

# Profile: Amy Bailey

Public Opinion October 12, 1957



**F**OR nearly twenty years and until a year ago, Amy Bailey was instructor in commercial subjects at the Technical School. She was also a member of a formidable number of organisations dedicated to the welfare of the people.

At the beginning of this year Miss Bailey retired from her job at the Technical School in order to devote her time to the nearly 140 young women who seek in the Housecraft Training Centre the qualifications which are their passports to a life of some stability as domestic servants.

Miss Bailey's life has been directed to the improvement of the lot of the ordinary working class girl who, she feels, is the member of our society most neglected.

Her interest in this work has been lifelong, but it was not until she visited Britain in 1938 that Miss Bailey saw clearly that the women of this country must be the ones to help to raise those of their sisters less fortunate than themselves.

The concrete idea of providing a place for the training of young women (for a place in the life of the country a little nearer to the true importance of their role as the mothers of the nation) arose out of an interview with Professor Simey, then an Adviser to the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies.

**T**HE situation then was that the working class women saw interest taken in their welfare only by foreigners, leaders of the various voluntary bodies working among them and this, Miss Bailey says, of course did not encourage the national self-respect which is necessary for true progress.

It was also necessary to break the circle which began with unemployment-because-of-unemployability-because-of-lack-of-training-because-of... "The wealth of the country is not only in its bananas, bauxite and sugar; it is in every happy home in the country and every family". Miss Bailey said.

With the aid of people of similar beliefs, Miss Bailey was in 1946 the prime mover be-

hind the formation of the Housecraft Training Centre. The aims of the centre were and still are, to take young girls and train them in the arts of housewifery so that they will be able not only to demand adequate wages for decent living, but will also possess the elementary knowledge at least, of how to employ their wages for the maximum benefit to their own home or family group.

Today Miss Bailey is Principal of the Centre and has in her charge nearly 140 young women in the school, near Torrington Bridge, Kingston.

She took us on a tour of the large old residence in fairly extensive grounds.

One group of about 20 girls were in a class on the theoretical approach to cooking, learning the reasons behind the processes; another class was learning on a large busy but spotless kitchen, to put this theory into practice; others were washing and ironing clothes and still others were in a general knowledge class which is part of special new course for hotel chambermaids.

**T**HE school depends financially upon its catering services and on services such as its laundry and small restaurant all of which put the practical value of the lessons learned to the ultimate test.

The school is also in receipt of a Government subvention and there is some hope of assistance in a building project to provide more space for the already cramped school.

In addition to the normal curriculum of training, the girls also learn proper deportment, and they are given other training to round off the rough edges, to give the girls advantages which they have been denied by their origins and means.

In the office there is a picture of four girls, three of whom are now State Registered Nurses in Scotland and the fourth about to sit for her final examination for this qualification.

These girls were once pupils in these classrooms who, having graduated, went out to work. After a few years they left for Britain and through the good offices of a Scottish minister and his wife here, found employment in Scotland. Miss Bailey is proud of them.

She says: "If you get a girl between 15 and 19 and can hold her interest and direct her enthusiasm and natural ambition, you will have very little trouble from her later on".

She believes that in many cases, women who would otherwise be useful members of the community are merely parasites because they have never been given the chance to learn to make a decent and honest living for themselves.