

The Save the Children Fund

(Malta)

The Save the Children Fund is a world wide organisation and it is with great pleasure that we publish a broadcast made by two ladies who have done so much to start the Fund in Malta.

The first speaker is the Countess Mountbatten of Burma, who is not only the President of the Save the Children Fund, but also the Honorary President of the International Union for Child Welfare.

This latter organisation has its Headquarters at Geneva, its founder-member being The Save the Children Fund.

Lady Mountbatten has also accepted to be the President of the Malta Branch of the Fund, which was started in January this year. The other speaker is Mrs. Josephine Debono who is Chairman of the Executive Committee.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: First of all I would like to say what happiness it gives me to know that the Save the Children Fund, of which I have been President for the last four years, and with which I have been associated for the last thirty years, has at long last come to Malta.

I feel very privileged to have been invited to be President of the Malta Branch of the Fund, and to be working with such an indefatigable Chairman as Mrs. Debono and with a most representative and hard-working Executive Committee.

His Excellency the Governor is taking an active interest in the Fund's work, and we are much honoured to have received the blessing and patronage of His Grace the Metropolitan Archbishop, which will be the greatest incentive to our work in these Islands.

Mrs. DEBONO: Although Malta has known of the work of the Save the Children Fund for many years, it would have been utterly impossible for us to have

started this Branch without your inspiration and unflagging enthusiasm.

You yourself have seen so many aspects of the work in Europe and in Britain, as well as in more distant lands, would you please tell us something about it?

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: Yes, I would like to. Today we are at work, through our doctors, nurses, teachers and welfare workers, in four countries in Europe, three in Asia and two in Africa, to say nothing of certain work for children of school age and pre-school children, in our own lands, which is designed to fill gaps left by the social services and other agencies.

All over the Commonwealth there are Save the Children Funds and these all grew out of the original one founded in London thirty-four years ago by an Englishman, Egiantyne Jebb. There are also similar organisations in some forty other countries and it is the International Union for Child Welfare which brings all these national funds together.

Our Maltese Save the Children Fund will be a member of the International Union, just like the Funds in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Italy and elsewhere.

It might interest you to know in one year, 1952, over forty-five thousand children have been helped in four different continents, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. I think I have visited every country where the Save the Children Fund is at work including Malaya, the Sudan, Korea, Austria, Germany, Greece and the Lebanon. Altogether I have seen the Fund's workers tackling their job in a dozen countries in Europe, Asia and Africa.

MRS. DEBONO: I understand that there are teams working at present in

Austria, Greece, Germany and Italy, and that the re-building of the Hermagor Hospital in Austria has made it possible to receive children suffering from tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, and various bone diseases. These children will thus be assured of the best possible treatment in a permanent institution.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: Yes, the Save the Children Funds of Canada and Britain raised £5,000 to enable the rebuilding of the hospital to be carried out.

Government Departments and Medical Services in all the countries where The Save the children Fund is functioning have been happy to co-operate and realise the tremendous need for child health and welfare work.

MRS. DEBONO: And we are proud to be able to join in this great work for the children of our Islands and Malta has a great part to play. Perhaps you will tell us about the origin of the movement in Malta?

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: It had always been my hope that while we were in Malta some link could be forged with The Save the Children Fund, and also with the International Union for Child Welfare. There is such a real love of children here and much to be done for them.

MRS. DEBONO: The same idea came to some of us who had been serving for many years as Charity Commissioners, especially in connexion with the administration of Milk Subsidies for mothers.

Child Welfare in Malta, together with medicine in general has made enormous strides forward, but in common with other countries some of the problems of the post war period were naturally not covered by existing service. For example, the very severe strain to which the girls who are the mothers of today were subjected due to the stringencies of war has been reflected in the difficulties young parents are finding in bringing up their children.

When we took the advice of the Gov-

ernment authorities as to what we could do to help in child health and maternity care, the way seemed open to start mothercraft and prenatal centres and the main function of the organisation will be to continue at the very beginning of child welfare before the babies are actually born.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: Services of this kind really form the basis of our organisation and all this is being put into force and the Branch is being gradually built on these lines. While every tribute should be paid to the existing services there is undoubtedly room for more work in this field in order to reduce the mortality and suffering amongst children.

MRS. DEBONO: The Executive Committee have organised, with the advice and help of the Government, a team of Save the Children Fund workers who will actually visit the different towns and villages and will hold prenatal clinics for expectant mothers who may attend free of charge. These clinics are designed to help the doctors and midwives who actually deliver the baby. Where necessary, the mother's health will be built up by giving free vitamins. The chief aim of this scheme will be to teach mothercraft which will be done by the trained nurses and health visitors whose co-operation is so essential.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: The magnificent response of so many doctors who are eager and willing to help in this scheme is most encouraging, and we hope as time goes on to form more teams and to enlarge the scope of our work so that every mother in Malta and Gozo may find free help and advice, and be cared for at our clinics. We have been fortunate in acquiring the services of Dr. Rene Eminyan and our nurse in the first class team is Miss Sylvia Parnis, both of whom have had considerable experience in this type of work abroad and in Malta.

MRS. DEBONO: We have also in mind the setting up of Day Nurseries to

help mothers with their children between the ages of two and five.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: That is an excellent plan as these children do not appear to be included in any scheme at present, and from the time they leave the infant clinics to the time that they come under the care of the school medical officers, they often experience difficulties and ill-health. In many cases the mother has to go out to work and it is a vital necessity that there should be a well organised day nursery where she will know that her child is being well cared for while she is away from the home. It is also hoped to promote a scheme to help the unmarried mother, and her child, the crippled child or the child who is incapacitated in any other way, as soon as the first part of our programme is in motion.

MRS. DEBONO: The possibilities and aid to unfortunate children are boundless and even the needs of emigrant children can be met through the co-operation of our branches overseas.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: When one is part of a big family where goodwill ex-

ists no child is looked upon as one too many, and no child is regarded as being outside the scope or range of The Save the Children Fund. There is no distinction of race, creed or nationality.

MRS. DEBONO: Yes, and our main purpose is to encourage the parents of Malta to bring up their children to be healthy and useful citizens of the future.

LADY MOUNTBATTEN: The motto of the Fund is SALVATE PARVULOS and that I know appeals to the heart of every parent in these Islands, where their devotion to their children is the dominant characteristic.

MRS. DEBONO: The principle aim of the Fund is to help parents to help themselves, thus ensuring that our children are healthy and happy from birth right up to the time they can stand on their own feet.

We have received most generous help from abroad to start our work, but we must naturally look to the people in our Islands to help us to continue and fulfil our aims.