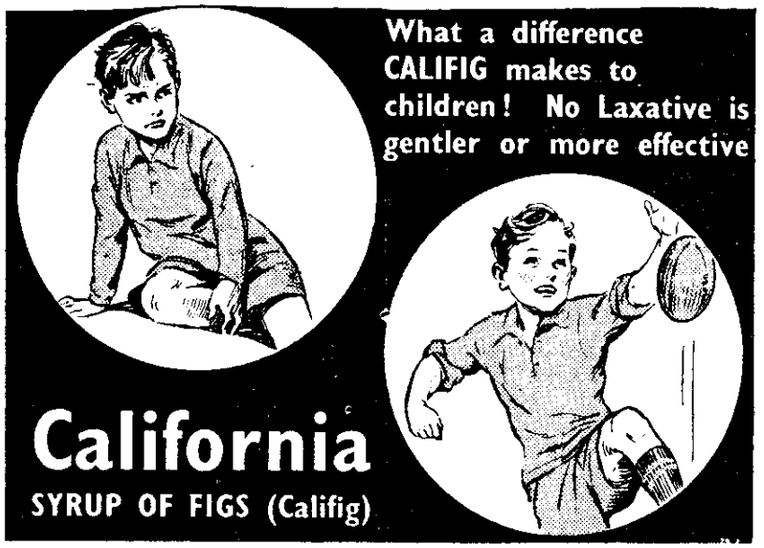

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WHILE MOTHERS WORK

Interesting Experiment In Wellington

SHOULD mothers go to work? That is the question that you hear on all sides. Can they go to work without neglecting their families? Is it uneconomical at the present time, when there is so great a demand for more and yet more teachers, typists, shop assistants, factory workers, that mothers, often skilled workers with ability and experience, should be tied to a home?

These are the questions that a small group of men and women in Wellington have been putting to themselves and which they have set about to answer. Their answer is an experiment, not new to Europe and America, but one that is an experiment for New Zealand. It is an attempt not only to benefit the mothers who want greater freedom and time for work or for service, but also to provide a centre that will be of real educational value to the children that are brought there. And if the experiment succeeds in Wellington it may, of course, be tried elsewhere in the Dominion.

Threefold Purpose

The Children's Centre is to serve a threefold purpose — nursery school, kindergarten and play centre. Primarily it will be a day nursery for any children up to the age of eight whose parents wish to leave them there all day. They may be left as early as seven-thirty in the morning and will be cared for until they are called for at night.

"Eight is the age limit at one end," *The Listener* was told in an interview, "but there will be no limit at the other. We hardly expect to have children under a year left in our care, but if they are weaned, we are prepared to accept full responsibility for them. At the other end, we would only have children of school age for the afternoon after they get back from school, but that time between school and a mother's return from work is a time when little children should not be allowed just to knock about."

The second function of the Children's Centre is to provide a kindergarten. This will be open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Children may stay on to a mid-day meal either regularly or casually. The kindergarten will be under the direction of a fully trained and experienced woman, who will have a junior assistant.

That covers the mornings, and brings us to the third function of the Children's Centre, the provision of afternoon play. Mothers may leave the children for the afternoon on three afternoons a week, and give an afternoon periodically in helping with the care and amusement of the children.

"What about equipment?" we asked. "In these days it is not easy to get toys, cots, tables, chairs, all the things in fact that are so essential to the successful running of a nursery school."

Here, we were told, the Centre has been lucky. "We have rented a large house in Karori. It is an old house, containing about 10 or 11 rooms, some of them very large. Also, and this is very important, it has about an acre of ground. That is just what we need for children to run about and play as they wish. We will put up slides and swings and climbing frames, and they can have little gardens also if they wish. There are lawns for games. The husband of the matron-housekeeper will keep the garden in order. As for equipment, again we have been very lucky. We have been able to buy the full equipment from an institution that has been given up."

How Children Will Benefit

"There is one point we should, however, like to stress. We do not want to look on this purely as a useful institution into which parents can shove their children and leave them for the day. We believe that a centre of this sort, if properly run, is of the very greatest value to the children. We are too apt to say that children are best at home, and forget that the normal home should be full of children. A child by itself is usually lonely, and may be mentally neglected even if he has the best physical care. Children need company and free play, and plenty of the right sort of toys and play activity."

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

(Continued from previous page)

heads and our neglect of shell-fish. The Maoris have much more wisdom in this respect, for they use all these. The Nutrition Research Department recently weighed the flesh present in fish heads: from a representative sample containing groper, red cod, and blue cod, 6 fish-heads weighing 5 lbs. 10 ozs. as purchased yielded 4 lbs. of edible portion.

Value of Skim Milk

Then there is our skim milk, a very valuable food containing the more nutritious elements of the milk. The Department of Home Science has demonstrated that rats grow much better on bread and skim than they do on bread and butter. The skim milk contains all the protein and all the calcium of whole milk, both being valuable particularly for growing children.

Too often do we despise the odd bits of the carcase—such things as liver, heart, kidney, brains, sweetbreads. Nutrition authorities advise using these bits because they are often more nutritious. Take for example our waste of livers. By reason of the fact that we have been careless in our hygiene of dogs, half the sheep-livers are rejected because they contain hydatid cysts. If we had the will, we could clear out this scourge—by dosing dogs regularly with arecoline, and by being careful not to allow dogs to eat raw offal from which they become infected, thus repeating the cycle by once more infecting the lambs. Now that we are short of eggs, mothers want to know what they should feed to their babies in place of egg yolk to prevent them from becoming anaemic; and when they are told that liver is the best known food for providing iron, they say "But we cannot get liver." There would be twice the number of livers obtainable if we solved our hydatid problem.

(Next week: "Oil—Non-Belligerent," by Dr. Turbott.)