Save the Children

Instinctively the sympathy of ordinary decent people is enlisted immediately the question of child welfare is raised. Every humane man and woman hates to think of children being badly fed, housed and clothed, and therefore such conferences as that on child welfare held on Tuesday at Capetown evoke a general and ready response. At this conference, various medical experts drew attention to the value of giving instruction and advice to mothers and the provision of trained nurses for public health. It has been thought that great a reduction of infant mortality resulted in other countries from the adoption of these measures.

Figures were given which showed that the Union was far behind, e.g., New Zealand in this respect, the infant mortality in South Africa among whites being 80 per 1,000 births as against 47 in New Zealand. Dr. Mitchell, the Secretary for Public Instruction, claimed that it should be possible to reduce the South African rate to 50 per 1,000 in a few years, which would mean a saving of 1,000 lives a year, and he urged the adoption of methods of public health and of education which shall advocate that mothercraft centres be established in the Union and conducted on modern methods and on uniform lines, which is admirable as far as it goes.

The question of infant mortality raises, however, such an objection: What should one desire an extra thousand babies to grow up to manhood and womanhood in South Africa?

Other meetings are being held and articles written showing the almost hopeless position that the young people of this country find themselves in when seeking a livelihood. We are told that there are ten thousand young white people on the Rand alone who can find nothing to do. There are thousands of whites throughout South Africa either out of work or on relief works where they eke out a miserable existence on 2s. and even 1s. per day. At independent Union meetings it has been feared, and we get a glimpse of the appalling conditions under which thousands of poor whites live in the country and on the diamond diggings.

Is it worth while to bring up babies, the mothers of whom are doomed beforehand to a life of misery and perhaps crime?

The very kind people who are so solicitous about the infant mortality of the Union are part of that class which tolerates, if they do not actively uphold, the system of society which not only makes a high infant mortality inevitable but also is responsible for the seething mass of adult misery, poverty, vice, disease and crime which is the inevitable accompaniment of the capitalist system of production.

Any attempt to alter this system or even to draw attention to the causes underlying the evils above mentioned is likely to be met with hostility from the rich and those who make the attempt are dubbed enemies of society, dangerous agitators, etc.

We want the babies healthily born and well brought up as much as the medical officers of hospitals and the health officers want to start at the beginning and so to arrange matters that there is a life worth living for the babies when they grow up.

To organise elaborate machinery for the purpose of ensuring that babies shall be properly born and attended to during the first few weeks of life, while the women are in hospital, and to ignore the fact that the great cause of infant mortality is to be found in the wretched conditions under which their mothers have to live prior to and after the birth of the children, seems to be starting at the wrong end.

It is notorious that the infant mortality is greatest in poor and congested neighbourhoods. In Goburals, for instance, a government district of Glengowrie, the rate is 140 per thousand, whilst the average for the city is 80.

If we compare the white mortality in South Africa with the native and coloured we find that the latter have a much higher infant mortality than the former. In other words, poverty and consequent bad conditions of life are notoriously the cause of this discrepancy.

By all means let us have more and healthier babies, but not until society is reformed to other ends of the famine that when they grow up. In the meantime the brutal fact remains that it is far better for the majority of the children of the lower classes to grow up than merely to reach maturity to satisfy the rapacity and lust of the ghoulish exploiting class: the boys to be wage slaves, cannon fodder, or criminals, the girls to be slaves in factories and offices and later to have the choice between being household drudges or prostitutes.

The workers need one thing above all others, THE ABOLITION OF POVERTY. This accomplished, the many reforms which are prattled about by the professional Philanthropists, Professors and Politicians will be easily effected. But poverty cannot be abolished excepting by the overthrow of capitalism, and this the Philanthropists, Professors and Politicians will resist tooth and nail.

They are convicted, therefore, of the most profound ignorance or the most despicable hypocrisy when they prate paternal platitudes about the poor and their poverty and yet at the same time refuse to recognize the obvious causes and work for the only real remedy.

Meanwhile the workers boldly,毫不疑問地 and with many blunders are groping their way towards their emancipation.

Despite the would-be leaders of thought they are hammering out on the anvil of bitter experience through generations of atrocious suffering in which they will liberate them from both mental and physical bondage. It is called working-class solidarity. It has been used with success in one part of the earth's surface, and it will not be long before the international solidarity of the toiling millions of the earth will sweep poverty and with it slavery, profits and power from the earth.

Is God Mocked?

COSSACKS CHARGE BLACK WORSHIPPERS.

Last Sunday evening the Mayor of Johannesburg Town Hall and Salvation Army were holding their usual service at about 6.30 p.m. with a congregation that included a perfectly orderly group of natives when a couple of masked policemen swooped on the scene and made a baton charge on the natives in question, driving them into the road, on to the pavement and off it again until they were completely secured and united.

The scene was a novel one for the Town Hall steps, this breaking up of any native groups, no matter how peaceable or unobtrusive, having been practised in the 'civilian of the town for the past fortnight only. In the vicinity of the native churches, however, it has gone on for years. When a native congregation comes out of church on Sunday afternoon it is given ten minutes to disperse, after which the mounted Zarps are given free rein and tramconne to "perwail on" them to dis- kiddled to the keysing of "police songs" and "police sports." In short, the slaves are allowed their weekly tot of God-stuff (indoors at least), and then it is "Back to your kennels, dogs!" The authorities are quite clear that the two troopers must have exceeded their instructions, for "natives are only too well come to attend divine service, they are thereby kept off drink" (1); but the practice continues, and we are asked if we can afford to sit down and let the Negro's friends and relatives who have to attend our meetings in large numbers, have in recent times apparently been scared away from them by the police.

The Salvationist gospeller raised no protest whatever at this discriminating, segregation outrage against a portion of his flock, and on enquiry we find that the Army does not intend to make any further complaints. "Our sympathies are for natives in another colony of the Union, and hence does not mind their being driven off the Town Hall site! Presumably it will also not complain if white people simply pocket the profits, or if the whites are like wise dragged helter-skelter away into the highways and hedges!"

The native societies and churches, and least of all their white missionary patrons, also seem quite untroubled by this sudden and mocked in this way by Smuts' Cossacks.

The only indignation we have discovered (except no doubt that of the hunted "boys" themselves) is that of some white workers present, and probably they were not typical. One of the few realistic published photographs of the 1922 Rand strike showed S.A.M.R. gallipooling through Bishop Street and chasing the astonished and indignant (presumably the hour when office workers were starting off home) into doorways and back alleys. That sort of conduct all along the line of this revolt, and not under cover of the police, is a very practical reprimand from the white workers. Yet how many of them will just nigger and chuckle to see "niggers," since treated?

Anyway, the incident throws a flash light on the increasingly belittling, nigger-baiting, slave-driving, pogrom-loving feature of our "White South Africa,"' before which, if "His service," shows the altitude of giving "perfect freedom," even God must bow the knee!

S.P.B.