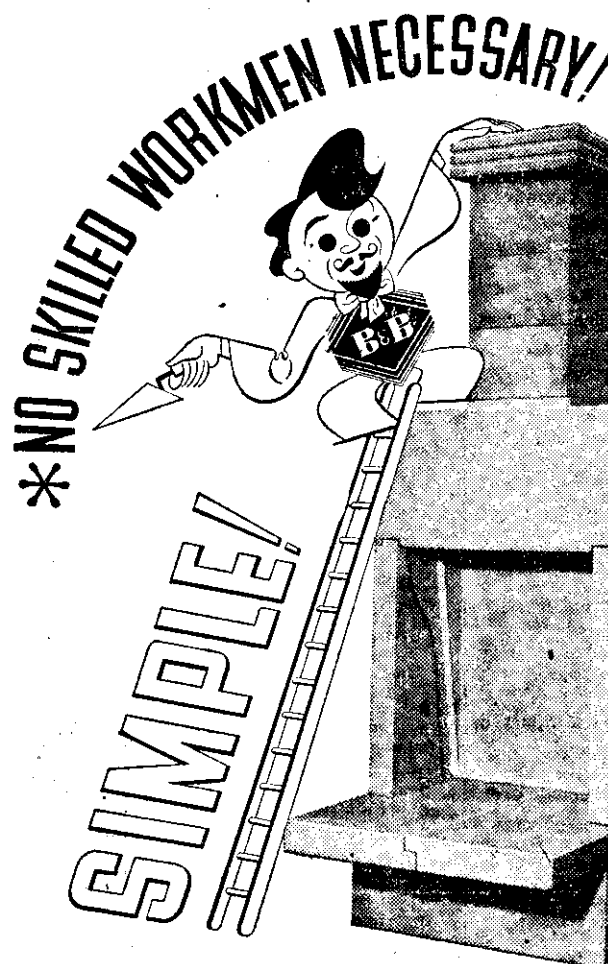
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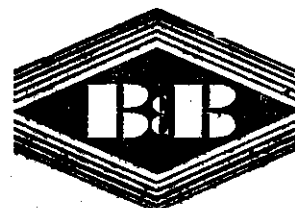
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