

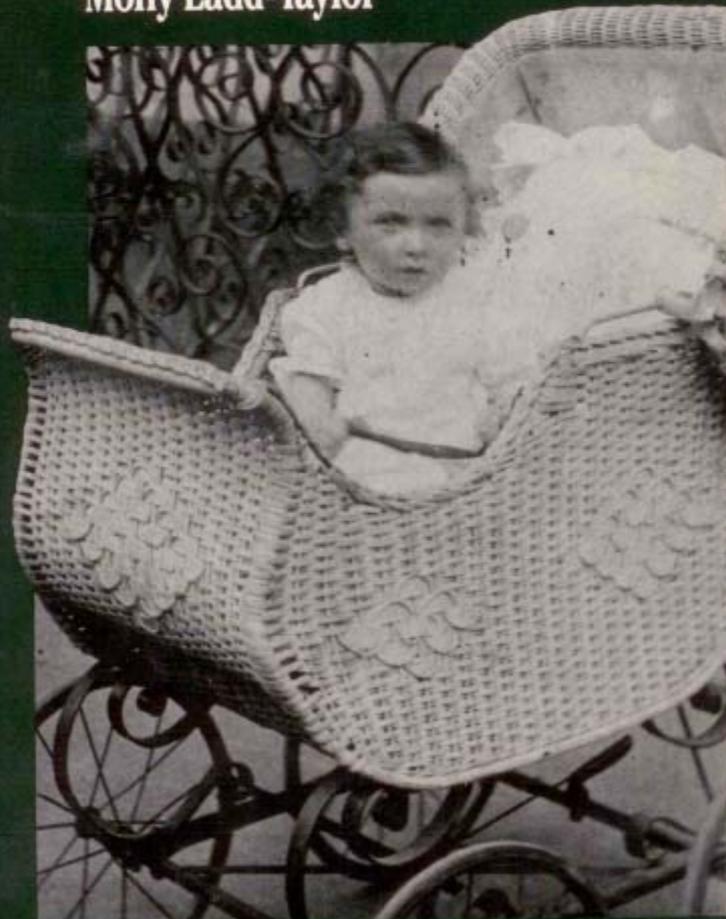


ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

**Raising a Baby
the Government Way**

*Mothers' Letters to
the Children's Bureau
1915-1932*

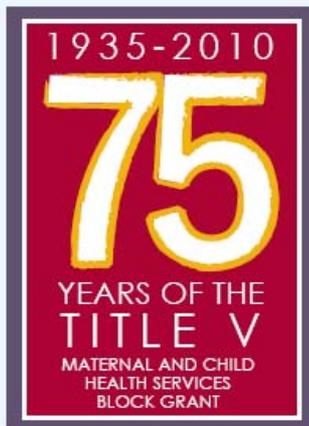
Molly Ladd-Taylor







ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS



Celebrating the Legacy, Shaping the Future

75 Years of State and Federal Partnership to Improve Maternal and Child Health

Grace Abbott's "Baby Carriage in Washington Traffic" Speech

Sometimes when I get home at night in Washington I feel as though I had been in a great traffic jam. In that traffic jam there are all the kinds of vehicles moving up toward the Capitol. There are all kinds of vehicles, for example, that the Army can put into the street — tanks, gun carriages, trucks, the dancing horses of officers, and others which I have not even the vocabulary to describe. They all finally reach the Hill and they make a plea that is a very old plea — one which I find in spite of the reputation for courage they bear, men respond to rather promptly. The Army says to them, "Give, lest you perish"; and fear as a motive is still producing results on a scale which leave the rest of us feeling very envious of the kind of eloquence the Army and Navy can command. But there are other kinds of vehicles in this traffic jam — great numbers of them which, coming from Nebraska as I do, do not seem to me to get the attention they should as they move down the street. There are the hayricks and the binders and the ploughs and all the other things that the Department of Agriculture manages to put in the streets. But when the drivers get to the hill they have an argument which Congressmen understand. They say to them when they ask for appropriations for research in animal husbandry, in the chemistry of soils, or in agricultural economies, "Dollars invested on this side of the ledger will bring dollars in geometrical or arithmetical progression" — depending on the enthusiasm with which they speak — on the other side. And, if there is one thing that a Congressman, and for that matter people in general understand, it is a balance on the profit side of the ledger. . . .

Then there are other vehicles. The handsome limousines in which the Department of Commerce rides . . . the bouzouks in which the Department of State rides with such dignity . . . the noisy patrols in which the Department of Justice officials sometimes appear. . . . Because the responsibility is mine and I must, I take a very firm hold on the handles of the baby carriage and I wheel it into the traffic. There are some people who think it does not belong there at all, there are some who wonder how I got there with it and what I think I am going to be able to do, and there are some who think the baby carriage is the symbol of bolshevism instead of the symbol of the home and the future of America.



Excerpt from U. S. Children's Bureau Chief Grace Abbott's speech in accepting an award from the National Institute of Social Sciences in 1931. Copy located in the U. S. Children's Bureau Records, RG 102, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.



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