

NATURE

No. 4028 SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1947 Vol. 159

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Editorial and Publishing Offices

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.,

ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

Telephone Number: Whitehall 8831

Telegrams: Phusis Lesquare London

Advertisements should be addressed to

T. G. Scott & Son, Ltd., Talbot House, 9 Arundel Street, London, W.C.2

Telephone: Temple Bar 1942

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ECONOMIC STATUS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONS

SCIENTIFIC workers who are bold enough to glance through the two hundred pages of the report of the Asquith Commission on Equal Pay will not find it easy at first to discern its exact bearings on their own activities. A brief chapter on the professions, and the sections on the non-industrial Civil Service and the Post Office in that on the Central Government Service, the chapters on the teaching service and on the local government services other than teaching, are the portions of the factual survey forming Part 1 of the report which obviously closely concern particular categories of men of science. Another chapter in the same part reviews equal pay in the United States of America, in Australia, in France and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. In Part 2, where the implications of the claim of equal pay for equal work are considered at length, the physiologist and psychologist may find something of interest in the discussion of the natural factors responsible for the prevailing differences in the remuneration of the labour of men and women and of the psychological effects of equal pay, as well as of the effects on the health and efficiency of women as workers. It is, however, on these explanations of the prevailing differences that there is a memorandum of dissent by Dame Anne Loughlin, Dr. Janet Vaughan and Miss L. F. Nettlefold, and there is a further reservation by Lord Justice Asquith, Sir Jasper Ridley and Prof. D. H. Robertson on the question of over-strain.

It is accordingly no surprise to find that the only approach to a summary is a paragraph directing attention to passages in which the conclusions of the Commission are briefly crystallized, and that these conclusions are limited to the social and economic effects of applying equal pay to the Civil Service, to teachers and to local government officers other than teachers. The general implications for industry are left open to debate, and although the consequences of its application, which in the Commission's view are common to all spheres, are considered at large in a further chapter, on one point raised the Commission was not unanimous. The purely financial consequences of equal pay are discussed in a final chapter, in which it is estimated that introduction of equal pay in the non-industrial Civil Service on the basis of 1939 figures would involve a gross annual cost of £4 millions, or £13 millions on the basis of the October 1944 numbers and sex-distribution. The probable increase when the Civil Service has settled down to its peace-time strength and sex-composition might lie between £5 millions and £10 millions. For England and Wales, the Ministry of Education estimates that the annual cost of raising the salaries of women teachers to the men's level would be about £14.5 millions, while for other employees of local authorities the Commission estimates the annual cost at about £750,000.

Turning now to the factual part of the report, which since the report is rather the opening chapter

of a new volume of discussion than the basis for action—in any event until ample time has been allowed for digestion—is probably the more important, no evidence was submitted of women with professional status charging lower minimum fees than men with the same status. Evidence from some professional bodies showed that their recognized scales provide for the charging of identical fees by men and women. As regards salaried posts, a broad distinction is drawn between employment in the public service and employment outside. In the Civil Service, women medical and dental practitioners receive the same salaries as men; but the principle of equal pay has not been accepted as yet for other professions, although the Royal Institute of British Architects is pressing the case for equal pay for men and women architects in the Government service.

Some witnesses suggested that outside the public services there was no differentiation between men and women as regards remuneration, and evidence submitted to the Commission indicates that professional men and women actually receive equal salaries for the same work, outside employment in central and local government, when practising as medical practitioners, dentists, physiotherapists, radiographers, university teachers and journalists and librarians in technical or specialized libraries in industry. Women pharmacists working for hospitals or for wholesale and manufacturing chemists are also stated to receive, in general, the same rates as men. A small section of the evidence submitted, however, indicated discrimination in salaries between men and women; for example, in retail pharmacy, welfare work and personnel and labour management. A table giving the numbers of men and women in certain professions shows the extreme variations of the sex distribution, from about 3,000 women out of 6,000 librarians, according to an estimate made by the Library Association, 7,198 women out of 44,341 medical practitioners, 2,667 women out of 25,224 pharmacists, 549 out of 15,404 dentists, 325 out of 9,700 architects and 261 women out of more than 9,000 chemists.

Passing now to the few conclusions drawn in the report, the Commission states that there is no reason to suppose that the grant of equal pay in the Civil Service would have as corollary a change in the policy of recruitment designed to restrict the employment of women, and while the present system of recruitment remains in force it is unlikely that equal pay would have the effect of increasing to any important degree the proportion of women in the Civil Service, although some increase may naturally be expected. Such increase is likely to be most marked at the administrative level, and is likely to be accompanied by an improvement in the quality of the persons recruited. The consequences are only likely to be important—and adverse—if the common rate is not held at a level at which it competes effectively with the rates payable outside the Service to men of the type and quality which are required. The effects in the local government service, other than teaching, are considered as likely to be broadly similar but slightly less impressive.

As regards teaching, the Commission considers that any risk that the quantity or quality of male recruits would be adversely affected by a system of equal pay would be more than offset by the natural effect of such a system in attracting more or better women to enter the teaching profession. It also emphasizes that the grant of equal pay would redress a sense of injustice which the majority of teachers, men as well as women, rightly or wrongly entertain.

It is not easy in reading this report 'to see the wood for the trees', and there are many points which cannot well be viewed in their proper perspective against the scanty conclusions already noted. Discussing, for example, the marriage bar in relation to equal pay, the Commission observes that in the professional, administrative and technical classes of the Civil Service, the bar is harmful so far as it increases the natural wastage, and results in a further shrinkage of the pool from which women in whom much training and experience has been sunk can be made available for filling the highest posts. Against this, of course, has to be set the risks of inconvenience and embarrassment to the public service from endeavouring to retain in employment women who may require considerable spells of maternity leave, and whose domestic duties may restrict their mobility and their availability for the long hours of work which may be required at times of crisis and pressure.

The report makes it abundantly clear that, for most professional and administrative workers, the change-over to a regime of equal pay for the two sexes involves a serious clash of equities and social purposes. Some of those may be resolved by Government social policy as regards children allowances, income taxation and the like outside the terms of reference of the Royal Commission; but their existence tends to reinforce the argument which the Commission displays for Government initiative. It is argued with force that, if equal pay is to be introduced immediately and as an act of deliberate policy in any sphere, the 'area' of its introduction should be confined to those same spheres of non-industrial Government employment to which the Commission's own conclusions have been restricted. That step might well be justified at the moment as helping to meet the need for trained man-power and woman-power at the administrative level; and although as indicated in the report there are considerable difficulties in the way of adoption of an equal pay policy in private industry and commerce, it is almost certain that Government initiative in the spheres indicated would be followed at least tentatively by many sections of industry in corresponding fields.

Whatever is done in any part of this field may be expected to have strong reactions elsewhere, and in directing attention to the probability that private industry would probably follow a Government lead, the Commission comments mildly on the argument put forward by the Treasury against the Government taking action independently of employers in Britain generally. The Treasury, it seems, fears that changes in the large field of employment which it controls in the non-industrial field would have too large an effect on outside practice. At the same time, however,

the Treasury resisted the introduction of equality in the Government's industrial establishments because, before the War, they covered such an extremely small part of the industrial field that the Government could not attempt to exercise a dominant influence in the sphere of industrial wages. This unconvincing attempt to make the best of both worlds and do nothing might well have received more pointed rebuke. It may be wrong, for reasons given in the report, to argue from the consequences of establishing equal pay in the public service to the consequences of establishing it in private industry; but there is a strong case for throwing the example and influence of the Government on the side of reducing the gap between the pay of men and women at the present time. If the adjustment is to be faced, it is well for it to be done while the relationships of costs, selling prices and the value of money are still in flux; and as a recognized instalment of social justice and an increment to the labour force, there are immediate benefits to be set against the cost.

There are, therefore, chapters of this report which scientific and other professional workers will do well to ponder, and the absence of definite conclusions should not prevent them from forming their own as to the effect and implications of the adoption of equal pay in the Civil Service, and probably also in commerce, following a Government lead. The factors to be weighed are duly set forth, and the minority report, which seeks to distinguish more clearly between opinions and evidence, reflects a more advanced and buoyant attitude than that of the majority, although it might have been more fully and cogently displayed. Both majority and minority reports, however, are a distinct contribution to clearer thinking on the many issues involved, and they deserve in particular careful study by all professional associations concerned with the economic status of their members. On what is said as to career value and the relative turnover of women as compare with men staff; the trend towards the substitution of mechanical for muscular power; and the truism that no material object or human quality derives value merely from the fact that it is uncommon, but only from the fact that it is scarce relative to the demand for the services which it is capable of rendering, there is room for further objective thinking by such bodies, as well as by individuals, before action is taken even on the limited findings of the Commission.

THE FUNCTIONAL A PRIORI

The *a Priori* in Physical Theory

By Arthur Pap. Pp. xi+102. (New York: King's Crown Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1946.) 13s. 6d. net.

THE King's Crown Press is undertaking the admirable task of making the contributions of scholars more readily available than they might otherwise be if they always had to carry the full 'editorial attention' of Columbia University. There is no diminution in quality; rather it is a case of 'high thinking and low living', but with a somewhat tempered austerity,

altogether appropriate to a monograph on a philosophical theme.

Dr. Pap will be known in Great Britain by his lucid paper on "Indubitable Existential Statements" (*Mind*, p. 234, July 1946); in the present context he appears as the expositor of a certain doctrine, namely, the functional, of the *a priori*, both in its historical aspect and in its application to classical physics. In both these domains he is strongly under the influence of C. I. Lewis and of Poincaré, though he does not hesitate to launch out on his own into deep water as opportunity offers.

Before making any detailed comments, it may be permitted to invite those seriously interested to have a copy of Prof. E. A. Milne's "Fundamental Conceptions of Natural Philosophy" (Scott Lecture, Royal Society of Edinburgh, 1943) before them when they tackle the thesis now under review. The point is this. Milne devotes considerable attention to classical physics, comparing them closely with his new theoretical edifice in process of construction. The core of the whole adventure, however—for it is nothing less—is an insistence upon the supreme significance of epistemology, and upon the need to use it properly. Now this is just what Dr. Pap has done, and done very well. In fact, whether he had this in mind or not when writing his manual (for he is silent on the question), the conjunction could scarcely be better. In parallel or in series, these contributions form a natural pair, which is not because they are alike; it is because for both it is the epistemology that matters.

From here, as from a springboard, we may well take off to follow up this new work. In Part 1, as already indicated, the treatment is largely historical, and in Part 2, in application to Newtonian mechanics. The discussion seems to be airborne from the start: the groundwork is good, but the reader is soon given wings. This applies both to the text itself and to the footnotes. The latter contain much valuable material, not clogging the machinery, but acting, as it were, as a lubricant.

Some early paragraphs show Lewis as a pragmatist, so far as the *a priori* is concerned. It is difficult to see what difference there is between his view and the essentially 'John Blunt' statement that *a priori* means 'true, no matter what'. This may well be, but he rejects, as Kant did, the *tabula rasa*; the mind does not start for Lewis with a clean sheet; but he will have none of the "*a priori* forms of induction", nor of the "synthetic *a priori*" either. Altogether, this seems a trifle 'queer'—to use an adjective which the Harvard philosopher employed in another connexion. Dr. Pap's *a priori* is rather gentler and, as he says, "may well be viewed as susceptible of degrees". The impact of Poincaré's "La Science et l'Hypothèse" on the writer is more profound, and brings about a certain axiological orientation almost amounting to a species of requiredness. At the same time, there is a strong leaning towards physics, as indeed there must be if Poincaré's thought is to bear fruit.

Alongside, another notion is ably handled, namely, that of 'real definition'. A quotation from John Stuart Mill follows, which, if taken in its original context, makes the position most intriguing. Mill had, in fact ("System of Logic", 1, Chapter 8, Section 5), just been discussing Archbishop Whately's "Logic", in which real definition is taken to contain more than is implied in nominal definition, whereas De Morgan held just the reverse (always assuming, of course,