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REPORT OF TWELFTH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HELD ON MAY 26th, 27th and 28th, 1936,
AT Y.W.C.A. CENTRAL CLUB,
GREAT RUSSELL STREET,
LONDON.

Chair: MRS. CORBETT ASHBY.

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SOCIETIES REPRESENTED.

BRITISH SOCIETIES.

- Association for Moral and Social Hygiene.
- Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society.
- Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools.
- Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries.
- British Federation of University Women.
- British Social Hygiene Council.
- College of Nursing.
- Conservative Women's Reform Association.
- Federation of Women Zionists.
- Guildhouse Fellowship.
- Kensington Women Citizens' Association.
- League of Nations Union Women's Advisory Council.
- London and National Society for Women's Service.
- London Teachers' Association.
- National Association of Women Civil Servants.
- National Council of Women of Great Britain.
- National Council for Equal Citizenship.
- National Union of Women Teachers.
- National Women Citizens' Association.
- New Britain Movement.
- Open Door Council.
- Purley and District Women Citizens' Association.
- St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance.
- Six Point Group.
- Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organizations.
- Suffragette Fellowship.
- Women's Freedom League.
- Women's Guild of Empire.
- Women's National Liberal Federation.
- Women's Gas Council.
- Young Women's Christian Association (Overseas Committee).

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES.

- International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship.
- Women's International League.
- Women's International Zionist Organization.

OVERSEAS.

- AUSTRALIA.—Australian Federation of Women Voters.
- National Council of Women of Tasmania.
- United Associations of New South Wales.
- Victorian Women Citizens' Movement.
- Women's Non-Party League (Tasmania).
- Women's Non-Party Association of South Australia.
- Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia.
- CANADA.—Montreal Women's Club.
- INDIA.—Indian Social Service Group.
- SOUTH AFRICA.—League of Women Voters.

FRATERNAL.

- American Women's Club.

RESOLUTIONS.

Franchise in Quebec.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deplores the fact that the Province of Quebec denies to women the Provincial vote although they possess the Federal vote. This Conference draws attention to the fact that Quebec is now the only part of the self-governing Dominions where women are excluded from exercising the full franchise, and urges the Provincial Legislature to remove this anomaly forthwith.

Franchise in Bermuda.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deplores the continued exclusion from the franchise of women in Bermuda. This denial of the vote to women presents an anomaly exceedingly difficult to understand in a community which lays claim to progress. This Conference therefore urges the Legislature to grant the franchise to the women of Bermuda without further delay.

Women in Diplomatic, Trade and Consular Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deplores the decision of the Government to refuse women entrance into the Diplomatic and Consular Services. This action is the more deplorable in view of the fact that four out of eight members of the Inter-Departmental Committee approved the admission of women to the Diplomatic Service on certain conditions. The Conference considers the reasons summed up by the Government in Paragraph 7 of their Statement to be inadequate, unconvincing and incorrect.

This Conference urges the Government to open all posts in the Diplomatic, Trade and Consular Services to women on the same terms as men. They believe that the test of admission should be the efficiency and suitable qualification of the candidate, and that entry should not depend on sex.

Women in Colonial Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes the urgent need for the inclusion of more women in the Colonial Services, and presses for the immediate appointment of an increased number of women on the same terms as men.

Equality within the Civil Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges that legislation governing appointments in the Civil Services within the British Empire should eliminate all discrimination between the sexes, with special reference to appointments, methods of entry, class of work, rates of pay, promotion and other matters where inequality exists.

Women in Administration in India.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled supports the demand of Indian women that women shall be given opportunity of association in the administration of every Province as well as in the Central Government, especially in the departments of health, education and labour; that women should be appointed to each Public Service Commission and that when a public commission of enquiry is set up, women should be appointed as members.

Education in Africa.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled affirms its belief in the basic principle that no race can progress effectively towards true civilization unless its women are as educated as the men. It calls attention to the inadequate educational facilities for girls in Africa under British rule, and urges that no customs nor prejudices shall be allowed to interfere with the equal education of boys

and girls. It demands that the respective governments concerned shall make adequate grants for this purpose.

Women in Health and Education Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing among the native women of many African territories, especially the inadequacy of the provision for their health and education. It urges (a) the allocation of a larger proportion of revenue for purposes of health and education, and (b) the necessity for the regular employment of a larger number of women in these Services.

African Women and Night Work.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled condemns the action of the British Government in prohibiting the nightwork of women in Gambia, the Gold Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zanzibar, and demands that any prohibition of nightwork shall apply in the Crown Colonies equally to men and women, according to the nature of the work.

Prostitution among African Women.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled has noted with concern certain results affecting African women which have followed the industrialisation and detribalisation of large sections of African people; e.g. it is apparent from reports received that commercialised prostitution, with its inevitable accompaniments of third party exploitation and traffic, is developing in certain areas.

Since prostitution in the commercialised sense is a phenomenon of comparatively recent growth among African peoples, this Conference urges the respective governments to take all necessary steps to safeguard African women from sexual exploitation for profit and, as a first step, to subject the whole problem of African prostitution to a careful investigation on social and economic lines, as to (a) whether a woman can be controlled by a man, (b) openings for women, (c) whether a woman herself can control her wages.

Australian Aborigines.

That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled recognising the work already done for the benefit of the Aborigines, supports the demand of the enfranchised women of Australia for women as paid Protectors amongst Aborigines and half-castes.

The Mui T'Sai.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled heartily congratulates the British Government upon the appointment of a Commission to proceed to Hong Kong and forthwith examine into the position in regard to Mui T'Sai. This Conference, representing both Overseas and British opinion, awaits with great interest the Report of the Commissioners, and trusts that as a result of the investigation the evils of the system will be entirely abolished.

The Status of Women. (a).

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes with satisfaction the acceptance by the 16th Assembly of the League of Nations of the Resolution sent forward by the First Committee with reference to an examination of the civil, political and economic status of women.

This Conference urges the British Government to provide suitable machinery for the implementing of this Resolution, and to invite the co-operation of the women's organisations concerned in the preparation of any Report upon the matter.

The Status of Women. (b).

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes that the terms of reference of the Resolution adopted by the 16th Assembly on the enquiry into the status of women covers only their status under national law. It earnestly urges upon the Governments concerned to include in their surveys all custom which has the force of, or is supplementary to national law, in whatever territories under their control, such customs exist.

The Nationality of Married Women.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled recognises the injustice to women under the existing nationality laws. It demands that the British and Dominion Governments without delay introduce into their respective Parliaments and pass into law, legislation to give the married woman her nationality on the same terms as a man or a single woman.

New Zealand Legislation against Equal Pay for Equal Work.

This Conference of the British Commonwealth League condemns the action of New Zealand in laying down in legislation that the basic wage for an adult male, married or unmarried, with or without children, should be computed as a wage sufficient to maintain a man, a wife and three children, while the basic wage of a woman is to be no more than sufficient to maintain herself.

The Conference considers this decision to ally family or imaginary family needs with remuneration for work done is to confuse basic issues, and is inconsistent with the principle accepted by New Zealand when it signed the Treaty of Versailles, namely, the principle that men and women shall receive equal remuneration for work of equal value.

The Irish Free State and the Woman Industrial Worker.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its consternation that the Irish Free State should have passed into law Section 16 of the Conditions of Employment Act 1936, which give power to a Minister to prohibit the employment of female workers in any form of industrial work, or to fix a proportion which the number of female workers employed by any employer may bear to the number of other workers so employed.

The Conference declares that the position of the women industrial workers within the Irish Free State has been made intolerable in being made subject to an arbitrary power with undefined limits against the exercise of which it is impossible for them to obtain any legal redress, since they are outside the rule of law.

The British Empire and Peace.

That this Conference of the British Commonwealth League is convinced that the close co-operation of the Dominions and India with Great Britain at the Assembly of the League of Nations adds to the solidarity of the British Commonwealth and Empire, and that the weakening of the League of Nations by the failure of the different State members to prevent or limit aggression is a serious danger to the Commonwealth and Empire.

Peace.

In view of the vital importance to the peace of Europe and of the world of maintaining the authority of the League of Nations and the sanctity of treaties; recognising that the strength of the League, if fully and unflinchingly exercised, is ample to prevent the use of war by an aggressive government as an instrument of national policy: the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its indignation at the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy in defiance of her treaty obligations, and at her barbarous methods of warfare; and calls upon the British Government to give a definite lead at the meeting of the Council of the League on June 15th at Geneva to maintain and intensify Sanctions until Italy is ready to accept terms of peace agreed by the Council of the League.

British Commonwealth League.

TWELFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

FIRST DAY.

TUESDAY, May 26th.

QUEBEC.

MRS. M. J. PEARSON moved:—

“The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deploras the fact that the Province of Quebec denies to women the Provincial vote although they possess the Federal vote. This Conference draws attention to the fact that Quebec is now the only part of the self-governing Dominions where women are excluded from exercising the full franchise, and urges the Provincial Legislature to remove this anomaly forthwith.”

Mrs. Pearson reminded her audience that the women of Quebec had in 1935 been refused the franchise in Provincial elections for the ninth time. The women's Provincial vote would come up again during the summer of 1936 and it was hoped that with the new Government in power it would be passed into law. During the Silver Jubilee celebrations the Canadian Alliance for Women's Votes in Quebec sent a petition humbly praying King George V “for an expression of sympathy and approval of their efforts to obtain political enfranchisement, a right enjoyed by all women of Canada, and which would be in accord with the principles of common law and equity.” The Petition was considered by His Majesty and returned to the Governor-General of Canada for transmission to the Government of Quebec. It was evident that an impression had been made in Quebec.

MISS M. E. BARRY (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance), in seconding, said that she had received a letter of encouragement from that splendid feminist in Quebec, Mrs. John Scott.

The motion having been unanimously carried, it was decided that a message be sent, in Mrs. Pearson's name, to the Canadian Alliance for Women's Votes, conveying good wishes to the unenfranchised women of the Dominion. It was also unanimously decided that a letter of greeting and good wishes be sent to Mrs. John Scott, together with congratulations on the fact that she was still taking a leading part in the cause.

BERMUDA.

MISS AGNES SLACK (Women's National Liberal Federation) moved:—

“That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deploras the continued exclusion from the franchise of women in Bermuda. This denial of the vote to women presents an anomaly exceedingly difficult to understand in a community which lays claim to progress. This Conference therefore urges the Legislature to grant the franchise to the women of Bermuda without further delay.”

Miss Slack referred to her recent visit to Bermuda, which had been a British colony for 350 years. The population was largely more coloured than white. Coloured men had the vote but coloured women had not. In the Bermuda Women's Suffrage Society there were some of the most capable and cultured women of the island. The franchise was entirely on a property basis. The country being small, property was difficult to acquire and therefore some of the richest business men in Bermuda had not a vote. The Women's Suffrage Society was doing all in its power to press the plea that they should receive recognition and voting power. The Conference would be glad to support that plea.

MISS UNDERWOOD (Women's Freedom League) seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES.

(a) Diplomatic.

MISS SYBIL CAMPBELL (Women's Appointments Board, Cambridge University) said: When the Inter-Departmental Committee on Women in Diplomatic and Consular Services was set up to enquire into admission of women, my Appointments Board felt it advisable to secure useful evidence. We pointed out that the closing of Diplomatic and Consular Services to women resulted in disappointment to a small number of the best modern language students at Cambridge. Languages particularly French and German, are vitally important subjects so far as candidates for the Diplomatic and Consular Services are concerned. So far as the Language papers in the Honours Examination were concerned, the women at Cambridge did considerably better than the men. In the Literature papers the proportion of women was not quite so high.

The Memorandum pointed out that if careers in the Diplomatic and Consular Services were open to women, parents in increasing numbers would probably devote that attention to the preparation for such a career that they now consistently gave in the case of their sons. The opening of those services to women would result in a larger entry of candidates for the administrative group in the Civil Service. Particulars were given of the appointments held by Cambridge women, not only in responsible posts in medicine and teaching, but in other posts in foreign countries and in our Dominions and Colonies where the work undertaken by those women brought them into contact with native races. The fields covered included anthropology, archæology, commerce, education, medicine, missions, science, administrative and secretarial appointments. Women buyers for the big British stores visit Paris, Vienna and Leipzig as a matter of routine, doing similar business to that conducted by men buyers. One woman buyer of carpets went up the Khyber Pass to purchase goods from the caravans.

Every member of the Committee subscribed to the following paragraph in its report:—

"H.M. Government are as well aware as we are of the immense services rendered by women at home and abroad. That there are women who can perform difficult work similar to that which falls to the lot of diplomatists is undisputed and undisputable. We take note not only of the eminent capacity but of the devotion sometimes to public duty, sometimes to religious or philanthropic causes with which women have served throughout the world often at the peril and, on occasion, at the loss of their lives."

Any person who signed that paragraph has completely given away the case for keeping these services closed to women.

It is regrettable that that Committee, and the Government, should have taken their present line. The Diplomatic Service is one of the finest services, if not the finest, in the world. It deserves the best possible entrants. It is admitted that women can do work akin to that in the Diplomatic and Consular Services, and yet the Government has decided to keep those services closed.

Coming to the Report of the four members of the Committee, three of whom represented the Foreign Office, who voted completely against the admission of women to the Diplomatic and Consular Services, I was much relieved to find that the Foreign Office representatives did not subscribe to the argument that it is embarrassing for women to be sent to foreign stations where they may have to live alone. The Foreign Office representatives are well aware that women are already employed, probably in the lower paid capacity of typists and secretaries, in embassies and legations in distant parts.

The argument used by those four representatives against the admission of women to the diplomatic and consular services was that the entry of women for the Administrative Civil Service Examination had recently been so bad that it would be really no hardship to prevent their entering the Diplomatic Service. One reason why Cambridge women hesitate to enter is that they are eligible only for the Home Civil Service. They feel that the scales are weighted against them if only the home Civil Service is open to them. The Indian Civil Service, the Diplomatic and the Consular Services are all closed to women. It is gratifying that four members of the Committee voted for the opening of the Diplomatic Service to women, although two of those members voted for a trial period only of seven years.

(b) Trade and Consular.

MISS JEAN I. HOWARD (late Agent-General for Nova Scotia), speaking as a Colonial with practical experience, who had been brought up with men in Government surroundings, said that after her father's death she was given charge of her office, which was staffed entirely by women. One of the difficulties of a woman administrator was that she must not only be abreast of the times and information, but ahead of it. She had not the opportunity of the friendly chats and information of the men's clubs. A woman to succeed must work twice as hard as a man.

The success of women had been quoted among missionaries and subordinate workers in lonely posts. Such women could not be compared to those who must take entire charge. The former had a consul to look to for protection in emergencies. Men admitted the equality of brains in either sex, but it was alleged that women were more impulsive and softer-hearted than men in dealing with "hard cases" and chronic bad characters. The position of a woman consul in a Latin country, particularly in a seaport, would be unenviable, because of the position of women in those countries, and the rough element with which she would have to deal. In examination the undoubted brain-power of the woman would be shown, but the suitability of character would not appear until too late. The difficulty foreseen by men was that, should a woman prove unsuitable through no fault of her own, she could not be dismissed. After the suggested seven years trial, how could women be excluded from the Service without arousing a storm?

Should a woman wish to marry, and the marriage bar was lifted, how could she work uninterruptedly? Would a husband be content to be subservient to his wife?

Women who had proved their worth in administration were Mary Slesser and Gertrude Bell, whose cases proved that the opportunity produced the individual. Women must live and work in a world of men, many of them favourably disposed towards women. No good purpose could be served by antagonising them. Many fine women would and could succeed, but the time was hardly ripe to generalise. Russia appeared to have given the greatest freedom to women, and the United States had appointed the greatest number of women consuls. Women's proved ability during the Great War had brought them the freedom of to-day.

MRS. NORTHCROFT moved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deploras the decision of the Government to refuse women entrance into the Diplomatic Service. This action is the more deplorable in view of the fact that four out of nine members of the Inter-Departmental Committee approved the admission of women to that Service on certain conditions. The Conference considers the reasons summed up by the Government in Paragraph 7 of their Statement to be inadequate, unconvincing and incorrect. This Conference urges the Government to open all posts in the Diplomatic, Trade and Consular Services to women on the same terms as to men. They believe that the test of admission should be the efficiency and suitable qualifications of the candidate, and that entry should not depend on sex."

Mrs. Northcroft said that a perusal of the list accompanying the statement issued by the Higher Grade Council of Women's Civil Service would dispel a little of the depression which Miss Howard's remarks might have created. The average woman would not be chosen for a diplomatic or consular post but, given the necessary qualifications, women could do the same work as men. If a woman had not sufficient tact to feel her way, both with her own and the male sex, she was not entitled to a position of such responsibility. There were many inaccuracies in the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee. Those in Paragraph 7 were more or less mild in comparison with others which were groundless, especially in view of the successes already achieved by women diplomats in many countries of the world.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN (Australian Federation of Women Voters), in seconding, contended that some of the arguments used by Miss Howard were entirely unsupported and had not been proved by history. As the proportion of women in the Diplomatic and Consular Services increased, so would the number of clubs which opened their doors to women increase. As to women being soft-hearted, she had heard a man say that he disliked seeing women on juries because they were so hard-hearted and could so quickly see through individuals. As to service in Latin

countries, if a British woman was sent to such a country as Spain she would be accepted as bringing with her the traditions of her own country and would help to raise the status of the women in the country in which she served. The United States had a large number of successful women in diplomatic service, and they had given satisfaction. In a letter in *The Times* (May 26th) the Principals of Oxford Colleges had said "The objection that 'in the very large majority of Consular posts officers have to deal with a number of matters which it would be difficult for the average woman to handle' falls to the ground when it is considered that the women concerned would not be average but exceptional women." It was only by definitely stating the case and backing it up, and by those who entered the Diplomatic and Consular Services endeavouring to get support and goodwill, that women could succeed in this direction.

MRS. CURTIS BROWN (American Women's Club) testified to the success achieved by women in the diplomatic and consular services of the United States. There were 200 women in the commercial service as well as in consular offices, and there were continual expressions of appreciation of their thoroughness and business ability.

MISS JEAN I. HOWARD pointed out that she was invited to speak only upon Trade and Consular Services, and had kept strictly to that subject.

The PRESIDENT feared that there was an inclination to misunderstand the attitude of the Latin races towards women. She had always found that, however low one might consider the attitude of the Latin races towards women as a whole, those races were always prepared to make a special exception for the individual woman.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) declared that it was mere subterfuge for the Government to argue that in certain countries women in general would not be acceptable. Why send them to countries where it was known they would not be acceptable, when there were so many in which they would be acceptable? She commended the letter in *The Times* to which Mrs. Littlejohn had referred, and said that it was of more than ordinary importance that there should be no narrowing of the field except to secure the best brains for international work. Apparently the Diplomatic Service had been closed to women because men preferred subterfuge and humbug, where as women preferred to call a spade a spade.

MISS BARRY (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) pointed out that the motion should be amended to read "entrance into the Diplomatic and Consular Services. This action is the more deplorable in view of the fact that four out of eight members of the Inter-Departmental Committee," etc.

The meeting approved of the amendment, and also of the further amendment to read "admission of women to the Diplomatic Service on certain conditions."

MISS AHRONS (London and National Society for Women's Service) said that it was not stated in the report of the Committee that male ambassadors and consuls were moved from one post to another because a post did not suit them or their wives. Of the four signatories who approved of the admission of women to the Diplomatic Service on certain conditions, only one was from outside the Foreign Office and was therefore not one whose preserves would be invaded if women were admitted. Some of the arguments in the report were ludicrous. Insufficient consideration had been given to the contribution women could make to trade. Women in the Consular Offices could make an important contribution to British commerce. There was no need to despair about women being able to get to know all there was to be known, and that through legitimate channels. Gratitude was due to the women signatories who by their reasoned arguments had so splendidly maintained the demand on behalf of women.

The motion was carried as amended, with one dissentient. The Conference unanimously resolved that a message of congratulation be sent to the women members of the Inter-Departmental Committee.

When invited to state her reason for recording a dissentient vote, MRS. COWEN (Queensland Women's Electoral League) said that in her experience on a sheep station in Australia she had had sometimes to handle 200 men at a time in the absence of her husband. She had always found a "nark" or mischief-maker about,

sometimes the woman cook, the housemaid, or the wife of one of the men on the place. In fact, in her experience, a woman was often "downed" by her own sex.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the Diplomatic Service would not comprise those on the level of aborigines.

(c) Colonial Services.

On the motion of The PRESIDENT, it was resolved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes the urgent need for the inclusion of more women in the Colonial Services, and presses for the immediate appointment of an increased number of women on the same terms as men."

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

The PRESIDENT (Mrs. Corbett Ashby): I have found it more difficult than usual to compose my Presidential Address, because it seems to me that in all our minds is a far wider problem than that of the position of women within the British Commonwealth of Nations. In a little over fifteen days we shall know whether the Empire is behind the League of Nations in strengthening the only world organisation for peace which mankind has invented, or whether the aggressor and the traitor to the pledged word is to be given full enjoyment of the results of his aggression. To my mind, that question of British leadership at Geneva on June 15th is the only question which is of supreme importance to the British Commonwealth at this moment. It far exceeds the importance of any other question I can think of.

We are living under the shadow of the breakdown of this world organisation for peace, not because it has been attacked by overwhelming forces from the outside, but because it has been weakly betrayed from within. The test of the co-operative action of the State Members of the League has come. It has nearly gone. Italy was the one great Power which could have tested the system and given the best opportunity for co-operative action because she is the one great Power that is entirely deficient in those raw materials by which modern war can be carried on for even a few weeks. Therefore, the challenge of Italy to the League could have been more easily met than the challenge of any other of the great powers. It has not so far been met.

What effect does that have upon us as an Empire and Commonwealth? It seems to me that it has two. First of all, there is the direct effect: that far from being the reigning power in Africa with the peaceful empires of France and Belgium and the entirely peaceful empire, as far as we were concerned, of Portugal, we now have to face in Africa the beginning of an imperialist power directly menacing Egypt, for whose defence we are responsible, and the far wealthier territories of Tanganyika and Kenya, wealthier for many years to come than the undeveloped territory of Abyssinia. We see all down the Suez Canal, that link of the home country with the East, a threatened black army, completely equipped with poison gas, machine-guns and aeroplanes. The balance of the Empire has been altered since we last met here and to-day we know that already men are thinking of preparing the Cape of Good Hope as a great fortress to control our passage to the East if the Suez Canal is closed, not by our will to prevent poison gas going through, but by *force majeure*.

The balance of the Empire is completely altered as regards access to the East. Our position in the Mediterranean as defenders of Egypt, of Palestine, of Malta, is threatened, and our prestige there lowered. I can remember arriving in Rome a few days after Mussolini had made his famous first march. Every Italian to whom I spoke told me that the Mediterranean was now to be once more a Roman lake, *Mare Nostrum*, and I thought with a smile of the British Navy. The British Navy has been for months 300 strong in the Mediterranean, but it has done nothing to restore our prestige there. That is one effect on the British Empire.

The second is to repeat, perhaps, in Africa the mistakes we made in Asia. Because we failed to co-operate with the United States in taking a lead against the aggression of Japan we know that British trade has lost millions in Asia and that the prestige of the British Empire has been lowered throughout that great continent. To-day we know there is drumming through all the vast continent of Africa the

knowledge of the treachery of the white man to the black, not the pure brutal aggression of Italy on the blacks. After all, a people whose tradition is that of internecine fighting is not likely to be surprised at Italian aggression. What is more formidable, surely, is that that brutal action has been aided by those white States which were pledged to the defence of Abyssinia; that it is Great Britain who refused to sell arms to the Abyssinians for their defence; that it is Great Britain and France that have taken the profit and the dues from the passage of poison gas through the Suez Canal; that it is Britain that has fuelled Italian aeroplanes in British Somaliland, and from the south that black men have lost those rights of citizenship which had been theirs for many years. So from the north and the south you have in that huge continent growing up, it seems to me, as foreshadowed by General Smuts in the letter which reached us a few weeks ago, an alteration of the attitude of black towards white, a complete mistrust of any white man's word. It seems to me that that is a factor which has appalling significance in connection with the development of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Those are the direct effects of the weakness of our policy, but there is another influence which seems to me of enormous concern to us as members of the British Commonwealth League, and perhaps to us, more directly than those other serious consequences: the whole question which now must be raised of the relationship of the British Commonwealth to the League of Nations and the effect on the maintenance of the British Commonwealth of Nations if the League disappears as a piece of effective international organisation. We ought to remember that the British Empire meets together on two occasions. It is called together at the great Imperial Conferences and it meets as a matter of course each year at the Assembly of the League of Nations.

As I see it, as the Empire meets in the Imperial Conferences it is for the purpose of discussing the intimate needs and relationships of one part of the Empire with another, but just because those conferences are concerned so largely with the internal affairs of the British Commonwealth they are apt to bring to the surface the differences and the antagonistic claims of the different parts of the Commonwealth. If you are dealing with commercial relations between different countries you are bound to find, as was found at Ottawa, that the needs of South Africa are extremely different from those of Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, and that what India wants is very different from what any of those others want. In fact, at an Imperial Conference there is brought out in the minds of the Dominions, and in the mind of the British at home, how extraordinarily diversified and how conflicting the interests of the different parts of the Commonwealth are, and that in attempting to hold a balance between those conflicting claims in the everyday needs of life—I am not now thinking of questions of defence—such as transport and communications and business, there are parts of the world more closely linked in everyday life with the Empire and in the production of what we need than the Dominions themselves. Therefore, while the Imperial Conferences must be a strength, they are also a test of the unity of the British Commonwealth. They do not occur every year.

On the other hand, at Geneva each year the leading and responsible representatives of the British Dominions and of India meet. Delegates meet almost daily in Imperial delegation, under the chairmanship very often of the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain. There the Empire is a group whose interests are one as compared with the rest of the world. Our interests are for peace in every continent. Our interests are for liberty and democracy; for an improvement of the social services of the world. The fight against tropical disease and so on concerns the Empire, and every problem presented to the Empire in preparation for the work of the Assembly of the League makes each Dominion unite and Great Britain herself feel more integrated in the whole. I believe there has been far too little realisation of the enormously consolidating effect on the British Empire of these yearly meetings in which the Empire acts as one in relation to the affairs of the whole world.

On June 15th that organisation may break down. It will break down unless this country takes a quite definite lead. If it breaks down it seems to me that there is one more stage that we shall have marked in the disintegration of the Empire, that Empire which is now composed of great self-governing nations that are completely independent in every legal, juridical and practical way, nations held together by the spiritual link of loyalty to the Crown, and, to a large extent, by a sense of common race. But will it be possible for those spiritual links to hold us

together in a world in which the greatest effort of co-operative organisation has broken down?

That seems to me an outstanding problem which the British Commonwealth has before it: somehow to focus public opinion in order to support this organisation of which the British Commonwealth of Nations is the most perfect prototype, because inside the British Commonwealth we have achieved the fundamental safety and co-operation which we have broken in the case of the League of Nations. What is the fundamental foundation of the British Commonwealth? It is the immediate and automatic certainty that attack on one part brings in, immediately, the whole strength and will, the economic, financial, military, naval and air strength of the other units, without question. What has protected and will protect the Empire from aggression is the fact that an attack on any small part of it, the sands of British Somaliland or the rich delta lands of Egypt, would be met, as the Prime Minister recently said, by the immediate and complete strength of every part of the Empire. The greatest protection of the British Empire is, therefore, the certainty of automatic sanctions being enforced in the case of aggression. It is that which has protected us and will protect us from war, and only that. Unless we are prepared to carry out those same commitments in the international field we shall be forced back on the pre-1914 international organisations. I cannot tell, though I suspect, that the Dominions themselves will not be any safer by the pre-1914 organisations or that anything that weakens organisation for peace will be more seriously felt in India, Australia, than let us say perhaps in Canada. If there is to be no co-operation for mutual assistance in Europe, what will be the position of Great Britain in a Europe controlled by air power, not by sea power, and in which the smaller countries will be driven to make their selection of which Great Power they shall become the vassal states?

I have just returned from France and Holland, where I presided over a committee of which thirteen representatives of eight nations were present. Those nations were Great Britain, Holland, Denmark, France, Poland (two representatives), Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, India. I realised that if Italy is not thrown out of the League it is only too probable that the other small countries will leave the League on the ground that a League which contains Italy has no further purpose or meaning, no moral standing and no practical purpose. The policies of the smaller neutral and peaceful powers in Europe will be directed towards asking whether Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia or Italy is more likely to be their personal protector. The danger to our country from such realities is, I think, only just being realised. But it does mean that the whole Empire policy will have to be redirected unless this country gives such a lead at Geneva on June 15th as will enable us, slowly but painfully, to recover the efficiency and the certainty of a co-operative policy.

In face of these great political issues it is very difficult for some of us to concentrate on the immediate purpose of this Conference, and yet I am sure that you will agree with me that because with agony in our hearts we are trying, some of us, to direct the greater policy, we must remember that we are also, fanatically, defenders of women's place in that Empire and, fanatically I hope, defenders of that theory of democracy which alone can bring peace and justice to nations, to classes, and to sexes.

I should very much like, if I may, to read you the Appeal which we, the women of eight countries, put forward. It is as follows:—

Appeal to the Women of the World.

In these tragic days the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship calls upon all women to unite and to strengthen the causes of democracy and peace.

You cannot let your rights be trampled upon or voluntarily sacrifice them without weakening your own forces for that good for which the world is crying. We call upon all women and all men to realise that the women's cause, democracy and peace stand together.

The Women's Movement is based on reverence for the individual, respect for human personality, justice between the sexes and the value to the world of variety in service and capacity.

Democracy is based on the same principles: justice between the classes, co-operation in the ordering of the common life of the nation, the recognition of liberty with its corollary of responsibility under freely accepted discipline.

Peace is based on the same principles: justice between nations, the substitution of law for war, co-operative action to ensure freedom and prosperity.

In 1937 we shall know what is the civil and political status of women in all countries through an inquiry by the League of Nations. It is the first time in human history that a world assembly has wanted to get a clear picture of the rights and disabilities, the triumphs and the defeats of women. What that picture is going to be we do not yet know, but if it is good it will encourage us to use our power for the solution of the appalling problems of the present time, and if it is bad it will be a call upon our feelings of solidarity to help all the women who are struggling and so help humanity.

To-day the shadow of the totalitarian state falls across the world. It crushes respect for the individual, it puts might before justice and blind obedience before freely accepted discipline. Above everything it is a retrograde man-made organisation where there is no freedom for the work, insight and wisdom of women.

All love of democracy has disappeared and men, drunk with the poison of propaganda, have surrendered their will, their judgment and their lives to the tyranny and egoism of dictators.

Those countries where democracy is still honoured—at least officially—have added to this darkness by breaking their word, by betraying the League of Nations, by letting a small and unarmed country be destroyed by an adversary equipped with the full and ghastly means of modern warfare.

Let the terrible sufferings inflicted in Europe and in Africa inspire all the women in the world with renewed energy, with burning faith and with clear understanding to turn this evil tide. Let us join our forces to those of our men and with them establish a world where honest co-operation and friendly understanding shall be the accepted means to solve our national and international difficulties.

Mrs. Corbett Ashby continued: That, I think, does summarise better than I could do, though I had a good deal to do with the writing of it, the task which lies before us in this British Commonwealth League to work for peace, to work for democracy, and to work for the fair position of women in that democracy. It would be an enormous mistake if we slackened our efforts in any one of these three fields to-day. That enquiry by the League into the status of women is of the utmost importance. We are not yet sure when the Report will be discussed, though we believe that, politically, it is most unlikely that it will be considered by the Assembly of this year. Many Governments have not replied. A few have done so. What is so urgent is to see that by 1937 we women have done our part, under the Government of the country from which we come, to secure that that Government shall give a reply, not on what the position of women is in theory under the law, but what is the true picture of women in that country under custom and in fact.

We can imagine the Government of this country sending a very rosy picture to Geneva in which no liabilities are put on women by force of law, but where it is customary for professions and industries to be closed to women, where it is the custom to forbid her this or that, to limit her in this way and in that; where the attack on the married woman has by no means slackened. And so we who represent the self-governing Dominions, those independent nations with independent representation at Geneva, ought to go home determined that the women's organisations in Great Britain and in all the Dominions shall, through their Governments, present a true picture of women's position under the law and under custom in the civil, political, and economic spheres; and that, in addition, those Government replies should be accompanied by the joint memoranda of the women's associations asked for directly by the League. So that we hope when the societies in the Dominions have presented their material to the Government, have, wherever it is possible, been called in to a consultation by those governments before the final answer is sent to Geneva, that they will also send to the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship a copy of those replies, in order that the great women's organisations may send in their memoranda a world picture of the

position of women. Those of us who are fighting not only for women but for democracy and peace will, I think, find our hands enormously strengthened if we can prove, again and again, how true Lord Cecil was when he said that where the women's movement is strong the peace movement is strong, and where the women's movement is weak the peace movement is weak; if we can prove that those countries that have retained the machinery and the faith of democracy are strong, then, whatever complaints we may each make in our own sphere, we shall prove that our work and our status does favourably compare with the position of women in those countries where might is right, and the whim of one man can dispose of the fortunes not only of individuals but of an entire sex. (Applause.)

On the motion of MRS. GUY INNES, seconded by MISS JEAN HOWARD, a hearty Vote of Thanks was accorded the President for her extremely interesting and far-seeing address.

(d) Training and Condition of Established Civil Services.

(1) England.

MISS DOROTHY EVANS (National Association of Women Civil Servants) said:—

Unlike other organisations, the Civil Service does not demand any specialized training before entry, except in the professional classes. For the whole range of duties covered by the Clerical, Executive and Administrative Classes no preliminary training is necessary. The best equipment which a girl or woman can fit herself with for a Civil Service appointment is a first class education. For practically all posts in the Civil Service now entry is by open competition. For all the examinations a high standard has become established by virtue of the large number of competitors taking part in the examinations in question.

Post-entry Training.

The training of a civil servant commences from the first day of her appointment. In a number of Departments there is a systematic training scheme in operation designed to test the fitness of the new entrant for various types of work. The object of the training is to ensure that the entrant shall be placed upon the work most fitted to his or her abilities. For a period which varies in length according to the grade of the officer the new entrant is taught his or her duties and it is only at the end of this period that the officer is expected to carry a full load of duty. During the probationary period, which again varies in length from grade to grade, there is a constant watch kept on the officer and any new entrant is liable to be dismissed within this period if not found fitted for the work in question.

It is not expected that this Conference will require to be initiated into the technical phases of the various training schemes in operation in the Service, and it is proposed to devote the most of this statement to a survey of conditions in the Service, particularly as they affect women entrants.

Conditions.

It is now possible to say that in general there is a very wide measure of equality in operation in the Service as between men and women in regard to entry. For the main classes, Clerical, Executive, Administrative, Professional and Technical, there is no difference in the methods of entry. Entry in all cases is by examination, either by what is known as competitive competition or by selection boards. Selection boards apply mainly in regard to entry for the professional and technical classes. There is no question of a limited number of posts at any examination being reserved for either sex. Success at the examination determines entry to the Service.

The largest field for entrance to the Civil Service is the Clerical Class examination. These are usually held annually and of late years have admitted at the rate of between 1,000 and 1,500 per annum.

Above the Clerical Classes is the Executive Class and candidates have been admitted here to the extent of some 100 per annum.

Above that the Administrative Class allows for the entrance of roughly some 50 officers per annum.

During the initial years of service there is no difference made in the salaries

payable to the two sexes. The training, conditions of employment, reporting system, and opportunities for promotion are, theoretically, the same for all officers. There is no barrier excluding women from eligibility to promotion to-day operating in any of the main classes. The last ban was removed on the 1st of May of this year, when the Executive Class in the Post Office was for the first time thrown open to women by promotion.

The numbers of women who have entered the various classes since 1928, when the common examinations were first held, has been somewhat disappointing. Of late years there are roughly one-third as many girls successful at the Clerical examination as there are boys. At the Executive examination the number of successful women candidates has lately been only one-tenth of the whole and in the Administrative Class examinations it is only one or two women who are successful each year.

In regard to admission to the professional classes, the proportion of women is perhaps a little higher than in regard to admission to the Administrative Classes. There are an increasing number of women securing appointment to the professional staffs of the British Museum, the Record Office, the Scientific Research Departments of the Defence Ministries, and the National Physical Laboratory.

Opportunities open for the higher appointments.

As was said above, theoretically women have the same opportunities for promotion as their male colleagues. In fact, however, it is frequently found that the numbers of women who secure promotion to the higher classes are small as compared with the numbers eligible. To some extent the women's problems are rectified by the representations which they themselves are entitled to make. Inside the Service staff organisations play an important part in determining staffing conditions and representations in regard to promotions are customarily received by Departments. These representations were founded on fact nearly always result in some improvement.

It is still too early to be able to assess the full effect of the opening of all grades in the Service to women and it will be some years before there are a sufficiency of women who will have entered by the Executive and Administrative examinations and will be ready to take their turn in the real administration of Governmental business.

One of the disappointments of women's organisations has been the scant attention paid by University women to the openings in the Administrative Class. When only some half dozen women take these examinations each year it is not surprising that women are still far from occupying any real proportion of the higher posts in the Civil Service. The opportunities are there for them and every effort should be made to bring the true facts of the position to the attention of the young women at the Universities.

How far reservations still continue.

In a number of the technical grades there is still a tendency to reserve work for one sex or the other. In some cases this is quite justifiable, for instance, there are women Warders and men Warders in the employ of H.M. Prison Commission. There are male and female nurses employed by the Ministry of Pensions. This differentiation of posts is, however, reduced to a minimum. Thus in regard to the inspection of Pensioners there is no difference made between the work allocated to men and women Inspectors.

There are still in one or two Departments whole sections of the work which are reserved to one sex or another. The most outstanding instance of this is the Engineering Section of the Post Office. Discussions on this matter have recently taken place within the Department, but it is understood that the official attitude still favours complete reservation of all engineering posts to men.

Women's reservations.

Below the Clerical work in the Service there is a strata of work which has always been reserved for women. This comprises the machine work, which is regarded as proper to a grade of women Writing Assistants, and the Typing work which is undertaken by women Typists and Shorthand Typists. On the Manipulative side

of the Post Office the same thing is apparent in the reservation of telephone work to women.

There is at present an insidious move being made by the Treasury to extend the all-women's grade in the big Clerical Departments. It is proposed that women should not only undertake the machine work but should have assigned to their grade large blocks of the more routine part of the Clerical duties. In return for this the scale of the women's grade will be extended. The effect of this on the status of women in the Service is likely to be bad from any equalitarian standpoint. Already there are a larger number of girls entering the Writing Assistant Class each year than there are who enter the Clerical and higher classes. The extension of the Writing Assistant Class, with its commensurate extension of the maximum, will make the Class appear all the more attractive. There is every likelihood, therefore, of girls being more and more diverted to the routine class, with a consequential falling away from the Clerical examination. This, in its turn, will mean that women will tend to undertake the whole of the routine work of the Service, whereas the more highly-paid and responsible work will continue to remain the preserve of men.

Marriage Bar.

The marriage bar still operates in the main classes of the Service. There is, however, a provision that in exceptional circumstances, where it can be regarded as in the public interest that the officer shall remain in the Service after marriage, the bar can be removed. This relaxation has as yet only taken place in a very small number of cases.

The continued existence of the bar operates to the disadvantage of women's promotions. The retirement of numbers of highly efficient officers has the effect of excluding from the higher appointments a number of women who would otherwise have secured these promotions.

Unequal Pay.

The most outstanding grievance from the point of view of women in the Civil Service to-day is the inequality in remuneration as between the sexes. For the first few years after the officer enters the Service the rates are the same, but thereafter there is a steep variation till at the maximum of the scale there is a differentiation varying from 20 to 25 per cent. This differentiation obtains throughout the scales in those grades which are reached by promotion, so that the anomalous position obtains in a number of cases that women in charge of sections receive a lower salary than the officers whom they supervise.

(2) Overseas.

Australian Civil Services.

MRS. GUY INNES (Australia): For the figures I am about to give you I have to thank the offices of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Agents-General of the various Australian States, who afforded me every possible help. I find that the conditions of entry for men and women are exactly the same in all branches of the Civil Service in Australia. Men and women receive the same salaries until they are 21 years of age, after which a man is paid £222 a year, he and the woman having started at £96, while at 21 the woman receives £175. That is based on the system of family allowances, it being considered that a man at 21 may be supporting a wife and two children. The minimum rates—for 21, £168; 22, £222; 23, £248, and 24, £258—continue for a man, but do not go on for a woman. It is difficult to ascertain where men and women are doing similar work. A woman librarian would receive up to £304 from £232, but she could not be advanced beyond £256 a year unless the Board considered her proficiency and other evidence for advancement. It was exactly the same in the case of telegraphists.

In the entire Commonwealth of Australia there are only 36 women in administrative posts, mostly clerks in the Attorney-Generals' offices, the meteorological office, pensions, maternity, statisticians, taxation, laboratories and engineering. Nearly all those employed on the telephones are women, but they do not work after 8 p.m. Men then undertake the duties.

Under Printing, a foreman in the Treasury Department receives £384, while a forewoman—I assume she does the same work—is paid £208.

Figures for laboratory assistants doing similar work are: Male, £252-£292; Female, £170-£306. It is strange that the woman should be paid more than the man, but you must remember that each case has to be considered on its merits.

Postmasters receive £256-£330; Postmistresses, £208-£280. Women are used as typists in a great many departments.

The Police are State-controlled except in the Northern Territory. It is interesting to note that in 1932 there were 20 black trackers in New South Wales.

There are women police and female searchers as follows:—

N.S.W., 8.
Victoria, 8.
South Australia, 14.
West Australia, 5.
Queensland, 2.
Tasmania, 1.

I was told that they rendered most valuable service.

Education is also a State matter, children commencing school at the ages of 6 to 7, the leaving age being 14. There are Correspondence Courses carried on almost entirely by a female staff, under a male head. The Correspondent Courses and Travelling Clinics are two special features of education in Australia, and women are employed almost entirely in connection with the Travelling Clinics.

The Married Women's Act was passed in 1932 in Western Australia, with a view to meeting the need of hundreds of students who had completed their training to become teachers. The dismissal of many married women whose husbands could support them resulted from the passing of that measure. A similar Act had been passed in Tasmania in 1923. In State Education in the entire Commonwealth of Australia there are employed 14,033 males and 18,692 females; i.e. 4,549 more women than men. There are twice as many women as Assistants and Junior Mistresses. Another interesting establishment in Australia is the School Banks with 125,599 child depositors, ranging between the ages of 6 and 14, with a credit of £92,622, so that each depositor has, on an average, 15s.

I was able to compare in the State Health service in Western Australia the salaries of male and female dental officers. They have exactly the same length of service. The men rise from £475 to £565; women may rise from £380 to £475. Qualifications must be the same in both cases. Of the Medical Officers the head is a man at £905; the maximum of the medical woman officer's salary being £595, starting at £495, or £565, starting at £475. In the Western Australian section there are three visiting nurses, one with war service, and two school nurses, and the head of the Correspondence Department is a male and out of his staff of 12 there are 10 women, who rise from £135 to £195. There is a telephonist, and there are women in the Accounts Department, while in the Engineering Department 5 out of 30 are draughtswomen. In the latter section women receive the same as men, with the exception that a married man receives an allowance of £10.

In the Factories Department there is one woman inspectress able to rise from £195 to £260; four inspectors at £360-£490, and a chief inspector in receipt of £545. There is no record of women earning that amount. There are a number of clerks in various departments, and in the Child Welfare Department there are four typists, one machinist, and the entire staff for boarding and relief work consists of five women, starting at £155 and able to rise to £276. There are six women out of the nine on inspection and probation work at salaries rising from £225 to £260. In the Aborigines Department there are two women clerks, and no women in the higher grades.

I am told that in the Commonwealth of Australia the policy is equal pay for equal service, but, in fact, this is not the case. In the States there is no doubt whatever that women do not receive equal pay for equal service, because of the Public Service Act, which provides otherwise, by clearly laying down that women should not receive the same pay as men. Moreover, every State has passed a Married Woman's Act which compels retirement on marriage, but in the Commonwealth the policy is, as I have stated. At the same time, one has to bear in mind the Arbitration Court's judgment and arrangement of family allowance for real or imaginary families.

SOUTH AFRICA.

Women in Civil Service.

MRS. LEVISEUR COHEN said:—

The position of women in the Civil Service in South Africa is not good. But their general position is not worse than anywhere else; in fact, South Africa compares favourably with the most advanced European countries in the position and protection it accords its women. They are admitted to all degrees, are eligible for scholarships and bursaries, and teach in schools and universities. They can become doctors of medicine, chartered accountants, advocates, and attorneys. They are mayors of towns and very often sit on town councils, and there are two women Members of Parliament.

Women make little headway in certain professions, for instance in the law, to which they were admitted only in 1923; but this is a question of personal ability and of open competition with men.

It is in the Public Services that we find injustices and inequalities. Women were first freely admitted to the Civil Service in 1928. Until recently there was no special entrance examination. Matriculation gave entry to men and women, but often both were admitted without any examination qualification. Now, however, a special examination system has been inaugurated, but women are not allowed to sit. The work of men and women in the Civil Service is kept separate. There are three grades of men clerks, and three grades of women clerks. They each hold different sorts of posts, and the women's grades are lower paid. A woman, of course, will often do work as good as, and better than, that of a man; but she does not, as yet, get a fair deal. I know of a woman of 26 who was a second grade woman clerk, but was doing a first grade woman's work. Rather than make her a first grade woman clerk, the authorities changed her existing post to that of a second grade man, and gave her a lower one.

This is due, as it used to be in England, to the old-fashioned idea that the man must keep his wife and children, while the wife is kept. She must, for the same reason, leave the Civil Service on marriage. Amongst other ills which this produces, I am told that it encourages irregular unions. A friend of mine in the Government Service once asked her Chief the following question:—

"If I am in the Civil Service and I come to you with a baby on my arm, but without a wedding ring on my finger, what do you do?"

"Dismiss you for immorality," he replied.

"And what do you do," she continued, "if I come to you with a baby on my arm and a wedding ring on my finger; you still turn me out, don't you?"

He had to admit that the position was a curious one.

South Africa has a Union Government. Each Province has its own Director and Secretary of Education, and so manages its own educational affairs. The teaching profession is not, strictly speaking, a branch of the Civil Service. Universities and Technical Colleges come under a different scheme. They are supported by the Government, which has a representative on their Boards.

Here, as under the Provincial Schemes, women must leave the teaching profession on marriage, and a woman gets a lower salary than a man, no matter what her qualifications.

Primary and High Schools come under the Provincial Schemes. I speak chiefly now of the Transvaal. Primary Schools are divided into schools for boys only, for girls only, and mixed schools. On the whole, men are heads of boys' schools, and of mixed schools, and women of girls' schools. There happen, however, to be several women principals of mixed schools in Pretoria and in some of the smaller towns. As fast as these women retire men are put in their places. In High Schools the salary of both men and women depends on the size of the school, but a man's salary is always higher than that of a woman. Men have more free time, as, for instance, when women take such subjects as needlework.

Civil servants can, of course, not take part in individual agitation for an improvement in their status. But the Pretoria League of Women Voters (which I represent here) and other associations of the same kind are working hard for better conditions for women. There are also four important Afrikaans women's organisations, which are remarkably strong. Though their main object is the moral and

cultural welfare of the youth of the country, they have at heart the general welfare of South African women. Of these

- (1) The South African Women's Christian Association was formed as early as 1904.
- (2) The South African Women's Federation was formed in the Transvaal in the same year.
- (3) The Orange Women's Association was formed in the Free State in 1908, and
- (4) The Natal Women's Christian Association was formed in 1905.

These four associations have a membership of over 13,000 women and are divided into 250 branches, of which Pretoria has four. The Women's Federal Council connects the four societies and organised the first joint conference in 1933.

South African women, who were given the vote only in 1931, have a great deal of work before them, but they will follow in the footsteps of the older countries. The men must see how important it is that the best brains should be used for the good of the community as a whole, and give equal pay for equal work, not only in the interests of justice, but in their own interests.

Civil Service Equality.

MRS. GORDON WILSON (Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools) moved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges that legislation governing appointments in the Civil Services within the British Empire should eliminate all discrimination between the sexes with special reference to appointments, methods of entry, class of work, rates of pay, promotion and other matters where inequality exists."

In regard to Miss Evans' suggestion that Civil servants were concerned because boys did better than girls in the examination, Mrs. Gordon Wilson said it appeared that boys were at an advantage in that their specific preparation for their path in life began at an earlier date and was more closely adhered to throughout than in the case of girls. It was fitting that she, as representing a group of women concerned with the education of girls, should propose the resolution because, in the first place, those who were naturally endeavouring to send girls out imbued with the necessity of working for all citizens should know that in entering Government service women would be labouring in many respects under a sense of injustice and undeserved inequality. Secondly, no other group of women stood to gain so much as a result of a change in the practice in the Government service as those in the teaching profession generally. Their remuneration was in part provided by local authorities and partly by the Government, and so long as the latter did not provide equal remuneration for men and women, it could hardly be expected to endorse the action which a progressive local authority might be persuaded to initiate. Thirdly, it was a pleasure to put forward the motion in the hope that it might be possible to induce the Government to improve women's employment without taking refuge in the statement that as long as the Government was adopting a practice in accordance with that prevailing in other occupations, it was doing all that could be expected of it.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) seconded the motion. She pointed out that in addition to the Commonwealth Civil Service there was a State Civil Service in all the States of Australia. The Commonwealth Civil Service certainly came nearer to terms of equality in pay than the State service of Western Australia, though women were compelled to resign on marriage. Six per cent. had been deducted from salaries in Western Australia since the 1931 depression. The teaching profession was entirely under State control, and opportunities for promotion in the case of women were somewhat limited. The heads of Central and Infant schools were always women; and they were eligible for Primary schools, apart from those that were exceptional or had an average attendance of 40 or under. Schools with attendance above that figure were staffed by men. Of the total number of teachers employed in the State service women formed 63 per cent. Opportunities for promotion were limited. There was no family allowance, as in the Commonwealth service, and in Western Australia there was no pensions scheme

for civil servants. That was probably the only State in the British Commonwealth in which pensions did not operate. In the State Civil Service a sum of money was subtracted from the salary of women every three months and that formed a compulsory saving. On retirement the women drew that money, which had been left at interest throughout their service. Men had to insure their lives in an approved office and thus ensure themselves of a certain amount at retiring age.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN (Australian Federation of Women Voters), reverting to the subject of examinations, said that in Australia girls in many instances did better than boys. In the ordinary subjects Honours List for 1935, 70 per cent. of the places in Chemistry, Latin and Greek were taken by girls.

MISS AHRONS (London and National Society for Women's Service) added that often a girl did not get the extra year of study which parents were willing to allow boys. Boys were specially coached for entry into the Civil Service, whereas part of it was closed to girls. The Civil Service was a fortress manned by men, and although there was a full aggregation in the Higher Division on paper, it was not yet working out as fairly as it should.

MRS. JAMIESON WILLIAMS (Australian Federation of Women Voters) thought that the facts and figures given by Mrs. Guy Innes might lead to the impression that Australia discriminated against women as such, whereas there was an Arbitration Court appointed in each State and another appointed by the Federal Government which laid down a minimum wage based on a standard of living, up and down. According to the basic wage in the State for men over 21, it accredited to him a wife and two children. The Federal Government based its figure on one child. Australia was giving a lead to the world by recognising that in industry and in all paid employment there were such things as marriage and children. It would be wise for Australian women not to ask for equal pay, otherwise they might get less than men and the children would suffer. They should rather ask for the separation of the family endowment scheme from wages as such. The Arbitration Court could fix wages for men and women plus a certain amount from a common pool out of which women and children could be endowed. The speaker emphasised that she was in favour of equal pay as between men and women, but could not see that it would be possible in Australia until the present position was cleared up. Most people there desired to see the Government producing separate schemes.

MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council) did not agree that Australia was giving a lead to the world, except backwards, in that the system of family allowances had been abandoned in favour of the extraordinarily senseless procedure of endowing imaginary wives and children and leaving real dependents entirely unprovided for. Women might have dependent on them not only their children, but invalid parents; and frequently they were responsible for the education of nephews and nieces. A woman should be given the right to earn whatever her talents enabled her to just as that right was accorded to men. As long as a woman was turned out of employment simply because she married there could be no real equality or fair conditions.

MRS. LITTLEJOHN pointed out that women in Australia earnestly desired equal pay; but they should not attempt to obtain it by asking that the present rate of men's pay be accorded to women. They should seek the institution of a different means of assessing pay, and the separation of the endowment from the pay in order that the former might be given only to those who needed it.

The motion was carried unanimously.

COLONIAL AND MANDATED TERRITORIES.

- (a) Administration.
- (b) Education.

MAJOR W. E. SIMNETT, M.B.E., after having explained what the Colonial Empire was, pointed out that these forty odd territories scattered across the globe, mostly in the tropical zone, were fundamentally different from the Dominions, in that very few of them were suitable for European settlement. While there was undoubtedly need for women in the Colonies, it was rather for the right type of woman, for the woman of character and stamina, with sound practical training,

ready to face conditions of comparative hardship and isolation in a spirit of adventure, and with a gift for understanding native peoples.

In earlier days, the Colonies had claimed the devoted service of some remarkable women, such as Mary Kingsley, Mary Slessor, Gertrude Bell, and of many less famous or unknown women in the missionary field. The pioneer spirit was still needed in the Colonies, and it was being abundantly exhibited at the present day, especially perhaps in science, medicine, hygiene and education. The speaker cited a number of examples to show the notable work being done by women in these and other fields.

Women could find scope for activity in various capacities. In those Colonies where white settlement was to some extent possible, as for example in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, and part of Tanganyika, there were, of course, ample openings for them as settlers or wives of settlers. They should not overlook such a Colony as Cyprus, a beautiful island which offered many advantages of residence for English people. Several Englishwomen were carrying on schools there. The representative of the Cyprus Government in London was a woman. There was scope for scientific and professional women in many Colonies, not necessarily in Government Service. Such work as Miss Cheesman's in the South Seas and Papua, for example, needed rare qualities of intrepidity and enthusiasm, and there was at present a woman entomologist, Dr. Evans, from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, working in Kenya. There were openings for other professional women also. He knew a masseuse who had gone out to Malaya and Burma, encountering many difficulties as the first of her kind, but where pioneers went others could follow.

There were not a few women in business in the Colonies; he knew several in Hong Kong and the East, and there were, of course, many others in the West Indies and Bermuda, but the Caribbean Colonies were rather a special case, and their own inhabitants had naturally first call. He understood that other speakers were dealing with the West Indies, Palestine and Fiji.

As regards the Colonial Service, there were openings for suitably trained women in the fields of medicine, nursing, hygiene and education. The great bulk of educational work and some of the medical work, especially in the African Colonies, was done by missionary societies and similar agencies, apart, of course, from administration. In regard to administrative work generally, there were obvious difficulties.

The speaker explained the general attitude of the Colonial Service towards the employment of women. There were exceptions, such as the Postmaster-General of the Falklands, who was a woman, but generally speaking the work of district and other "field" officers could obviously, under present conditions, only be done by men. As regards headquarters and secretariats, where it might be argued that there was in some cases work equally suitable for women, we had in all our Colonies special responsibilities to the native peoples to train them for the work of administration and local self-government. An outstanding example of this was the Assistant Colonial Secretary of Tanganyika, who was an African. In advanced and civilised Colonies, such as the West Indies and Ceylon, where there was increasing scope in Government Services for the people of the country, women should, of course, have their share. In a country like Ceylon, which had full adult franchise, this would doubtless come about naturally in course of time, but in backward countries it was not possible.

There was, however, ample scope for women's work "at one remove," so to speak, from Government Service in Colonies where the wives of Government officials accompanied their husbands. One heard of the petty social life of many small stations in the Colonies, but for women with the right temperament and training, there was no lack of useful and urgent work awaiting them in the districts where their husbands worked, and much could be done by women to improve conditions of native life around them, especially of the lives of women.

Much depended upon their having some training for the work, and there were several institutions in this country where such training could be obtained. So far as the nursing profession was concerned, there was no need to speak of the admirable work of the Overseas Nursing Association centred at the Imperial Institute. There were also the Westonbirt House of Citizenship at Tetbury, Glos., and the Empire Citizenship Training Council in Carteret Street, Westminster, who arranged short

courses of training for women proceeding overseas, particularly to African and other tropical dependencies. It was believed that still another such centre was to be opened in London in October.

PALESTINE.

MRS. LEONARD STEIN (Women's International Zionist Organisation) said: The Administration of Palestine deals with education and health. There is one woman only in Grade K of the Civil Service, the highest rank. All other women employments are in the nursing profession. There are only one or two in special colleges under Government administration. That is not true of the Missionary schools nor of the special supported schools.

In citing the need for women in the health service, Mrs. Stein quoted from the report of a male inspector in Government service, which showed that, although he visited four colonies, in none was it possible for a male to inoculate Arab women against malaria or treat them in any way whatsoever. She added: There is no reason whatever why women should not be employed in the Government health service. There are women in the Jewish health service and in the Christian Missionary Service.

The Palestine administration comes before the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League, sometimes twice a year. The latest report available is that for 1933-34, which gives the number of children attending school between the ages of 5 to 15 as follows:

Moslem children (1931 Census), 157,500.
Christians, 19,000.
Jews, 34,600.

According to the 1933 Report of the 157,500 Moslem children who could be attending school only 36,000 were doing so; i.e. 23 per cent. Of that number, 29,000 are boys, 7,000 girls. There are 31 Moslem town schools for boys; 21 for girls; 238 rural schools for boys and 7 for girls. Of the child population in rural schools, 13,997 Moslem boys; 682 Moslem girls.

The population of Palestine, an agricultural country, is about 1,000,000, 650,700 of whom live in what are called rural settlements, not municipalities and not towns. Three-quarters of the 157,500 Moslem child population ought to be attending schools in the rural areas; that is something like 120,000 children, and, half of them being girls, there ought to be at least 50,000 Moslem girls attending rural schools, whereas there are only 682.

Why is it that the children do not attend school? Mlle. Thibert has gone into the question, in order that details might be submitted to the Permanent Mandates Commission. She noted the difficulty in regard to female Arab education, owing to the lack of teachers and the problem of accommodating unmarried women in Moslem villages. She pointed out that it ought to be possible to make some provision for employing married Moslem women as teachers and accommodating married women in the villages.

The number of Jewish children who could attend school, according to the 1931 Census, was 38,300, roughly 20,000 boys and 18,300 girls. The 1934 Report records that of the 38,000 who could have gone to school in 1931, 44,800 are actually attending school, so it works out that there are 112 per cent. attendances of Jewish children. That is, of course, the difference between the number of children who became of age between 1931 and 1934, when the Report was submitted to the Commission. How is it that the percentage is so high in regard to Jewish children attending school, both girls and boys? The reason why there is not problem as regards Jewish education is that Jews take care of their own educational system, which shows that if there is money there and the need, it can be met. The need exists. There is a possibility of training these young women. I think the will must come from the Arabs themselves, not that the Government must find the money.

FIJI.

MR. H. S. L. POLAK: When I came to England some years ago, after having spent a number of years in South Africa and India, I conversed with a distinguished Scotsman, Sir William Wedderburn, one of the most eminent members of the Indian Civil Service in his day.

He said, mistaking me for an Englishman, "The difference between us Scots and you Englishmen is that we believe in education, and you do not."

That is still largely true in regard to our attitude towards women, coloured people and others of like kind and status, if any. In spite of all the evidence, we still believe that the proper place for a woman is in the home, and we still are not sure what is to be the status of the coloured people of the Empire. We are not quite sure whether they are potential equals. We have formulated no real philosophy on the subject. We are therefore still somewhat uncertain as to whether we shall educate them, the extent to which we shall educate them, and the purposes for which we shall educate them.

The case of Fiji came under my observation some time ago owing to a curiously unprecise paragraph in an otherwise precise Indian weekly journal, and my attention was directed to the actual population and education figures in that colony. The population figures are, roughly, 197,500, and that population is very mixed. Out of that 197,500 there is a white population of about 8,500; the Fijians and other more or less aboriginal peoples number 104,000 odd and there are about 83,000 Indians and 1,500 Chinese. We shall leave the latter out of our consideration. In those sections of the population there are almost equal numbers of Europeans, males 4,300 and females 4,100; Fijians, male 53,800, female 50,300. In the case of the Indians there is a significant difference, 48,700 males and 34,300 females. The Indians were brought to the country many years ago, under conditions of indentured labour, which is now at an end, but has left certain associations and aftermath which must be taken into consideration when thinking over the problem of education.

One of the most striking features of that system was that the provision made was for the immigration from India of one woman to three men. That is how it worked out. There was nothing to indicate what the relationship of the woman was to any one of those three men. That largely accounts for the disparity of the sexes in the Indian community. You would expect many fewer women than men in those circumstances, but what has happened of more recent years is that there has been a natural increase in the population with the normal relations of the sexes and in a number of other cases young Indians have gone to India to choose their wives, or to be chosen by them as the case may be, and have taken them back to Fiji with them. Thus there is a gradual working up to normal proportions, but still the population figures are disproportionate so far as Indians are concerned.

Then it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that female education in India is very backward. You would expect to find a reflection of that in any Indian community abroad. You do not find it so much emphasised in colonial Indian communities. In South Africa, for example, I found a much stronger tendency among the colonial-born Indians to insist upon provision for the education of the girls than was the case in the Indian-born section of the community. I believe that tendency is fairly widespread.

Of the European school population in Fiji, 15.41 is male and 15.89 female, so that the proportions are fairly equal. In the Fijian group 14.93 are male and 10.68 female, a considerable discrepancy, but not so great as is found among the Indians, where the figures are 7.96 male, as against 3.42 female. Speaking generally, the Indian education is the lowest of all the sections. Speaking specially, particularly in regard to the relative proportions of the sexes, there is a smaller percentage of Indian girls going to school than girls of any other community.

Taking rough figures, the entire amount spent on education in the colony, from Government and all other funds, is about 6s. per head of the population. That does not amount to very much, but of that, 3.8 pounds is spent upon each European child, 1.3 pounds on each Fijian child and 1.9 pounds on each Indian child. Bear those figures in mind in relation to what I said earlier that we are not quite sure whether we ought to be spending money on the education of other peoples. If we were sure, we should be spending not only the same proportion upon the education of the other people in the colony, but larger amounts proportionately having regard to the fact that there is so much leeway to make up.

Do we, as administrators, really mean that we are going to educate these people or see that they are educated, or help them to educate themselves, so as to do their own types of work, as was suggested earlier in this discussion? If we do, what are we training the people for? And how are we training them? What part in particular are the women going to take in this development?

In India a strong women's movement is growing up. There is the work of the India Women's Conference and of the Women's Institutes. These women's organisations are spreading all over the country. They are beginning to take a more animated part in the organisation and creation of public opinion, particularly women's opinion. If, as a matter of fact, the woman's proper place is in the home, it obviously is in the training of children there first of all and later in the schools and colleges on all the activities of life. I take it that one of the things you here would wish to do would be to promote movements among our own people first, and from them to the women of all these other communities, so that they may be brought into association with each other on as equal terms as is at all possible, with a view to training the women of those other communities to take on the tasks that the women of our own community have hitherto carried out. Whether Fijian or Indian women, they have to go among their own people. They have to develop better and higher ideals of citizenship, more equal ideals of citizenship, and help to abolish all those inhibitions in Indian traditions that are like an excrescence upon modern life. Those we want abandoned as rapidly as possible. Unless something is done you will retain those disparities and those excrescences of old and more primitive days, and thus retain reactionary traditions, so that it will not be possible for women, whether Fijian, Indian, or of whatever nationality they may be, to carry on their proper and equal task of bringing up the new generation.

WEST INDIES.

MISS UNA MARSOM (Jamaica): It is rather a happy coincidence that to-day I received a letter from the West Indies, in which the writer refers to Lady Denham, wife of the Governor of Jamaica. My correspondent tells me that Lady Denham is busy trying to organise the ladies of the island into a body of social service workers, so that they may help their less fortunate sisters.

I have spoken several times at your Conferences and I believe you are fully acquainted with the standard of civilisation in the West Indies. We are supposed to be a little in advance of Africa and our women have had for many years an opportunity of taking advantage of secondary education. The boys have come to England to be educated and many are now taking an active part in the life of the country, as doctors, lawyers, teachers and traders, some holding very high positions.

As far as the women are concerned, they can, for our purpose, be divided into two sections: the Jamaican or coloured women, and the white women. Jamaica is the largest of the West Indian island and fairly represents what happens on the other islands. The population of Jamaica was estimated in 1934 to be 1,104,775. There are about 12,000 whites. Jamaican girls largely attend the secondary schools and elementary schools are rapidly increasing. The difficulty, as in other countries, is to find occupations for the girls. Most of those leaving the elementary schools go into domestic service or remain at home because there is little else for them to do. There are colleges for the training of them as teachers, and many take higher examinations and become nurses. The girls who leave the secondary schools enter the Civil Service and are found to be efficient and to give much satisfaction. Apparently there is no great desire to let women occupy the higher positions, there being only about four or five women in the Civil Service who are second class clerks. It is really difficult for girls to advance beyond being stenographers or assistants, as they are called. My sister put in fourteen or fifteen years service before she became a second class clerk. On the other hand, men become second class clerks after a few years service, and much more easily. On the whole, girls are doing quite well in Government service and many are teaching in the secondary schools, which were not so long ago staffed by English teachers. There are now Jamaican teachers in most of the girls' schools and the same applies to most boys' schools. You will realise that, though education is fairly good, we have a great deal yet to do, and it would be most helpful to the development of the island if we could have the assistance of more women like Lady Denham, Mrs. Neville Rolfe, Miss Solomon, Mrs. Corbett Ashby and other British Commonwealth League workers.

You will be familiar with the past history of the island. Whereas the African peoples have had their own country and tribal system, we had nothing of the sort. Our people were brought to the region and had to undergo the dreadful experience of

slavery for over two hundred years. Among people emerging from the demoralising influence of slavery there is naturally a great deal to be done if they are to be trained in the right way of living, and women are best able to assist in that connection. About half-a-dozen Jamaican girls have come to England to study medicine, but, for the most part, they get their training in their own country. They have therefore not a real sense of helping the lower classes by doing social work. They do not realise that they ought to put themselves out to better the conditions of those less fortunate, and if any do realise it they do not know how to go about it. They can learn much from white women who come to the West Indies.

Women who come out there can be divided into two classes: those who come as wives of private traders—English wives of Jamaican professional men—and wives of Government officials. The women who come out to us vary a great deal, and we have been most unfortunate in some instances in the wife of the Governor, the first lady of the land. Some have taken very little interest in the people or their development. On the other hand, others have been active and we have to thank them for much. Lady Stubbs did a great deal as a result of the Child Welfare Association she established in Jamaica. She was aided by a group of women who worked very hard, as I understand Lady Denham is working now, but they had to work under great difficulty.

It is nearly five years since I left my home in Jamaica. When I was there I used to do a little work for Mrs. Spooner, of the Victoria League, and she used to wish she could get more helpers. There is so much to be done and so few willing to come forward and help. So many of the women who come out to the West Indies take no interest in the people among whom they live. They just have a good time and look forward to returning home for a holiday, and then they will talk over a cup of tea of the dreadful work they have to do for poor uncivilised peoples! If more would really help, they could do useful work for our people, who are quick, alert and most grateful for help extended to them.

Mr. Polak said that some people were not certain whether coloured peoples should be educated; that in any case it only led them to have ambitions of equality. Most of the whites who are not of the best type spend much time trying to keep up their prestige and to impress on non-whites that they are inferior because they are coloured. Colonies cannot be built up in that spirit. Many of you who are engaged in this work know that, in spite of the fact that Jamaica has been a British Colony for nearly 300 years, there is a great deal of poverty and backwardness, which is an astonishing contrast to the progress made by the few. Those who are educated, University boys and girls and brilliant folk, are a mere handful compared with the vast mass of the people. Whenever I think of the standard of living of the people of Great Britain and of our poor women at home, I want to weep. Our people are badly paid and there is very little of interest in their lives. There is no one to organise them. Women are needed to do that kind of work.

I have been fortunate in getting into touch with the British Commonwealth League and women's organisations that are progressive and sincere. If a group of women could go out from an organisation such as this and try to establish a branch of the League in the West Indies and get women interested, there could be more rapid advancement. The women have the vote, but hundreds of thousands do not bother to exercise it. There is no one to enable them to realise it is their duty to take part in the life of their country; their duty to try to develop their children in the best possible way; their duty to raise the whole standard of living. Many of the young people who come from the colonies and mandated territories to be educated in England are apt to specialise, and thus do not spare time to branch off into social work. That has to be taught them. They would be glad to learn how to use their leisure. This organisation is so progressive that I feel sure much could be taught to our women if someone was sent out to the West Indies and able to supply literature. Most of our women can read. It has been said that when you educate a man you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman you educate the whole race, because the woman passes her knowledge on to her family. A family can rise in standard only as the woman rises. The man brings in enough to keep the home going. It is the woman's part to raise the standard, not only of her family, but, through it, of her country. I leave that thought with the British Commonwealth League as applied to the West Indies. I know the women of Jamaica would be grateful for any assistance the League can give them.

AUSTRALIA.

Aborigines.

MISS NEIL read the following paper on behalf of Mrs. John Jones, who was unable to attend the Conference:—

This year South Australia celebrates its centenary. It is instructive to recall that the question of appointing Protectors for the Aborigines threatened at the time to wreck the whole Foundation Act, the British Colonial Secretary declining to gazette the Governor until proper provision had been made to protect the rights of the natives. How strong was the feeling in England at that time is shown by the announcement of Mr. J. Fowell Buxton, who said: "I would rather carry the measure to send out a Protector than be the victor of Waterloo." The Governor of South Australia said, on his appointment, "The natives are to be considered as much under the safeguard of the law as the colonists themselves, and equally entitled to the privileges of the British subjects."

Had those noble sentiments taken root and flourished throughout Australia, I should not now be seeking your sympathy in pressing the request for Women Protectors.

In the first year of this century, Australia led the world in the enfranchisement of women; yet during the whole of the past century, while the white woman has advanced in status in Australia, the position of the aboriginal woman has gone from bad to worse. In stone-age tribal life the girl, at the age of eleven or twelve, becomes the slave-wife of a man generally old enough to be her father. He may die, and she may be passed on to his younger brother. Notwithstanding her slave status, it has, in tribal life, compensations, such as corroborees, feasting, hunting, fishing and trekking. It has been proved, too, that de-tribalised women, living under proper protection, exhibit as high a morality as white women do generally.

When giving evidence before the Royal Commissioner in West Australia (in 1934) the matron of the East Perth (Aboriginal) Girls' Home, said: "During the last few years, hundreds of girls have passed through the Home, but she had known of only one, who had 'got into trouble.'" It is therefore sad to read in the *Daily News* (W.A.) of June, 1933, that Mr. Love, superintendent of the Kunmunya Mission Station, said: "Having travelled across Australia from South to North and from North to North-East, I came to the matured opinion that nearly every black woman in the bush or on cattle station or in camp, is at the disposal of any passer by for the price of a stick of tobacco." Dr. Cilento, Federal Government Medical Officer, said a year later, after having investigated the conditions of Aborigines on the Queensland coast, "Infection with venereal disease is sooner or later the fate of most Aboriginal women."

The figures of the 1935 Census show that, out of the 75,000 Aborigines in Australia, about a third are of mixed blood, while the number of half-castes steadily increases. Few half-castes have known fathers. Mr. Bleakley, the Federal Royal Commissioner (1928), stated in his report, "One fact is universally admitted, that where the white woman has braved the climate and other discomforts, the young black woman has still been indispensable to make life possible for her. One deplorable result of the semi-starvation that often exists (in camps of detribalized blacks) is that women find the temptation too strong to resist to supplement their meagre resources by trading in prostitution."

Mr. Bleakley recommends punishment and deportation of Aborigines who prostitute their women. He also recommends more severe penalties for white men who offend. These have been provided by law, but convictions are rarely secured. The penalties are still too light in most of the States. At the Kalgoorlie Police Court (25/5/33) a man named Hammil was fined £1 for consorting with a female aboriginal, who was present with a half-caste baby in her arms. Hammil said that the woman had been handed over to him by a half-caste, who had told him that her husband was in prison. This may have been the initial cause of the black woman's trouble, for sometimes women are brought in by the police from long distances in the bush, to give evidence against their husbands, but there is no provision made for their safe conduct back to their tribal country. One of the most crying needs for Women Protectors is for such cases.

In the now notorious Borrooloola Case, Constable Stott admitted that he had travelled the young lubra for some hundred miles on foot chained to his saddle; that

he was bringing her in to give evidence against her husband; that she was (as all prisoners are) dependent upon the constable for what food he liked to give her, and that no shelter but his own tent was provided for her at night. It can hardly be imagined that such conditions could prevail in a country of enfranchised women.

Father Gsell (for 25 years superintendent of the Roman Catholic Mission at Bathurst Island, North Australia) said lately that, while a rigid standpoint of conduct within the tribe was insisted upon, yet the natives thought nothing of passing over their womenfolk to the sixty or seventy Japanese who regularly traded and fished along the shores of the Island. About the same time, Mr. Goodfellow, of the Royal Natural History Society, London, who was visiting the Island, gave information to the papers regarding the prostitution of the native women and reported that a child of eleven, almost white, was living amongst these people. A police constable was sent from Darwin to enquire, and returned with the child, who was placed in the aboriginal compound at Darwin.

I could cite many authentic happenings to show how urgent is the need that women should be included in the Protectorship of detribalized Australian Aborigines. I would urge this Conference to press upon the women throughout Australia the need for seriously studying the requirements of the thousands of detribalized blacks, and especially of the poor little half-caste children, of whom Mr. Moseley, the Royal Commissioner for West Australia, said lately, "It is a pathetic sight to see these children, in many cases so fair as to be undistinguished from white children, living in a hut worse by far than the kennels some people would provide for their dogs; whole families of nine or ten being huddled together in abject squalor, with no cooking utensils, and no proper facilities for washing. All sleep together in one hut, and intimate matters of sex relationship become in the minds of the young details of such minor importance that one is not surprised to find girls at an early age having children of their own. . . . If the conditions continued . . . these half-castes would become a positive menace to the community; the men useless and vicious and the women a tribe of harlots."

Would it not be worth meetings, processions and deputations in all the cities of Australia to awaken the governments to the determination of women to secure their share in the righting of the wrongs of the Australian native women, probably the most wronged within the British Empire?

Is it too much to ask that of the hundred or more 'Protectors' of Aborigines in Australia, some shall be women? There are many who have already made full preparation for such work; the King has decorated two of them for their life devotion to aborigines in the desert heart of Australia—Mrs. Standley, of Alice Springs, and Mrs. Daisy Bates, of Ooldea. Many other women, such as missionaries, and wives of officials and settlers, have gone to their rest unsung; but there are many living who are qualified by long service as police women, missionaries and nurses.

The objection usually made to the appointment of women as Protectors is the unsuitability of the life, but we believe that there are white women who will undertake to endure hardships such as men have borne in the past, and that are being endured continuously by their coloured sisters, the detribalised aborigines.

A well-known society in London, which has for many years worked for the Australian Aborigines, approached the Prime Minister of Australia when in London last year. They were asked to submit written questions to Canberra. When the answers were received in London, the only question to which no reference was made was that relating to the appointment of women Protectors. From conferences of this League during the past ten years, the request for the appointment of women Protectors has gone to Australia from time to time, but without producing any definite response. Let us appeal to the women of Australia to renew their efforts for the appointment of women Protectors.

The PRESIDENT said Mrs. John Jones had requested that the following motion be passed:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges upon enfranchised women in Australia to make a concerted effort to bring before their Governments the long-standing omission to appoint women as paid Protectors amongst the Australian Aborigines and half-castes."

The motion had not been circulated, but it was actually a re-affirmation of what the League had urged in the past.

MRS. COWEN (Queensland Women's Electoral League) reminded the Conference that the Queensland Government in 1935 passed an Act imposing punishment on any man having anything to do with an aboriginal woman. Queensland was doing its best, and she feared that the proposal would hurt the feelings of that Government.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the object was to give encouragement to work being done in the various States of Australia. Was there a woman protector in Queensland?

MRS. COWEN: Not actually a woman protector; but there are women on the staff, and women who would be willing to work amongst the blacks.

The PRESIDENT thought it was not a question on which there must be penal legislation, but rather one of raising the economic and educational status of the Aborigines. As women and children were so deeply concerned there should be women as well as men protectors.

MRS. JAMIESON WILLIAMS (Australian Federation of Women Voters) thought that if the motion were passed it should be modified to allow of reference to the fact that women in every State in Australia had already been pressing for the provision of women Protectors.

The PRESIDENT then suggested the following wording:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled, recognising the work already done for the benefit of the Aborigines, supports the demand of the enfranchised women of Australia for women as paid Protectors amongst Aborigines and half-castes."

MISS BARRY (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) proposed and Miss REEVES (Women's Freedom League) seconded the amended motion, which was carried unanimously.

INDIA.

MRS. RAMA RAU (Women's Indian Association) moved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled supports the demand of Indian women that women shall be given opportunity of association in the administration of every Province as well as in the Central Government, especially in the departments of health, education and labour; and also that women should be appointed to each Public Service Commission."

Mrs. Rau said: There is in every province in India a Public Services Commission which deals with applications for posts in any service attached to a particular province. So far those Commissions have been composed entirely of men. We feel that women with sufficient training and knowledge should also be appointed as members in order that they may help in dealing with the applications. Unfortunately, the women of India confine themselves to certain professions open to them, education, medicine, health, and, more recently and slowly, the legal profession. Incidentally, women in the educational service in India are usually paid higher salaries than men in that service. It ought not to be at all difficult for any Government to choose suitable women from these branches who would be capable of bringing a great deal of knowledge and experience to the tasks awaiting them.

Women's conferences in India have reiterated that qualified women ought to take their part in those particular branches. As to the department of labour, a Labour Commission reported some years ago and a recommendation was made that women supervisors should be appointed in the different mills in India. That recommendation has never been taken seriously, although the need is urgent because such a large number of women work in the mills. With the exception of one single woman official in the Ministry of Labour in Bombay, there is not, I think, any other woman acting in any official capacity in the labour department of any province.

I see no reference to it in the motion, but there is also a desire that has been expressed by organised women in India. India is on the eve of a great constitutional change. It is at this time that a resolution of this nature must be pressed home from every platform in the country. When re-formation of the governments, both provincial and central, comes about, the women of India desire that there should be

several Public Commissions appointed by the Government of India to enquire into various social questions which it is felt need such enquiry. For instance, the legal aspect of women under the law. Indian States have already appointed Commissions to examine the legal status of women, so that we feel that when the new Government is definitely established it should also appoint such Commissions and that when they are appointed women should be accorded a place. I ask leave to add to the motion:—

“and that when a Public Commission of Enquiry is set up women should be appointed as members.”

MRS. LANKESTER (Women's International League), in seconding the motion, said that, in spite of the extended franchise, there was much fear that unless the women of India could be associated with the administration of every Province, as well as the Central Government, from the commencement of the new Constitution, they would still form a neglected part of the population. There were, of course, many able women ready to take part in the administration as regards education. In Bengal there were 19,000 girls' schools, and yet it took two of those schools to make one literate girl. There were only two women inspectors for all those schools, eight assistant women inspectors and only 10 per cent. of the teachers in those schools had been trained. Was it any wonder that the Bengal Women's Educational Association urged that there should be women in the education department of the Government of Bengal? Until women were concerned with administration in regard to education there would be no great improvement in illiteracy, because when economies had to be effected they appeared to be made at the expense of the education of girls. As regards health and social reform, if there had been a woman in the department concerned, it would have been impossible for a member of the Legislative Assembly to reply, as he had recently, that it has not been brought to his notice that there was violation of the Sarda Act.

It was difficult to know quite how to press the motion. Probably the best way would be to give every possible support to the women of India in pressing the plea on their own legislatures. The India Office had said that that was the only thing for Indian women to do, and when the new Constitution came into operation it would still be necessary to continue to urge the appointment of women to administrative posts.

MRS. RAMA RAU suggested that it would be helpful if some member or members of the League could write to those in authority on the matter, as well as to the wives of governors.

The PRESIDENT added that members might write to those known to them in the Indian Civil Service or in a position of responsibility in India.

MISS AGATHA HARRISON (Women's International League) endorsed Mrs. Rama Rau's remarks. When she accompanied the Labour Commission to India she had been amazed at the efficiency of Indian women assessors. Women who had not previously sat on a Commission and who had never studied industrial questions, though they had a general experience of social work, had laid before the Commission information which displayed a wide understanding of the needs of men, women and children. The fact that the recommendations of the Witley Commission had not been carried out was a matter for grave condemnation. It was not true to say that women had not the necessary experience. Technically they had not, but a study of the part they had played as assessors with the Commission revealed that the necessary women were available and capable.

The motion was carried unanimously, with the additional words: “and that when a public commission of enquiry is set up, women should be appointed as members.”

SECOND DAY.

WEDNESDAY, May 27th.

CHANGING AFRICA.

PROFESSOR VICTOR MURRAY said:—

There are two factors involved in this subject—first of all the situation in Africa and secondly the nature of freedom.

The relevant points about Africa are three.

1. Africa is governed by alien races.

2. In some parts of Africa the alien races have made their permanent home, e.g. South Africa, Rhodesia, Kenya. It is essential not to be doctrinaire and to assume that as the Europeans came later they have no business there at all and ought to clear out. We did not take this attitude with regard to North America. As a matter of historical fact, the Europeans were at the Cape long before the Bantu. Nevertheless, the problem of freedom where two races are permanently settled together is a very particular one.

3. Other parts of Africa are impossible for white settlers and will forever be a black man's country. Here again the problem of freedom is particular because the Africans cannot get on in the modern world with the whites, and what, therefore, ought to be the attitude of the whites in areas where they will always be visitors?

The concept of freedom needs definition: it is quite colourless by itself. We have to ask what is this freedom *from* and what is this freedom *for*. The paper which boasts of its “independence” may after all only be independent of truth, and that is hardly a commendation!

Freedom is commonly thought of as political freedom and we speak of people being free if they can vote for their representatives. A still further stage is to be free to be a representative. There is also the freedom to make the wishes of the representatives effective. There is also freedom from external compulsion. There is also freedom from disabilities due to mere accident, such as race and colour.

South Africa illustrates all these factors of political freedom. It is a country of black and white and also of two races among the whites. Political freedom by the South African Act 1910 meant mainly freedom for the Dutch from compulsion by the English. At the same time it has turned out to mean freedom to oppress the blacks. Lord Crewe, in the debate in Parliament, could not entertain the idea that the natives of the Cape would ever be disfranchised by reason of the South African Act, yet that disfranchisement has come within the last few months. General Smuts, whose Rectorial address at St. Andrews on freedom gave hope of better things, concurred in this disfranchisement. Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr disagreed and gave figures to show that even on the grounds advanced by the proposers there was nothing to fear from the native vote.

All this shows that freedom from external compulsion for one group may lead to oppression within the group. Magna Carta and the English Reform Act of 1832 illustrate this point, so also does the experience of Liberia. It is not, therefore, a matter confined to the whites only.

Economic freedom is also to be considered. Our unemployed have got the vote, but most of them are free only to starve, and they might prefer to give up political freedom in order to have economic freedom. This is a factor also in India and even in a relatively prosperous area like the Transkei in South Africa. Freedom is often developed at the cost of other people's servitude.

When we look at those parts of Africa which are tropical and purely black man's country we find that freedom is nowadays interpreted to mean the development of native folk along their own lines. The orthodox theory is that of the Dual Mandate. The two sides of this Mandate, according to Lugard, are (1) the development of the natural resources of Africa, (2) the development of the natives in the arts of self-government. If, however, the economic mandate is in one pair of hands, and the political in another, what is going to happen, especially where the political authorities need financing from the industries of the country?

Another problem in indirect rule, as the system of the Dual Mandate is called on the side of government, is to define what is meant by the “natives' own lines.” If it means that the typical person is the uneducated backward native you are doing

a great wrong to the educated native who has no part or lot in this scheme of things. Here again you may get the freedom of one group developed at the expense of another.

The only aim seems to me to be better education all round, an education not simply of the mind but of the heart. The only freedom which is worth while is that which can become personal freedom and that is a matter of the spirit rather than any political or other devices.

AFRICAN POLICY.

(a) Survey of Education.

MR. C. R. BUXTON: Fortunately, Professor Murray has led up to my subject by pointing out the enormous importance of education in relation to the problems of basic freedom. On education he has written one of the most stimulating and inspiring books, *The School in the Bush*, which will suggest far more to you than I now can.

The British Commonwealth League asked one or two bodies of various kinds to suggest speakers, and the Save the Children Fund suggested me. That Fund deals primarily with children everywhere and with their needs. The founder, my sister-in-law, Miss Eglantine Jebb, was profoundly interested in the children both of Asia and of Africa. She felt that sufficient attention was not given to their needs.

In 1931 a conference was held at Geneva on the subject of "The African Child," and a short report, written by Evelyn Sharp, bore that title. I refer you to that and to the official report of the International Conference on African Children, issued by the Save the Children Fund. That Report deals with child welfare generally, infant mortality, education, and the child under labour conditions. The importance of women's work in connection with African education was emphasised, as was the importance of the education of African girls. I refer you also to Lord Lugard, who wrote an introduction to the official report in which he said: "The education of the women of Africa must be regarded from a threefold aspect: first, in regard to their work in the house and in the fields; secondly, as mothers and in the care of the new-born infant; and thirdly, in the conceptions and ideas which they will pass on to the growing child."

The Memorandum on African Education by the Advisory Committee of the Colonial Office, issued in 1925, lays down, in somewhat vague and general terms, the principles which we are supposed to observe in conducting education in Africa. But, like every other authority, it has emphasised strongly and repeatedly the desirability of women taking a greater part in this work. Reference is made to three institutions which I have visited. One is in Kenya, the Jeanes School at Kiambu. Miss Jeanes was an American lady who had a great idea: she did not want a teacher so much in the ordinary sense, as at a normal school, but she believed that among primitive people it was necessary to have one who would not only be a teacher but a general inspirer, educator, and uplifter; who would really be sent to teach in the school but would eventually live and teach in another place, preferably the place he came from. There are now several Jeanes Schools, largely supported by the Phelps-Stokes Trust and the Carnegie Trust. Often it is a matter of training a man and his wife, not only intellectually, but giving them a course in hygiene, the principles of sanitation, and so on. The idea is that they are to return to their own place and spread civilisation all round them. That has been in some instances wonderfully successful.

Then there is the Makerere College, the highest educational institution in Uganda; in fact, the highest in East Africa, though that to me is a lamentable fact. Not that Makerere is not a fine college; but it does not reach anywhere near university level and does not profess to. It is typical of how little we have done for African education that in the whole area of East Africa there is not one single institution of university rank. West Africa is a little better. There we have Achimote College. It is, as far as I am aware, the finest educational institution that we have created for Africans.

In each of these three institutions women do the finest quality of work.

Lord Lugard, in the *Journal of the African Society*, speaks of the village school and says the native schoolmaster and his wife—for these schools must be

conducted by Africans—ought to be specially selected and trained, drawn, if possible, from the people with whom they have to deal and familiar with their language, customs and traditions.

The official report issued by the Colonial Office in 1925 may lead you to the conclusion that education is a rather simple, peaceable, quiet, and slightly dull, subject. As a matter of fact, the subject of African education is one of intensely bitter and passionate controversy. These controversies are interesting and important. It is constantly said that the African in his intellectual faculties is fundamentally different from the man of the white race, fundamentally inferior, that there is an unbridgeable gulf because the faculties are so fundamentally inferior. If you hold that doctrine it must have far-reaching effects on your conclusions.

I have tried to glean the present opinion of scientific men. Those who have approached the question with a genuinely unbiassed mind have said that this inferiority of the African is not proved. There is not enough opportunity to prove it. Neither do scientific men claim that equality is proved, still less superiority. Lately there has been an investigation involving minute cranial measurements in Kenya. The conclusion drawn by two doctors of medicine was that the African was inferior; but that conclusion was strongly attacked by scientific men in this country. They pointed out that it is an exploded idea that mere size of brain is a test of intellectual power.

There is the question of the possibility, so much disputed, of great attainments by the negro race. A whole library of books has been produced by Negroes, particularly in the United States, and there is almost another library in connection with the Negro race and its achievements and possibilities. Certainly when one goes into the existing evidence, one is not inclined to lay down any limits to the possibility of achievement either intellectual, artistic, moral or spiritual of the men and women of the Negro race.

I found in East Africa one dominant school of thought among white people, namely, that we ought to teach Africans what are called practical things, such as carpentry, engineering, building, hygiene, and agriculture. Those who argue thus look with horror on what they call a literary education. They speak with the utmost contempt of missionary schools because their education is too literary. I am not disputing that there is much in technical and practical education. It was somewhat neglected in earlier years. It is necessary, of course, to take account of the life which most of these people are going to lead. The general view is that people are to be educated solely for the function they are to perform. I hope you will all hesitate long before accepting any such view. Even if there are absurdities connected with a literary education, I hope you will be slow to condemn it, because the so-called literary education, which in the main has been given by missionaries, is the whole of the real culture which the African possesses—the whole of his outlook on the outside world. I am not going to under-rate what forms the major part of education, at any rate in the more simple type of school, that is education through the Bible. I do not want literary education to be limited to the Bible. Many have seen a greater world and greater possibilities through their knowledge of the Bible. I am not going to condemn teaching history or literature or language for their own sake. There is something of the divine in every one of these African people, and it is deplorable how little we have done for them. It is one of the greatest scandals of our Imperial rule that we have done so little for education. While the population of the school children in a so-called advanced State regards 200 per 1,000 as the normal school population, after long years of government we are educating only 10 or 15 per 1,000 of children in East Africa and in some of the colonies outside Africa. Even in West Africa there are one or two colonies in which the figure is as low, but generally the percentage there is about 30 to 35 per 1,000. The number of girls is fairly high. Figures given in a book by an American, Professor Parker Moon, indicate that American territories, on the whole, come out best; British next, French and Belgian next and Portuguese last. These are defects which must be remedied, and in remedying them there is a great part for women to play.

PROFESSOR VICTOR MURRAY added that in the elementary schools in West Africa there were, on the whole, more girls than boys. As one went up the educational scale girls and boys were separated.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN asked whether the disenfranchisement of the natives would increase distrust of the white man,

PROFESSOR MURRAY: Only the natives of the Cape had been given the franchise. When he was in Africa in 1934 everybody was talking about the fusion between a Nationalist and Labour Government. It seemed impossible to bring together two parties which had been utterly opposed for the past ten years and fuse them without some kind of programme. He could not see any programme on which those parties could unite. The issue of bringing the Protectorates into the Union had been postponed. Thus there had to be some other issue on which the parties could get together; and they therefore turned their attention to native troubles. He could not find anything more, in the disfranchisement of 10,000 people in a community comprising 950,000 Europeans, than fear and the desire to have a programme on which to unite.

MISS MELLOR (National Women Citizens' Association) urged that Africans, any more than Europeans, should not be classed together. There were many women in West Africa who had gone far afield in education and in all walks of life. They had independence after marriage and much power in Council, in State, on Committees and in government circles.

EDUCATION.

MISS ELEANOR HAWARDEN (South African League of Women Voters) moved:—

“That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled affirms its belief in the basic principle that no race can progress effectively towards true civilization unless its women are as educated as the men. It calls attention to the inadequate educational facilities for girls in Africa under British rule, and urges that no customs nor prejudices shall be allowed to interfere with the equal education of boys and girls. It demands that the respective governments concerned shall make adequate grants for this purpose.”

Miss Hawarden emphasised that it was not her intention to discuss the Union of South Africa. We in England could not be too clear that what we said or did here could not help nor harm the natives of South Africa now. We had done our worst with them, and it was too late to undo the harm we did when, by the Act of Union of 1910, we handed them over, helpless victims, to the white people of the country. But we could make sure of the welfare of the natives in the colonies now under our control. To that end we must study local conditions and direct the light of public opinion to these dark places of the Empire. Education was of the utmost importance to the welfare of African people. Girls and women should have their rightful share of it. There was, however, a marked discrepancy, in almost every colony, between the numbers of boys and the numbers of girls receiving education. In the Gold Coast Colony, for example, where women were supposed to be advanced, there were, as official reports showed, three times as many boys as girls in the mission elementary schools, that is to say in most of the schools of the Colony.

The discrepancy in some territories was not quite so marked in what little secondary education there was for Africans. But in every colony some attempts were made at vocational training for boys. Apart, however, from one or two hospitals which trained girls to perform simple nursing duties, and apart from the training of a pitifully few women teachers, there was nothing for girls.

The more intelligent Colonial administrators were beginning to realise what a mistake it was to leave the women uneducated, a force for stupid mulish conservatism. Some medical officers appreciated the value of women nurses and trained midwives. Efforts were being made to provide more and better education for girls. These efforts were, however, small in comparison with the leeway that has to be made up. In at least one respect most of the Education Departments wilfully retarded progress by insisting that women teachers should retire on marriage, despite the serious shortage of women teachers. The prejudice behind such a rule was all the more stupid when one remembered that in South Africa many of the native women teachers were married. This privilege, denied to white women teachers, was allowed to black women because of the shortage of native women teachers. But there was a numerical difference in African education statistics which was more serious than the difference between the numbers of girls and boys being educated,

namely, the difference between the numbers of children receiving any kind of education and those receiving none. Only a small proportion of African children received any education. This was paid for by missionaries and by the Governments of the territories. But, though Education Departments would gladly expand their activities, they could only work within the narrow limits set by the Colonial Treasuries. In Northern Rhodesia there were nearly one and a half million black people; yet in 1934 the Government granted only £20,000 for the education of these people. In this territory, during two years, one of the copper-mining companies made a profit of over a million pounds. In the Gold Coast there were 700,000 children; only 44,000 were in schools. The territory had rich gold mines, but the Government took in taxation only 12% of the profits of these mines, as against the 52% taken by the Government of South Africa from the gold mines of that country. The need of education for Africans was urgent, and it was clear, too, where the money for this education could be obtained.

MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance), in seconding the motion, said that many owed all they valued most in their lives to having had a well-educated mother who regarded the education of her daughters as important as that of her sons. In the family—and there were still a few—in which the mother thought the marriage of her daughter more important than education, the cultural tradition of the family had deteriorated. If that type of thing lowered civilisation amongst the whites, what must be the result of such a point of view in changing Africa? If African women lagged behind the men in education, not only would they ultimately be at a personal discount, but would handicap the race as a whole in its struggle for betterment.

Miss Spender concluded by quoting a passage in regard to girls' schools and the training of native women as nurses from the Report issued by the Colonial Office to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under British Mandate, 1934.

MRS. BIGLAND (League of Nations Union) pointed out that the shortage of native women nurses in some of the hospitals in Africa was partly due to the fact that those who could be trained in England were debarred because so few hospitals would take coloured women students.

MISS FEGAN (British Federation of University Women) said that in British West African colonies native girls were being trained as nurses in all the native hospitals she knew. She had visited both schools and hospitals in Nigeria and the West Coast. In the north and in Moslem territory it was impossible for female nurses to serve in men's wards. Men were therefore being trained for such work; but wherever in the Moslem hospitals there were women's wards there were European nursing sisters who were training native women as nurses, and in the European hospitals native female nurses helped European nursing sisters. Native midwives were also being trained in their own country and about six already had passed the C.M.B. examination. The treatment of native children who came to the clinics was unexceptionable.

MISS MONICA WHATELY (Six Point Group) said that she had been invited to attend a Special Committee at the House of Commons when a number of native African chiefs were giving evidence. These men stressed the importance of the education of their women, not only because it was necessary for the sake of the women themselves, but because if their education lagged behind that of their men it would not make for harmony in the family and would be detrimental to future progress.

MRS. LAUGHTON MATHEWS (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance), referring to a question asked by Miss Chrystal Macmillan, said that women in Nigeria owned their own property.

MISS MACMILLAN: Do they own their earnings?

MISS FEGAN: It is the same thing. The woman keeps a certain amount. According to Mohammedan law she can own her own property.

MISS NINA BOYLE: There were many cases in which Bantu women were returned to their homes because men wanted the money the women were able to earn.

MRS. EDEN (National Council of Women of Great Britain) said that she had lived for twenty years in South Africa and knew that, among the more enlightened natives, women kept their earnings. Others still had to be taught to realise that women were entitled to these. Even in England mothers still took the children's earnings. The same happened in Africa, but the Government was working on right lines and doing everything possible to enlighten the natives on the subject.

The motion was carried unanimously.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION.

MISS FEGAN (British Federation of University Women) moved:—

“That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing among the native women of many African territories, especially the inadequacy of the provision for their health and education. It urges (a) the allocation of a larger proportion of revenue for purposes of health and education, and (b) the necessity for the regular employment of a larger number of women in these Services.”

Nigeria, with which the speaker was more directly concerned, had, she pointed out, suffered severely in the late slump but, owing to economies, the Government had been able to balance the budget. It was hoped that the cuts in connection with educational and social services would soon be restored. Nearly everywhere in Africa the women played a far more important part than was generally recognised by people in England. In Mohammedan countries boys were brought up by women in the harems until they were six or seven years of age and in the harems the women had complete control. Medicine and education must go hand in hand. Women controlled affairs from the start and until they were educated it was waste to spend a great deal on medical services. Prevention rather than cure should be the leading principle. What men were taught they did not always apply in the home, but if once women were interested and educated, then there would be a vast improvement. European nursing sisters were doing excellent work in connection with training and educating the women; in the north they visited the towns to treat native women. Vigorous attempts were being made to improve sanitary conditions in big towns. Native women were being trained as sanitary inspectors, so that they might visit compounds and harems to which men inspectors could not go. As to clause (b) of the resolution, the speaker took “women” to mean both black and white, because it would be impossible to do without the help of trained native women. They understood their children and their mentality, and were better teachers of them than white women could be. If only English wives of officials would take more interest in native women they would probably not so greatly notice the effect of a trying climate. Those who had helped her had always enjoyed the work. A certain number of West African girls came to England to undergo training as teachers and nurses. It would be most helpful if English families would volunteer to accommodate the girls during their holidays. They were apt to be shy, but when they got over that they were delightful, cheerful, and attractive visitors.

MISS REEVES (Women's Freedom League), in seconding the motion, emphasised the importance of paying greater attention to health and education, especially of girls and women. Everybody admitted that native women teachers were required as well as nurses, but native women were also required in the administrative and health services, especially as inspectors. She once overheard two employers of labour talking and one said: “We have not very much to fear from the ordinary man inspector, but save us from a woman. You cannot take her across the road and give her a drink. She hunts round and sees things that no man would ever see.”

The motion was carried unanimously.

(b) Native and European Laws.

MISS ELEANOR HAWARDEN declared that the problem of the legal status of African women was part of the larger one of the relation between native custom and English law. They could not sweep away all native law, nor did they wish to

do so. Nevertheless they could not leave untouched native customs which permitted the infliction of horrible tortures on witches. There was, however, a large field where the decision to recognize or not to recognize could not be arrived at so easily. Here they had to make some sort of standard to guide them.

The standard laid down by statute was that of natural justice; the law of each colony provided that native law and custom should be recognized except where it conflicted with natural justice. Natural justice was a difficult conception about which lawyers had argued for hundreds of years, but for practical purposes it might be defined as whatever seemed fundamentally just to those who administered the law: in this case, what Englishmen thought was just.

Certain fundamental principles were valid in all circumstances: e.g., the right of women over their own bodies for sexual purposes; their rights to as much freedom as men, to equal guardianship of their children, to hold property, and to share in the government of the community to which they belonged. If this idea of natural justice were applied, a great deal of native law and custom must be condemned. Over the greater part of Africa the children were regarded as the sole property of the father; in many tribes there were different moral standards for each sex; and in no community were women entitled to an equal voice with men in political affairs. Though there were some women chiefs, this meant little. The right of African women to dispose sexually of their own bodies seemed to vary from tribe to tribe. Archdeacon Owen's shocking disclosures had recently disturbed many people. We had been assured that these were exceptional incidents, and that even these occurred only in an occasional tribe notorious for its ill-treatment of women, such as the Luo of Kenya. But if there were more people as sensitive to injustice as Archdeacon Owen, and as prepared to clamour for justice, we would probably hear of many more such incidents. The abolition of these customs would entail their replacement by English legal principles. The case of *Rex v. Jackson* laid down that a husband might not forcibly detain his wife in any place; the enforcement of this rule would protect other Luo women from the oppression from which Archdeacon Owen had rescued only one woman.

English principles had been found to work well. An example was the Transkeian Penal Code, which provided that the age of majority for men and women should be 21, though native custom provided that a woman should always be under the guardianship of a male. An example of the mistaken reaction in favour of native custom was the Natal Native Code revised in 1932, which enacted that a native woman living under tribal conditions should never escape from some sort of legal guardianship. This had caused great hardship in several cases, and had drawn protests from native and white people alike.

This did not imply the abolition of all native customs. The speaker would very strongly oppose any attempt to impose on natives the English divorce law, which must be one of the worst of any modern civilized state. Native law was usually much more intelligent on the subject of the continuance of marriage, and nearly everywhere it was recognized that other things than physical infidelity might make the relationship of husband and wife intolerable. We should secure to the natives the best that Western civilisation had to offer, in law, medicine, education, agricultural technique, political organization, and improved means of transport.

Those who had to wrestle with the terrific problems of administration on the spot might tend to sink under them, and lose a clear perception of the legal and political principles which should be established in Africa as in England. Fears had been expressed that the encouragement of local native self-government which is now such a feature of British African administration might tend to preserve undesirable native customs, simply because they were native customs. The danger was admitted by enthusiasts for Indirect Rule, as this system was called, and it could perhaps best be prevented by the existence of an informed public opinion in this country. Unfortunately there was at the moment so little that one was almost justified in saying that it did not exist. The Colonial Office was as excellent a branch as any of the finest Civil Service in the world. But it was fundamentally unsound that the government of this vast Colonial Empire of these 50 million African people and great numbers of other races, should be purely bureaucratic, however efficient the bureaucrats might be. If Parliament must know what was done in its name in England, how much more should it know what was done in its Colonies,

where the people were seldom able to plead their own case, or cry for justice loudly enough to be heard.

MISS NINA BOYLE (Suffragette Fellowship) directed attention to an Act passed by the Union of South Africa in 1927 which laid down that native customs and law should be maintained provided that they did not conflict with public policy or natural justice; and that such customs as bride price should be considered to be contrary to such principles. Once more women must be expected from any operation of natural justice supposing they should invoke it to protect their persons and their freedom. These principles of natural justice must be made the foundation of our policy. The difference between the natives and ourselves was that we were trying to act and they were not. We were trying to deal with people who had this marvellous social structure, and lived under these wonderful conditions. The result was that they had never made a road, cleared a jungle, drained a swamp, built a bridge, launched a ship; nor except in a few instances laid the foundations of a lasting city or erected a place of worship. They had never evolved an alphabet and had no written literature, they could count only in the most elementary fashion; they had no system of transport other than man or beast, and they had never had any trade except barter. They had no agriculture until we taught it them. Recently the native women of one of the African territories petitioned the Government to prevent constant flittings because it prevented their having settled homes. That showed a real appreciation of something of the advantages of civilisation.

The natives had no knowledge of hygiene, and some of their customs resembled a medical student's nightmare, as was shown by papers read at the Conference on the African Child called by the Save the Children fund in 1931, in Memory of Miss Eglantine Jebb, one of the greatest women of this century. The natives disliked caring for the sick and had never set up the remotest approach to a hospital. Their midwifery was in many cases sheer intentional cruelty. In many districts, in many regions, they would not allow a dying person to remain under a roof but flung him or her to the hyenas. If we could lift the shadow of fear which dominates the superstitions under which they lived, it would be well worth while.

MISS QUAYNOR (West Coast of Africa) asked what part of Africa Miss Boyle was referring to, or had lived in.

MISS BOYLE: I spent fourteen years in South Africa.

MISS QUAYNOR strongly protested against Miss Boyle's statements and declared that they could not be applied to the West Coast of Africa. She had found the English more superstitious than those of any other race with which she had come into contact. She had had experience of nursing in two hospitals in London, the Clapham Maternity Hospital and the Dulwich Hospital. The patients at those hospitals preferred black to English nurses as being more thoughtful and more cheerful.

The PRESIDENT believed the difficulty arose from the fact that there was still a tendency to talk about Africa as if it were a single country, inhabited by a single race, living under the same conditions. Miss Boyle had directed attention to the worst conditions which had to be dealt with in a part of Africa. During the morning the speeches had shown how entirely different were conditions elsewhere of Africa.

MISS HAWARDEN thought that Miss Quaynor had misunderstood Miss Boyle, who had no intention of suggesting that Africans were incapable of absorbing or evolving on their own account a higher type of civilisation. Miss Quaynor would, however, probably agree that Africans far removed from civilisation could not take advantage of the advantages which western civilisation had to offer. Miss Quaynor, being dissatisfied with the nursing methods of African women, had come to study European methods of midwifery and nursing with a view to teaching other African women and to exercise her skill on behalf of her own people.

MISS QUAYNOR agreed, but added that West Africans did not throw their dying out of the home.

The motion was carried unanimously.

NIGHTWORK.

PROFESSOR EDITH RODGERS (Open Door Council) moved:

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled condemns the action of the British Government in prohibiting the nightwork of women in Gambia, the Gold Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zanzibar, and demands that any prohibition of night work shall apply in the Crown Colonies equally to men and women, according to the nature of the work."

Professor Rodgers said that the prohibition of Night Work by women in the Crown Colonies was one of the far-reaching results of the old pernicious Washington Night Work Convention of 1919. It had had to be fought tooth and nail ever since that date. Its evil influence on women was spreading to the British Crown Colonies.

Reports on the application of Conventions to Colonies had to be sent to the International Labour Office by countries which had ratified the Convention. Up to 1931 this had been applied by the British Government to only a few of the Colonies and the Government reported that "in the case of the remaining colonies, protectorates and other dependencies, it was considered that this Convention was inapplicable owing to local conditions."

In 1932 the Government suddenly changed its policy and proposed to apply the Convention to the colonies named in the motion and to some dozen other colonies in addition.

In Barbados women had worked at night in the sugar industry for over 200 years. The Government said that to dismiss them would cause resentment among the labouring population, and it would be difficult to find sufficient male labour to replace the women. Yet the Convention was to be applied there also.

The Open Door Council endeavoured by correspondence and interviews to ascertain why the Convention had suddenly become applicable. They also pressed the Colonial Office (without success) to publish the reports from Colonial Governors and the correspondence with the International Labour Office.

The only explanation given by the Colonial Office in a letter to the Open Door Council was that it has been decided to apply the Convention in a large number of dependences "in spite of the fact that the conditions with which the Convention is designed to deal (namely the industrial employment of women during the night) have not yet arisen." The letter went on to say, "It was in this sense that the Convention was described in the Annual Report for 1931 as 'inapplicable'."

It would be seen that not only were women to be forbidden to do Night Work in existing industries where night work was required but the possibility of such work was to be forestalled by a prohibition so that whatever form of Night Work might arise in some new or extended industry, they would be forbidden to do it. In very hot countries it is often easier to work at night than in the day-time. The prohibition of Night Work to women was a curtailment of their individual freedom and a serious limitation of their economic rights.

MISS LIEBEN (Six Point Group) seconded the motion, adding that it was the expressed policy of the Group to oppose all one-sided protective legislation.

Why were women to be forbidden night-work? Surely in hot climates night-work would be far less onerous than day work. Was it less harmful to health for a sick nurse to work at night than for a spinner or weaver? Why should it be more dangerous to a woman's virtue to work in a factory brilliantly lit by electricity than in one into which the sun shone? Perhaps the Government was thinking of the dangers of the dark streets? Why then had it not forbidden the parish nurse to cycle down unlighted country lanes, or the policewoman to patrol the parks after sunset? Apparently not the welfare of women but the benefit of men in industry had been the prime motive of the Government. The evils inherent in night-work was harmful to men in the same degree as to women. Ability to do the work should be the sole criterion.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guild of Western Australia) opposed the motion. The points of view put forward by the proposer and seconder were too theoretical. Why was it that organised industrial women always supported protection? Did the supporters of the motion consider that they knew more about the conditions of women in industry than did industrial women of outstanding experience and ability, both in trades unions and otherwise?

The PRESIDENT said that the motion dealt with protection of women in African territory where there was no trades unionism.

MRS. CLAPHAM added that there was all the more reason why, if and when industrial undertakings were established in those territories, there should be some Government supervision and protection for women employed. But why pick out Africa? The same difficulties had to be met in civilised countries. A vital principle was involved.

MISS REEVES (Women's Freedom League) asked whether it was not a fact that the climate in several of the territories mentioned was such that most of the agricultural work had to be done at night.

MRS. L. THOMPSON (National Women Citizens' Association) asked what type of work women would do during the night in various parts of Africa.

MRS. WATERWORTH (Women's Non-Party League, Tasmania) supported Mrs. Clapham. Apparently those present knew far too little of the subject to vote on the motion. Laws had been made for the purpose of doing the best for women. The Government rightly looked upon women as potential mothers. Any mother was more important than any industrial worker, and any baby more important than either. The Government must protect the next generation.

MISS CHRYSAL MACMILLAN pointed out that organised women were not in favour of restriction being imposed upon their work. That was evident at the meeting in Denmark when all organised women united in condemning the proposition. The point, however, was that women should be given the same opportunity to work as men. A great blunder was made about one hundred years ago in England when there was failure to impose a general restriction on the particular type of night work, and if the Government had been honest with respect to the various colonies it should have said that there should be no night work for men or women in this, that or the other industry. That was protection for both men and women. Picking out women and saying that they should not work at night meant that when industry began to grow up certain jobs would be closed to women.

MISS MONICA WHATELY (Six Point Group) said she was at the meeting of the International Labour Office last January when the economic status of women was under discussion. Mr. Hayday, who represented the organised workers of Great Britain, had not thought the matter important enough for him to be present, and not one woman had been called to speak on a matter vitally affecting her future.

The PRESIDENT then asked for a show of hands on the motion and declared it carried. Twenty voted for and eleven against, two abstained from doing so who were entitled to vote, one because she desired more information before coming to a decision.

(c) Social Problems in Northern Rhodesia.

Mr. J. MERLE DAVIS indicated, as one of the most fascinating human situations in the world to-day, the condition of society among the Bantu people as a result of the opening and development of heavy industry in Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo.

Mr. Davis said: Katanga, the southern province of the Belgian Congo, is immediately adjacent to the mines of Northern Rhodesia. Together the joint mines on either side of the frontier form one immense reservoir of labour, influencing the entire population. The situation is interesting because the industry is probably more modern and more vast than any comparable industry established anywhere in the world in recent years; and because those drawn upon to serve this industry are probably among the most primitive and backward of human societies.

The great mines of the Copper Belt in Katanga and Northern Rhodesia represent the investment of some £15,000,000. This investment has been made in an area measuring only 160 by 50 miles. All would probably realise the effect of that sudden and rapid investment of capital: its disruptive, its attractive, and its demoralising effect. In Africa it has impinged with tremendous force upon the minds of this primitive society.

What first strikes one when visiting the Copper Belt is that when the people leave their old habitat in the bush, both men and women enter an experience of

freedom, or release from inhibitions, superstitions, fears and age-long traditions that is completely revolutionary. That has both a tremendously hopeful and a fearful aspect—hopeful in that it introduces the people not only to new forms of human activity, new standards and ideals, new satisfactions and opportunities for development, but it also plunges them into a state of confusion, of false standards, of a lack of understanding of what is going on about them that may completely disorganise and demoralise the individual as well as the group. There is an intricate web of human and industrial relationships and influences; complete interdependence of the individual upon the group; a looking to the group for all decisions, for all standards, for all opportunities of life. That intricate web, and all it typifies is suddenly destroyed, and the individual is thereby launched upon a bewildering existence.

The women of the Copper Belt and of Bantu Society are in many respects the more important of the two sexes. Although the men do the work it is the women who by their absence or their presence create the standards, the social life, its opportunities and its temptations. The women are the human material with which the welfare workers and agencies that are trying to recreate Bantu society on the mines have to deal. The problem in connection with the women is at present almost insoluble. Tribal authorities, chiefs and elders, are divided on the question whether women should be there or be kept away.

About one-third of the men working in the mines are married, or at least are living with women whom they claim to be their wives. Half or more of these men have probably brought their Bantu wives with them. The chiefs more and more deplore that women should go to the mines with their husbands. When such couples return to their villages there is a new licence, a new laziness, a disrespect for authority, often new marital difficulties. The community, the chiefs assert, is not benefited by the experience of the wives at the mines. On the other hand, the mines without the women expose the men to moral and social evils that are distinctly detrimental.

The woman on the mine, whether the real wife or not, comes into a little world in which there is no regular work for her. Accustomed to working from morning till night on well regulated conventional lines of occupation, many very pleasant and all of them social occasions, working with other women, she enters upon an existence in which there are no gardens to be tended, and where only one or two children are with her because most of the miners and their wives leave their children at home with the grand-parents. In Bantu society the grandmother brings up the children. Moreover, few of the tribal friends of the woman live in the immediate part of the compound, so that at the mines a woman finds herself more or less alone. Her husband is at work for eight to ten hours a day, according to the shifts, and she has practically nothing with which to occupy those hours. On one or two mines the woman is supposed to cook the man's food; on some mines the food is cooked and rations served out to the men.

Then there is a complete absence of that public opinion which is the very essence of life and of interest to the women in the native village. Imagine the Bantu background with its network of relationships, a network vastly more complicated and wider than Anglo-Saxon relationships, where every relative on both sides and back several generations and literally many degrees removed, has certain obligations which must be respected. The women come out of that atmosphere into one in which there are no relatives. That is a very big step indeed. The lack of moral control, social and public opinion, which to a large extent with the Bantu, as with communities in this country and in others, is the backbone of a great deal of the steadiness and *morale* of the community; the lack of that and the knowledge that no one is watching her, that no one cares, that no one will criticise, whatever she does, is a great source of danger to the women as well as to the man.

There is another element that complicates life for the women and men who come down to the mines. I call it a spiritual element in a very real sense. As with all peoples who are economically backward as compared with ourselves, the Bantu has a well established conception of the world and of life. His is a reasonable world-order within limits. If you believe in witchcraft, demons and all the rest, you have a system of civilisation which can explain everything that happens and within certain limits, satisfies the individual. There is not only a recognised order of social relationships in the present, but a spiritual background which entails belief in the

efficacy of the lives of the ancestors, in their watchful care over everything that goes on; so that any act however trivial, is seen by those who have gone before. There is also a sense of belonging to a world order, an accustomed social and political order which satisfies its members to a degree. All that is suddenly swept aside. The people come into a new world order of which they have not the remotest conception. The limitations, conventions and values are all foreign to them, and they are adrift.

The Bantu in this way live in a sort of No Man's Land. They have left the solidity of their own group and have not found a new social group to support them. They are confused. They are in great danger not only on moral but on intellectual lines. From a well reasoned order they come into one which has no reason. Things happen all around them for which they cannot account. A great deal of mental trouble develops among some of these people. The origin of this mental trouble are tracing to this complete change of worlds, a change which brings spiritual hunger, intellectual hunger, and confusion.

Another element which is a source of greater danger to these Bantu women is that in their own social and economic environment they have not known what money or personal property is. The Bantu has no personal property under the tribal organisation except, possibly that the farmer uses the same axe and his wife the same bowl from year to year. The wage factor, the factor of possession coupled with a complete divorce from the home surroundings, makes possible a moral situation that is full of peril. The women, having very little else to do, go into the town and see what the white women are wearing. They acquire an extraordinarily rapid taste for Western things. The sociologist with our Commission examined the lives of 75 workers leaving the Copper Belt for their villages after a period of work on the mines. He found that some of the men were carrying away as many as six or seven western-made frocks bought for their wives, and his attention was called to one or two women who had buried in the floor of their huts anywhere from four to eight frocks which they never wore except on ceremonial occasions or to take out and display to their friends. Of course many useful things are purchased with the money earned.

One or two positive factors might ameliorate the situation. Bantu native life is rich in social activities, which have to do with emotional and artistic expression, with the Bantu creative instinct, with his musical and hunting instincts, his sexual life and tribal relationships. The rich social fabric they have built up is no longer part of their life when they get to the mines. Of great benefit on the Copper Belt would be the introduction by western women and men workers of adaptations of native activities, social life, sports, dancing and drumming and singing, to the new conditions, with a good deal of what the West has found to be fun and worth while wisely added, but yet not so different from the old forms of expression that the native fails to feel at home in them. Otherwise they will not form a real source of emotional outlet. Fortunately, those in control of the mines are beginning to realise this necessity, and are introducing women workers in three of the mines.

I think you can see the indirect bearing of the situation I have described on the subject of prostitution. Five years ago I was visiting the Copper Belt alone and had occasion to go to a Baptist Girls' School situated about eight miles from the Roan Antelope Mine, the biggest of the mines on the Copper Belt and then in course of development. The principal of the little school of 25 girls expressed great anxiety in regard to that beehive of activity only eight miles distant, the girls being pressed in some cases to go over and entertain the men. She said she was, nevertheless, holding them very well. Twelve months later I visited the same school. There was not a single girl left. The principal said that one by one her girls, some of whom had been with her for as long as ten years, had slipped away, drawn by the excitement and the promise of high wages on the mines. That school had been literally drained of all its students. That is bound to happen. There are a great many other direct effects that one might mention.

Here is a situation that can be grappled. It is being attacked somewhat feebly. That any attempt whatever is being made to meet the needs of these people is most encouraging. The strength and size of these Mining Corporations, among the greatest of British industrial enterprises, is a source of hope. The directors are men who, to a certain extent, have the welfare of the workers at heart. I would not say that they all have. Most of them recognise their responsibilities and are

trying to meet those responsibilities. The situation is better than if there were a number of little organisations and men dealing with a few hundreds of natives. The fact that the mines on the Copper Belt are new, and are so well manned in London as well as in their own area, are factors largely in favour of the situation being dealt with.

The Government, working with the missions, the native chieftains, and those responsible for conducting the mines, can and does accomplish a great deal in checking the coming of women to the mines, in co-operating at the source with the immigration authorities, and ascertaining the exact identity of every woman who comes as being a *bona fide* member of that community and having a legitimate reason for going to the mines. If some such system of co-operation could be worked out, the danger at the mines would be much minimised.

PROSTITUTION.

MISS GRACE SAUNDERS moved:—

“That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled has noted with concern certain results affecting African women which have followed the industrialisation and detribalisation of large sections of African people; e.g., it is apparent from reports received that commercialized prostitution, with its inevitable accompaniments of third party exploitation and traffic, is developing in certain areas.

“Since prostitution in the commercialised sense is a phenomenon of comparatively recent growth among African peoples, this conference urges the respective governments to take all necessary steps to safeguard African women from sexual exploitation for profit and, as a first step, to subject the whole problem of African prostitution to a careful investigation on social and economic lines.”

MISS SAUNDERS said: In considering this resolution, we do not forget how greatly conditions in general, and those of women in particular, differ in various parts of Africa, as, for instance, in Central or East Africa as compared with the Gold Coast or Nigeria. But the causes and effects of detribalisation and of the evils growing up in city and mining centres work in the same way.

What are some of the chief causes of the increasing detribalisation? First, *the need for money*. Not only must the Government head-tax be paid in cash, but many chiefs also demand a money tax from each man, and as the uses of better tools and other western products become known, debts are incurred to traders. In some places, the more ambitious man may move to a town where he can take his family and secure an education for his children. But usually it is the single man who goes away from his village, staying only a few months, but tending to increase his absences and eventually to stay away altogether.

A second potent cause of migration is the result of *polygamy*, especially where it is in full swing and the chief or wealthy older man can buy as many young wives as he likes, up to 200 or even 500. This means compulsory bachelorhood for most of the young men. In one tribe in the French Cameroons recently, of the total adult males, 40% were unmarried. Not only does the presence of large numbers of young and more or less neglected wives create an atmosphere of great temptation for both sexes, but also such marriages tend to lower the status of women even in her own eyes. We read that in various districts it is the custom for the chief to lend a wife for the use of a visitor to the village and also to some of his relatives and friends. A polygamist on a great scale offers his wives for ready money to soldiers and others, and sometimes allows them liberty of connection, on condition of their bringing him in a fixed sum regularly. . . . In a word, polygamy is prostitution made into a system. (Father Keller. ‘La Polygamie en Cameroun.’ Report. Louvain. 1934).

We are warned not to interfere with tribal customs, but surely evils which lead to such consequences as this must be dealt with, both by education and in other ways.

In other parts of Africa the exodus of men goes on. In Bechuanaland 40%, and in some districts of the Ciskeian Territory of South Africa, 70% of the adult

males are away from the villages. Even when they return, they do not settle down easily to the discipline and customary life of the tribe.

Apart from questions of polygamy, the prospects of marriage become uncertain, where the younger men are absent in such large numbers, and family life suffers. In Bechuanaland, the average age for marriage is now 25—30 for men and 19—26 for women. Some of the men send for their woman relatives to join them, or else make a temporary connection at the mines, and such women are handed on to others. From some tribes the girls leave the villages on their own account and live as they can, often on the earnings of prostitution in the large centres.

Supervision of such places as beer-halls, even at the mines, where there is control, is difficult. In the town locations, for instance in parts of Rhodesia, the beer-halls are "focal points of prostitution." Everywhere where the status of woman is low, she tends to become a chattel and a source of profit to others, either to the man she lives with, her husband, the proprietor of lodgings, or the beer-hall or dance-hall manager.

In asking for enquiry, we must be clear that we do not want laws or police measures for the control or suppression of prostitutes. Josephine Butler's principle "No laws of exception, aimed at one sex or any special class," still holds good. There are disquieting signs showing that commercialisation of prostitution is beginning, and a constant watchfulness is needed. It is the third-party who profits who is to be suppressed.

In any enquiry, pointed questions must be asked about the men who have introduced the girl, the control exercised by her husband or the men with whom she lives, and any connection of these with the police, the proprietors of beer-halls, and so on. Perfunctory replies making out that the position of the African woman is satisfactory must simply not be accepted. An example of such statements may be studied in the Annex to the Report for 1935 of the League of Nations Advisory Committee on Slavery, on "The Status of the African Woman." Replies were sent to the Colonial Office from officials of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Nyassaland, Northern Rhodesia and Zanzibar, and two of the Governors defended the position of women under polygamy.

It is true, as we were told to-day, that the main problem of Africa to-day is the educated African. But we cannot ignore the fact that many of the roots of these evils lie back in tribal conditions. Betterment of life in the village would help to slow down the rate of detribalisation, and education of women, with the opening up of new possibilities of work for them, is urgently needed.

In the cities and mining districts, the Governments must enquire into the most essential forms of welfare work needed. Here the co-operation of the missionary societies and the churches would be of the utmost value, they contributing their experience and understanding of African customs and conditions and the Government supplying funds, without which missions are unable to do work they are longing to do.

MRS. JAMIESON WILLIAMS (Women's Non-Party Association of New South Wales), seconded the motion. She pointed out that the Conference was not laying down any hard and fast rule, but was asking for information as to the change taking place in the various provinces or protectorates throughout Africa. Three Committees of the League of Nations were dealing, to a certain extent, with questions affecting women, but the matters involved in the motion were ignored by those Committees or Commissions. The Slavery Commission had been endeavouring to bring the question of human slavery under control, but though men had been declared free throughout nearly all African territory, men were still permitted to own women in slavery. The old tribal customs, laws, and taboos were not actually being dealt with by the Committee on Traffic in Women and Children. Women were being sold by their male relatives to other men or simply handed over for evil purposes by chiefs or heads of families. Traffic was, in fact, going on under the heading of old tribal customs which were gradually being widened into laws under native courts and the decisions of those courts. Women brought before native courts were not receiving the treatment that would be expected from a civilised court, inasmuch as old law and custom permitted them to be sent back to the ownership of their male relatives or to be forbidden freedom. Under the clauses bearing on the protection of native races and their education and training to take

charge of their own affairs, women were being neglected. It was therefore necessary to press for an investigation.

MISS NINA BOYLE urged that any committee appointed should be requested to enquire into all the matters involved, and also that there should be insistence on the presence of a qualified feminist on the committee as well as men and Government officials.

MISS CHRYSTAL MACMILLAN proposed as an amendment the addition after "economic lines" of

- (a) as to whether a woman can be controlled by a man;
- (b) as to openings for women to engage in adequately paid work;
- (c) as to whether a woman herself could control her wages.

MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council) seconded the motion, which was carried as amended.

THE CAUSE OF PEACE.

MRS. CORBETT ASHBY (having vacated the Chair in favour of Mrs. Guy Innes) said: When the title of this section was suggested about a year ago I had hoped to be able to speak on the normal contribution of the British Empire to world peace. I feel now that it is necessary to divide the subject into the contribution of the British Empire to world peace in ordinary times, and the contribution it is extraordinarily urgent that the British Commonwealth should make in this particular time of crisis. Those two contributions must differ slightly. I take it that we all support the organisation of world peace by the League of Nations, that we accept the League with all its faults, weaknesses and disappointments; and that we are clear in our own minds that those faults and disappointments have been due to the reluctance of the countries that are members of the League to work the machinery; that it is not so much a question of failure of the machinery as absence of will to use that machinery. Whenever we hear it said that the League will not work we should ask: "Which part of its machinery could be improved and how?"

We know that the League, contrary to the original intention, is only a partial and not a world League, but we have to remember that the greatest absent member, the United States of America, has actually taken for some time a definite and practical share in much of the work. Though only nominally there are observers when questions come up, they have sent a full delegation to the Disarmament Conference, and at some technical conferences they have been present as observers and of course they are full members of the International Labour Office and are on the Council.

The contribution of the British Empire to world peace in normal times is summarised, I think, in Chatham's famous phrase, "I have called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old."

It is exceedingly difficult for the representatives of European nations gathered at Geneva to maintain a sense of proportion as regards world organisation and the League, and not to look at it as an instrument for the settlement or rather postponement of the worst of the European crises, because it has not yet been very energetically used to remedy grievances. It is largely left to the representatives of the great independent Dominions to force the League to recognise that there are such things as the problems of the Pacific, that there is a threat to the standard of labour throughout the world owing to low Asiatic standards; that it is not possible to deal with such social questions as the drug traffic or the health of the world without bringing in expert collaboration from overseas; and that it is the high labour standards of the western industrialised countries—the first to adopt modern means—that are now definitely threatened by the exploited badly paid labour of Asia and of Africa.

There is also, of course, the standing example of the organisation of peace as it exists in the machinery of the British Commonwealth. That illustrates the way in which it is possible to get those who differ (people with entirely different traditions, histories and difficulties) to co-operate and to seek, about a round table and in conference, the adjustment of the most serious economic difficulties. That is of enormous help in setting up standards for the settlement of other difficulties. I believe that the more enthusiastic and full the co-operation of the members of the

British Commonwealth is with the League of Nations, the more solidly will be laid the foundations for world peace. But we have, I think, a different and extremely important contribution to make to the solution of the present crisis.

What is the root of the present crisis? It is not, I think, a question of the independence of Abyssinia or its control by another power which produces the serious crisis to-day. Bitterly as I regret our treachery to Abyssinia, appalling as I think its direct effects may be on the whole attitude of black to white, I feel that there is a greater crisis, and that is that there has been a breach of the Kellogg Pact, the world declaration that change shall be sought only by peaceful means. I feel also that there has been a flat breach of the Covenant of the League of Nations; a definite and unprovoked breach of the 1925 Protocol which bound Italy and the rest of us never to use poison gas, and a breach of the 1931 Pan-American Treaty which was open to signature by the rest of the world and which, one might say, Italy barged in to sign, which reiterated her pledge, unnecessary since she was not a South American State, never to make open war.

It is not only a breach of all freely-accepted undictated obligations which has produced the crisis. Far more serious is the way in which every other partner to those treaties has allowed Italy to get away with a complete breach of pledges. We judge a community not by the wrong-doing of the criminal, but by the reaction of the community to that criminal. We judge a community not by the tale of wrong and outrage that may take place. None of us could get up in any country without remembering the terrible list of wrongs that occur by day and by night in even the most civilised of communities. What we do take as the test of community life is the automatic seeking out of the criminal, the unswerving and immediate condemnation of the criminal; the protection of the victim, the punishment of crime and, in more civilised communities, the attempted rehabilitation of the criminal. What has produced the real crisis in the world to-day is that having set up standards at the cost of the frightful tragedy of the Great War with all its dead, the home country and the representatives of the Dominions have raised only a feeble verbal protest against the smashing of those standards.

How can the British Dominions help the United Kingdom in facing up to this crisis? It is important that the Dominions should not run away from this crisis because they are protected by enormous distances from the arena of immediate conflict. Canada has been the most far-sighted of the Dominions, for it was she who first had the honour of proposing to a World Assembly that immediate and drastic oil sanctions should be imposed upon Italy. Canada saw that something far more was at stake than a mere mastery of a primitive people by a so-called civilised people. The Dominions can back up the United Kingdom if they will insist that the only basis of a world organisation for peace is the basis which has made the strength and unity of the British Empire. And what is that?

To my mind, the British Commonwealth of Nations is, to those who are partners in its heritage of race and tradition, linked with the Crown. But the British Commonwealth as against the rest of the world is not strong only through that tradition and loyalty and that unity, where it exists, of race. It is built up on the complete certainty of the rest of the world that in any case of aggression against the weakest unit of the British Commonwealth there will be co-operative action that is immediate, that is certain, that is unlimited. That is why, when Italy told the world that she was forced to look for outlets for her population and for sources of wealth, she did not attack Tanganyika or Kenya, richer and easier to develop than Abyssinia. Italy selected Abyssinia because she was sure that if she attacked Tanganyika or Kenya immediate, automatic, unlimited sanctions of every kind would be applied. As the Prime Minister recently said, if any Power threatened to attack Egypt the united power of the British Empire would be used in her defence. Quite so. Unlimited, certain, automatic in its application. I would only ask: Will we adhere to the treaty to allow the ships of all nations to pass through the Suez Canal bind us if Italy asks permission to carry poison gas to drop bombs on Kenya?

The contribution of the British Empire—there can be no action without the support of the Dominions—must in this crisis be support of the principle of sanctions, to have them thought out and catalogued; to see that they include key materials without which no country can wage war; to ensure that financial sanctions are immediately imposed. It is amazing that we should still be selling to Italy

goods without which she cannot wage war, simply because she is paying us in gold instead of the normal exchange of goods customary under ordinary trading conditions. Also, we should without hypocrisy face the fact that if we are in favour of economic pressure to prevent war after it has broken out, we must also face the fact that there must be readiness to meet the threat of those on whom we are putting economic sanctions, and that if they attack us, we shall defend ourselves.

I believe that on June 15th the British Empire could make a contribution to world peace by continuing sanctions and by strengthening the embargo on financial assistance to Italy until the League can influence the terms of peace which Italy will attempt to impose upon her victim. The British Commonwealth members should make it perfectly clear that this disaster has been due to the reluctance of Great Britain and France to use Article X. of the Covenant of the League which attempts to prevent war, instead of allowing a year to go by with practically no effort to prevent war and at the last minute, when a quarter of a million men are landed in Africa, and the whole prestige and stability of the Italian Government is at stake, taking steps to allay the trouble. I hope the British Dominions will see that Article X. is strengthened. I hope, too, that their contribution may be to throw Italy out of the League. It is clearly laid down in the Covenant that a State which does not fulfil its obligations should no longer be admitted as a member of the League. We have a clear case against Italy. It is not that that would cut Italy off from human intercourse. The old machinery of our ambassador would still be left. It would mean that the League would stand for a moral value in the world on the one hand and, on the other, that it would stand for the principle of protection of the victim of aggression and would attempt to limit the profits to be made out of aggression.

My opinion, as that of one who has recently returned from Holland where I met with the representatives of eight countries, is that unless we throw out Italy the smaller countries will leave the League. It should be remembered that the League as a debating society is a useless institution; that moral force against an Imperialist victor has no value unless backed by action, and that the social and humanitarian activities of the League will not in fact continue if it becomes more or less a political debating society, because no country will feel it sufficiently useful, with the difficulties of tradition and so on, to continue their subscriptions to a body which has lost prestige and power.

I would ask the Dominions to realise the enormous difficulty in which the United Kingdom is placed at this moment and to sympathise with us. The United Kingdom, because it represents and is the centre of the Empire, is the most powerful country and nation in the world. It has the strongest Navy, and one of the strongest Air Forces. Three of the other countries with strong Air Forces are our allies or friends, the United States, France, and Soviet Russia. We have a mechanised and modernised Army. But what makes every foreigner realise that we are the most powerful nation in the world is our economic, our financial and our political stability. That gives us a position in the world and a responsibility for leadership which no other country, or group of countries, possesses. The leadership, therefore, of action to save the League falls on June 15th to our Foreign Secretary. If Great Britain falters and does not take the lead, no one else can take her place. The new French Government will undertake to back us in all we ask them to do if only our request for action is made definitely and clearly beforehand. But I think we must insist that leadership means commitments. I know the Dominions, quite naturally, have the most intense dislike and suspicion of any British commitments on the Continent, and yet I would ask them to realise that British leadership means fresh commitments on the Continent. We cannot obtain co-operative action against Italy from other Powers unless we are prepared to defend other Powers more successfully than we have attempted to defend Abyssinia from aggression. The price of any action against an aggressor is co-operation to defend the victim of aggression.

We have to choose between a policy of commitments and of no commitments. Commitments are objected to as dangerous. We had no commitments to Yugo-Slavia. When Austria attacked her in 1914 our commitments were of the slightest. They had been carefully limited to the single commitment to defend Belgian integrity; and even that had to be submitted to a vote of the House of Commons. We have far greater commitments now as regards the defence of Belgium and France

than in 1914. The danger to-day is the danger of having no commitments in the East and therefore no control over the policy in the East which may provoke the war which must inevitably engulf us; because although the Dominions are far away I think they must realise that we to-day in this city will have perhaps twenty minutes' notice of an air attack which may paralyse the capital of the Empire. We may be defeated in the next European war by swift air attack or by a few weeks blockade which will starve us out. Therefore, the position of the United Kingdom in Europe is one of enormous difficulty. Our protection can no longer be in isolation, can no longer be in reliance upon the help that the Dominions may send us. It must and can only be in co-operation with Europe itself.

Therefore, I would appeal to Canada to back the action of Great Britain in Europe, realising that if the League is strong we can act with her in difficulties which may arise with Japan owing to the loss of markets and prestige in Asia. I appeal to South Africa to help us because our failure in Abyssinia has enormously added to the danger to the white population all over Africa. Instead of the friendly empires of France, Belgium and Portugal, we have the appalling militarised Empire of Italy with the new standard of employing blacks against whites. And we know that though Australia may feel she has neither lot nor part in Europe apart from us, whether the League exists now or not will enormously influence her relations with Japan. On the Continent we are supposed to have given up the control of the Mediterranean and to have lost our passage to the East, but we can even now, I think, redress our position if we act together. But it does mean that the Dominions have got to follow, for once, the leadership of the United Kingdom, and not to force her to take a weak position in Europe because they are afraid of the commitments she takes there.

If you regard the United Kingdom as the heart of the Empire, then you must back the League and British leadership, for if Italy is whitewashed and sanctions are called off, the smaller European nations will rally to their chosen protectors: they will choose between Great Britain, France and Russia inside the League or Germany and Italy outside. Groups, hostile and suspicious, will be formed, and they may well believe that it is better to cling to the petticoats of Central Germany than to the island of Great Britain. We can only secure a preponderance of force against the aggressor by keeping the machinery of the League as it is at present. Governments believe in force, our own amongst them. I am not dealing with the personal problem of whether the individual man or woman is entitled to use force. I am asking that we shall make it perfectly clear as a matter of political policy that the choice for any Government is between using force for its national purposes or in co-operation against an aggressor.

I hope the policy of this British Commonwealth League will be to rally the Empire in support of co-operative action against aggression and then to examine whether it is not possible to give such economic advantages to the loyal State Members of the League as will make the League not only a politically advisable organisation, but a materially profitable one. For I believe prosperity and peace go very well together, and that we ought as an Empire, having seen our way through the immediate crisis, having strengthened the authority of the League, to use our enormous power and resources, our position over sea, in order to ensure that the State Members of the League tackle courageously and at once those problems of the causes of war: the economic shortage of raw material, the impossibility of obtaining foreign currency which is starving out Germany to-day. The question of open markets and the standard of colonial administration should also be considered in order that we may tackle that next problem of Disarmament, and so by showing the certainty of co-operative action in defence move forward to the constructive policy of co-operation in remedying evils.

MISS DARNLEY NAYLOR (Australia) said: The system of arbitration has long been familiar to the Australian people. As Australia took her part in the World War and in the Peace Conference, so she has maintained her position as a member-state of the League of Nations. Branches of the Australian League of Nations Union were early set up in each State and have established a strong public opinion in favour of the collective system.

In 1920, the C Mandates came into force, and Australia undertook her share of responsibility with Great Britain and New Zealand over Nauru and began her administration, under the League, of New Guinea. The policy in this mandated

area has been to preserve it for the benefit of the native population. Traffic in drugs and arms is prohibited, as well as forced labour in any form.

Australia reports annually to the Mandates Commission in Geneva and shares in League activities generally. She has been one of the first member states to send women as deputy delegates.

The attitude of the Australian Government to the Italian aggression against Abyssinia was clearly defined on October 31, 1935, when the Attorney General moved the second reading of the Sanctions Bill. "The adherence (of the Government) to the policy of sanctions is based," he said, "upon its profound belief that collective action will be productive, not of war but of the prevention or limitation of war."

As recently as March 19, 1936, Mr. Bruce summed up the Government's views when he told the Council of the League that it was necessary that the whole system of international co-operation should be reviewed. Change, by peaceful means, within the framework of the League, was the policy of Australia.

MR. JAMES H. GIBSON (Canada): On paper at least the Dominion of Canada has taken a large and important part in the development of the League of Nations over the last fifteen years. The formidable war effort of Canada first made her a figure in international affairs, as a result of which she was present at the Peace Conference in Paris and subsequently took her place as one of the original members of the League of Nations. Of all the British Dominions, Canada was one of the first to be elected a Permanent Member of the League of Nations Council in 1927. She was one of the members of the International Labour Organisation, and from those facts alone one might be led to infer that Canada's part in the conduct of the affairs of the League has been most important.

Looking at the other side of the picture it is a little difficult to escape the idea that, wilfully or not, it has been the part of Canadian policy to try to water down the obligations under the Covenant of the League. There has been the position of enjoying the benefits of collective security and membership of the League of Nations without always the disposition to assume the necessary obligations and commitments which membership implies. That spirit is now passing away.

There is naturally a considerable disposition in Canada, as in some of the other Dominions, to regard Europe and European conflicts as something rather far removed from the everyday life of people in Canada and other Dominions. That is also less true than people used to think, if only for the reason of national self-interest. Canada, among all the countries of the world, is preeminently dependent for national prosperity upon her export trade. Within the past ten years Canada has more than once stood as high as fifth among the nations of the world in her total of trade, and among those countries she stands first in *per capita* export trade. Disturbance in other parts of the world has a direct effect upon the economic and commercial prosperity of any country, and people in Canada are coming to realise that. They are coming to believe that collective efforts to bring about peaceful conditions and to avoid hostilities will be amply repaid in a continuance of the commercial prosperity which is so necessary.

There are a number of intelligent people in Canada who think that something very useful might be achieved if the international centre of gravity, the political centre of gravity, could even for a matter of years or months be shifted from the Continent of Europe across the Atlantic into North America. I am not certain that that is going to happen, but I have an idea it might be useful in making people think more seriously about international relations and collective security as a whole. Canada has been supposed to act as some sort of interpreter between Great Britain and the United States. It is not too much to say that some Canadian efforts have been directed towards increasing effective collaboration between the United States and Great Britain and between the United States and the League. That is a process which is likely to be carried on.

Canada in another important respect as a Pacific power, as one of the countries of the Pacific area, has perhaps not yet come into its full share. There are important trading and commercial relations between Canada and Japan. There have been causes of uncertainty and friction between the two countries before now and there is, especially in Western Canada, an understandable anxiety lest friction and sharpened relations between Japan and the United States result in conflict which

may bring Canada in. That is another way in which Canada will be bound to look to the policy of the United Kingdom.

Membership of the League of Nations for Canada has brought some curious anomalies. If, for example, the Minority Treaty which the League of Nations have enjoined upon the Czecho-Slovakian Government were to be applied to the whole of Canada, a number of enactments of the Provincial Governments—I am thinking particularly of British Columbia which have had discriminatory effects against those who are born in Canada but are not of Canadian race, would have to be done away with. Small as that seems, it is another point in which the people of Canada are being brought to realise the importance of the League as an international organisation, as something that involves the governments of all countries throughout the world.

Thinking people in Canada regard the course of isolation, as exemplified in the United States, as an impossible course. Whether Canadian policy is likely to be drawn much more closely to Washington than to London is a matter that will perhaps be decided within a few years. It might be beneficial from the Canadian point of view if that happened, but it would be by no means an answer to the pressing question of Canada's part in collective security and the contribution she can make to peace throughout the world. Another course and one which appears practicable, both on the short and the long view, is the policy of full co-operation inside the British Commonwealth, linked up directly with the organisation of the League of Nations. Full co-operation and consultation with the British Commonwealth is inconsistent with anything short of full participation in the League of Nations. People in Canada believe that the machinery of the League of Nations has worked well whenever an honest attempt has been made to work it. There is a desire to see that machinery work well, and if that process is going to imply commitments on the part of the Canadian Government, I think Canada is more ready now than formerly to undertake such commitments. No policy of drifting along and trying to avoid the issue of commitments will serve. The most interesting happening in Canada is the way in which public opinion is being created arising from interest in international affairs. The League of Nations Union in Canada does far more than advocate the ideas and work of the League of Nations. It is the only national body which has ever set out to try to make Canadians think intelligently about external relations. That is having reactions in a number of directions through the national life.

Mrs. Corbett Ashby has said some pertinent things in regard to leadership by the United Kingdom. There are a large number of people in Canada who would like to see the United Kingdom take a strong lead and would be willing to support it, people who believe that the mere fact of being able to lead opinion creates opinion. That is a process which I should like to see going on. There should be no turning back, much less turning aside and still less standing still. The attitudes and usages of international co-operation that have been slowly and painfully built up during the last fifteen years should not be lost sight of. If the British Government can give an honest straightforward and persistent lead in framing a policy designed to promote effective co-operation between the countries of the world, the people of Canada will be more and more ready to support a policy of that kind and more determined to see that policy carried into effect.

The PRESIDENT, in replying to Mrs. COHEN (Queensland Women's Electoral League) who had cited Japan's withdrawal from the League, said that no action had been taken by the League in regard to Japanese aggression. A good reason was that at that moment Russia and the United States were not members of the League, so that that body had no powerful State Members in the Continent of Asia. A bad reason was that Great Britain and the United States each waited for the other to take action, with the result that no effort was made to put an end to Japanese aggression. It would have appalling results in Europe and Africa if a similar mistake occurred in the present crisis. The League of Nations could, of course, act only through its state members. The machinery of the League was good. The great thing was to make governments work it.

Mrs. WHITE (Open Door Council) hoped the President would not maintain her remark as to keeping the machinery of the League as it was at present. Actually that machinery had been made as difficult as possible for any individual country

to work. No one country wanted to risk the odium of Italian hatred. Though Great Britain had endeavoured to act throughout the crisis as a member of the League of Nations, all the weight of Italian odium had fallen upon her. At the same time, it was the lack of a persistent British lead which had been the trouble throughout. That Conference should do what it could to show that there was a strong public opinion, not only in Great Britain but among representatives of the British Commonwealth, in favour of standing by obligations and of increasing pressure in the matter of sanctions. Mrs. White emphasised the necessity of the League of Nations having power of a more easily wielded kind, for instance through an International Police Force.

The PRESIDENT agreed, but expressed the fear that if the question of reform of the League were brought forward at the present juncture it would only be used as an excuse for doing nothing. Immediately the aggression had been dealt with—and if State Members wanted to act even now they could do so—there should be examination of the wording of the Covenant with a view to removal of ambiguity.

PEACE AND THE EMPIRE.

Mrs. WATERWORTH, O.B.E. (Australian Federation of Women Voters) moved:

“That in view of the vital importance to the peace of Europe and of the world of maintaining the authority of the League of Nations and the sanctity of treaties; recognising that the strength of the League, if fully and unflinchingly exercised, is ample to prevent the use of war by an aggressive government as an instrument of national policy; the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its indignation at the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy in defiance of her treaty obligations and at her barbarous methods of warfare; and calls upon the British Government to give a definite lead at the meeting of the Council of the League on June 15th at Geneva to maintain and intensify sanctions until Italy is ready to accept terms of peace approved by the Council of the League.”

Mrs. Waterworth said that the President's address showed the courage that we needed. She added: There are events which call for a stand on the part of individuals and countries, whatever the consequence. Of such there are before the world two which stand out far beyond considerations of national safety. They are both crimes against humanity—the treatment of women and Jews in Germany, and the attack upon Abyssinia. Upon matters such as these the world should speak. It is our duty to give at gatherings such as this, anything of our personal views or experience which may help to prevent war.

I regard the question from the standpoint of a woman with three sons of fighting age, and two daughters-in-law. I am afraid for them and all others in like case. I have been travelling to England for the past three months. I have encountered young Englishmen who live in India, Singapore, the Malay States and other places who are upholding the best traditions of the country. The thought of their fine young lives being brought to an end by war is simply unbearable. But they all have the same cold-blooded attitude to it. They are totally disillusioned. Though the Great War did not “end war” and “make the world safe for democracy,” out of its ashes has risen something which the promoters of wars did not expect and do not want—the disillusionment of the Young. For the first time in history the young people in the countries which have a degree of freedom of thought and speech are speaking for themselves. From this unexpected quarter prevention of war may come. They are cynical, emotionless, and cold-blooded in their view of it, they know what wars are fought for, and no stories, such as used to fire them, will stir them in the future. There have always been a few of this kind. Now there are many. I knew this before I left Australia for, though there has been a regrettable censorship of books by Customs officials, information filters through. The young people listen coldly even to stories of the need in some countries for space, for expansion, for they know that space, when it has been gained, is not occupied to any extent. I was also told of this attitude in New Zealand, which I visited in 1929. But in the United States I was astounded when I saw the tremendous demonstrations against war by the youth of the country.

What a good thing if this were the spirit of young people in all countries! Governments would be obliged to find a solution to their problems more intelligent than war. If they discovered that young people valued their lives above anything countries have fought for in the past; if, in plain language they would not fight, and I believe and hope that is coming, what a wholesome effect it would have upon the world. I believe in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United State and England, Governments will not be able to lay their hands upon the kind of armies they found in 1914—far from it! There are five forces which will prevent this—the young people's attitude of mind; the deterioration of the people through losses in the Great War; the falling birth-rate, and the lower standard of intelligence, and the increasing number of the unfit; deterioration by under-nutrition and mal-nutrition; and deterioration through unemployment. While we rejoice over the enlightenment of the young people of some countries, we have to realise that in Dictator-ridden countries there is a great danger.

Have we nothing more intelligent to offer our young people than increasing armaments as a preventative of war? The continued belief in and support of the League of Nations is surely indicated, and in the light of the attitude of thinking men and women, its continued and vigorous life is of paramount importance.

MRS. SADD BROWN (Hon. Treasurer, British Commonwealth League) seconded the motion. She was convinced that because of all that the peace movement represented, and because of peace itself, there was sufficient will and thought in that Conference and throughout the world to bring about peace's achievement. Would the British Commonwealth League have worked for years, were it not for the fact that that organisation coupled the freedom of women with the freedom of the spirit? The League of Nations was not by any means at its last gasp. It still stood as the symbol of an eternal ideal and it was for all to do their utmost to change that ideal into reality. If there were full support of the League it could be used as an instrument through which to promote the unity of the nations of the world in order to insure peace.

Asked whether her plea for support of the League of Nations involved military sanctions, the PRESIDENT replied that, as she understood it, the intensifying of sanctions meant the intensifying of those already in force.

MRS. WHITE suggested that it would be better to say "agreed by the Council of the League" rather than "approved."

The suggestion was adopted and the motion was carried accordingly.

The Conference then endorsed the "Appeal to the Women of the World" as read by the President during the course of her Presidential Address.

On the motion of MISS AGNES SLACK (Women's National Liberal Federation) seconded by MRS. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) the following was carried as an emergency motion:—

"That this Conference of the British Commonwealth League is convinced that the close co-operation of the Dominions and India with Great Britain at the Assembly of the League of Nations adds to the solidarity of the British Commonwealth and Empire, and that the weakening of the League of Nations by the failure of the different State members to prevent or limit aggression is a serious danger to the Commonwealth and Empire."

THIRD DAY.

THURSDAY: MAY 28th.

MUI T'SAI.

MRS. LAUGHTON MATHEWS (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) moved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled heartily congratulates the British Government upon the appointment of a Commission to proceed to Hong Kong and forthwith examine into the position in regard to Mui T'Sai. This Conference, representing both Overseas and British opinion, awaits with great interest the Report of the Commissioners, and trusts that as a result of the investigation the evils of the system will be entirely abolished."

Mrs. Mathews said that the Commission was appointed subsequent to the publication of the Report of a Committee of Enquiry appointed by Sir William Peel, Governor of Hong Kong, who had said a few years previously that drastic powers would be required if registration were to be made effective, and that such powers would be intensely unpopular. Whether owing to unpopularity or not, it was clear from the Report, that the attempt at registration had not been effective.

An alarming paragraph on Page 24 was as follows: "While the Committee are of opinion that the sale of girls, for any purpose is an undesirable practice, they doubt whether any attempt to stop the practice could, for the present, be initiated by the Hong Kong Government with any hope of success. Attempts to stop the practice, which are doomed to failure, are to be deprecated." Any attempt would be "doomed to failure" if undertaken in such a hopeless and unworthy spirit. After all, however deeply-rooted this system might be in the national life, undesirable systems in other parts of the British Empire—such as Sati in India—had been courageously suppressed.

When Hong Kong became a British Colony nearly a hundred years ago, slavery was already illegal in the United Kingdom and its colonies. Yet, contrary to British law, this veritable system of slavery, whereby helpless children were bought and sold, and were completely at the mercy and at the disposal of their owners, had continued for generations with the full knowledge of the Government. Those on the spot now asked us to believe that the practice, although undesirable, was impossible to alter.

That was why they rejoiced that the Government had sent out to Hong Kong this impartial Commission. Although they did not doubt the Government's good intentions, they would not relax their watchfulness.

The Commissioners before sailing for Hong Kong received a deputation from the British Commonwealth League. Their attitude was most sympathetic. The speaker was asked to put forward the League's proposals, namely, that there should be immediate registration of all girls already purchased under whatever name, and the prohibition of further purchase, further, that the number of inspectors (including women inspectors) should be considerably increased in order that registration might be adequately enforced with a view to the ultimate complete abolition of the system. The present law expressly included girls sold for the purpose of marriage or of adoption.

In China boys were often adopted in order that a son might carry on the male line. Daughters were useless for this purpose. Girl children were bought to do domestic work, and were called "adopted daughters" to avoid registration. Thus only a fraction of the real Mui T'Sai came under the official eye. Registration of all girls purchased, under whatever name, must be the first step towards complete abolition of the system. Total abolition could not come all at once. One could not turn children into the street without any provision being made for them. There was reason to hope that public opinion was changing among the younger generation of Chinese who had grown up since the birth of the woman's movement.

The Report stated that, until the closing years of the nineteenth century, there could be little doubt of the absolute right of the head of a Chinese family to sell his children. That sale was practised openly and with general approval. The present generation of Chinese found the idea abhorrent. Dr. Sun Yat Sen and his associates thought that many of the major difficulties of the Chinese had their origin in the older customs. These they set out to destroy. About the same time educated

Chinese women began to demand sex equality, the first step towards securing this was the destruction of the idea that the head of the family could dispose of the women of the family at will. The importance of the demand for sex equality in relation to the future of Mui T'Sai could not be over-emphasised.

MISS AGATHA HARRISON (Women's International League) in seconding the motion, said that those who glanced through recent Colonial office reports from Hong Kong and Malaya in regard to cases heard in the courts would realise that the appointment of the Commission had been more than overdue. A copy of the resolution should be sent to its members so that they might be aware that those at home were watching their work and looking forward to the issue of the report, which could not be available until the late autumn. Then it was to be hoped that the members of the deputation would be given an opportunity of studying the report and again meeting the Commission. In the meantime the co-ordinated group of women's organisations under the British Commonwealth League should seek to incorporate with them responsible Chinese men and women in this country. It was not advisable or possible to wait until the Chinese Government took action, especially when the system was being carried on in territory under British rule. There was certainly a growing opinion in China itself.

MR. STOKER, K.C., said that the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society had been perpetually bombarding the Colonial Office through its Minister in Parliament and by correspondence. The Society now rejoiced that, aided by the efforts of other bodies represented at that Conference, the appointment of a Commission had been achieved. His Society felt that there should be an inquiry into British colonies in connection with Mui T'Sai and that steps should be taken to cover treaty ports such as Shanghai. There would follow the larger task of putting a stop to the source of supply in China itself. He understood that a wealthy Chinese gentleman was so appalled by the system that he had decided to devote his life and energies to putting a stop to it with the aid of funds at his own disposal. Many questions were doubtless involved. China was over-populated and starvation common. That was an urge to the commercially-minded to take advantage of the opportunity of acquiring children and subsequently trading in them.

MISS NINA BOYLE said that Miss Picton Turberville had assured the deputation of women's organisations that the Commission's mission was to put a stop to Mui T'Sai.

The motion was carried unanimously and it was agreed that a copy be sent to the members of the Commission, to the Colonial Office, and to the Press.

STATUS OF WOMEN.

(a) Implications of the Resolution.

MISS DOROTHY HENNEKER (International Federation of Business and Professional Women) having briefly reviewed the circumstances which led up to the Geneva resolution asking various Governments and organisations to examine the civil and political status of women under national laws of all countries, emphasised that such a resolution was not forced by the League upon the public, but by the public upon the League.

Women's international organisations asked, first, for equality of rights, but broadened this to meet the modern difficulties of social conditions in the various countries and the readjustments which all countries are being forced to make between the historic types of living and modern conditions where living is fixed in a certain way.

One of the main effects of the depression was a vast amount of unemployment. The remedy which first came to the minds of many was restriction of the right of women to work, it being felt that men, the traditional breadwinners, might then gain employment. That was not the simple remedy it appeared to be. Restrictions were placed upon women in many countries, especially upon married women. It was, however, found that under modern conditions women could not be thrown out of employment without displacing labour all through the economic structure; that restrictions on the employment of women meant disruption of the economic structure of the country. It was no solution of unemployment.

That brought the question up again from the angle of the status of women and their right to earn.

Then the matter came forward officially to the League. It was decided that the Assembly meeting in September 1935 would discuss the problem. In January 1935 the Council decided that the Secretary-General of the League should ask women's organizations to send in reports as to their points of view. I do not think the consequence of that is generally realised. This was the first time women themselves were asked to express their own point of view on their own actual question. That is important.

Certain organisations thought it wiser to adopt the Equal Rights Treaty so as to establish the principle, and then national laws would be adjusted. Others, particularly industrial women's organizations, felt that this would destroy the whole fabric of protective legislation which had been built up through many years. Yet another group felt that perhaps it was not strategy, that if this was simply passed there and adopted nothing further would be done and that the whole matter had to be taken up nationally.

The League Resolution:

"(1) Decides that the question of the political and civil status of women shall be referred by the Secretary-General to the Governments for their observations, including observations as to the actions which, in their view, the League might take in this matter."

It further

"(2) Recommends that the women's international organisations should continue their study of the whole question of the political and civil status of women."

Clause (4) "Expresses the hope that the International Labour Organisation will, in accordance with its normal procedure, undertake an examination of those aspects of the problem within its competence—namely, the question of equality under labour legislation—and that it will, in the first place, examine the question of legislation which effects discriminations, some of which may be detrimental to women's right to work."

Further action has been taken with regard to that particular section of the League Resolution. The question of the economic status of women was not at all fully covered by that.

There was a meeting of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office in January 1936, to which many international organisations sent letters pointing out that there was a gap and that something should be done about it. The International Labour Office felt that its competence more or less covered an examination into the economic status of women. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women sent a letter to the International Labour Office pointing out that it was necessary to seek data as to the status of women not only in law but in fact.

We put forward a plea that the whole field should be surveyed; otherwise we felt valuable time would be lost.

In reply we received a letter in which it was stated that "The Governing Body decided to instruct the International Labour Office to undertake the study of the legislation affecting women's work which was proposed by the resolution of the Assembly, and also to undertake a wider study of the general question of the employment of women in all its aspects. It was agreed that for that purpose the Office might consult such organisations of women, or trade union organisations, or others, as are able to supply relevant information."

That indicates that there is a broadening of the type of study which the International Labour Office is undertaking. That Office is undertaking three studies; it is bringing up to date the women's labour laws of 1932; bringing up to date and enlarging its research as to women in the higher Administrations, and undertaking this economic study of the actual position of women with regard to wages, dependents, insurance and so on, on which it will probably be occupied to at least 1938.

With this review in mind it might be easier for the members of the Conference to discuss the resolutions before it.

(b) I.L.O. and Women in Industry.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN (Australian Federation of Women Voters) then said: I wish I could feel as happy about the enquiry that the International Labour Office

proposes to conduct as Miss Henneker does; but I feel that she must have good grounds for her hope and trust.

Unfortunately, the past record of the International Labour Office, to put it mildly, it is one of sadness. We all remember that famous report on women's work issued in 1931 when the mere fact that women did factory work was classed as evil, and the injurious effects of labour on women's organs were said to be proved by statistical data.

Intellectual work, they wrote, is said (by whom?) to be a still heavier cause (than manual work) of sickness among women.

Now when we read of this attitude to women's work accepted as fact, we have cause for vigilance. They say that past reports will be brought up to date. Such a report can never be brought up to date—it can only be scrapped. It visualises in industry and all legislation pertaining thereto, only one type of woman—the woman in the last stage of pregnancy. It contains only five illustrations. Each one is that of a woman in this state. This is not the average condition of the working woman, but surely a mere fraction; in fact, single girls invariably outnumber the married.

It is not very clear to me what the International Labour Office has promised to do in regard to this enquiry. In the agenda for the meeting of October 24th an extract from Item 9 reads "from observations it is evident that the committee implicitly recognised the necessity of special (protective) legislation for women. . . This indication seems to show that the Committee wished to indicate that the special object of the proposed study should be to examine the measures limiting the employment of women which have been adopted during recent years . . . and which have no connection with the health of the woman worker." It seems as if any examination should be unprejudiced, and unprejudiced analysis here seems impossible; for the International Labour Organisation has already adopted a policy approving special legislation, believing this to be the foundation upon which the analysis must be made.

All work has connection with health.

It seems as if it will be impossible to secure reliable and unbiased data on women's work. The only solution is to make all industry as safe as possible and to permit women and men to enter as they themselves choose.

Mr. Maurette suggested to the Assembly that Governments might be consulted as to whether equality of rights meant identity of rights. This assumes that the word "right" when applied to women has a different meaning from that which is universally accepted when applied to men. Some states withhold various rights from certain groups—such as from a coloured race. The state may say they do so in the interest of that race; but they cannot say that they are giving equal rights to that race. To accept that the word right has a different meaning for women from that universally accepted for men is to lay down for the first time that the equality of rights between a man and a woman is something different from equality of rights between a man and a man and that the attainment of full rights is something of which a woman is incapable.

The first civil right every individual should possess is the right to work for pay on the same terms as his fellow workers. This right is not possessed to-day by women. How can the matter ever be cleared up if her economic is separated from her civil status? That of man is not so separated. We disapprove of the division of the two forms of status. They are one and indivisible.

This Assembly divides discriminations into those which are and those which are not detrimental to women's right to work. All such discriminations between men and women are detrimental.

Unfortunately the work is proceeding under the division we therefore call upon the International Labour Office to recognise the discriminations against women, such as exclusion from certain trades and professions; lack of opportunity and promotion; prohibition of night work, and unequal pay; and to realise that no matter what the pretext, these discriminations are definite inequalities under which women suffer and which militate against their ability to earn a decent living and above all are contrary to that equality to which all free citizens should be entitled.

There are some bright spots. Two pamphlets were issued last year which show a trend in the right direction—but only a trend.

Henry Fuss, in "Unemployment and Employment among women." states: "Though restrictions are imposed for supposedly moral and practical reasons based on women's duty in the home, the real aim is to make room for men in the vacancies

produced by women's dismissal or exclusion, whereas, contrary to widespread belief, persons who work for remuneration do not deprive someone else of work, because their own earnings give them the power to purchase goods or services that give employment to other persons. No arbitrary distinction can be made between the placing of men and women. Each vacancy should be filled by the person who most closely satisfies the needs of the job."

Marguerite Thibert, in "Economic Depression and Employment," after having pointed out that women constitute one-third of the employed population of the world, states that there is a very serious danger to the welfare of the working class as a whole owing to the system of unequal pay for equal work between men and women. Further she asserts that the right to earn one's livelihood by one's own activity is an exclusive prerogative of the masculine portion of humanity, instead of being recognised as the fundamental right of every human being.

Such statement from two members of the International Labour Office are indeed refreshing, but must not mislead us into thinking that all are of the same opinion and that we can relax our vigilance or our efforts. These are still most necessary because of age-long prejudice.

Time and again it has been proved that woman's constitution is capable of withstanding great strain. I dare to say that a man would collapse in less than a week if he were called upon to do the work that falls to many women—the work of a wife and mother in a home where she is the sole worker—jack of all trades whose work is never done who gets no free week-ends nor annual holidays, but keeps at her daily toil year in and year out. No labour is as hard as that. To talk about discriminations being necessary to her well-being is to talk arrant rubbish.

STATUS OF WOMEN.

MRS. N. SPILLER (Women's Freedom League) moved:

(a) "That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes with satisfaction the acceptance by the 16th Assembly of the League of Nations of the Resolution sent forward by the First Committee with reference to an examination of the civil, political and economic status of women.

"This Conference urges the British Government to provide suitable machinery for the implementing of this Resolution and to invite the co-operation of the women's organisations concerned in the preparation of any Report upon the matter."

Mrs. Spiller said: It is our duty to collaborate internationally in order to improve the position of women in other countries, or to learn from them how to improve ours. The Assembly resolution is not quite clear as regards the question of the economic status of women. It is quite clear to us, however, that woman's economic position reacts strongly on her civil and political status, and that it is impossible to consider or discuss one of these aspects without touching on the other aspects of the question.

The status of women covers the whole field of women's rights and equal rights are affected by reaction in every field. We have to fight reactionary tendencies everywhere. We therefore ask the British Government to do its share in preparing a comprehensive report, just as we are prepared to collaborate with the Government in any way that would promote this object.

MISS HELEN FRASER (National Women Citizen's Association) in seconding the motion, stressed especially its second paragraph. The outlook of the best Civil servant was apt to be limited, and freedom of action was circumscribed by official technique. It would be necessary to make sure that the points of view of the most divergent women's organisations were freely heard. Women must be allowed absolute freedom to go out to work for their home and their children.

DAME MARIE OGILVIE GORDON said the President of the National Council Women had written to the Government asking whether it was intended to set up any special committee to deal with the question of the status of women and, whether an opportunity would be given to women's organisations to be represented thereon. The reply was that the Government had no intention of setting up a special Committee.

After discussion the motion was carried.

MRS. WATERWORTH, O.B.E. (Women's Non-Party League Tasmania) moved.—

(b) "That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes that the terms of reference of the Resolution adopted by the 16th Assembly on the enquiry into the status of women covers only their status under national law. It earnestly urges upon the Governments concerned to include in their surveys all custom which has the force of, or is supplementary to national law, in whatever territories under their control such customs exist.

Mrs. Waterworth said that women were in a worse position than a few years ago. The majority of men need do nothing in the way of shouldering their responsibilities to sustain their right to hold their power. The position of women was very different. They were suppliants, however much they might dislike the position. Perhaps the quickest way to attain their rights was by earning them—by doing the work which nature had thrust upon them—namely the preservation of the race. If they did that their full rights would be graciously bestowed upon them without further argument. This was her message to all the women of the Empire.

Women should strive first of all for Peace; second for the children, thirdly the mothers; fourthly, the falling birth-rate amongst the intelligent, and fifthly the rising numbers of the unfit.

The King had set us an example. He had seen for himself the conditions under which many of his people lived and had shown a sense of personal responsibility for the misery of miners, factory workers and those living in huddled misery.

MISS NINA BOYLE (Suffrage Fellowship) in seconding the motion said that she had on many occasions stressed the fact that there were women as well as men to be catered for in the world. The customs which related to marriage often degenerated into mere sale and barter.

The motion was carried.

MISS MONICA WHATELY (Six Point Group) moved:—

(c) "That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled notes that the International Labour Organisation has been commissioned in the terms of the Resolution of the 16th Assembly to make an enquiry into the question of equality in labour legislation.

"In view of the fact that in many countries women have been deprived of their economic rights, this Conference urges the International Labour organisations without delay to make a clear declaration of the principle of a woman's right to earn on the same terms as men."

All connected with international work realised that the spread of dictatorships coincided with the lowering of the status of women in the countries in which the dictatorships existed. Existing rights were taken from individuals of a community. For instance, not only had the women of Italy practically no rights under the existing régime but the fact that the Government was trying to force them into marriage was lowering to the spirit of women as well as degrading to the dignity of marriage. Every sort of restriction was being imposed to prevent them earning their living in the class of work in which a decent wage was paid. German women had reached a high standard before the present Government came into power, there having been 40 women in the Reichstag. Now German women could vote only on a certain issue put forward by the Government and then not unless they were married. There was only one place in which German women found equality: in prison and concentration camps. Large numbers of them were being held as hostages for the alleged misdemeanours of their men folk. Those conditions were almost certainly bound to have repercussions on the status of women in other parts of the world.

Mrs. WHITE (Open Door Council), seconded the motion and emphasised its second section. Reference had been made to the rights of which Italian and German women had been deprived, but the women of Great Britain also suffered many disabilities. The Government had not refused co-operation, which was the phrase used in the motion: it had refused, apparently, to set up a Committee to deal with the matter. Women's organisations would have to be most vigilant in their efforts to ensure that their work was organized and taken into consideration in the report that the British Government was going to make in regard to the position of women. Further, it would be necessary for representatives of women's organisations to be in Geneva when the question was considered. No subterfuges must be put forward and exploited as truth.

Mrs. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) thought that there had been unfair criticism of the International Labour Office. Like the League it was only a piece of machinery which could be operated only as the personnel would permit.

The PRESIDENT explained that the motion meant that in view of the fact that the Labour organisations were making an enquiry, the Conference urged the private organisations to make that declaration.

MISS AGATHA HARRISON asked for an expression of opinion from the mover and seconder.

MISS WHATELY said that her organisation had sent in four resolutions, one dealing with the Status of Women which was not accepted by the Resolutions Committee of the British Commonwealth League. The motion before the Conference covered the general lines of that sent in by the Six Point Group; but it was not a motion they would have chosen.

MISS MACMILLAN said that the Open Door Council was in the same position as the Six Point Group. It was, she thought, necessary to ask the International Labour Office to make a declaration that what was a right to ask for a man was a right to ask for a woman, without asking the Office to express an opinion as to whether a woman should have the same rights as a man. She would, of course, like this to be done, but it was a remote possibility at present. At least the International Labour Office should be asked to declare that it would not go on making fallacious statements.

Mrs. WHITE, as seconder, agreed. It was not a question of opinion as to whether women should have the same rights as men, but that the word "rights" must mean the same as between men and women.

MR. STOKER, K.C. asked what the question of wages included. As Chairman of a Trade Board which fixed women's rates of wages, he had in some cases heard men who sat on the Board suggest that women should receive the same rate of wages as men. Women members of the Board, had, however, viewed that suggestion with great suspicion. They had at times opposed it, on the ground that women would be got rid of and men employed in their stead; that it was a movement on the part of men to deprive women of employment. Had the British Commonwealth League obtained the real wishes of women workers on that aspect of the question?

The PRESIDENT. The Women's Movement was divided on the matter. The mover and seconder had made it clear that they thought the "s" should be omitted and "Organisation" substituted in the second paragraph. She understood from Mrs. Guy Innes, Chairman of the Resolution Committee, that that was what the Committee had intended.

Mrs. GUY INNES: That is so.

MISS AGATHA HARRISON moved and Mrs. LITTLEJOHN seconded the withdrawal of the motion because it did not appear to express exactly what was meant.

The mover and seconder agreed, and the Conference signified approval of the withdrawal.

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

MISS EDITH GRAY (Canada) moved:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled recognises the injustice to women under the existing nationality laws. It demands that the British and Dominion Governments without delay introduce into their respective Parliaments and pass into law, legislation to give the married woman her nationality on the same terms as a man or a single woman."

Miss Gray desired to make two points to bring the question up to date. There were now five countries who had notified the Monte Video Convention by which the States of the Pan American Congress hoped to secure absolute equality in the matter of nationality of women. The last to ratify had been Columbia. Others were the United States, Chili, Mexico and Honduras.

The Hague Convention, against which the women's organisations had been working, had been only a half-measure, tending to make a complete solution more

difficult; it had now been ratified by nine countries. The tenth ratification would constitute an International Treaty, but until then Gt. Britain could alter her laws in accordance without woman's wishes without breaking any Treaty. Apparently, however, Australia would soon ratify. She understood from the Canadian delegate to the Hague in 1930 that the lack of common ground was so great that the results achieved were the most that could be attempted. This Convention, however, relieved Canada's most pressing problem, namely, Canadian women being left "stateless" as the result of their marriage with Americans. The Bill designed to rectify this was drawn up in Canada in 1931 and, after having been passed, was copied verbatim by Gt. Britain, the two ratifications being deposited in Geneva on the same day. The Canadian women's organisations managed to get a private Bill before Parliament, but it was withdrawn when the necessity for Empire unity was explained, the promise being given that the Hague Convention would be reviewed this year.

Miss Gray concluded: What we do here is of great value though we may not subsequently hear about it. In delving into Hansard, I discovered that the member introducing the Canadian Bill emphasised the insistence of its women supporters, and backed this up by reading a long account of the British Commonwealth League's deputation to the High Commissioner for Canada in London. One paragraph of the report read, "They urge that one of the Dominions, Canada for preference, should take the first step towards producing agreement among all parts of the Empire, since opposition to the reform seemed now to consist of stressing the difficulty of securing such unanimity."

MRS. COWEN (Queensland Women's Electoral League), seconded the motion, and said that Australians were proud of the fact that they were 98% British, though perhaps their cousins in the Mother Country did not reciprocate this pride. The matter of the nationality of married women affected Australians very keenly. Dorothea Mackellar and other poets had made articulate the Australian's love of their native land. No woman should lose her country because of another love—that of that fellow-creature, for whom she feared that that gathering had not altogether a large affection—mere man. One love should not be brought into conflict with the other. If a divorce from a husband was humiliating and painful, how much more distressing must be a divorce from one's native land. There had been in Australia some tragic cases of foolish girls who had married Afghan hawkers or Chinese, and had accompanied their husbands to Afghanistan or China. The conditions of life, especially married life, in those countries were so different from those in Australia that those girls had found them impossible. Some of them had lost their lives, generally at the hands of the women of their husband's race, whether mothers-in-law or other wives. Such Australian women, having lost their nationality, could not claim the protection of their country's flag. One girl in China had been rescued by the British Consul at the exercise of great diplomacy. The situation had also its Gilbertian side. A girl married an American and sailed with him to the United States. Though they were one in the eyes of God and the law, they were two according to the quota regulations, and she had to come back to Australia, whilst her husband had to remain in America to transact his business. This girl had lost her Australian nationality and her birthright; yet she has been returned as not wanted from her husband's country. A man could marry whom he pleased and retain his nationality until of his own free will he relinquished it. This, in the case of some strangers within our gates, was done as a matter of expediency. This was so manifestly unfair that in the near future the law should be amended to permit a woman to wear her country's flag whilst living happily under that of her husband's.

MRS. JAMIESON WILLIAMS pointed out that in *The Shield* for April 1936 attention was directed to cases in London in which the position as to British nationality was being used to protect traffic in women. A strong point could be made if those cases were cited. She had been amazed by the feeling of women in Australia on the subject and felt sure that anything in the nature of a petition or resolution drawn up by that Conference and which could be followed up, would be accepted.

MISS GRACE SAUNDERS (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene) said it was known that women were brought into England and were there married to men whom they never saw again, simply in order that the women might quite automatically acquire British Nationality and escape deportation. These were an undesirable type of women who were being exploited by known traffickers. Her Association had definite evidence on this point.

Asked whether the Conference was being asked to vote for the independent nationality of women or for the Montevideo Treaty, the President replied that the Conference was being asked to vote on the independent nationality of the married woman on the same terms as a man or a single woman.

The motion was carried.

IRISH FREE STATE.

MISS MACMILLAN put forward as an emergency motion:

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its consternation that the Irish Free State should have passed into law Section 16 of the Conditions of Employment Act, 1936, which gives power to a Minister to prohibit the employment of female workers in any form of industrial work or to fix a proportion which the number of female workers employed by any employer may bear to the number of other workers so employed:

"That the Conference declares that while the position of women may be bad under laws which restrict their rights as workers, women can at least ascertain the limits of these rights and can appeal to the courts against the infringement of such rights, but that the position of the women industrial workers within the Irish Free State has been made intolerable in thus being made subject to an arbitrary power with undefined limits against the exercise of which it is impossible for them to obtain any legal redress, since they are outside the rule of law, the running of which within a territory is the first test of Civilization."

Miss Macmillan pointed out that in respect to women industrial workers in the Irish Free State the law had been completely set aside and women brought under the arbitrary power of the Minister. The Bill condemned by that Conference last year had been entered on the Statute Book, though the speaker was not certain whether it was yet operative. There were countries in which women were forbidden to do certain things, but they knew how they stood under the law. Under the enactment passed in the Irish Free State women workers would not know from day to day what their rights were or might be. If those rights were infringed they had no redress in the courts. Women had been placed outside the law. There had been so much international protest as regards a similar decree by Belgium that it had to be withdrawn. Ireland was very sensitive to the opinion of those in other countries.

MRS. LAUGHTON MATHEWS, who seconded the motion, wondered whether Irish women would appreciate the protest. She hoped, however, that the Government of Ireland realised its responsibility for the moral welfare of the women whom it was depriving of the right to earn an honest living. Many women would be faced with idleness and poverty.

THE PRESIDENT suggested that the motion be sent to Irish women's organisations, and to the Government of the Irish Free State, with a list of the organisations represented at the Conference. That would prove that the motion did not represent a criticism on the part of Great Britain only.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM questioned the fairness of bringing such a motion before the last session of the Conference. Delegates had not had an opportunity of ascertaining its implications.

MISS FEGAN (British Federation of University Women) asked whether it was possible to embody in the motion the fact that Irish women were opposed to the enactment, and that the Conference heartily backed them in their opposition.

MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council) thought that it would be wiser for the Conference not to speak for Irish women who did not happen to be represented there. It was, however, quite fair to bring the motion forward at any stage, seeing that last year the Conference had condemned the Bill which had now passed into law.

MISS BARRY (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) suggested the deletion of the second portion of the motion.

MISS MACMILLAN contended that it was an essential part because a new principle had been introduced. She agreed, however, that the motion might be shortened.

MISS NINE BOYLE thought the motion should be passed as it stood.

MRS. COWEN (Queensland Women's Electoral League) said that she could not vote. There was a large number of Irish women in Queensland and she had had no opportunity of ascertaining the wishes of her League.

The PRESIDENT said that last year the Queensland League had supported the motion condemning the Bill. The Conference was merely being asked to reiterate a protest.

After some further discussion as to the form in which the motion should be passed it was put and carried as follows:—

"That the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled expresses its consternation that the Irish Free State should have passed into law Section 16 of the Conditions of Employment Act, 1936, which give power to a Minister to prohibit the employment of female workers in any form of industrial work, or to fix a proportion which the number of female workers employed by any employer may bear to the number of other workers so employed.

"That the Conference declares that the position of the women industrial workers within the Irish Free State has been made intolerable in being made subject to an arbitrary power with undefined limits against the exercise of which it is impossible for them to obtain any legal redress, since they are outside the rule of law."

NEW ZEALAND LEGISLATION.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN moved as an emergency motion:

"That this Conference of the British Commonwealth League condemns the action of New Zealand in laying down in legislation that the basic wage for an adult male, married or unmarried with or without children, should be computed as a wage sufficient to maintain a man, a wife and three children, while the basic wage of a woman is to be no more than sufficient to maintain herself.

"The Conference considers this decision to ally family or imaginary family needs with remuneration for work done is to confuse basic issues, and is inconsistent with the principles accepted by New Zealand when it signed the Treaty of Versailles, namely, the principle that men and women shall receive equal remuneration for work of equal value."

The movement contended that as long as a man was paid on the basis of his family responsibility it was difficult to secure equality of pay for single or even married women.

MRS. STEDMAN (Hon. Financial Secretary, British Commonwealth League) seconded the motion.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM protested that the Conference was about to pass a motion condemning New Zealand for doing something which Australia had been doing for many years. What right had Australia to protest when her own slate was not clean? The motion was superfluous.

The PRESIDENT said that as the motion arose out of something which had occurred during the past fortnight it was a matter of urgency.

The Conference agreed to this.

The President urged delegates to remember that membership of the British Commonwealth League was based on the fact that affiliated associations accepted the principle of equality. That ought to guide delegates in facing new situations.

The motion was carried, with two dissentients.

The Conference concluded at 1-15 p.m. with a most hearty vote of thanks to the President, proposed by Miss Macmillan, and seconded by Miss Agatha Harrison.

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