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BRITISH  
COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE

"To secure equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and to uphold the principles of democracy, realising that only through democracy can this objective be reached."

REPORT OF FIFTEENTH ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

HELD ON MAY 16, 17 and 18, 1939

at the ECONOMIC REFORM CLUB  
26, GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W.1.

THE CHANGING STATUS  
OF WOMEN UNDER  
DEMOCRACY

Chair: MRS. CORBETT ASHBY, LL.D.

*Headquarters—*

17, BUCKINGHAM STREET, ADELPHI, LONDON, W.C.2.

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## SOCIETIES REPRESENTED.

### BRITISH.

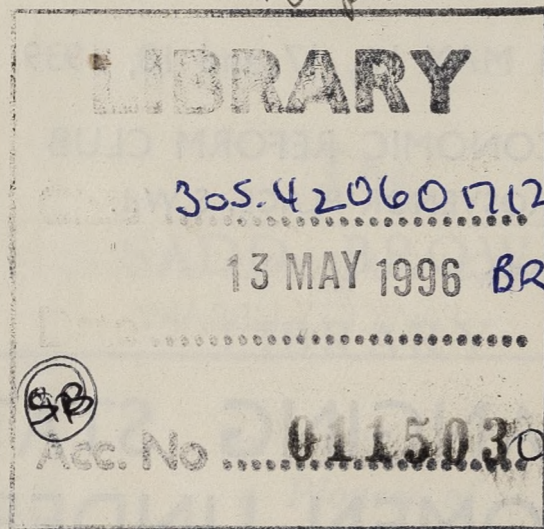
Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women.  
Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society.  
Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools.  
Association of Head Mistresses.  
Association for Moral and Social Hygiene.  
Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries.  
British Federation of University Women.  
British Social Hygiene Council.  
College of Nursing.  
Council for Representation of Women in the League of Nations.  
Federation of Women Zionists.  
Finchley Women Citizens' Association.  
Friends Penal Reform Committee.  
Guildhouse Fellowship.  
Kensington Women Citizens' Association.  
London and National Society for Women's Service.  
Married Women's Association.  
Medical Women's Federation.  
National Association of Women Civil Servants.  
National Council for Adult Education.  
National Council of Women of Great Britain.  
National Council for Equal Citizenship.  
National Federation of Women's Institutes.  
National Peace Council.  
National Union of Women Teachers.  
National Women Citizens' Association.  
Nationality of Married Women Pass the Bill Committee.  
New Commonwealth Society.  
Open Door Council.  
Purley and District Women Citizens' Association.  
St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance.  
Sorooptimists:—London and South East Counties Divisional Union.  
Society for the Ministry of Women.  
Standing Joint Committee of Women's Industrial Organisations.  
Women's Freedom League.  
Women's Peace Crusade.  
Young Women's Christian Association of Great Britain.

### INTERNATIONAL.

International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship.  
Women's International League.  
Women's International Zionist Organisation.  
Associated Countrywomen of the World.

### OVERSEA.

AUSTRALIA.—Australian Federation of Women Voters.  
National Council of Women of Australia.  
National Council of Women of Tasmania.  
National Council of Women of Victoria.  
Victorian Women Citizens' Movement.  
Women's Non-Party Association of South Australia.  
Women's Service Guilds of West Australia.  
SOUTH AFRICA.—South African League of Women Voters.





## RESOLUTIONS.

### Equal Pay.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled continues to demand equal pay for equal work. Industry has been, and still is, largely organised on the basis of segregating women in low-paid employment, and of permitting men to acquire the higher degree of skill necessary for the decreasing number of well-paid jobs. Modern, mechanised processes of mass production in industry permit a large percentage of the workers to acquire all the skill necessary in a few weeks.

Therefore, the demand of Equal Pay for Equal Work must operate in every sphere, and the point be stressed that women must have the opportunities to *do* the equal work, and the demand of to-day *must* be Equal Work for Equal Pay.

### Equal Pay in the Civil Defence Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled protests against the unequal rates of pay as between men and women volunteers in the Civil Defence Services, and against the unequal rate of compensation, both being for women only two-thirds of the men's rate. It calls upon the British Government to announce immediately equal rates of pay and compensation for those men and women volunteers who perform equal services for their country in a time of danger.

### Family Allowances.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled believes the time is now ripe for the adoption of a National scheme of family endowment, and urges its affiliated societies throughout the British Commonwealth to press for such a scheme in countries where it does not already exist.

### Financial Status of the Wife.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled supports the principle that the services rendered by a woman as wife and home-maker, whether such services be supervisory or manual, shall be recognised as of monetary value; and that she shall be legally entitled to a share of the family income for her personal needs.

### Status of the Paid Domestic Worker.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled strongly recommends increased facilities for the scientific, general and specialised training of home-workers, and that the conditions of employment of such workers shall reasonably approximate to the freedom and social status obtaining in other avenues of employment.

### Democracy

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled prays that its Governments will uphold the principles of democracy without distinction of race, class, creed or sex.

### The Status of Native Women.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls upon the Government to press the League of Nations to set up a Committee competent to deal with the Status of the Women of the Primitive Peoples, consisting not only of jurists but of persons with special knowledge of the conditions of the populations concerned.

### Women on Juries.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled draws attention to the valuable services rendered by women on Juries in Great Britain, and recommends its affiliated societies in other parts of the British Commonwealth to press the respective Governments to enable their women citizens to participate in this service.

### Women Police.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges the appointment of a greater number of Women Police throughout Great Britain, the Dominions and the Colonies. It notes with regret that in Great Britain out of 181 County and Borough Police Forces, 142 do not employ any policewomen at all, and in many instances one woman alone is expected to fulfil all the duties assigned to the office of policewoman in that district. It also recommends the appointment of more Police Matrons.

### Women Protectors for Australian Aborigines.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled appreciates the intention of the Commonwealth Government of Australia as evidenced by their "New Deal" for Aborigines. While recognising the work already done by the Commonwealth and the States for the betterment of the Aborigines, this Conference urges the appointment of Women Protectors and Inspectors to the Aborigines.

It also recommends the appointment of women doctors, believing that such appointments would assist in the solution of long-standing problems relative to the health and moral protection of native women.

### Women on Church Councils.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled welcomes the growth of a movement for Christian Unity among the Churches. It, however, notes with concern that inadequate opportunities are being allowed to women of making their contribution in thought and experience to a matter which vitally concerns all Christian people.

The Conference draws attention to the fact that women are taking the highest degrees in theology, and that a large body of competent opinion is available from among them. It, therefore, urges upon the leaders of the Churches that they shall secure the adequate representation of fully qualified women on all Councils and Committees constituted for the furtherance of Reunion.

### Women in Medical and Nursing Services.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled demands that all Hospitals and Medical and Dental Schools shall be open to men and women alike for training, experience and appointments. It urges all Governing Bodies to accede to this request.

### The Training of Native Women.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls the attention of the British Government, the Governments of the Dominions and the Colonial Administrations to the urgent need for more facilities for the full training of women of the country, i.e., native or indigenous women() as nurses, midwives and doctors. In order that this training may be secure, the present staffs, especially nursing sisters, Europeans, European trained, or trained up to the European standard, should be increased.

The Conference, therefore, urges further appointments of women on the staffs of Hospitals and as Health Visitors, and the appointment of women Medical Officers to initiate and organise Health Services among women of the country.



### Franchise.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled presses for the granting of the Franchise to women living under the British Flag, notably in Bermuda and Quebec, thereby recognising an inherent principle of democracy. The Conference believes that uniformity within the Commonwealth in this matter is essential in view of the refusal in many countries at the present time to recognise the rights of the individual.

It, therefore, urges the Governments concerned to pass into law without delay a measure to extend the franchise to women on the same terms as men.

### The Married Woman's Right to Independent Nationality.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled reaffirms the right of a married woman to her own independent nationality on the same terms as a man or a single woman.

The Conference calls upon the British Government, in conjunction with the Dominion Governments, to remove all disabilities of the married woman in matters of nationality, and draws attention to the extreme importance of this in view of the international situation.

The Conference urges the British Government to enact legislation with the utmost speed to restore to British women their former equal and independent nationality so that:—

- (a) British women married to aliens shall reacquire, and British women who in future marry aliens shall retain, their British nationality, unless they desire otherwise.
- (b) That an alien woman married to a British man shall be required to satisfy the same conditions as to residence, oath of allegiance, etc., as are required from an alien man or a single alien woman, before acquiring British Nationality.

### Women on Boards and Commissions

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled congratulates the Secretaries of State for the Dominions and Colonies on the decision to open Administrative posts in the India Office and the Colonial and Dominion offices to women.

This Conference is convinced that women have a definite contribution to give to world order, and that they can make their full influence felt in national and international affairs only if they have an adequate share in the framing of policy. For this purpose they urgently claim to have equal opportunity with men to serve in all Government positions at home and abroad, in the Diplomatic and Consular Services, and on all Committees and Commissions, both national and international to which the various Governments make appointments.

The League, therefore, while appreciating the advance already made, calls upon the Governments of the British Commonwealth to give women equal access with men to all key positions where policy is framed, and an equal chance with men to hold those positions.

## British Commonwealth League. FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

### FIRST DAY

Chairman: MRS. CORBETT ASHBY, LL.D., President.

### ECONOMIC STATUS

#### Equal Pay.

MRS. E. ABBOTT (Open Door Council) moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled continues to demand equal pay for equal work. Industry has been, and still is, largely organised on the basis of segregating women in low-paid employment, and of permitting men to acquire the higher degree of skill necessary for the decreasing number of well-paid jobs. Modern, mechanised processes of mass production in industry permit a large percentage of the workers to acquire all the skill necessary in a few weeks.

Therefore, the demand of Equal Pay for Equal Work must operate in every sphere, and the point be stressed that women must have the opportunities to *do* the equal work, and the demand of to-day *must* be Equal Work for Equal Pay.

MRS. ABBOTT said: Equal Pay for Equal Work is a fashionable but somewhat misleading and ambiguous phrase inasmuch as there is actually no such thing as equal work. It does not matter where we look: at the arts, or professions, the actor, the doctor, the writer, the artist, the lawyer, or at a set of industrial workers, men and women, and even young people, who are employed on machine processes. There are always some who are outstandingly good at the job they are on, there are the mass who are what we call average, and there are those who are below the average. With star performers in the arts and professions or in industry we are not concerned. We are considering the great mass of industrial workers. These are the skilled and the semi-skilled, or so they are called; although the word "skilled" took a knock between 1914 and 1918 from which, to my mind, it has never quite recovered!

Yet to-day one of the difficulties about arguing equal pay for women is that when they do a job is it often called unskilled or semi-skilled when it actually demands just as much skill in its performance as work which is technically described as skilled. So the proper formula for this discussion is not Equal Pay for Equal Work but Equal Work and Equal Pay for Women. That is, the right to do the job and to get the rate for the job, not a rate based on the sex of the worker.

Women have always been in industry. There are at present close on 4,000,000 insured women workers in the industries of the country. With the exception of Iron Ore and Ironstone Mining there are women working in practically every trade and industry, though by no means in every section of it. Women are, as they always have been, an integral part of the industry of the country; they are an essential part of the fabric of industry itself, joint builders with men of the nation's wealth. As such their position as wage earners is discreditable to all of us. Undeniably there are a few in highly-paid jobs, and, here and there, instances of equal pay; as in cotton weaving and certain piece rates. But, by and large, women, however skilled they may be, are the *cheap workers*, at the bottom of the labour market, with an all-over average wage that is lower than the wages of the so-called unskilled labourer.



Every type of industrial legislation or organisation tends to confirm the woman in her position as a cheap worker instead of remedying it. Factory legislation controls and segregates her as the eternal juvenile, "the girl who can never grow up," Trade Board legislation controls and segregates her as the female worker; Trade Union custom and organisation controls and segregates her; while she is the Cinderella of Insurance, whether it be Health or Unemployment.

Is this position natural or unnatural? Is it based on reality? Is it just? Is it good for industry, the employer or the man worker? I submit that this situation is entirely artificial, that it is divorced from all reality and that its results are bad for everything and everybody concerned.

First comes the division of the work itself. There is heavy and light work. In one industry you will be told that men do the heavy and women the light work, while in another you will find the women doing heavy work. Heavy or light, the man's job carries the man's rate. Heavy or light, the woman's job carries the woman's rate, anything from half to two-thirds that of the man. Both the division and the rate are artificial. Here is an example. Some years ago there came to me a woman from a leather goods factory. The trade was seasonal and both heavy and light goods were turned out. Small trunks and dispatch cases were "heavy" and handbags and fancy goods were "light." By arrangement with the head of the men's section when the seasonal rush was for the heavy work the men took it; and again when it was the light work the men took that also, at 1s. 3½d. an hour. The other side of the work, whether light or heavy, was taken by the women at 7½d. an hour. All were skilled workers and the women were as skilled as the men as they proved by taking over the work at given notice.

If the employer says "Only with cheap labour can I make my profits," I say "Choose the best workers of both sexes, give them equal pay and you will still make your profits." It is for the good of industry, the employer, and the nation that in every job the ablest workers, men and women, should be employed; and to those workers should go the standard rate for the job without distinction of sex. The enforcement of a standard rate would be an incentive to the employer to take the best of the available workers, the output would be improved, and what he lost on the "swings" he would gain on the "roundabouts." The male worker would gain, for he would no longer have to fear the cheap competition of women.

Probably the first essential change is a moral one; a different attitude towards the woman as a human being and as a worker, and the realisation that to pay women badly and unequally is both unjust and bad economic policy.

It is always useful to discuss the question of equal pay. But now more particularly it is urgently necessary to go further than discussion and to plan it. We may have to face a repetition of the war years of 1914 to 1918. Even if we do not have to face such horrors there will certainly be great changes and reorganisation in our industrial life. Are we going to begin the old haggling about dilution and all the rest of it? Or are we going to take the better way?

MISS GRACE M. TURNER (National Council of Women of Victoria) seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

#### EQUAL PAY IN CIVIL DEFENCE.

LADY PARES (National Council for Equal Citizenship) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled protests against the unequal rates of pay as between men and women volunteers in the Civil Defence Services, and against the unequal rate of compensation, both being for women only two-thirds of the men's rate. It calls upon the British Government to announce immediately equal rates of pay and compensation for those men and women volunteers who perform equal services for their country in a time of danger.

LADY PARES said: The Lord Privy Seal stated in the House of Commons that there would be a flat rate of pay for whole time service in war for all air raid precaution volunteers and for auxiliary firemen, the rate for men being 60s. per week and for women 40s. per week. Again it was announced that in cases of total disablement the compensation would amount for a single man to £3 a week for twenty-

six weeks and thereafter 30s. a week. In the case of disabled women compensation would be payable at two-thirds of the rates quoted. A totally disabled woman would therefore have to scrape along on 20s. a week. Thus in the event of war women were to be exploited, and were asked to work in the Civil Defence Services at two-thirds the salary and rate of compensation.

Many of the Women's Societies protested to the Home Office against these decisions and received the reply that the rates of pay and compensation were subject to later decisions of the Government of the day and that such decisions would be partly dependent upon the policy as to differential rates for men and women generally.

There was at first some uncertainty as to the compensation to be paid to dependents of women disabled or killed in A.R.P. services. This doubt, however, was removed by a letter from Sir John Anderson, in which he stated that the compensation rates already announced related solely to injuries sustained by volunteers in course of duty or training in time of peace and that while there was a differentiation in the disability allowance payable in respect of the individual man or woman volunteer, such allowances as might be payable in respect of dependents would be at the same rates, whether the claim arose in respect of a man or a woman volunteer.

We must keep a careful watch and continue to educate public opinion on this matter. Women of all classes were preparing themselves to give all possible help. It was unworthy of our statesmen that women's efforts, should be classified as so much less important than those of men. Women's response to the call for service was not likely to be checked by inequality in pay, but women did object to the exploitation of their sex and to the use of women as cheap labour.

It was easy to appeal for justice on practical as well as ethical reasons. A woman living in London in war-time must get to and from work. There would be difficulties of service, and in obtaining food supplies. A woman might live solely to do hard and nerve straining work. She would need just as much pay as a man if she were to sustain health and strength. On April 18th during a debate in the House of Commons on the Housing Services, a member raised the question whether women looked after themselves when living in rooms. He said that evidence had been brought of non-resident nurses who, as a result of living out of hospital, had not been properly fed. He contended that this applied not only to nurses, but to people living away from hostels or homes.

MRS. TATE interjected: Does not the honourable gentleman know that when women are paid adequately they will eat adequately, and that while they are underpaid they are likely to spend money on things which amuse them more than food?

LADY PARES added that if war should come none could foresee the results or what the condition of the world would be. It was therefore in the interests not only of women but of labour in general that we should do nothing to assist lowering the standard of wages and lead to serious repercussions.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council), seconding, said: This motion concerns a new aspect of an old injustice. Because the Government had begun to take a new line in regard to that old injustice they invited the services in civil defence of men and women on an apparently equal basis; they gave it to be understood that the work of women was of equal value with that of men. It was clear that the danger to women in the Civil Defence Service would be exactly the same as that incurred by men; for instance, in fire-fighting.

Women responded readily. Then came the question of the allowance to be made. The Government failed to continue on the basis of justice and common-sense. They decided on a flat rate because it would be undesirable to differentiate in pay between the varying importance of what men might be engaged in or the difference in the amount of danger incurred. But the flat rate broke down when it came to the allowance to women. Two-thirds of the rate allotted to men was deemed good enough. Thus a woman totally disabled during the course of her service would be expected to scrape along on 20s. a week for the rest of her life, apart from a higher rate for twenty-six weeks.

It is surprising that women immediately on the promulgation of such iniquitous



terms did not resign throughout the country from their A.R.P. work. They had apparently been so long accustomed to being doormats, and second in status to men, that they had come to regard such iniquities as a matter of course, or thought it useless to protest. Protest was never useless. Women throughout the country should publicly urge that while there were other works of national importance open to them it was not wise on the part of the Government to put such poor value on woman's services in Civil Defence; also that women should not accept the cheapened position, but should emphasise that their services were genuinely required in a national emergency and should be adequately compensated.

MISS HELEN WARD (London and National Society for Women's Service) pointed out that women had refrained from resigning from A.R.P. because, as had been the case in the last war, they put up with injustice, not because they regarded themselves as doormats.

MRS. LEDGER ETHERIDGE (British Commonwealth League) reported that in some instances, when women had signed on for Civil Defence day-work, they had been told that they would receive no pay unless they signed on for night work also.

MISS ANN PROTHERO-JONES (Open Door Council) said that the Air Raid Warden in North Kensington had stated that he had permission to spend a small amount of money in obtaining paid help, but that he had no authority to pay women.

MISS A. GODWIN (Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries) directed attention to recruitment for semi-military work. If women Territorials were recruited in order to do clerical work which should be undertaken by civilian women workers in the ordinary course of earning their living, then there would be reason for objection. But if women were being recruited for auxiliary work in connection with territorial services, this would be perfectly legitimate.

The motion was carried unanimously.

#### FAMILY ALLOWANCES

MRS. E. HUBBACK (National Council for Equal Citizenship) said that in Great Britain we still talked of family allowances as something to come, whereas in Australia, New Zealand, and nearly all the countries of Europe some scheme of family allowances was already an accomplished fact. The case for family allowances could be divided, roughly, into three main groups. The Family Endowment Society regarded family allowances as an important and necessary measure on account of child welfare; as of urgent importance for the status of the mother in the home and of the woman in the labour market; and as an urgent measure to prevent too rapid a decline of the population in the western countries and in the British Dominions.

As to child welfare, there was not, broadly speaking, so much poverty as there was twenty years ago in Britain and the Dominions. There was, however, wider recognition of the evil to child bodies and minds as the result of malnutrition. Both the standard of child nurture and the educational standard were higher. Mr. H. Seebom Rowntree had estimated that if there were a minimum wage covering the needs of three children, 42 per cent. of the children of the country would still be receiving less than would keep them efficient, and about 26 per cent. would be in a state of inefficiency for about five years of their childhood. Incomes at present did not cover the needs of a large number of families. If to-day the resources of the country could be concentrated upon actual children and not upon possible children, the problem could be solved.

At present, what a wife received depended partly on the wages and partly on the goodwill of her husband. Until a mother was given sufficient to bring up her children adequately in the home, she could not be expected to do her job adequately; nor could she enjoy a proper status.

The giving of family allowances would remove one of the arguments for refusing equal pay to women. Broadly speaking, the amount of dependency that fell on women was much less than that which fell on men, and, broadly speaking, the burden of rearing the next generation, from the income point of view, was on the

male shoulders. That argument was not without justice. What was desired was not so much equality of pay, as equality of standards of living. This could not be achieved until family allowances, facilitating the achievement of equal standards of living were instituted.

A great change was being made manifest in connection with the forecasts of the population of Great Britain. In two or three years time we would be faced with a declining population. The mothers of the next generation would not number more than three-quarters of those of this generation, so that unless the birth-rate increased in a startling manner we should face a devastating and cumulative fall in the birth-rate, leading, at the present rate of decline, to a birth-rate population of not much more than 4,000,000 at the end of one hundred years. There were various opinions as to whether Great Britain would be better off with a smaller population, but there could not be two opinions as to whether Australia or New Zealand would be better off with a smaller population. Those Dominions were faced with the same problem as Great Britain.

Economists agreed that a rapidly declining population would lead to a lower standard of living. The prosperity of the past century had been due largely to greatly increased markets. A decline in population would mean less elasticity, smaller markets, and a reduced standard of living, bringing with it all kinds of social, if not economic, problems, of which not the least important would be the tremendous increase in old as compared with young people. Between 1934 and 1937 the number of young people under 15, according to the "Manchester Guardian," of May 16th, 1939, declined by 600,000. This number was added on to those over 60. A population with a larger number of individuals under 15 was preferable. The economic factor was not the only reason for the fall in the birth-rate. We must encourage with all the force we could command the psychological impulse of people to retain enough faith in life to have more children and to defeat race suicide. Nevertheless the economic factor was contributory and important. To combat the devastating fall in the birth-rate we needed both inducements.

Married people who were considering whether to have another child compared their consequent standard of living with that of childless friends, and realised that they could not always maintain this standard if they had the child.

Family allowances were justified by the need for adequate nourishment, house room and education of children; the need for raising the status of the mother and of the woman in the labour market; and the need for preventing a devastating decline in the population of Great Britain.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN, J.P. (Australian Federation of Women Voters) moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled believes the time is now ripe for the adoption of a National scheme of family endowment, and urges its affiliated societies throughout the British Commonwealth to press for such a scheme in countries where it does not already exist.

#### NEW SOUTH WALES SYSTEM.

MRS. LITTLEJOHN described the operation of child endowment in the only State in the world which possessed such a system—New South Wales.

It was there inaugurated in 1927, and was then payable for the children when the family income did not exceed a prescribed limit, based on the living wage determined from time to time for the purposes of industrial awards under the Industrial Arbitration Act. Since 1929 the living wage had been based on the needs of a man, a wife and a child. Thus one child in each family was debarred from endowment. The endowment was paid until the child was 14, and was extended to 16 if the child were incapacitated. Children in charitable institutions were included.

When practicable, the endowment was paid to mothers; and for mother and child (except when the child was under 2 and had been born in the State), a residence qualification of 2 years immediately preceding date of claim was required. The amount payable was 5s. per week per child, but was reduced when necessary to comply with a condition that the endowment did not raise the family income above the living wage plus £13 for each dependent child.



The living wage varied according to the cost of living and was between £3 10s. —£3 19s. a week. By the family income was meant the combined income of claimant, and husband and children under 14 years. In assessing this combined income, however, certain amounts were excluded, such as sick pay, funeral benefits, money received from fire or insurance policies, lump sums received as payments under workmen's compensation, or superannuation or gratuity, earnings of children under 14, earnings of a mother from casual employment and also any payment by the State in respect of a child's attendance at school.

Until 1933 the money necessary to meet the cost of child endowment was obtained from proceeds of taxation levied upon employers on the basis of amounts paid in salaries and wages. This was abolished in January 1934, and endowment has since been paid from the general revenue of the State. The allowances were paid fortnightly, and were usually reckoned on family income during the twelve months preceding claim. Officers of the Public Service of the Commonwealth of Australia had in terms of their employment received child endowment since November, 1930. In their case the income limit was higher, and 5s. per week was paid for each dependent child under 16 provided this did not bring the remuneration of the wage-earner above £500 a year.

Employees in banks in New South Wales also received child endowment in terms of an award originally made by the Industrial Commission for New South Wales in June, 1939. The amount of £32 per child up to 14 or to 16 if at school was payable, provided that the amount of these allowances plus the wage-earner's salary, apart from other allowances, did not exceed £750.

When child endowment was first inaugurated, the same opposition was manifested towards it, as had been encountered since time immemorial by most attempts to improve the financial position of wage-earners.

But industry sustained the burden, and the amount raised was soon found to be above the money necessary. The levy was lowered and finally the amount came to be paid out of general revenue. The scheme worked most successfully and neither employer nor employee would suggest changing it, though many would like to see the payments increased, as 5s. a week did not even feed a child. If Australia wanted population, she must be prepared to pay for a Grade A population and a healthy well-fed one. Therefore the position of the parents with a family must be made at least as comfortable and as secure as that of those who were childless. This could be accomplished only by some form of child endowment.

MISS E. PICTON TURBERVILL, O.B.E., (National Council for Equal Citizenship), in seconding the motion, pointed out that the subject was now a live issue in Parliament and the country and that opposition was weakening. She assumed that the children's allowance would be paid to the mother so that the working-class woman would have the money put into her own hand. A family allowance would raise the status of the woman in the home and destroy one of the objections to equal pay for equal work. For the sake of future generations, the standard of working-class living must be improved.

MRS. JOHN JONES (Victorian Women Citizens' Movement) endorsed Mrs. Littlejohn's remarks, speaking as one who had lived in England for ten years, she instanced the case of a woman of about 35 with seven children of school age and a child boarded for 7s. a week because that nearly paid the rent of 8s. 6d. a week. Her husband was a bricklayer's labourer and earned, after paying his insurance, £2 a week. Nine people thus lived on £2 a week. At Christmas and Easter the husband received only four days' pay owing to the three days' enforced holiday. That meant that the family of such a worker had 10s. a week to live on at Christmas and Easter.

MRS. E. ABBOTT (Open Door Council), regretted that the basic wage in Australia was not the same for men and women, and that when family allowances had been introduced in that country they had not brought about equal pay. In Denmark and other Scandinavian countries there were in some cases family allowances in part of the Civil Service. They had nothing to do with bringing about equal pay, which had been won by women who fought for it and did not mix it up with family allowances. One of the reasons for child endowment was that certain wages

would not cover family needs. If those who wished to see child endowment would study the nutrition statistics of Great Britain and the condition of children in certain areas and base their arguments on those, they would probably obtain child endowment more speedily than by using other arguments. If a family allowance were given in such a way as to look like a wage for the wife, it would provide an excuse for turning married women out of work.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) asked why certain States in Australia which had had family allowances discontinued that admirable practice. She preferred the term "dependents' allowances," because one had to consider not only the children but the old. It would not be advisable to have any industry burdened with any part of the child allowances, but a prosperous country such as Great Britain should ease the burden of those who were struggling to make their way while handicapped by dependents. She did not agree that more dependents belonged to men than to women.

MRS. ISRAEL ZANGWILL (Women's Peace Crusade) supported the motion. She pointed out that family allowances had been successfully adopted in Great Britain during the last war.

MRS. LITTLEJOHN referred to Mrs. Abbott's remark that adoption of the child allowance system in Australia had not brought equal pay for equal work. The Feminist Societies wished to have the wage for the job as distinct from the allowance for wife and child. In reply to Mrs. White, family endowment had not been discontinued in any part of Australia. The basic wage generally included one child in certain parts it included three children; in others, two. Child endowment was included in the basic wage in every part of Australia—except in New South Wales, which gave individually—and in New Zealand.

As to aged dependents, for many years Australia had had a non-contributory Old Age Pension of £1 for women over 60 and men over 65. Under the projected National Insurance Scheme, it was proposed that women should be given 15s. and men £1. That had been opposed, and for the moment the National Insurance Bill put before the Parliament of Australia had been shelved.

MRS. E. HUBBACK agreed with Mrs. Abbott that equal pay could and did exist without family allowances, but pointed out that it was also true that equal pay would be much more widespread and easier to establish with family allowances. The motion was carried with three dissentients.

#### FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE WIFE.

The Conference being a little ahead of schedule it was decided that Miss Frances, who was down to second the motion under this heading, should be the proposer and thus allow Dr. Edith Summerskill, M.P., fuller time in which to speak.

MISS J. FRANCES (Married Women's Association) accordingly moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled supports the principle that the services rendered by a woman as wife and homemaker, whether such services be supervisory or manual, shall be recognised as of monetary value; and that she shall be legally entitled to a share in the family income for her personal needs.

MISS FRANCES felt that the economic position of the woman in the home was the basis of all inequality between men and women. Because a woman worked in the home as a dependent without any legal monetary recognition she influenced the rate of pay between men and women; because she was cheap labour, she depressed the value of all women's labour.

The prejudice against legal monetary recognition of a woman's services in the home ran parallel to the prejudice against giving women the vote. Men must be educated to realise that when a woman worked in the home for the benefit of the family she made it possible for a man to earn outside. There could be no equality between the sexes so long as the economic position of the married woman was left unrecognised.



DR. EDITH SUMMERSKILL, M.P., seconded the motion, and said: Before any legislation is introduced it is necessary to do something which will call for a tremendous amount of energy on the part of reformers to change public opinion. To free women economically will be almost harder than freeing them politically has been. In the fight for equal pay for equal work we have succeeded in many spheres. Women are accepted, if not welcomed, in most professions. It is true that though most of the work in parishes is done by women, they are not yet allowed to preach in the Church of England. Women are not yet recognised in the British diplomatic service.

There are two categories into which the wife can be put, from the economic point of view. There is, first, the wife with a private income. I am not concerned with the parasite, whether male or female. If a woman has a private income and makes no contribution to the running of the home, even in a supervisory capacity, she can be disregarded, though in fact the law looks after her very well.

Secondly, there is the wife without an income, the woman with whom the motion is concerned. The woman in the home who has no income of her own does not get a square deal from society in any shape or form. As a child she is probably brought up to believe that her future lies in marriage; and indeed her whole future depends upon her marriage being successful. Otherwise, she is entirely unequipped to do anything but run a home. Fortunately most marriages in Great Britain are extremely successful.

The present position is that any woman can, as her husband's agent, pledge his credit as far as necessities are concerned in order that she shall live in conformity with the particular sphere of life they occupy.

After that, what does the married woman get?

She is given the housekeeping money, and it is often said that the man who gives her all his earnings is a good husband. He is also in my opinion very clever, because it really in many homes requires almost the knowledge of a Chancellor of the Exchequer to be able to budget for the whole week and remain solvent on Saturday night. That is, however, achieved up and down the country by innumerable heroines. Yet if at the end of a week of cooking, scrubbing, washing, ironing and back-aching physical work, to say nothing of looking after the children and wondering how to make both ends meet, a woman saves a little money, or over a period of two or three years puts by in the Post Office in her name her savings, she is not legally entitled to one penny of them. Her husband can demand the money back. That is not just.

There are many homes in which women know that a large part of the income is spent on beer, dog-tracks and similar luxuries, whereas the wife has not sufficient to buy milk and essential food for her children. Nevertheless, she has no redress if the husband is able to prove that he is giving her enough to keep the family alive. That also is an injustice.

The argument advanced against any legislation suggested as a remedy of the evil is that 80 per cent. of the insured workers in the country are receiving under £4 a week. Therefore whatever kind of equal distribution of income there may be, there would not be enough to go round. That argument does not deal with the principle that if a woman knew she was legally entitled to a share of the income, it would add dignity to the home and in many cases lead to greater happiness.

Another ridiculous argument is that by attaching a monetary value to the services of the woman in the home, a husband and wife will be put in the position of employer and employee. Indeed, the Press has used the phrase 'Wages for Wives,' which certainly I have never had in mind. I have in mind an equal partnership, a totally different relationship from that of employer and employee. A perfect marriage is a partnership in which the man and the woman make their contributions to the home in their own particular way; the partnership books are open for both to see, the woman being aware of the amount coming in; and, moreover, it is a partnership in which not only the work is divided but the income is in common and each partner has a legal right to a share of the income.

MISS HELEN WARD (London and National Society for Women's Service) agreed that at the root of the problem was the wholly dependent and servile position of the married women. All the younger women should be urged to devote themselves to helping to solve the problem in their generation.

MRS. J. PRITCHARD (South African League of Women Voters) explained that the position of married women in South Africa was even more difficult than that of those in Great Britain, because the old Roman-Dutch law obtained, and all marriages were contracted in community of property unless an ante-nuptial contract was asked for by the wife. That was not often the case; it cost seven guineas and many could not afford it; and there were often sentimental reasons. As a result of action taken by the South African League of Women Voters there had been a slight alteration in the law so that when a woman married without an ante-nuptial contract and the husband died intestate she would receive a child's share or a quarter of what her husband left; if there were more children than three she would receive a quarter and the children the remainder.

MRS. E. ABBOTT (Open Door Council) opposed the motion as being dangerously framed. What share of the family income should the wife have for her personal needs, and how was the necessary legislation to be framed? In Scandinavia women were in a position much in advance of that of women in the British Empire. There was in Sweden a marriage law which gave economic status to the wife. The work of the wife in the home was recognised in a certain, though extraordinarily complicated, way. On the whole, when last the question had been discussed internationally, many who had studied the position of women in Great Britain had had to acknowledge that it had not been possible to define that status for women generally which would render a simple law, giving a wife a share of her husband's income, a safe law. That might be a danger and would not improve the status of the woman in the home. Legislation might adversely affect the freedom of the married woman engaged in paid work. On the whole it would be wiser to concentrate on obtaining a better status for the woman worker in the home and on obtaining a Married Women's Property Act for all women in the British Commonwealth.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) also opposed the motion. Whatever 'a share of the family income' was called it would, in fact, amount to a wage for a wife if one insisted that a husband should have over to her a share of his income. There should be some effort to devise a financial status for wives.

MRS. JOHN JONES, J.P. (Victorian Women Citizens' Movement) felt that the passing of any motion on the subject must be preceded by legislation for child endowment.

MISS ANNE PROTHEROE-JONES (Open Door Council) asked who was to ensure that the woman worker in the home was earning her wages. Was it to be her husband?

MRS. LEDGER ETHERIDGE (British Commonwealth League) asked if the wife was to be paid as a home worker, what was to happen when she got old and ill or insane? Was she to be pensioned off?

DR. SUMMERSKILL, in replying, expressed surprise at the mental attitude of certain speakers. There were some who seemed to think that once the Conference passed the motion there would, within a few weeks, be a law on the subject. The motion was not concerned with legislation. The Conference was being asked to support the principle that a woman 'shall be legally entitled to a share of the family income for her personal needs.' At the moment she was not legally so entitled. Surely that was unjust. Details in regard to legislation had not yet been worked out; that would take much time and call for the help of those who understood not only economics but how to draft the necessary Bill. All the motion did was to ask the Conference to say whether or not it was in favour of the existing system whereby a woman in the home was not in the eyes of the law legally entitled to any part of the money her husband handed to her.

As to Mrs. Abbott's contention, Dr. Summerskill added that in her experience if the status of women was improved in any sphere, that improved status was reflected upon women as a whole. The status of women in Scandinavia was infinitely better than in Britain. But it was difficult to believe that because women in Scandinavia had something approaching the kind of thing that women in Great Britain were pressing for, that that had necessarily damned them.



A show of hands indicated that the voting was very close. A division was called for, and the tellers counted 17 for and 14 against. The Chairman's announcement that the motion was carried was received with applause.

### DOMESTIC WORKERS.

MRS. FYFE, C.B.E. (Household League of United Service) said that the number of women undertaking housework was lessened by increasing facilities for education, the ease of transport from villages to the towns, and the increasing numbers of girls going in for office work. Any work seemed to be more attractive than housework, but to many who had for years run their homes happily and fairly successfully it seemed that many young women were missing a training which ensured happiness in life. It would be a bad day for the country if there were no longer any home life. Genuine give-and-take would answer better in the home than the stringent rules of a Trade Union. A good employer and a good servant should live in harmony together. Lady Headlam, who had helped in bringing many thousands of maids and employers together, had felt for a long time that something could be done to raise the status of the worker and make housework more attractive to the modern girl; and, while helping to solve the great problem of the shortage of domestic workers, would also bring home to many employers some of the reasons for this shortage. With several other keenly interested ladies, it had been decided to form

*The Household League of United Service.*

The name indicated what was being attempted. If the effort was successful, it would raise the status of the workers, and make them feel that housework could be honoured work that would give them not only a job but a training for the best job in the world—that of a happy wife and mother.

MISS M. E. FINCKEN (British Commonwealth League) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled strongly recommends increased facilities for the scientific, general and specialised training of home-workers, and that the conditions of employment of such workers shall reasonably approximate to the freedom and social status obtaining in other avenues of employment.

Miss Fincken asked her hearers to think what was conveyed by the words "domestic (home) service." "Service" was the greatest word in the English language. Women were to blame for the disrepute into which domestic service had fallen and for the fact that girls entered domestic service because there was nothing better they could do. Probably more women entered domestic service than any other work; yet that did not tend to promotion of happiness and efficiency in the home.

Miss Fincken continued: Since my return to England from South Africa I have been running hostels for girls. The greatest problem is the domestic one. Some of the residents are students from colleges, studying art, music, drama and so on. These girls cannot cook an egg, they know nothing of food values, or about running a house and, apparently, have little sense of service. It is lack of knowledge of how to run a home that creates many of the troubles with which women meet when they marry and have homes of their own. Many of those prepared to do domestic service are quite inefficient, and that is making it so difficult to solve the problem.

Education is essential and just as it has been decided that boys should be conscripted for service with the Forces, so women should be conscripted for a certain number of months after leaving school so that they may learn, both as employers and employees, how to run a house.

An increasing number of women are employing educated workers on their staffs. It is my experience that such workers exert a certain moral and spiritual influence on students. That is of great value. I believe more educated staffs are now being employed in university hostels. Many women who take up domestic work have, in the first instance, entered blind-alley occupations. They later turn to domestic service because nothing else offers, only to find that they are not really strong enough to carry on the work, which requires physical strength, staying power and a knowledge of how to do things in the right way. That brings us back to the question of education. In conclusion, I remind you that the domestic service problem is not confined to this country.

MRS. B. MACDONALD spoke as representing Australia. In seconding the motion she said:—

The possibilities of placing the conditions of homeworkers on a reasonable equality of freedom and social status with workers in other avenues of employment are much more difficult to accomplish in this country than in Australia. To begin with, the countries are entirely different—England is a very small country, with practically pocket-handkerchief distances, increasingly urbanised, and very closely populated. The spread of industries in this country, with their regulated hours of labour, good pay, week-end freedom and a recognised status for the workers, tempt girls to accept such work in preference to that of domestic service. Australia, on the other hand, is twenty-five times larger than the whole of Great Britain, with a large proportion of the population settled in the principal cities, on or near to the coast line. The majority of the industries are in these cities, but Australia's wealth and importance come from the land, and it is in the homes of those wide areas, and not so much in the cities, that the women are raising the standard of domestic service and giving social advantages and freedom to their workers, with a breadth of human understanding that is very often lacking in cities, and in smaller and more industrialised countries.

I had the great advantage, while in Australia, of studying this problem at first hand, in organizing the foundation scheme for settling the boys from Dr. Barnardo's Homes throughout the vast State of New South Wales,—followed by the Domestic Immigration Society bringing girls from 16 to 21 from Great Britain for domestic work in the country districts of N.S.W. and afterwards by the settlement of Scottish families with landowners. Since I returned to England, seven and a half years ago, I have worked on several Committees specialising in the problems of the domestic worker, and can, from an absolutely unbiassed viewpoint compare the conditions between the two countries, and the possibilities in each country of ever placing the status of domestic workers on a line with that of other workers in other avenues of employment.

1. The architecture of the houses is more workable in Australia than in England,—no basements, and, at the most, only one flight of stairs—good airy bedrooms, and, in most houses, a good sitting room. Kitchens are better equipped with modern conveniences. More labour saving devices are used—more on the American principle. Most of the farms and stations in the country districts have their own electric plant.

2. Better food—no difference made between employer's provender and that of the employee. vegetables are plentiful and fruit is much cheaper and more generally eaten than in England.

3. More freedom—working hours are much shorter. In ordinary households, in the cities, where only one maid is employed and the employer is in a City office, the evening meal is seldom later than 6-30 as offices close at 5, and shops at 6 in Australian cities. In the country districts that meal is often later, in the summer particularly, because the men on farms and sheep stations work while daylight lasts—but there is always the compensation of some hours of free time and leisure for the homeworkers in the afternoon.

4. There is more friendly co-operation between an Australian mistress and her maid. Australian women, highly cultured in every respect, pride themselves on their knowledge of cookery and housewifery, and run their homes particularly well, and encourage any maid who is not as proficient as themselves, to attend the classes at the Technical Colleges. There is much more 'give-and-take' and a better distribution of house duties between employer and employee in Australian homes, than there is in England.

5. Wages are better than in this country. Miss Jones, the very efficient Organising Secretary of the Church of England Settlement Committee (whose office is in Victoria Street), told me yesterday that during the past twelve months, between 180 and 200 girls had emigrated to Australia under the Church of England organisation, and none had been placed out under 30s. a week, others at 35s. and a few at £2 a week. All wrote very happily and praised the conditions under which they were living and working.

From my own experience of settling British girls and women in New South Wales, with very few exceptions, the only disgruntled migrants were those who had



formerly been for some years in service in English provincial or country homes. They were snobbish in the extreme, and very often not nearly as efficient as the Australian girls. The more successful ones were those who had been workers in congested industrial areas in this country, and gratefully contrasted the living conditions to which they had been transplanted to those they had left behind. These girls always proved very satisfactory in the country districts, saved money, and the majority of them married and settled in the country districts.

The magnificent work that is carried out by the Country Women's Association in every country district in every State of Australia, in their formation of Social Centres, to which all lonely girls are invited—circulating libraries, local dance clubs, cookery classes, sewing circles, wonderful health and medical services, and above all, their kindly interest and friendship, make life in the Australian country districts much happier for the domestic worker, particularly for those who have migrated from this country. The Country Women's Association of Australia, like the Women's Institutes in this country is composed of women of every rank in life, and they work unceasingly for decentralisation and satisfactory settlement in the country districts, knowing that no country district can remain settled or populated without homes, and as women are the home-makers, the need of the wives and mothers in those homes for domestic help is very necessary. Therefore, in every possible way, living conditions for the home-worker are raised to the best and happiest standard by these wide visioned women, and I feel that Australia will lead the way in raising the status of homeworkers.

MRS. FYFE, C.B.E., replying to Miss Frances (Married Women's Association) who had asked what was being done to further the training of domestic servants, said that the Ministry of Labour had a scheme whereby girls could undertake a course lasting eleven weeks. There were, in addition to the various day training centres, five residential centres.

LADY SANDERSON (Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society) said she had had three kitchen maids from the Ministry of Labour Domestic Training Home and all had been able to cook a three-course dinner. Her cook had thought them well worth training.

MRS. G. LANKESTER (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) could not understand how girls did not know how to boil an egg when so much more domestic training was now being given in secondary schools.

MRS. FYFE agreed that even in elementary schools girls received a measure of training. As a rule, they left school at fourteen. Many mothers did not trouble to supervise the girls' free time or to send them to classes. Thus during the time that elapsed between leaving school and having a home of their own they had forgotten much that they had learned, simply from lack of practice.

MISS DAWSON (Association of Head Mistresses) also expressed astonishment at the apparent ignorance of domestic science amongst girls. There were domestic science courses in most schools nowadays and girls were there trained in cookery, laundry, housewifery, and sewing.

LADY HEADLAM, C.B.E. (Household League of United Service) said that while there was no shortage of centres in which girls could receive training, it was difficult to get those centres fully used. Mothers in villages should realise that domestic service was not what it was in the old days. It was now an altogether better-conditioned job; there was a home and friendship.

MRS. EDEN (National Council of Women) thought it should be possible for the Women's Institutes to promote interest on the part of the girls and persuade the mothers to encourage them to enter domestic service. Teachers should be encouraged to advise girls to take up that type of work.

THE REV. DOROTHEA BELFIELD (Society for the Ministry of Women) thought that one of the greatest difficulties that had to be overcome was the objection mothers had to girls sleeping out. They preferred to keep them at home and send them to daily work. Women's Institutes could do much to impress upon mothers that the daily place was not always the best preparation for domestic service. In the villages and small towns there were no facilities for day-training.

MRS. LEDGER ETHERIDGE (British Commonwealth League) urged that a Conference be called in London to discuss the subject. Mrs. Littlejohn had said we wanted Grade A children, and one of the reasons why we could not have such children was that parents were often unable to obtain adequate domestic help. While poorer people had large families, those in better circumstances who wanted children could not have more because of the difficulty of obtaining help. The Germans and Austrians who had entered domestic service in this country had proved very efficient. Many had now returned and it was not easy to replace them.

MISS L. HANDS (Federation of Women Zionists) drew attention to the potentialities of refugees as domestic servants, saying, however, that the price which was asked for their service was a matter which should receive further consideration. The motion was carried unanimously.

DAME MARIA OGILVIE GORDON (National Council of Women of Australia) suggested that the proposed Conference should be called by the Household League of United Service or by the National Council of Women rather than by the British Commonwealth League.

The CHAIRMAN asked for an expression of opinion as to whether such a Conference as that proposed by Mrs. Etheridge should be called, and on receiving a unanimous reply in favour of such a course undertook to bring the matter before the Executive of the British Commonwealth League with a view to seeing what could be arranged.

## CIVIC STATUS.

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

THE PRESIDENT (Mrs. Corbett Ashby, LL.D.): In these days of many organisations and of pressing and anxious problems the British Commonwealth League has a quite definite rôle to fill. We have had a busy and, I think, useful year. Again and again we have been on deputations to Government Offices; we have written letters; we have backed up, at the request of overseas societies, questions especially concerning the Dominions Offices and the Secretary of State for the Colonies as well as other social questions; and above all various feminist questions here at home.

I have to announce a very serious loss. We have relied perhaps more than we quite realised, on the enthusiasm and indefatigable work of Mrs. Guy Innes as our Chairman, and we regret she has felt obliged to resign. We hope very much that we shall be able to welcome her back at the end of the year, and we do hope that Mrs. Innes will remember us and not become too much engaged in other interests, but will keep a corner for us in her heart.

Mrs. Hubback regretted this morning that one motion had not been better drafted. We cannot be specialists in every question, but it would add enormously to the possibility of usefulness of the British Commonwealth League if more societies would join us. The greater the number of women's organisations the more imperative it is that we should have some common meeting ground in which we can pool our knowledge and get other societies interested in pushing forward our special work. The British Commonwealth League has the advantage of including women from overseas who, as we have heard to-day, have all the same problems though they may have to meet them from a slightly different angle.

One of our difficulties is in itself an excellent one; that is, that women are tending to be more and more human and less and less conscious of being women. That is the value of our enfranchisement, of our better education and of the much greater share that we are now allowed to take in community life; but it means also that it is twice as difficult as it was in the suffrage days for women to remember the disadvantages under which they still suffer and to get the necessary co-operation for remedying those disadvantages. During the series of crises through which we have passed, for example, all of us have been bitterly anxious, not only on behalf of our country and Empire but for personal reasons, especially those of us who have sons or men of service age. How many of us have really thought of this anxiety as



an additional reason why we should bestir ourselves to give equal rights to nationality to British women as well as to British men? How many of us felt ashamed when we read in the paper recently that the alien wife of a British husband would, of course, be accepted as a volunteer for A.R.P. when we knew very well that a British woman married to an alien would have her services refused on the ground that she was an alien? It seems to me that now we are used to women in public life and less conscious of the disadvantages and disabilities of sex, we do not pull together. Those of us in the old Suffrage Movement will remember the old argument that *now* was "not the time" to do whatever it was we happened to want. On the other hand, it is certainly true that we have many societies in the British Commonwealth League and we ought in addition to our particular work to think what is the rôle that the Commonwealth itself should play in the world of to-day and then what is the rôle that the British Commonwealth League should play.

It is obvious that the Nations of the Commonwealth have been and still are acutely anxious about what is happening in Europe—the danger to the Mother-country, the danger to Imperial communications, all those difficulties that are going to weigh so heavily upon us and loss of markets which must lead to a reduction in the standard of living of any country which has only built up that standard of living on a vast external trade. Those are some of the anxieties. On the other hand, I think the British Commonwealth can play a vital part at the moment. It is built up on the theory of co-operation, not only co-operation in defence but, as it showed magnificently during the last War, spiritual co-operation. It is only that attitude of spiritual co-operation which can save the world from a new and greater catastrophe.

Is there anything to be learned from the Commonwealth of value to international relations? As I see it (and all this must of course, in a sense, be controversial) the value of the Commonwealth in that spiritual co-operation is that it is a co-operation between equals. The nations of the Commonwealth are, as we now know, through the Statute of Westminster and through the necessities of modern life and their own development, to all intents and purposes independent and sovereign nations, though we have the Crown as a living bond. Only one restriction on national sovereignty exists and that is as regards war or participation in war. Is not that what we want to build up between nations? We have been able to make a success of the British Commonwealth because we have not attempted to push national sovereignty beyond the limit at which the co-operative good is greater than the national good. Is not that precisely what we want to commend to the world—a limitation of freedom which gives the only real freedom? It is due to the appalling abuse of national sovereignty that to-day there is no security, no safety, no liberty for either the individual or the community.

Another way in which I think we can help is that we can affect enormously the standard of living of every human soul, according to whether the British Empire is for or against economic co-operation. We can also make or mar the prosperity standard of living and happiness for the races of the world according to whether we are ready to co-operate. The action of the British Commonwealth would, I believe, in itself be sufficient to stop any war that could break out in any quarter of the globe if we really used our own economic power to withhold help from the aggressor; used our immense economic power to stop war instead of protesting against certain action and then pouring in the very munitions of war that make that action possible.

How can women help? We are not in the big industries which control the Government, but, after all, behind practice lies theory, and women have an enormous practical power in directing the thought of the community. As we direct it so to a very large extent it will respond. We have at any rate our special share in directing the course of events and in fighting another ghastly theory, as old as the hills, known as "the racial theory." The British Commonwealth League has with-in it all creeds, all races; and on our carrying out of our campaign against this disastrous racial theory rests to a large extent its victory or defeat in the rest of the world. We cannot go into this fight with clear consciences, for all over the Empire there are racial discriminations. It is for women to be in the forefront against these discriminations, because we are against, primarily, the ridiculous and unjust discrimination which is sex discrimination. If we are bold enough, far-

sighted enough, we shall use our influence to achieve equality of opportunity, equality of education, equality of training and equality of liberty in the real sense, without distinction of sex, I believe we shall be false to our ideals unless we carry out that theory far more widely and insist that we stand for spiritual equality and practical equality between races.

When we ask for equality for women we realise that women are as unlike each other as men; but that does not prevent us from standing for the principle of equality and applying it with vision and practical ability as far as we humanly can. If we tackle it in that spirit we shall be surprised how far that application can go; and it will have an immense bearing on the solution of the most acute problems of to-day.

We know that in recent utterances of one of the German politicians it was said that if Germany recovered her lost colonies in Africa she would apply the racial theory with the utmost severity. We must ask ourselves in how many other parts of the Empire we are not guilty of discriminations which in effect are nearly as bad.

Reference to the agenda will show that our mission is two-fold. First, we must as women make our contribution to the solution of the questions in which every woman is interested—in other words, to quote Barrie, "What Every Woman Knows"—such as that of nutrition. But because we are also citizens we must bear in mind that behind the special problems in which we are interested is the background of the wider humanity.

It seems to me that the greatest problem facing the world to-day is that of human personality and liberty. We have achieved as a result of our knowledge and with the aid of science a "dizzy point of eminence," but we are no longer capable of guiding the machine we have created. In my view the solution of all our problems depends on whether we have reverence for human personality and liberty or whether, in what seems to me a false admiration for immediate efficiency, we are ever more tempted to sacrifice the individual to the machinery and control of the State; whether the individual is regarded as a mere cog in some State machine or whether the State is regarded as the machinery created in order to promote the maximum amount of happiness, the highest standard of living and the fullest development of human personality.

## DEMOCRACY

The following motion was moved from the Chair:

"The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled prays that its Governments will preserve the principles of democracy without distinction of race, class, creed or sex."

The Chairman said that because women had, for the most part, come to the conclusion that they did not believe it possible to divorce the care of the body from that of the soul and the spirit, they would say that democracy was only true if, without distinction of race, class, creed, or sex it created a fine mind and high soul in a healthy and energetic body.

DAME MARIA OGILVIE GORDON (National Council of Women of Australia) said that exposition of the term "Democracy" exactly represented the foundations for the last fifty years and more of the work of the National Council of Women as also the International Council. She paid a tribute to the President's address, to which she felt the Conference had listened with a great sense of enlightenment.

On MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) questioning the word "preserve," the CHAIRMAN said there had been a difficulty in framing the motion. It was difficult to find a better word. She invited suggestions and the general view seemed to be that the word "uphold" would be more suitable and the motion was carried with the substitution of that word for "preserve."



## THE STATUS OF THE NATIVE WOMAN.

MISS UNA MARSON (Jamaica) moved—

"The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls upon the Government to press the League of Nations to set up a Committee competent to deal with the Status of the Women of the Primitive Peoples, consisting not only of jurists but of persons with special knowledge of the conditions of the populations concerned."

She spoke for those who belonged to the outposts of Empire, and by "outposts" she did not mean Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or South Africa, but the little colonies in the British Commonwealth. It was felt that the chief cause of neglect of the conditions prevailing among primitive peoples—and she did not like the word "primitive"—was the fact that the education given in Great Britain prevented those who went out to work among those peoples from really understanding and appreciating their difficulties. That did not apply exclusively to those who went out among primitive peoples. There was a lack of understanding and sympathy even in Great Britain. Frequently a group of middle-class children called "Blackie" when they saw her in the street, and then ran off. Though she and those she represented had exactly the same feelings as other women they were looked upon as individuals apart, as strange creatures. Not only the wives of Governors, but others who went out to the colonies, seemed to think of the peoples there as beings who should remain at a certain fixed low standard of living. That produced a grave and serious problem.

It was important that such a Conference should insist on an enquiry into the condition of these women. They suffered; they needed sympathy, help and understanding. And as all the facts in regard to the conditions under which they lived did not come to the Colonial Office, it would be helpful to have a Committee to thoroughly investigate those conditions. The Committee should be composed of those who had understanding of the conditions, the psychology and the history and other aspects of the life of the people.

MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER (St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) seconded the motion. She referred to previous unsuccessful efforts to have the status of primitive women included in the World Survey, for which a Special Committee had been appointed by the League of Nations in 1937. They had accordingly advised the League of Nations to do exactly what the Conference was being asked to do on that occasion.

Asked whether a Committee, if appointed, would be likely to go ahead with the work, Miss C. SPENDER replied that it would be an obligation on the Committee to do so, just as it was the duty of the Committee of experts to proceed with the World Survey.

LADY SANDERSON (Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society) said it seemed to rest with a body such as the British Commonwealth League to send up a suggestion and get it forwarded. She agreed as to the importance of getting on to the Committee those who really knew the conditions among primitive peoples. Native women had insight, foresight, and knowledge not possessed by those outside their country.

The CHAIRMAN thought the best step would be for societies to suggest the names of suitable nominees, qualified experts from various countries concerned. All recommendations had to go through the Government and it was advisable for those in South Africa, Australia, or New Zealand to get into touch with the High Commissioners in London to ascertain what likelihood there was of their sending a recommendation to the League of Nations simultaneously with the British Government.

MISS UNA MARSON pointed out that the word "primitive" was hurtful to her coloured sisters.

The CHAIRMAN said that as the motion was going to the League of Nations it was necessary to use a word which did not necessarily limit it to women living in what were technically known as the colonial areas. If the Conference would accept the wording before it, an endeavour would be found to substitute a better term before the resolution was forwarded.

The motion was then carried unanimously on this understanding.

## WOMEN ON PUBLIC BODIES.

### HEALTH AND EDUCATION.

MRS. WINTRINGHAM, J.P., gave an outline of the method of creation and growth of Local Government machinery. Central and Local Governments and Voluntary Organisations between them, covered nearly every part of our lives from pre-natal clinics to old age pensions and funeral clubs. There were three parties—Administration, Representatives elected by voters, and Electors.

If administration were to come to a sudden stop, we should find such conditions as streets unswept, water supply cut off, no street lights, no schools, no Poor Law Institutions.

Each of us would be free to knock our neighbour on the head, pick his pockets, or give him measles.

Citizens had to work this machinery—not hierarchy nor throne. As a general rule, the educational and health services of an area were as likely to be as good or as bad as the area and its inhabitants deserved.

If there is little public interest in such matters, little enthusiasm, little care, and a desire to keep down the rates at all costs, the provision will be the minimum.

She had often found, when talking about the powers of Local Government, that her listeners did not know who were their representatives on the Rural Council, Rural District Council, Town Council, County Council, and even in the House of Commons.

Since women had had the vote, many shortcomings had been uncovered and much apathy and indifference had been dispelled.

After tracing the origin and growth of local government from the time of Alfred the Great, Mrs. WINTRINGHAM said the Councils now carrying out the work of Local Government were—

Urban District Council and Parish Council—197 with 650 women.

Rural—432 with 485 women.

Town Council and Borough Council—845 with 372 women.

County Council—62 with 276 women.

Each had its special function in carrying out the laws made by Parliament.

The two particular aspects of Local Government work which she had been asked to consider were Health and Education.

*Education Committees* must be set up by every *Local Education Authority*. These Committees were constituted in accordance with a scheme made by the Council and approved by the Board of Education. The Council was bound to appoint persons with *special knowledge* and experience of education, and must also *include women* among its members.

*Sub-Committees* were appointed by the Education Committee, consisting either wholly or partly of members of the main Committee to deal with higher education, finance and scholarships.

It might not be possible for a woman to give full time to County Council or Town Council work, but she could do most valuable service in serving on a Management Committee.

The election of these Committees was important. There had been many cases of a Committee administering a Girls' School composed entirely of men, and hundreds of village Schools Committees had no women at all on them. The value of even one was great, as there were many details about such things as school dinners, milk in schools, drying of clothes, supervision of cloakrooms, alterations in buildings, equipment and teaching of Domestic Science. In these days, when new Senior Schools were well-equipped to provide school meals it was a tragedy that in the Junior and Infant Schools, where the need for good nutrition was even more necessary, there was a deplorable absence of any provision. Where women managers had an interest all kinds of action had been taken to ensure some kind of provision—hot dinners, hot soup, or a hot drink, and above all proper supervision of table manners and table equipment.

It ought to be possible for women interested in the conduct of the village school to manage to get appointed. One section of the Educational System which should be the very special concern of women was the employment of children.



A child under twelve must not be employed at all; a child between twelve and fourteen must not be employed on any Sunday for more than two hours, on any school day before the close of school hours, or on any day before 6 a.m. and after 8 p.m.

The branches of health administration were very numerous and there was a special need for women on all Committees relating to this matter. Under this heading came Housing including sanitation and water supply; Maternity and Child Welfare; Public Health Committee; Care of the Blind; Care of the Insane and Mentally Deficient; Public Assistance; Baths and Wash Houses; Tuberculosis; Adulteration of foods, including milk, and inspection of cowsheds and dairies.

*Housing* included plans for new and reconditioned houses; closing of condemned houses, slum clearance, and the supervision of common lodging houses, sanitation and water supply.

Women were invaluable on the *Maternity and Child Welfare* Committees. Women, whether as representatives or officials, had amply demonstrated their capacity in the sphere of the London County Council.

MRS. J. PRITCHARD (South African League of Women Voters) regretted that the main difficulty was apathy on the part of women themselves.

MRS. F. WHITE (Open Door Council) urged that civics should be taught in schools. Then there would be no lack of personnel for local bodies.

MISS C. K. SCOVELL (British Commonwealth League) speaking as one who had for many years been a county councillor, said that excellent as it was to get women co-opted on to local bodies, it was far better to have them elected. They would come forward if only they received the necessary backing.

#### WOMEN AND THE LAW.

Mrs. FLORENCE EARENGEY, J.P., Barrister-at-Law, said: The present century has seen some remarkable changes and developments in world conditions and in the life of its peoples, notably the use of the motor vehicle and the advance in the status of women.

The Prime Minister, speaking at the Albert Hall to women of his own party' said "I seem to be in these days the target of rotten eggs; but that does not keep me awake, because I believe I have the support of the women of the country. And," he added, "they have a clearer vision than some of those whose sight is obscured by party or personal prejudice." That was a tribute to the public work of women, and it reads strangely to those of us who remember the strenuous opposition to women's demand for full citizenship, and the prediction of the disasters which would overwhelm the nation if the demand were granted.

That woman's status as a citizen has undergone a great change is indisputable, more especially since the Great War, with the passing of the Sex Disqualification Act 1918, and later the extension of the Franchise to women on the same terms as men (commonly called "the Flapper Vote). Looking a little further back, the Married Women's Property Act 1882 may be regarded as the Woman's Charter, establishing as it does her independence so far as the control of her own property is concerned. The subservient position of woman for many centuries, until quite recently, largely sprang from the Feudal System, under which grants of land were made in return for military service. Women were obviously incapable of rendering personal service of the kind required, and few grants were therefore made to them. For the same reason, when lands so granted became inheritable they descended to the eldest or younger sons, in preference to the daughters; and if a woman tenant married, her husband took control of her property and administered the income entirely as he thought fit. As a result woman became dependent on some man—father, brother, or husband—from the cradle to the grave. It is true that previous to this a husband could not sell his wife's real estate without her concurrence, but this was frequently obtained "by kicks or kisses," and many wives were reduced to penury.

A partial remedy was found by the Courts of Equity, by means of a device known as the Restraint against Anticipation. If the property was settled on this

way no sale could be made and no anticipation of the income was valid. This necessarily assumed woman's inferior status, for such a restraint was not allowed in the case of a man. But it paved the way to a better status, and ultimately to the Married Women's Property Act, 1882. Under this Act whatever property a woman possesses on her marriage remains hers, free from the control of her husband; and whatever property she acquires during the marriage also remains hers. She is at liberty to contract, and to acquire rights and incur obligations in contract or tort. But, by what seems a curious construction, she was held to contract, and to be liable, only in respect or to the extent of her separate estate. A judgment against her was therefore limited to her separate property, and was not a personal judgment such as would apply to the case of a man or single woman. This anomaly was, however, abolished by the Law Reform (Married Women and Tortfeasors) Act, 1935, in respect of any obligation incurred after the 2nd August, 1935. This may be a left-handed compliment, for she may now be made bankrupt, or committed to prison under the Debtors Act, 1869, just as if she were a man; but it at least places her on an equality with men in this respect, even if it is an equality of obligation; and to that extent it is to be welcomed.

The same Act abolished, with certain limited and temporary exceptions, the Restraint on Anticipation; the reason for its existence had ceased, for a wife is no longer likely to be induced by her husband's "kicks or kisses" to part with her property, or to deal with it as he might direct. The Restraint has always been void in the case of a man, and this badge of inferiority has now in effect gone.

The Act of 1935 also abolished another interesting anomaly; husband and wife were regarded in law as one. He therefore could be sued with her for any tort committed by her while she was his wife and was not judicially separated from him. This no doubt originated in the theory that he could control her tongue as well as her property and person. Such a theory was possibly well-founded many years ago, but times have changed; and since the 2nd August, 1935, no action of this nature can be brought against him unless he was in fact a party to the tort. There is, however, still left in existence the husband's liability for his wife's income-tax. Separate assessments may be claimed, and allowed; but he remains personally liable to the Crown for tax due in respect of her separate property, although he may not touch a single penny of it. And, as to his liability, it appears that he cannot compel her to repay him what he has so to pay.

One other marital question must not be omitted from this review. It will be remembered that, by an Act of 1857, a marriage could be dissolved for adultery on the part of the wife, while adultery on the part of the husband was not sufficient; the wife had to show other causes in addition, such as cruelty, desertion, bigamy, etc. Now by the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1937, the grounds for divorce have been extended and made applicable to husband and wife alike. Whatever view may be taken as to the adequacy of these grounds, it is gratifying to think that equality now exists in this matter between the sexes. In the matter of procedure, however, equality does not exist. A wife can in some cases still compel her husband to find security for her costs.

With regard to Inheritance, to which I have already referred, another advance has to be recorded. By the Administration of Estates Act, 1935, the old rule that on an intestacy the eldest son took the real estate, subject to the surviving spouse's dower (a life interest in one-third of the income to the wife) or tenancy by the courtesy (a life interest in the whole to the husband) has been abolished. Real and personal estate are now to follow the same destination, viz.: equal division between all the children, subject to the surviving spouse's interest, which is the same for interest whether the survivor be husband or wife.

The Sex Removal Disqualification Act has wrought a number of changes on which I may briefly touch. Efforts had previously been made to enable women to become barristers and solicitors, but without success. This bar was removed by the Act, and in due course many women joined the Inns of Court and were in due course called to the Bar. Similarly many became articled to Solicitors, and became Solicitors themselves. They fulfil a useful rôle in both branches of the legal profession. There are undoubtedly many cases, especially in sexual offences and cases where women and children are called as witnesses, in which a woman advocate



is more suited to deal with psychological issues than men. The confidence of the witness in such matters is of the utmost importance, and it will scarcely be disputed that women understand their own sisters, and children, far better than men can hope to do. In divorce cases the ideal combination of Leader and Junior seems to be a Leader of experience and a woman Junior of great understanding.

No woman has as yet been appointed a Judge, Recorder, or Metropolitan Police magistrate in England, although there are several women Judges in America. Since 1918 women have taken their place as Jurors, and it seems to be generally thought that they have discharged their duties admirably. In consequence of the same Act a number of women have been appointed Justices of the Peace. The great majority of magisterial benches now have women members, and in a few instances women have been elected Chairmen of their Benches. In view of the fact that over 90% of the crime of this country is dealt with summarily by magistrates, and that many cases involve women and children (and especially girls) in some capacity or other, it is obvious that women magistrates have a useful role to perform. But attendance in Court is not the only duty of a Justice of the Peace. Some are appointed Judicial Authorities under the Lunacy Acts, and deal also with mental Defectives. Further, Statutory Committees of Justices and Boards of Visitors serve the Prisons of the country. They not only visit the prisons regularly but hear cases of breach or discipline, and award punishments where necessary. The number of women prisoners is very small as compared with men; there are about 650 women prisoners in England and Wales, and for this work, often of a very intimate nature, it seems to me essential that the majority of the Committees of women's prisons should consist of women Justices, with a considerable knowledge of psychology. Women can be most useful also in the domestic régime of the prison—the questions of food, clothing, cooking, and the general well-being of the women, all have to be considered.

Another branch of public service in which women can, and should, give valuable aid, is the Police Force; and when the nature of the work of the Police is considered it seems strange that the establishment of women police has been so long delayed, and is still so inadequate. The charge of women was recognized by the appointment of two women to supervise women convicts. It was undesirable that women and children should have to make statements to men in cases of sexual offences against them. Children are, in such cases, so terrified that it is almost impossible to get them to speak. Sir Nevil Macready, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said in 1920: "I have no doubt in my own mind that the matter ought to be taken over entirely by women police." Gradually women police matrons were employed to take charge of women and girls when in custody, more especially in the large towns. These police matrons, of course, have not the powers of the police, and cannot take statements, though present when they are taken by men police officers.

H.M.'s Chief Inspector of Constabulary in his annual report for 1933 stated: "It is now, I think, clearly understood in every police district that women in police custody must be attended by, and be under the supervision of, members of their own sex from the time they come into the charge-room until they leave it." In spite of this, one finds from H.M.'s Inspector's Report for 1936 that out of 181 Forces in England and Wales there are less than 107 with not only no police woman but no full time matron employed; in such places a woman is called in as required.

The Children's Act, 1933, provides that all girls under 17 brought to Police Court shall be in charge of a woman, though not necessarily a policewoman.

Police matrons and women "as required" are not adequate substitutes for fully qualified and attested policewomen; and it is hoped that Local Authorities will recognize the necessity of insisting on the appointment of women to serve in this Force. In 1936 the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police authorised an increase in the numbers of Policewomen from 68 to 142.

In addition to their having charge of women and girls in custody, policewomen are invaluable as patrols in parks and in the streets, and a further increase in their number in the country would probably lead to a substantial decrease in the assaults upon girls.

From the foregoing observations it is obvious that many barriers against

women's contribution to the country's service have been broken down, and women can enter almost every profession except the Church and the Diplomatic Service. Retrograde measures have been adopted in some foreign countries, in which women are relegated to the confines of the Church, the Children and the Kitchen. It is yet hoped that our own country will maintain its attitude of progress, to its own advantage and the benefit of the world in general. It is impossible to reach the heights of civilisation until the nations give all their citizens the opportunity of full development and service unhampered by artificial disabilities.

## WOMEN ON JURIES

MRS. J. PRITCHARD (South African League of Women Voters) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled draws attention to the valuable services rendered by women on Juries in Great Britain, and recommends its affiliated societies in other parts of the British Commonwealth to press the respective Governments to enable their women citizens to participate in this service.

Mrs. Pritchard said: You all remember the couplet from Butler's *Hudibras*:  
Do not our juries give the verdict  
As if they felt the case—not heard it?

It is constantly asserted that whatever truth underlies this aphorism would be aggravated by compelling or empowering women to serve as jurors.

It was said that women had not the business experience or contact with the realities of life which would enable them to deal with the issues to be decided by juries; that they were more likely than men to be swayed by mere appeals to emotion; and that neither by instinct nor training had they, nor could they ever hope to acquire, a real capacity for weighing evidence. These predictions have invariably been falsified.

At first it was reluctantly admitted that even before professional vocations were thrown open to women, their services on juries would have been of great value in cases of divorce and of criminal offences against members of their sex. Experience has now shown that in all countries where women's electoral and vocational freedom has been granted, the truth that responsibility breeds a sense of responsibility applies equally well to service on juries.

In spite of these facts, in South Africa women do not yet serve on juries. This is not entirely the fault of the Government, though it is largely so, because they have imposed difficult qualifications, and very few women are eligible; but even these few showed an extraordinary apathy when women were called for. Each city had to supply a certain number of women willing to serve. If I remember rightly, only one city supplied the required number—that was partly owing to the qualifications; but if the few women eligible had risen to the occasion, it might have been accomplished.

But we have accomplished something else—we have women assessors. It took us years of hard work to get as far as this. It was only when, as National Secretary of the South African League of Women Voters, I wrote to each Judge personally (I think there are about thirty-two Judges) and asked them to try women as assessors, that they began to call them. These women assessors have only so far been called in the Province of the Free State. We have written repeatedly to other Provinces, but so far have had no success.

I wish it were possible for this Conference to use its influence to assist the women of South Africa to obtain this valuable right. The League of Women Voters will continue to agitate the matter, and will also see to it that next time we are given longer time for the sending in of names; but it would be most useful if additional help could come from here.

MISS M. REEVES (Women's Freedom League) seconded the motion. She said that while the law might be all it should be, practice was not. It was possible for a jurywoman to be challenged. There were many who seemed to think it was nice and proper that women should be willing to leave the Court when certain cases were tried. It was in her opinion, the duty of a woman to refuse so to do.



MRS. WINTRINGHAM cited the limitation that a husband who was a barrister was disqualified from serving on a jury, his wife being also disqualified through his disqualification.

The motion was carried unanimously.

### WOMEN POLICE

MRS. EGBERT MORLAND (Society of Friends' Penal Reform Committee) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges the appointment of a greater number of Women Police throughout Great Britain, the Dominions and the Colonies. It notes with regret that in Great Britain out of 181 County and Borough Police Forces, 142 do not employ any police women at all, and in many instances one woman alone is expected to fulfil all the duties assigned to the office of policewoman in that district. It also recommends the appointment of more Police Matrons.

Mrs. Morland reminded the Conference that women police had arisen out of the voluntary organisation known twenty-five years ago as Women Patrols, under Commandant Allan. To-day women police stood for the protection of the weak, the prevention of evil, the preservation of child life in the streets, and making the streets safe for women and children. Law and order rested on moral suasion, not on physical force. The women police were chosen for their admirable qualities.

In 1920 Sir Neville Maccready had said that if women police were put on the same footing as policemen, he would place the whole question of solicitation in their hands. In 1922 the Committee on National Expenditure decided as an economy to disband women police. The public, however, would not agree and women police were retained. It was now realized that they were an indispensable adjunct to any well-ordered Police Force.

Women police had made good during the most dangerous period in Ireland and, in co-operation with German police, in the occupied territories. They moreover rendered excellent service in instituting a hostel for the shelter of girls in German occupied territory, running the hostel and befriending many young girls.

During their years of service women police had shown themselves tactful, efficient and resourceful and had won for themselves universal respect and gratitude. There must be more of them, for every thoughtful woman knew that there were matters concerning women and children—and men too—in which the presence and help of a policewoman was invaluable. Their work and influence in the life of the people was to-day a necessity.

MISS G. CHOSACK (South African League of Women Voters), in seconding the motion, regretted that there were no women police in South Africa. There were women probation officers, but most of them were voluntary. There were, she thought, only two paid first-grade women probation officers in the whole of South Africa. Some time ago in Cape Town four first-grade women probation officers were called for, to be paid at the same rate as second-grade men probation officers—the old problem of equal pay for equal work.

In South Africa the varied population increased the need for women police. That the non-European population would welcome them was indicated by the fact that one of the three Europeans elected under the Native Representation Act to sit in the House of Assembly in South Africa as the representative of the Bantu was a woman—Mrs. Ballinger. So long as there were no women police in South Africa it would be all the more necessary to work to improve the position of women probation officers.

There were as yet no women magistrates in South Africa, the reply of the Minister of Justice when resolutions on the subject were forwarded to him being that the law at present did not permit of their appointment. Of course when putting forward such resolutions the League of Women Voters had not lost sight of the fact that a change in the law was necessary. There was, however, movement in the right direction in that the Minister of Labour also held the portfolio of Social Welfare, and a director of Social Services had recently been appointed.

MRS. WINTRINGHAM stressed the necessity for more women police in Great Britain, in view of the increasing number of aerodromes. Great vigilance was required in connection with the dangers to which young girls were exposed.

The motion was carried unanimously.

### PROTECTORS FOR ABORIGINES

MRS. JOHN JONES, J.P. (Victorian Women Citizens' Movement) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled appreciates the intention of the Commonwealth Government of Australia as evidenced by their "New Deal" for Aborigines. While recognising the work already done by the Commonwealth and the States for the betterment of the Aborigines, this Conference urges the appointment of Women Protectors and Inspectors to the Aboriginal women of Australia.

It also recommends the appointment of women doctors, believing that such appointments would assist in the solution of long-standing problems relative to the health and moral protection of native women.

MRS. JONES said that for ten successive years this Conference had affirmed its belief that much of the suffering and degradation of detribalised native women in Australia could have been mitigated, had they been afforded official help by women protectors working in co-operation with male government officials. Year after year resolutions asking for the appointment of qualified women had been sent to the Australian Government, not only from this and other English societies, but also from women's societies throughout the Australian States. The question, however, remained just as it was, or perhaps a more definitely negative and undemocratic position than ten years ago. The matter came to a head in Australia last year with the meeting of Chief Protectors and other government officials at Canberra to consider the welfare of aborigines. Among the resolutions passed was one stating: "While the use of women protectors for the supervision of female natives in populated areas may in places be desirable, the general appointment of women is not considered practicable, because of the very scattered nature of native camps, the difficulties of travel and the isolation." At the same time the Report recorded the opinion of Mr. Neville, Commissioner for Aborigines in West Australia that "There is also the difficulty that aboriginal women will not usually give information to a white woman. . . such information can be obtained only from the men by a man."

Commenting on this last assertion first, it might be remarked that in their worst difficulties native women at times became separated from their own people, being bartered by their husbands to Japanese, Malays, and even white men in exchange for drink and tobacco; further it should be remembered that there had been no official women protectors to whom native women could give information. Valuable comment on this point was supplied by the recently published book "African Women" in which the author, Sylvia Leith-Ross, said: "We have perhaps until recently received our information too exclusively through men, whether acting as investigators or informants. Even with the highest degree of trained discernment it is difficult for a male investigator to get an accurate impression of what goes on in a woman's mind when it is revealed to him by another man, who will probably and often unconsciously make out that the woman is of little account; that her whole life is in his hands, that she has no will, no property, and he holds the accepted view that the husband is lord and master and that the woman is his property."

Such an opinion seemed justified also in Australia, for recently a Federal Judge at Alice Springs upheld the claim of a wild warrior from the bush who had kidnapped a girl-child of eleven from the mission station where since babyhood she had been nurtured as a Christian. The property claim as his promised wife was allowed.

The other reasons given against appointing women Protectors, and now adopted by the Federal Government, seemed equally fallacious. Difficulties of travel and isolation of native camps had not prevented governments from bringing native women singly or in batches as witnesses against their men folk, entailing upon these innocent women the indignity and often suffering, of being travelled with scanty clothing or none at all for hundreds of miles on foot, generally tethered to the policeman-protector's saddle, he alone being responsible for their lodging, if any, at night, and their supply of food. Would any white woman say that where native women have to be travelled in the cause of justice and generally for no wrongdoing of their own, that there were not white women qualified and willing to act as



their protectors? "Isolation" was no valid impediment against the employment of women as Protectors. The name of Daisy Bates could have been cited. Moreover Florence Buchanan, a delicate lame little lady, in 1908 went out from Queensland to Moa Island in the Torres Straits. She lived there for years alone, deputed by the Queensland Government and the Church authorities to act unaided among the natives, as teacher, nurse, religious leader, judge and governor. So strongly and well did she lay the foundations that to-day the Government pointed to Moa Island as a model self-governing community.

Under all civilised governments it was allowed that girls and women under distressful publicity should be accorded the help of other women. The treatment sometimes accorded to native women was an exception. Only last month there appeared in Australian papers the account of a conviction against a pearl-diver for harbouring female aborigines on his ships. This was the first prosecution in Darwin for this offence in spite of twenty years protests by Father Gsell and others. The court was crowded to capacity with Japanese, Malays, Koepangers, and Europeans. The magistrate showed great sympathy for the aboriginal witnesses.

A few days later nine native women, alleged to have been on two pearling boats, were taken into custody by the police and brought into Darwin. The capture was made at midnight; the nine women jumped into the sea in a frantic effort to escape when the raiding party crept alongside the boats. The women were plucked out of the water, and, clad only in scanty garments, were brought ashore at Darwin some hours later. Guarded by policemen and black trackers they were placed in a motor truck and transferred to the new aborigines compound, where they were kept under a native guard until the hearing of the cases. And yet the Federal Government lately answered the request of Women's Organisation in West Australia for a woman Protector at Darwin by declaring that in existing circumstances such an appointment would not serve any good purpose. Surely there was great need for the help of women to women if it were true also that "The (Federal) Government has been unable to check the spread of venereal disease, leprosy, opium smoking, grog and methylated spirit drinking . . . on the foreshores of Darwin in Frog Hollow."

The speaker had seen emaciated natives of both sexes lying under the trees under the deadly influence of opium and other vices. Mr. Matt Thomas, a widely travelled prospector, writing in the *Northern Standard* of January 25th, 1938, said that he had seen the same thing on the banks of the Katharine River in the Northern Territory. Mr. Cook, Chief Protector at Darwin, said at the Canberra Conference that aborigines prostituted their women and were guilty of every vice in the calendar in order to obtain money to purchase opium dross.

The Federal Government had lately shown deference to public opinion by the appointment of a first full-time director of aboriginal affairs. They proposed further to appoint assistant directors. It might benefit the detribalised native women and children of the Territory if the Government were to appoint a female assistant director with medical qualifications and police powers.

MRS. GUY INNES (British Commonwealth League), who seconded the motion, reminded the Conference that the British Commonwealth League had for many years strongly urged the appointment of women protectors in isolated districts. She thanked the President for the compliment paid her in the course of the Presidential Address.

MRS. E. M. WHITE said that the Open Door Council strongly urged the appointment of women protectors. It would be a pity, if they were appointed, to limit them to protecting women only. She therefore proposed the omission of "women" from the last line of the first paragraph of the motion.

This suggestion being generally accepted, the motion was carried unanimously, with the omission of the word "women," the word "Aboriginal" being altered to "Aborigines."

## SECOND DAY

Chair:—MRS. CORBETT ASHBY, LL.D.

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

MRS. MONTAGU NORMAN (Vice-Chairman, Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence) said: The organisation on whose behalf I speak was set up a year ago by the Home Secretary. So much had been said with regard to A.R.P. that women felt that they were under an obligation to support the movement, but they did not know exactly what they could do. The Home Secretary asked Lady Reading if she would be prepared to set up a women's organisation. Lady Reading convened at the Home Office representatives of the chief women's organisations, and from a nucleus of these an Advisory Council was formed. Without the help of some sixty women's organisations my organisation could not have done what it has done.

Having formed the Advisory Council, we commenced decentralising in centres all over England, Scotland, and Wales. From that small start at the Home Office has grown a vast organisation with 900 branches throughout the country—the result of a year's work.

The Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence is a national organisation which, in co-operation with the various departments concerned, advises women on and undertakes their enrolment in the different branches of civil defence. We are a recruiting agency and we cover all branches of civil defence. We were set up to serve the local authorities, and to serve those Government departments which are concerned with civil defence—the Ministry of Health with evacuation, the Ministry of Labour with recruiting and, of course, the Home Office with A.R.P. In the Branches, we do whatever the local authorities ask us to do.

Our first job was to deal with A.R.P. We are still doing this. A wardenship is the most important duty that a woman can undertake under A.R.P. In poorer districts it has been found helpful to give women some elementary 4-course lectures which they can understand, and without an examination at the end—in First Aid, Home Nursing, and how to keep food from being contaminated. A woman in a home with only one living room in which to do everything finds it extremely difficult to make that room gas-proof and yet be able to use it. Where the local authorities are progressive we have been able to get the lectures given in clubs and various rooms in the district. The snag is that the local authority has no power to sanction these classes and to give us the rooms in which to hold them. They are willing to give training to those who are going to give them service in return, but these poorer women cannot give service.

We encourage everyone to take training in First Aid and Home Nursing, especially the young people leaving school. In regard to evacuation, the Women's Voluntary Services Centres have also been able in the country districts to help the local authorities with the survey. They have gone round canvassing from house to house. Volunteers of many kinds are needed on the evacuation side. It is hoped to have one adult to every ten children. Women of leisure with commonsense are needed, who can go away with the children, either to stay with them where they are billeted or see them into the homes provided.

On the transport side ambulance drivers and drivers for cars are needed. Here there is need for training.

The London County Council require twelve thousand women for the Auxiliary Fire Fighting Service. The authorities are concerned about the shortage of nurses. That shortage would be greater in time of war. Recruiting is going forward successfully.

We are organising hospital supply parties and older women are taking charge of them, some of them in their own homes, working together, always with the co-operation of the matron of whatever hospital is near them.

A Central Organisation is being formed for women with scientific, technical and higher administrative qualifications, we feel strongly that capable and highly-qualified and skilled women should be placed in places of responsibility where their qualifications will benefit the Government.



MISS ANNE PROTHERO-JONES (Open Door Council) asked whether Mrs. Montagu Norman was aware of the discouragement some women met with when offering their services. She gave instances in which obstacles appeared to be placed in their way.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN (Australian Federation of Women Voters) gave instances of the cross-examination to which women were subjected when offering their services. She felt that women who had received an elementary school education and women who were known to favour equality of the sexes were being cold-shouldered.

MRS. MELLOR COUTRET (Nationality of Married Women Pass the Bill Committee) asked whether the services of an alien woman, married to a British subject, would be accepted in the civil defence services, while those of a British woman married to an alien would be refused.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) thought it unfair to lead women living in poor districts to think that it was possible for them to make their one-roomed homes gas-proof. Was it a fair assessment of a woman's life and work that she should be paid in defence service only two-thirds of the amount a man in such service received?

A Delegate asked a similar question in regard to the rate of pay for women recruited for clerical work.

MISS M. E. TAYLOR (Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women) pointed out that the present billeting scheme, if put into operation, would make it impossible for women who had trained in First Aid and Home Nursing, to undertake any such service in the event of war, because the whole of their time would be required in looking after their homes and the children they would be obliged to receive.

MRS. M. STEDMAN (British Commonwealth League) said that the problems involved appeared to be simpler in country districts. There people knew just where to go and what to do, and there was closer co-operation between local authorities and women's voluntary services. In London the authorities seemed to make matters unnecessarily difficult for those really anxious to offer their services. Would it not be better to have a large central organisation in London to which application could be made?

MRS. MONTAGU NORMAN, in replying, said that the Women's Voluntary Service, for Civil Defence were fully aware of the difficulties experienced in some districts. If members of the societies represented at the Conference had specific instances they should formally state them in writing. She was unaware of the cold-shouldering of women because of their political opinions or because they had been educated in an elementary school. It was true that whilst a foreign woman married to a British husband would be accepted for service, the British wife of an alien would not be accepted. It was not possible to make a one-roomed home satisfactorily gas-proof. At the same time there were many ways in which poorer women could be helped, as for instance in regard to the storage of food and how to keep it from contamination. In regard to the rate of pay for women clerks, most of those being recruited would probably be employed by local authorities or in Government departments where the rates of pay were standardised. The difficulties arising out of the billeting scheme were fully realised. She felt, and believed it was the view of the Government, that women who took in and cared for children would be doing the highest possible form of National Service, although their work would be hard and not spectacular. The authorities were fully aware there were many large empty houses. They were being ear-marked for special purposes in the event of war. As to food storage, those who had suitable accommodation had already been advised by Sir Auckland Geddes to get in a certain reserve to cover the first few weeks of war, until the rationing machinery could be put into full operation. All the problems involved were undoubtedly easier to deal with in the country districts. In London the Women's Voluntary Services organisation had established centres in eighteen out of the twenty-four boroughs. This should make the liaison with local authorities much easier.

## SOCIAL STATUS.

### COMMUNITY LIFE.

MRS. W. D. WALKER (Associated Countrywomen of the World) said that Agriculture was the foundation of economic life in every country. The country-woman's position in the economic and social fabric was of prime importance.

Forty-one years ago the first Women's Institute was formed at Stoney Creek in Canada, where a dozen farm women met in a little loft over a cornchandler's shop and decided to hold monthly meetings where they could learn from each other and from lectures. There were now more than a million countrywomen organised in thirty different countries. All who knew rural conditions would realise how countrywomen's societies had aided women in their own homes, and how they had conquered isolation. This great movement had altered the whole status of the countrywoman. It was democratic, non-party, and non-sectarian, and worked as simply and practically as possible for the welfare and happiness of all.

From the first the countrywomen's movement built wisely and well. It was now regarded as an integral and valuable factor in national life. Home makers whether in town or country should have the opportunity of giving their considered opinion on questions of such vital importance as child life, health, nutrition, housing, and education.

An urgent problem in Australia was the drift of people from the country to the city. To stimulate decentralisation and make happy home life possible in the sparsely settled areas of that country was a problem still far from solution. Two factors had proved valuable aids—the establishment of Aerial Medical Service in the remote "outback" and the formation of Countrywomen's Associations in the less sparsely settled, but still completely rural, areas.

Faced with a diversity of needs, the Countrywomen's Association endeavoured to meet them. Rest Rooms in country-towns provided hospitality and congenial meeting places. Emergency housekeepers, bush nursing homes, children's playgrounds, seaside and mountain holiday homes, baby welfare trains and caravans and libraries had been founded and were entirely organised and supported by the association.

Lectures and demonstrations embraced a variety of subjects, from handicrafts and cooking to beekeeping and poultry. Women migrants and newcomers to a district were made honorary members of their nearest branch, and this membership helped them in their first year in a strange new country, peopled, though sparsely, with very friendly folk.

In every British dominion, in many colonies and dependencies, similar organisations were flourishing.

In New Zealand, Maoris and white women worked in friendly co-operation. Several Women's Institutes in New Zealand had Maori officers and committees. This mingling of native and white women in rural communities was an interesting development. There were full-blooded Red Indian Women's Institute members in Canada, Cingalese and Tamil members in Ceylon, and both English and Indian women were forming the Mahili Samitis or Women's Institutes in India.

Town women and countrywomen *must* learn to see each other's point of view. In no place could women learn to understand each other better than in the social, educational and economic intercourse of their organisations.

The Associated Countrywomen of the World was the central organisation for eighty-seven national organised countrywomen's societies in thirty different countries—a link between Women's Institutes and similar bodies all over the world.

Symbol of the faith of these women was the Fourth Triennial Conference to be held in London from May 30th—June 10th. In the week following the Conference, hospitality and entertainment would be extended by the country women of the British Isles to all delegates and visitors.

The keynote of policy had been *not* to build up a big central organisation, but to strengthen in every way the development of kindred societies in their own countries.



Amid all the stress and turmoil of a sadly complicated world the country-woman still held steadfastly to her faith—the will for peace—the social betterment of all. Should trouble come in spite of all, the social order could be built up again because of the broad basis and firm foundations upon which the work of country-women rested.

### WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

MISS CICELY MCCALL (National Federation of Women's Institutes) said that in 1940 the Women's Institute movement would be celebrating its birthday. In that quarter of a century the whole outlook of countrywomen had changed. Cinemas, wireless and cheap transport had altered the countrywoman's everyday life even more than the townswoman's.

Perhaps one of the most striking changes due to the Institute movement had been to make village women articulate. Last year at the Annual General Meeting over 7,000 countrywomen attended from all parts of England and Wales. Amongst other resolutions discussed was one on housing. The Chairman asked for instances of bad housing within the personal experience of delegates. One woman described her cottage, and told how the only cupboard was beside the kitchen range, and the water had to be fetched from a well across the fields. This woman had never spoken in public before; but she stood up on the Albert Hall platform and told her fellow delegates about the things she knew from personal experience. Countrywomen had been taught to express their opinions, and to advocate the changes they desired. The village pump might look picturesque to the tourist, but the average village woman preferred a tap over her sink. Through her Institute she had learnt now how to badger her Parish Council and her district Council for an adequate water supply.

Perhaps that great annual gathering in the Albert Hall—this year to be held at Earl's Court because it had outgrown Albert Hall—had done more than anything to bring home to the individual member a sense of her own possibilities, and the importance of an organisation numbering 380,000 members. Community feeling was the basis of the movement. There were many villages where Church-goers and Chapel-goers had lived side by side for years in silent hostility until one day they found themselves chatting amicably as they cut up bread and butter for the Institute tea. Out of that community feeling had grown the attribute of free service.

The monthly meeting taught members good manners in public business.

Institutes were not only interested in traditional stitches and ornamental embroidery. They were interested in skill for skill's sake, whether it be cooking the family dinner or making a child's frock.

A campaign was being launched to encourage and teach food production and preservation. The differences between the townswoman and the countrywoman were fast disappearing. There was an increasing amount of interchange of ideas and interchange of inhabitants between town and village. The lady of the manor was still too often in the chair, for feudalism died hard in England. But, benevolent autocrat though she might be, she was giving her service and learning as much from the communal work of the Institute as any other member.

### GIRL GUIDES.

MRS. LEIGH WHITE (World Association of Girl Guides) said: Guiding is a preparation for citizenship. Although it is commonly said that a Member may be any age from eight to eighty, we must, for our immediate purpose, concentrate on that which is at the heart of the Movement, girls from eleven to sixteen years of age. That period of transition from childhood to womanhood—those years which constitute as it were an apprenticeship—of such is our material, and there lies our opportunity.

The Movement, together with that of the Boy Scouts, owes its origin some thirty odd years ago to the genius of Lord Baden-Powell. Its object from the start

has been to encourage in the growing child the development of character, with a sense of individual responsibility, and at the same time to promote good feeling and friendship between the children of all nations. Its ideals are far-reaching, but simple to understand and even to express. They are the ideals of truth, of courage, of courtesy and of service. Its methods are practical, as well as adventurous, and its standards are high. All this is embodied in the Promise and Laws, and is summed up in the service of God and the service of mankind. Perhaps the secret of its success lies in the combining of a steadfastness of principle with a flexibility of method, and it is this very combination which has made possible the adoption as well as the adaptation of the Movement for children of every race and of every belief.

Fundamentally it is a voluntary movement, although within the past few years there has been a tendency on the part of Governments in different countries to introduce the movement into the schools as part of the recreational programme. Even in those countries with which we have not direct connection and where some of the principles for which we stand are not necessarily upheld, our methods are made of considerable use. All this goes to show the value which can be set on the Movement as a training ground for citizenship. This is made manifest both by facts and figures. There are close on one and a half million girls in the Movement to-day, to say nothing of the million who have passed through its ranks since its inception. Constantly we receive letters from people from different parts of the World, filling posts either as teachers or missionaries or the wives of civil servants, who tell us that they once were Guides, and that they cannot be too grateful for all that they learnt and for what has become a real value to them in later life.

The Movement is working in over thirty different countries and among an even larger number of races.

Guiding and Scouting are very active in India. They have had a remarkable effect in breaking down the barriers of caste and creed. In South Africa we have another instance of the unifying and healing effect of the Movement upon the discordances due to difference of race and colour.

From the point of view of method, undoubtedly the Patrol system is by far the most important—the system upon which the whole work of our Movement is based. It is a system by which children of 12 or 14 or 15 years of age find themselves being *relied upon* to take voluntary responsibility, not only for their own actions, but for the well-being and the interests of all others within their group. Companies of Guides consisting of about thirty members are divided into groups of six or seven children, from among whom the children choose a leader and a second. It is a miniature community, a social unit into which the children learn to fit themselves both as leaders and as fellow members.

The responsibility for carrying out the activities of the Company, making plans and so on, rests mainly with the Patrol, and the success of the whole Company depends largely upon the corporate effort—both in action and in spirit—of the Patrol. Another point of great importance in our work is the encouragement which Guiding gives to those interests which are connected with the home and with a happy and useful family life.

Perhaps the outstanding points of interest have been firstly the out-of-door and love-of-nature aspect, which produced its high watermark in the art of camping and such-like activities. The Movement can no longer claim this as its own, but it is safe to say that it was foremost among the pioneers of what has now become an accepted part of our social and educational life. The second feature has been the development of what traditional and cultural interests of the different countries, the folk lore, the dance, the customs, songs, all of which have been the medium of great interest and even of exchange between the children when they meet, as they do, in international camps, which take place in one country or another every year. The third, and in these days the most important feature, is the active realisation of the necessity for greater outward expression of spiritual values, which are inherent in the first part of the Promise, that of duty to God.



## PEACE

### Emergency Resolution

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that few of the societies represented in the British Commonwealth League were definitely formed for the purpose of working for peace. The motion therefore had to be in a form acceptable to those societies which were not specialists in that work.

MRS. T. GOLDING (New Commonwealth Society) moved:

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled, believing that the chief responsibility of women, while the British Commonwealth is at peace, is to do all in their power to ensure that it shall remain at peace, and believing that, as long as the nations of the British Commonwealth among others insist on retaining the right and the power to be judge in their own cause in certain classes of dispute, war is sooner or later inevitable, urges the Governments of the British Commonwealth to express their willingness to co-operate with other nations in creating an effective supernational authority, equipped with a tribunal for the settlement of all disputes with power to enforce its decisions.

Mrs. Golding said: I think we should try and clarify our minds as to what exactly we mean by peace. Do we mean solely the peace of the British Commonwealth, maintained by our ever expanding armaments, at ever increasing cost, and by *ad hoc* alliances based on the expediencies and the necessities of the moment as crises recur? That is one present policy—the old policy of power politics, where peace is the interval between wars. That, I take it, is not the peace we desire. Do we wish, as at Munich, to secure peace for ourselves at the cost of another and weaker nation? There are those who accept such a peace with a clear conscience, who call it peace with honour, but I cannot believe that this craven acceptance of peace represents the view of the women of the British Commonwealth as a whole. I feel that women not only in the British Commonwealth, but throughout the world look forward to a peace that shall be built upon more enduring principles than expediency, a peace that may be built up between nations when they agree to submit to the law of man in interstate relations in place of the law of the jungle.

We must cease to regard war as a natural calamity. An earthquake, a tidal wave, a shipwreck; these, indeed, are natural calamities over which man has little or no control. But war is entirely man made, and only man can destroy the monster he has created. Throughout its history it has been surrounded by the power and pomp of states, and it remains to this day a revered institution and an honoured profession. It is necessary that we should regard war for the thing it is.

Throughout history, war has performed the same simple function. It is the means used by armed states, when diplomatic and other pressure has failed, to bring about territorial and other changes. Indeed, until appropriate machinery exists for allowing peaceful change to take place without recourse to war what alternative is there? You may say that such machinery already exists in the covenant of the League, but that, unfortunately, it will not work. My reply is that it is not the machinery that is at fault, but the will to use it. The Council of the League has been almost entirely guiltless of trying to make the League system work. It has shirked its obligations and responsibilities by every mean device known to the politician. I grant you that the history of the League proves the impossibility of working an international organisation through the representatives of great sovereign states, in close touch with their government, each pursuing narrow national ends. The strengthening of international organisations seems to need the creation of a permanent tribunal for the settlement of disputes that fail to find solution by negotiation. The personnel of such a tribunal would be elected by the League Assembly, and would have to be as independent of National bribes and wire-pulling as are the judges of our civil courts. To do otherwise is to make a mockery of both law and justice. If we remember that war is the time-honoured method of settling interstate disputes and of effecting territorial and political change, it should be evident that it can be superseded only by the creation of a system which accepts change as inevitable and necessary, and which sternly suppresses violence

on the part of those who refuse to submit to impartial settlement all such disputes as find no solution by negotiation. If the final settlement of such unresolved disputes be taken over by the international authority, it must have power not only to enforce its decision, but equipped to operate with absolute certainty and efficiency.

Objections of enforcement are usually of two kinds, the first that an international force would be difficult to organise, and the second that the enforcement of international law is immoral.

In regard to the first, I would ask the objector to consider the existing situation. Should war break out no one will deny the immense difficulties that will have to be faced in co-ordinating the armed forces and material resources of the one alliance, but this will not prevent a more or less workable scheme from being devised for the simple reason that the new alliance will hang together or hang separately. I submit that it would be as easy to organise an international force by nations co-operating to bring about a new order for the settlement of international disputes as it is to organise the forces of an alliance to establish a balance of power. In either case, in a world of armed nations, the situation would have to be met by armed force.

In regard to sanctions, I feel there is much confused thinking. They are said to be a *cause* of international conflict, though accepted in the national sphere as legitimate deterrents. In the national sphere, assault and battery is disallowed by law, and the law imposes upon the offender sanctions which the community regards as effective deterrents. I can see no justification for accepting assault and battery in the international sphere as a recognised procedure and rewarding the offender with our approval. No kind of community, no system of law, can be built upon such premises. The principles of morality are unchangeable, though the manner change. These principles imply the absolute respect for Right as against Might in the relation both of men and states, and they permit in the last resort the use of force against those who would attempt to violate it.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council), in seconding the motion, advocated an international tribunal with power to enforce its decisions as the only reasonable method of securing protection from aggression. What was the use of naming a nation as an aggressor and then permitting it to continue aggression and actually to supply it with munitions? If the League could have enforced its decisions people would not to-day be grieving over the hideous waste of life in China, and they would not have seen the nations of Europe taking their cue from Japan. There was nothing to be said for the feverish attempts of each nation to be stronger than the rest. There was need for an international force under which all could live in security.

MRS. ISRAEL ZANGWILL said that the Women's Peace Crusade was unable to support the motion, and asked that it be held over for further consideration. It was said that the nations of the British Commonwealth insisted on retaining the right and power to be judge in their own cause in certain classes of dispute. The fact was that on becoming a Member of the League the right to be judge in one's own cause had, theoretically at any rate, to be renounced.

The Women's Peace Crusade stood for a rebuilding of the League of Nations and not a scrapping of it, as the last paragraph of the motion suggested. The League of Nations was not a supernational authority and it did not need creating; it was already in existence. It was an international authority and should comprise all nations. The paragraph ought not to stand, because it was entirely misleading if it was intended to support a modified League of Nations.

The necessity was to define the means by which nations could remain at peace. The first paragraph was therefore a contradiction of the third. To enforce by force was not the way to remain at peace. The Women's Peace Crusade had suggested a motion which had not been accepted by the Executive of the British Commonwealth League, but by the courtesy of the Executive the resolution had been circulated so that it might be considered by the Conference.

LADY LAYTON (Women's Peace Crusade) objected to the motion before the Conference being put forward as an emergency resolution, and also asked that it be referred back.



MRS. GRANT DUFF (New Commonwealth League) urged that the motion as it stood be voted on.

MRS. DUNCAN HARRIS (National Peace Council) pointed out that the last six words of the motion were inconsistent with the keeping of peace.

MISS HELEN WARD, speaking as an individual, supported the reference back for further consideration.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) moved that both motions be referred back to the Executive for further consideration.

DAME MARIA OGILVIE GORDON (National Council of Women of Australia) seconded the amendment. She was surprised that a motion of such importance should not have been circulated before the Conference met, so that delegates could have received instructions from the bodies they represented.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN, J.P. (Australian Federation of Women Voters) explained that the Executive realised to the full the importance of the motion. Because of the constantly changing conditions in the world it had been deemed wiser to delay the wording until the last minute so that the motion might be up-to-date.

The Conference decided by 23 votes to 13 to refer the emergency motion back.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Council of the British Commonwealth League would be meeting on the following Friday, after which the motion would be circulated to the constituent bodies and a postal vote taken.

It was agreed that the two other motions on the subject as circulated be recommended to the constituent societies for consideration. These motions were as follows:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled urges Governments in the British Commonwealth of Nations to refuse recognition of the sovereignty of states over territories they have seized in violation of Article X of the Covenant.

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled, noting that, in his statement on Conscription in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said "No one can pretend that this is peace time in any sense in which the term could fairly be used"; noting further that huge quantities of raw materials required for war purposes have lately been imported from the British Empire by Germany, Italy, and Japan; urges the Governments in the British Commonwealth of Nations to take all possible measures to prevent the export of such materials to States that have committed acts of aggression and appear to be planning others.

THE PRESIDENT referred to the illness of Mrs. Hoster, a valued friend of the Women's Movement and of the British Commonwealth League.

DAME MARIA OGILVIE GORDON paid tribute to Mrs. Hoster's work in training and befriending women who had taken up the profession of secretaries and shorthand typists.

Delegates united in sending Mrs. Hoster a message of sympathy and hope for her speedy recovery.

(Mrs. Hoster has since died.)

### VOLUNTARY WORK

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN, J.P. (Australia) said: It seems fitting to devote a few minutes to the voluntary work undertaken by so many people, in order to ascertain whether this free contribution of labour lessens the opportunity of women to receive payment.

On the whole, the advantages to women of voluntary work have outweighed the disadvantages and have yielded more than they have cost. Some of the earliest voluntary work done by women as when spinster daughters of village clergymen taught children in the desire to uplift them. From these humble beginnings have

grown our village schools, employing paid teachers. Another shining example is Octavia Hill, whose first effort at House Management was in an entirely voluntary capacity. This idea, grown and expanded, is with us to-day under the name of House Property Management, and provides paid jobs for a large number of women.

Child welfare, maternity work, and the duties of Hospital Almoners and Health Visitors were in their earliest days carried out, certainly in a small and at times inefficient way, by voluntary workers. To-day, even though much voluntary help is still given the head is invariably a paid social worker. The Y.W.C.A. began entirely with voluntary work and to-day employs hundreds of paid workers all over the world.

These examples show that volunteers have done the pioneering, and that when the pioneering has proved valuable the work is recognised professionally. Certain jobs might never have been available at all had it not been for the original work of volunteers. Probably 80% of the humanitarian work which to-day we consider essential was first launched at women's meetings. Ideas first expounded at voluntary meetings were developed, enlarged, and eventually embodied in our Parliamentary and Council legislation. Here again women were pioneers, proving themselves in every instance to have been far ahead of legislation. When those reforms are accepted as part of a nation's work, the paid jobs appear. The amount of voluntary work available is not diminishing opportunities for paid work to any real extent.

Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks. The fact that a great deal of voluntary work is available, even under a paid worker, makes it sometimes a little difficult to get really good salaries for women workers. So much is done for nothing, that the idea is still prevalent that women when paid can be paid at a low level.

There is another danger which we must not overlook. In Australia the Royal Empire Society and a few hospitals (very few fortunately) do not have *any* women on their main council. You may say this does not matter much. I think it does. If women sit at the council table with men, they have an opportunity to prove their intelligence and worth, and every opportunity that women have to shew their ability tends to raise the status of women generally.

I sent in my resignation to the Royal Empire Society in Australia, saying that it was against my principles to belong to any organisation purporting to stand for cementing the bonds of Empire where women were completely overlooked. I pointed out that there would have been no Empire had the women not joined their men folk and suffered and toiled in distant lands.

As for the hospitals which care for women and children as well as men, if they have no women on their highest Board or council, I decline to support them, because it is against my principles to support any institution which cares for the needs of women and children and has no women on its Board.

If *all* women would take the trouble to examine the personnel of the charities to which they are asked to subscribe, and write accordingly, I believe we should soon find women sitting in an equal capacity on all Boards where affairs deal with all citizens, including women and children.

I shall not enlarge on the voluntary work women are being compelled to give to A.R.P., in which they face the same dangers as men, give the same service and are being paid less. That difference in payment must be reckoned as a voluntary contribution. I understand that a disabled or dead woman is to be worth less than a disabled or dead man; but how this deduction has been reached even this government has been unable to explain.

Though women's voluntary work has in most cases led to paid work, a keen watch must be kept to see that it is in no way abused.

Men and women do not spend money the same way, nor are men as efficient household managers as women. Therefore it is the duty of collectors, subscribers, and workers to see that the careful, sympathetic and understanding viewpoint—which is that of women—is also available when funds are to be allocated. Direct action is the quickest way.



## WOMEN ON CHURCH COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

THE REV. HILDA PETTMAN (Congregational Delegate from the Society for the Ministry of Women) said:—I view the subject of women's place in the work and counsels of the Churches, not so much from the point of view of women's right to serve, or that women ought to be allowed to serve in these ways, and to join clergy and laymen on an equal footing; but more from the point of view of the loss to the Churches, and to the world which looks to the Churches for a lead. Such opportunities *are* denied or are inadequate; but I find that talking about rights underlies wrongs, and I do not think that it does much to help the argument. It is beyond dispute that the Churches, at the time of their own, and of the world's greatest need, are not availing themselves of all their resources.

When speaking of the Ministry of Women, I am speaking of it in the widest sense. I myself am an ordained minister. Let me before saying more remind you that the word "Diaconate" is used in two different ways. The Anglican diaconate is an Order and a step to the priesthood—a step for men only. Women are ordained deaconesses, but their ordination is not a step to the priesthood; it is an end in itself; and it does not carry with it the same functions as those exercised by a deacon. In the Free Church use of the term, "deacon" applies equally to men and women elected by the local churches to its Diaconate. It is not a lifelong office, but something like membership of the Anglican Parochial Church Council, except that deacons, men and women, have wider functions than church councillors. For example, they would be able to celebrate the Sacrament and to administer the Elements. There are Free Church deaconesses, trained and ordained, who do social and parish work and conduct services, but this is not a step to the regular ministry.

On Parochial Church Councils and Free Church Diaconates women are eligible for election on the same terms as men. The Free Churches are very, very slow, and there is still a great deal of prejudice to be overcome. In this matter of women's place in the life and work of the Free Church I can understand the objection to women in the pulpit and administering the sacraments though, of course, I do not agree with it: but I cannot understand the objection to women in office in an advisory and executive capacity in the business life of the Church.

In the pulpit women are still a novelty, but so far as the business life of the Church is concerned their ability and intelligence have been proved beyond question. Women are university professors and teachers in the very highest positions; they are doctors, lawyers, estate agents, factory inspectors, members of Parliament; they have even attained Cabinet rank. Nevertheless, when it comes to the active work of women on the Diaconates, as well as in the trained ministry, objections are raised.

I am inclined to think that one factor which militates against the better acceptance of women on local church councils is the women themselves. This is where I think that the mistake of arguing too much about rights has an effect. In order to get proportion on a committee a woman is sometimes nominated and the nomination goes through. The women may accept from a sense of duty, but sometimes in that way the wrong woman is put on a committee. There is a fine opportunity for service, but that woman does not happen to be the right woman for that job. Sometimes such women are only too ready to be re-elected and for lack of other candidates they are re-elected year after year. In other cases, other women, entirely suitable, are asked to stand for nomination and they refuse. There should be no false modesty about taking what opportunities there are of serving on Church Councils. The Church needs the very best women. Their influence goes beyond the local church which they have been elected to serve.

As to the position of women in the Councils of the Church, I take that to mean the whole Body, not the local representation of which I have just spoken, especially bodies concerned with the theological basis of Re-union. One of the most noted of these, probably the most noted, is Friends of Reunion. In looking through the list of its Officers and Council for 1938-39, I noted that there are 108 members, 22 of whom are laity. Eleven of these are women, and there is one woman minister, while there are three women on the Executive Committee. At the same time, that Council is not an active, executive body. It is largely a body of people who have

been willing to serve in an advisory capacity and to give their names as being interested in the Movement, but that is not quite the same as an active committee. For the last two years a woman has taken the closing service at the Annual Conference of Friends of Reunion; in each case I understand that it has been a laywoman. So far as I know there have been no opportunities for trained and qualified women, ordained or lay, to lead in the theological discussions, or to give any of the addresses in the course of the Conference.

There has recently come to my notice—though it is dated April 1938—a Report entitled "The Christian Faith and the Common Life," submitted to the Church in Great Britain. It seems exceedingly good, so far as it goes, and if the proposals were carried out they would be most helpful to the life of the Churches.

One passage in it runs:—"In order to fulfil its eternal and unchanging mission in a rapidly changing society, the Church must be prepared to move forward along untried paths . . . nothing less than the whole resources of the Churches and of their various agencies is adequate for the purpose."

"The *whole* resources of the Churches!" Our contention is that those whole resources are not at present being used. Again, the Report says:—"There may be more prophecy among us, more thought and experience of a creative quality, than we realise."

Surely that is a direction in which women could make their full contribution to the life and councils of the local churches, and to the larger councils of the Churches gathered together in conference? Surely this is where women are needed? And if there were more trained women ready to serve in leadership, and in creative thought and work, surely the Churches could not refuse them? They would soon become accustomed to using them. I still find myself regarded as a novelty. "There may be more prophecy among us, more creative quality than we realise." That is our contention at this moment.

The Rev. Dorothea Belfield (Anglican Delegate from the Society for the Ministry of Women) asked leave to substitute "inadequate opportunities" for "no opportunities," and "concern" for "indignation" in Motion XI. Permission having been given, she moved it as follows:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled welcomes the growth of a movement for Christian Unity among the Churches. It, however, notes with concern that inadequate opportunities are being allowed to women of making their contribution in thought and experience to a matter which vitally concerns all Christian people.

The Conference draws attention to the fact that women are taking the highest degrees in theology, and that a large body of competent opinion is available from among them. It, therefore, urges upon the Leaders of the Churches that they shall secure the adequate representation of fully qualified women on all Councils and Committees constituted for the furtherance of Reunion."

Miss Belfield said that both she and the Rev. Hilda Pettman were members of the Society for the Ministry of Women which had interdenominational thought and action as its basis. They spoke not only as women who sought to open the Ministry of all the Churches to women on equal terms with men; but as women who desired to make their contribution to that great cause of Christian Unity which was one of the greatest needs of the present time. The issue before the world was one of a fight between good and evil; between truth and falsehood; between civilisation and barbarism. Surely this was a time when the *whole* Christian community should speak with an undivided voice of the great truths upon which Christianity was based. We should recognise that though in some ways both Churches and individuals might express their belief differently, there was the ultimate Truth which we could all combine to present. At no time since the beginning of the Christian Era had this need appeared to be more pressing. It was disastrous for the Church that such inadequate opportunities should be allowed to women of sharing with men in the councils of the Church, especially those that were dealing with theological thought and expression, and the practical work of the Churches. While it was true that in the Anglican Parochial Church Councils and the Free Church Diaconates



men and women sat together upon more or less equal terms, women were almost entirely excluded from theological debates and the higher ranks of administration.

For example, no qualified women had taken any part in preparing the Scheme for a United Church of the future. It was, therefore, not surprising that the Scheme when it dealt with the Ministry of the Church had only one tiny paragraph devoted to the position of women. It referred to an Order of Deaconesses to be "set apart for a special ministry," though it was added in a footnote that in view of the different conditions in the Churches the question must be further considered. That was the only mention of women in the whole pamphlet.

It was the conviction of those who were endeavouring to improve the position of women, whether in the ordained ministry or in the voluntary lay work of the Churches, that only men and women *together* could present Christianity, the truth of God, with the fulness which it required. At the present time, many women, both in the Anglican Church and the Free Churches, were studying theology. Many had taken high degrees. It was hoped that that Conference would bring to the notice of the Churches, and of their leaders, the fact that there were many women who had not only the deep devotion which had belonged to women throughout the ages, but also the ability to express it in terms of theology, and so to bring to the world a wider and a fuller apprehension of the Being of God.

MRS. G. H. SHORT (Women's Non-Party Association of South Australia) seconded the motion. She described her experience as a representative from the South Seas to the Missionary Conference held in Madras in December, 1938. Of the 400 delegates, 70 were women, one Chinese woman chairing one of the Groups at the Conference, of which there were 15 in all. Women had made an excellent contribution to all the discussions and had been received on an equal footing with men in every way.

One of the Resolutions passed by a Group in which men largely predominated, stated:—"It is of the utmost importance that women should be given the opportunity to use their capacities to the full in every part of the Church's life and work."

Another urged that—"There should be equal opportunities for service for both men and women in every department of the Church's activities."

Yet another said: "Since one of the vital factors in the ideal home is equality between the sexes, the Church itself should demonstrate equality of opportunity for men and women in its life and work."

That had been opposed by a high dignitary of the Church of England, who hoped that it did not mean equality of opportunity in the ordained ministry of the Church. That was precisely what the resolution *did* mean, and when the next name called was that of the Rev. Hilda Ives, she was welcomed with tremendous applause.

The motion was carried unanimously.

## MEDICAL AND NURSING.

DR. MARGARET BALFOUR (British Social Hygiene Council) moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled demands that all Hospitals and Medical and Dental Schools shall be open to men and women alike for training, experience and appointments. It urges all Governing Bodies to accede to this request.

Dr. Balfour said: The motion is not framed in the selfish interests of any section of the medical or dental profession, but represents a principle of great importance to the general public. This is that all young men or women about to become doctors or dentists should have the best possible facilities for training in their profession, and that, having qualified, they should gain experience in the treatment of difficult and dangerous cases by holding hospital or teaching appointments under senior members of their profession. I can remember the days when there were few opportunities for women to study medicine and very few indeed for getting post-graduate experience. They had to get their experience as best they could, probably on their earlier patients. This difficult position was met by the medical women

organising their own hospitals and sometimes even their own medical schools and the fact that these proved so successful silenced the statement that there was no demand for medical women.

There has been a great change in public opinion since those days. Most medical schools (outside London) are now open to women and also many posts in hospitals. Indeed there are now medical men who say that medical women keep their own special hospitals and institutions to themselves and yet wish to share all the opportunities open to men. This, therefore, is a question on which we should make ourselves clear.

All training schools should be open to men and women alike, with the possible exception of countries where some of the women hold a secluded position and need special arrangements. But in other countries surely it is of the first importance that students should learn from the beginning to put aside all inhibitions of sex as regards their professional work. With regard to hospitals, this resolution does not mean, I take it, that hospitals built and endowed in order that poor women if they wish be treated by their own sex, should necessarily have male staff; or that other hospitals, catering for men, should necessarily have women doctors. It means that in the great mass of general hospitals where there are men and women patients, the Governing Bodies should not forbid women applicants and should consider sex only as one of the many qualifications for and against the appointment.

In the stage of evolution which medical women have reached, it is of less importance to press for more admissions to medical schools and more junior posts in hospitals and of greater importance to press for a proportionate share in the higher appointments. More representation of women in these would automatically lead to the removal of present disabilities. It is a fact that there is no woman on the General Medical Council and few on the Committees of the British Medical Association. I am thinking chiefly, however, of two services, the Public Health Service in England, where there are many women in junior posts, but where promotion to the rank of Medical Officer of Health seldom or never takes place; and the Colonial Medical Service, where women are admitted on the same terms as men but are not promoted to the senior ranks. The main objection probably is, that if women were so promoted, they would be in the position of administering men's work—and there seems to be as bitter a prejudice about this now as there used to be, fifty years ago, about the entry of women into medicine. But the result is that women have no influence in the directing and organising of their work and this handicaps it in many ways. The difficulty was overcome in India by forming a separate medical service for women, in which they naturally held the administrative and specialist posts. This may not be ideal, but it may be a stepping stone to the idea, which might be adopted in other countries.

In the same way, many of the difficulties experienced in the training of indigenous nurses in overseas countries might be overcome if trained nurses could be appointed by the respective Governments as officials to organise indigenous nursing services.

MISS C. K. SCOVELL (British Commonwealth League), in seconding, said that as far as she knew there had never been a woman medical officer of health in Great Britain. There had been several assistants who had generally not taken their true part in the organisation as a whole. It was important that, especially in V.D. Clinics, women patients should be dealt with by women doctors. There were two reasons for the fact that a large number of women did not attend clinics. Firstly, these were not well organised as to time of waiting and so on, and secondly, there was a lack of women doctors on the staffs. The nursing service should be open to men and women alike, as things were men did not always get the same opportunity as women, though they received excellent training in the mental hospitals and had to pass pretty stiff examinations, so that often such male nurses were extremely capable especially as they had learned more psychology than was usually taught.

MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council) asked whether Dr. Balfour implied that women entered the Colonial Medical Service on the same terms as men, in pay as well as conditions?



DR. BALFOUR replied that there was no inequality at the bottom, but there was inequality in promotion, after the first eleven years.

MRS. HICKS (Purley and District Women Citizens' Association) spoke of the difficulty of getting husband and wife to the Clinic together in, for instance, such a hospital as the Royal Free, where there was not a clinic for men. The almoner could not bring them in. The law of libel made matters more difficult.

MISS SCOVELL thought that that was a special case in which it should not be difficult to co-operate with another hospital.

THE PRESIDENT suggested that difficulties created by the law of libel in that particular connection might be profitably discussed at another Conference.

The motion was carried unanimously.

MISS LOUISA MARTINDALE, C.B.E., J.P., M.D., B.S.(Lond.), F.C.O.G., dealt with the Social Status of Women in the Medical and Nursing Services. She said that at present there were on the British Medical Register 121,747 names, of which about 10% were women.

With regard to their medical education women were admitted as medical students to all the Provincial, Scottish and Irish Universities, namely, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Aberdeen, St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Galway, as well as Cambridge and Oxford. In London four out of thirteen great teaching Hospitals admitted women students, namely, The London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women—the only school for medical education admitting women only; University College Hospital, and King's College Hospital which admitted a certain number of women students annually; and the West London Hospital which admitted men and women medical students on a 50/50 basis. The other teaching schools, namely, Barts., Charing Cross, St. George's, Guy's, the London, St. Mary's, the Middlesex, St. Thomas's and the Westminster Hospitals, did not admit women students. A few years during and after the Great War, Charing Cross, St. George's, The London, St. Mary's and the Westminster Hospitals received a certain number of women students but in 1928 reclosed their doors.

On the other hand women were admitted to all the medical examinations of the following qualifying bodies: All the Universities of Gt. Britain and Ireland. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in England; The Society of Apothecaries of London, and the Conjoint Boards of Scotland and Ireland. They were eligible for election as Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of London, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

The British Post Graduate Medical School being new and up to date, and modern in its outlook, not only admitted women as well as men graduates but appointed women to the House Staff.

All the eighteen Provincial University Medical Schools and four of the London Medical Schools admitted women medical students. Of these four, one, the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women, had 355 women students studying, but admitted no male students.

Approximately there were 4045 men and 400 women medical students in London, or, in other words, 10% were women.

The number of men and women applying for admission as medical students reached its peak a few years ago. At present, women as well as men had sufficient facilities for studying medicine.

The Medical Women's Federation had a strong watching co-education committee, and believed that it was at present unnecessary and inexpedient to press for further Co-educational facilities in London. But women must conserve all their energies for the widening of postgraduate opportunities for their sex and the breaking down of any prejudice against welcoming women physicians and surgeons on the honorary staffs of general Hospitals all over the country.

It seemed useless to train women to take the highest degrees in Medicine and Surgery and all the specialities, and then to refuse them a chance to practice their skill on the Honorary Staff of the general Hospitals, not because they were unequal

to such opportunities, and not because the general public did not want them, but because of the prejudice of lay Governing Bodies and some of the older members on the Honorary Medical Staffs.

If a woman desired to be an efficient consulting Surgeon or Physician, she must have hospital beds. At present few big general Hospitals allowed women to compete for these appointments. To overcome this difficulty five general Hospitals entirely staffed by women Physicians and Surgeons had been opened. These were the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (118 beds); The South London Hospital (165 beds); The New Sussex Hospital (65 beds); The Brutsfield Hospital for Women and Children, Edinburgh (64 beds); and The Redlands Hospital, Glasgow (74 beds).

There were also the following five Special Hospitals: The Marie Curie Hospital for Cancer and Allied Diseases (39 beds); The Annie McCall Maternity Hospital (50 beds); The Duchess of York Hospital for Babies, Manchester (90 beds); The Lady Chichester Hospital for Nervous Diseases (80 beds—partly); The East Anglian Sanatorium for Consumption and Children's Sanatorium (61 beds—partly); The Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh, and The Mothers' Hospital (Salvation Army).

These Hospitals were well conducted, and turned out yearly work as excellent as at any of the Hospitals staffed by men only. There was a great public demand for women doctors, and consequently these Hospitals with their large Out-Patient Departments were extremely popular. There were, however, a very few other big Hospitals on which women had been appointed to the Honorary Staff, notably:—The Royal Free Hospital (35 women); University College, and King's College Hospital.

Some of the Children's Hospitals and a few other Hospitals had appointed women as Psychiatrists or as Clinical Assistants in their Out-Patient Departments. The L.C.C. had also appointed a certain number of women specialists on their Consultant and Honorary Staffs.

Women had always done well in *general practice* in nearly all the cities or large towns. They were employed in various Government Departments under the Ministry of Health, the Home Office, the Post Office, and the Board of Education, under the Local Authorities, and so on. They did excellent work in research, and in Pathology, and it was almost impossible to find a Medical or Surgical Journal without discovering at least one or two valuable articles by women. The status of medical women was very high. They had done their best to make opportunities for themselves in every field of medicine, but the time had come when other women could show their faith in and loyalty to their own sex by launching a campaign amongst the boards of management all over the country, to remove the present sex bar. Nearly all British Hospitals were controlled and managed by boards of Lay Governors—men and women chosen not for their knowledge of what good Hospital administration should be, but because of their wealth or social position—and it was these Governors who had it in their power to include women on the Honorary Staffs.

## NURSING

The nursing problem is entirely different. At present Great Britain was suffering from a shortage of nurses. A comparison of the census tables for 1921 and 1931 showed an actual increase in the number of nurses but the shortage of nurses to-day was due to three factors:

- (1) The large increase in the number of Hospital beds (largely due to the workhouse Infirmarys having been taken over by the Municipalities).
- (2) The greater demand for nurses owing to the shorter hours now in operation (96 hours per fortnight) and the consequent necessity for an increased Staff.
- (3) The new openings for nurses in connection with Public Health work and as school and district nurses, and as Health Visitors.

For every hundred doctors there were only seventy-three nurses. And yet, when one considered the training, life and future of a nurse, it seemed wonderful that so many of our girls had adopted a career involving so much self-sacrifice, danger and over-work at salaries so totally inadequate that on retirement the



very minimum of comfort can be expected. The only justification was that a nurse received her training free, and that she did not need such a high standard of preliminary education as in most of the other professions, such as medicine, law, or architecture.

In the past the hardships, the long hours, the discipline, the lack of freedom, the petty restrictions, the short holidays (fourteen days a year for a probationer) and the danger of infection, had been greater than in any other profession in the world.

It was true that in a few of the most modern hospitals, the Nurses' Home resembled a first class hotel with its beautiful bedrooms, reception rooms, swimming pool, and tennis courts, but these conditions were found only in a few Hospitals. Such luxury, though it was by no means too great, was not likely to help the nurse, either to fit in a middle-class household as a private nurse or to reconcile her to living on her tiny pension on her retirement.

In spite of the apparent shortage, in 1937 there were 73,849 nurses on the Register for Great Britain. Including male nurses, mental nurses, sick children's nurses and fever nurses, the total was 89,206. This did not include a large body of probationers and assistant nurses, employed in the profession, but not registered as trained nurses.

The position had become so serious that an interdepartmental Committee on Nursing Services had recently met. It had now issued its interim report. The Earl of Athlone was the Chairman. A strong committee, consisting of medical consultants, matrons, and members of Parliament, interviewed representatives from various Associations, such as the Medical Officers of Health, headmistresses, hospital matrons, the British Medical Association, the College of Nursing, the General Nursing Council, the Medical Women's Federation, and many others.

The terms of reference included an enquiry into recruitment, training and conditions of service. The most important conclusions and recommendations of the Committee were:

The *Status* of the Nursing profession is all important if a suitable flow of recruits is to be obtained.

It is therefore recommended that the profession should be recognised by the State, the Public and the Hospital authorities as a service of outstanding National importance.

That the salaries and pensions should be dealt with on a national basis.

(At present the salaries are too low.)

That Salaries Committees for the Nursing profession should be established on lines analogous to the Burnham Committees which regulate the salaries of the teaching profession.

Grants from national funds should be given to recognised teaching Hospitals and grants from public funds to the voluntary Hospitals under the necessary measure of public control.

Those who served on Boards of Management of Hospitals, knew how impossible it was to give higher salaries under present conditions, while the voluntary subscription lists were decreasing so rapidly and the cost of living was so high.

It was agreed that a minimum age of nineteen would be desirable but at the moment such a recommendation was not practicable.

Though no girl should be admitted to the wards of any Hospital below the age of seventeen the gap between leaving school and being admitted to Hospital as a probationer was a long one for the elementary schoolgirl, though not so bad for the girl from a secondary school.

To meet this difficulty it was recommended that:

The Preliminary State Examination should be divided into two parts, the first part of which may be taken before entry to Hospital.

The strain on the probationer during her first year of service would thus be greatly lightened. Such a course could be taken in one year in a Secondary School, or, a part-time evening course of two years in a Technical Institute. The syllabus would include Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene.

Some of the big Hospitals had Preliminary Training Schools, which were ideal. To tide over the present acute shortage and to introduce as soon as possible

shorter hours of work, Hospitals were advised to employ more orderlies and ward-maids and extend the practice of employing married nurses. At least four weeks' annual leave for probationers as well as nurses was advised, with adequate accommodation and extension of the system of living out for the trained staff. Other recommendations suggested fewer unreasonable rules and restrictions, the establishment of a Nurses Council in every Hospital. The appointment of a woman not a nurse to conduct the Nurses Hostel, adequate facilities for recreation, better food routine medical inspection, and a recognised status for assistant nurses.

The public was very much awake to the necessity for radical changes in the conditions of the Nursing Service. No human beings could be expected to enter a service of such outstanding national importance without some definite assurance that the training would not be so severe that their health will be permanently injured, nor the pay so low that they could not provide for a comfortable retirement. Only by assuring recruits of such an improvement could we attract the type of woman most need, ensuring not only the nurse's happiness and well being, but also that of the patients under her care.

## INDIA

KUNWAR RANI LADY MAHARAJ SINGH said that there were in India a number of Indian women who had not been able to occupy the positions for which they were fully qualified because European women had been given preference.

The first woman to be admitted to the Research Institute at Kasauli was Dr. Mayadas, but she only gained entry after most persistent knocking. She had previously had some pathological experience in Germany and in India and conducted her own pathological department at the Women's Medical College in the North of India. There she had been responsible for diagnosis of the various cases. In that she had been most successful.

Valuable work was done by the mission institutions in India in training women nurses. The necessity for this had been recognised by Lady Dufferin, who had instituted the Dufferin hospitals in various parts of India, staffed completely by women. Indian women were fully capable of conducting their own institutions and training their fellow-countrywomen. Dr. Mayadas ran a hospital for women. Unfortunately, the standard of nursing had always been rather low in India, one of the main reasons being caste prejudice. England was not the only country which had Sarah Gamps. India probably had a larger number of them, but even the indigenous midwife was now being trained.

The main difficulty in regard to nurses in India was inadequate housing and neglect of recreation. Better-class women did not join the nursing profession because it entailed a certain amount of going about under chaperonage. For that reason a new Nurses' Training School had been opened in Simla, known as the Lady Reading Nursing Institution, which had for a time attracted the better class girl. Now it appeared not to be attracting nearly sufficient pupils. It had not, however, been closed down.

So far as Indian women coming to England were concerned, it appeared that the nursing system was somewhat strenuous for them. Girls from India had not the same physique as the British girl and were unable to do during training the heavy work expected of nurses in British institutions, though it was understood that the system was now being overhauled. The few who had come from India to be trained had done excellently and proved capable of taking responsibility, and were relied upon by surgeons when undertaking serious operations. Probably Englishwomen would be amazed if they knew how successfully Indian women doctors carried out obstetrical and other surgical work, often in most difficult circumstances in miserable little village homes.

The mission hospitals in India were usually crowded out because of the human sympathy shown to patients. Many of the men and women in the Government hospitals appeared not to be actuated by the same motive of service-

As to entertainment and recreation, a movement had been started in Lucknow to improve the conditions under which nurses and others worked. The Big Sister Movement had been formed to get in touch with women living in isolated places



with no means of entertainment or recreation during off-time. They were invited to the homes of members of the local committee and entertained by them in other ways. The Y.W.C.A. was also active in that way. The ordinary Indian man was not at present sufficiently trained to look upon the professional Indian woman as anything but "fair game". He still believed that every woman must be economically dependent on some man. The Committee of women in Lucknow was considering how best to influence public opinion in regard to better treatment of women who entered professions. There was an effort to arrange for men who could be depended upon to address students in various universities with a view to educating them in that connection so that they might display more courtesy and consideration to the woman who was trying to earn her own livelihood and to show her the respect which was her due.

### TRAINING OF NATIVE WOMEN

Mrs. M. MACMILLAN (British Commonwealth League, Native Races Subcommittee) moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls the attention of the British Government, the Governments of the Dominions, and the Colonial Administrations to the urgent need for more facilities for the full training of native women as nurses, midwives, and doctors. In order that this training may be secured, the present European staffs, especially nursing sisters, should be increased.

The Conference therefore urges further appointments of women on the staffs of Hospitals and as Health Visitors, and the appointment of women Medical Officers to initiate and organise Health Services among native women.

Mrs. Macmillan said that it was astonishing, and seldom realised, what a small part European or African women were allowed to play in the regeneration of British Africa. Ill-health was one of the great handicaps that had kept Africa a backward continent. This could not be remedied without the education and co-operation of African women. These had an independent social position and there was no social bar to their taking part in public work. The actual bar was the almost total lack of education of any kind, and certainly of secondary standard among women, which prevented them taking even such opportunities as existed. The programme urged in the motion was impossible without a parallel of general development and higher standards of education for women.

For instance the latest Kenya Report says "the lack of sufficient suitable women to be trained and lack of training facilities are the obstacles to an adequate home midwifery service". The Tanganyika Report after saying that six school-girls and a number of literate women are in training adds "many years must elapse before the supply of even moderately competent native midwives can approach the midwifery needs of the territory".

So far there was no provision in British Africa for the training of fully qualified doctors, either men or women. Training must be taken in Great Britain at considerable expense and sacrifice. There was no such thing as an African Nursing Service. Throughout Africa nursing and doctor's assistants were men. An average hospital in Africa consisted of one European doctor and a number of African male assistants, the highest grade of which was the sub-assistant surgeon, others being known as assistants, dispensers or dressers, all with varying standards of qualifications. The aim was also to have a number of outlying bush-dispensaries run by an African dispenser. In East Africa the more important subordinate grades were commonly filled by Indians. There were no trained African nurses in the East and Central African colonies and no government facilities for training of any kind, but several notable Missions trained women as nurses and midwives, generally for employment in their own hospitals. Kenya had plans for a nurses' training centre. Its policy was also to have one European nursing sister on the staff of every hospital. So far these ambitions had not been realised.

In West Africa nurses were trained at a few of the larger hospitals in Freetown, Lagos, Accra and one or two other towns. They were given six months theoretical course and three years practical work. Most of them were absorbed into employ-

ment in the town hospitals. There were few hospitals anywhere else, and the bus dispensaries and N.A. hospitals were staffed by men. As might be expected from its prosperity, the Gold Coast led. It aimed at a most hopeful new development for the training of nurse-dispensers and women health visitors intended for work in rural areas, which were so far practically untouched.

How to reach the women in these vast rural areas was the problem. It could be solved only by women, through an organised system of district nurses. The Hailey Survey said: "It is especially necessary to consider the possibility which each territory offers of giving training to women and girls through the employment of village health services."

If the British had any justification for their presence in Africa, it was that they should hand on to Africans the best in their own experience. This could not be done without greater participation by European women in a work which was a national responsibility.

The speaker said she believed that the resolution rightly stressed the need for increased European women staffs. In connection with the nurse-dispensers already mentioned, the Hailey Survey said: "It is anticipated that an expansion of the qualified medical staff will be necessary to provide adequate supervision if these dispensers are to form health centres in all the rural areas." From Nyassaland came the cry, "The appointment of a lady Medical Officer and additional nursing sisters would make possible considerable extension of these services, lack of staff has so far handicapped the functioning of the clinics established at the three native hospitals." The common story throughout Africa was that staffs were never adequate to the work to be done. Nigeria, with its twenty millions, had 114 European and 5 African doctors, and 62 nurses; the other smaller colonies, with two to three millions apiece, had roughly an average of 50 doctors and 30 nurses. Kenya, with a large white population, had 50 nurses and Southern Rhodesia 271. In West Africa staffs were never at full strength owing to the demands of leave and sickness.

The motion rightly stressed the need for women doctors, since their work in educating African nurses could not be done by a male doctor. It was useless to ask for more African nurses until there were European nursing sisters to train them. A hospital without a Sister was simply a contradiction in terms.

Mrs. Leith Ross had written expressing opinions on this subject which were of interest, since she had just returned from Southern Nigeria. She said that what was wanted was a comparatively large increase in the present number of European Nursing Sisters, both in Government and Mission Hospitals. These Sisters should be chosen with special care and be able to strengthen their students' characters in countries where salaried work had never been known. However good a nurse's training, it was experience that counted in the nursing as in the teaching profession. It was rare to find a girl with so great a sense of vocation that she would forego the idea of marriage, or even wish to postpone it. Her working years were therefore limited to two or three. As to the training of native women as doctors, Mrs. Leith Ross thought that, on the West Coast at least, the time was not ripe. It would be better to concentrate on Health Visitors, nurses and midwives; she would like to see much of the municipal work of the towns, including sanitation, in the hands of the remarkably competent West African women.

Mrs. Macmillan, continuing, said that many believed that there was no necessity for an African nurse to give up her work on marriage; in district nursing it might even be essential that the nurse should be married, as there were obvious difficulties in the way of women living alone.

If the picture of women's opportunities in Africa was discouraging she did not wish to be little either the work done by many remarkable missionary women, or the new ventures initiated by the Government. A start was being made by the provision of Maternity and Infant Welfare Clinics in many colonies, staffed entirely by women. But the very slow rates at which progress was being made was not satisfactory, and those who had to find the means should be fully encouraged.

MR. CHARLES COLLET (Vice-President, League of Coloured People), in seconding the motion, called attention to part of its wording, which he would like to see altered. The sentence dealing with the present staffs might be changed to "The present staffs, especially nursing sisters, should be increased by the appointment.



of more European or European-trained persons. . .” There were at present on the West Coast, several fully European trained African women, possessing the highest qualifications who could not get employment in their own country. The first thing to do would be to give these women an opening before importing more European women. Trained women of their own people, drawn from their own *milieu*, could give better service to African women than European women, however devoted, unprejudiced and noble-minded. The majority of European nurses or nursing sisters in African hospitals were far from possessing such qualities. The second part of the motion seemed to draw a distinction between “women” and “native women.” Further, a certain amount of contempt attached to the word “native.” Its use should be abandoned. It was just as easy to say an African, or a West Indian.

There was no need to stress the demand for fully trained doctors, nurses, and midwives in Colonial Territories and in certain Dominions, for the non-European population. The Union of South Africa had a population of more than six million Africans, and only about nine fully qualified doctors for that population, all of whom obtained their training at the cost of God knows what sacrifices in view of the terrible poverty of the African population. They had to go outside the Union for it, the South African Medical Schools not wanting them, to Europe, America, or in one case to New Zealand. In Johannesburg itself, the only institution provided for the training of nurses and midwives, had been provided by the American Negroes through the noble Missionary work of the American (African) Methodist Episcopal Church, whose Bishop did not mince his words on the need for greater health services for the African population of South Africa.

The Union had nine qualified African doctors, but the whole of British East Africa, after so many years of “glorious colonisation and civilisation” had not one single qualified African doctor.

The Government was moving, with characteristic slowness, towards the provision of these men. The work done at Makerere was a step in the right direction. All that was being done was slow, even if he did not add the criticism that Makerere seemed to be on the way to become some sort of second hand copy of British Institutions of the “Oxford” type. While the government dallied, there were millions of human beings who daily were suffering and dying without benefit of doctor nurse or midwife, and little benefit of medical clergy.

The quality of the teaching staffs should be of the highest. He would like to kill the idea that childbirth was easier for the “primitive” women. It was often harder than for the “civilized” woman, in view of the difficulties to be faced, aggravated by the customs of the people and their superstitions, such as the one which does not allow a woman to receive any food or drink during the whole process of childbirth and from the time the first pains start. The result was an enormous maternal mortality. Only trained African women, knowing the superstitions and beliefs of their sisters, could give the best care and attention and full understanding in the African villages.

The result of this training of African women would be the transformation of the training schools and hospitals into marriage agencies, as had happened elsewhere. These women would be much sought as wives by the educated African men. This would be all to the good, as theirs would be homes from which the others would learn by example. The authorities must not prevent or discourage these women from practising their professions after their marriage, or dismiss them from their posts.

MISS L. HANDS (Federation of Women Zionists) asked Dr. Martindale what use was going to be made of the refugees.

DR. MARTINDALE replied that they were being trained. The younger ones were nursing, and a number of provincial hospitals were engaging one or two refugees. The older refugee women doctors were being encouraged to engage in midwifery.

MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council) could not understand why such obstacles should be put in the way of training young medical refugees in view of the great demand for doctors in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

MR. CHARLES COLLET (League of Coloured People) hoped that Africa would not become the dumping ground for doctors from various places.

A Delegate pointed out in regard to nurses that women had only to go to the Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women in order to enter into South Africa. Some qualified sisters went out on the exchange system.

MRS. J. PRITCHARD (South African League of Women Voters) pointed that South Africa and Africa were two different places. Both men and women doctors, coloured and white, were being trained in South Africa at the moment.

MRS. GUY INNES (British Commonwealth League) asked if there were any discrimination against women students in dental training schools.

DR. MARTINDALE had not heard that women dental students had experienced any difficulty. They always took medical degrees. Though they could not obtain training at Guy's or Bart's, they could do so at one of the other London Hospitals or at provincial hospitals. They could get the dental work afterwards. As to refugee doctors, it was difficult to fit the right doctor into the right place. The financial restriction also added to the difficulty. A refugee woman doctor, for instance, would not be allowed to go into Australia without £200, and she would have to take an Australian degree, for which she would have to wait two years.

MRS. MACMILLAN added that in regard to doctors going to Nigeria that the conditions there would be difficult for older practitioners. The climate was exceedingly bad and difficult for Europeans.

MISS JOSEPHINE LUKE (Sierra Leone) thought that as a native of the West Coast of Africa she might be helpful. Nurses were needed there. Just as in Great Britain there were training schools, so there might be such schools in West Africa. If the people there were trained, they were capable of training others among themselves. They were physically fit to do the work; climatic conditions would not affect them, and being of the people they would know better how to approach them. An educated African could teach an uneducated African in a better way than could a European man or woman. The native had a better understanding of the outlook of the people and certainly of the various dialects. Unfortunately, at present West Coast Africans were not able to get the necessary training in their own territory; therefore, most of them came to England to be trained and to obtain degrees as English nursing sisters, so as to go back and work among their own people. But when they returned they found they were not put in the position in which they were able to do that. Surely when they had qualified they should be able to occupy the same position as European women. An African woman might hold the C.M.B. and other qualifications, but a European-trained nurse leaving hospital, without much experience, would be given preference. That demanded investigation. Moreover, one did not only want people with elementary education to take up nursing; it was to the benefit of the profession that educated women should adopt it. If it were confined to only those with elementary education, it would not be possible to get beyond a certain standard. Medical women were also needed on the West Coast. In fact, a European staff was required to train the people, in medicine, midwifery, and nursing.

There was some discussion as to the precise wording of the motion. The Conference eventually agreed to pass it in the following form:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls the attention of the British Government, the Governments of the Dominions, and the Colonial Administrations to the urgent need for more facilities for the full training of women of the country as nurses, midwives and doctors. In order that this training may be secured, the present staffs especially nursing sisters, European or European trained or trained up to the European standard, should be increased.

The Conference therefore urges further appointments of women on the staffs of Hospitals and as Health Visitors, and the appointments of women Medical Officers to initiate and organise Health Services among women of the country.”



### THIRD DAY

Chair:—MRS. CORBETT ASHBY, LL.D.

#### POLITICAL STATUS

##### ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN

MRS. M. STEDMAN (British Commonwealth League) moved:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled presses for the granting of the Franchise to women living under the British Flag, notably in Bermuda and Quebec, thereby recognising an inherent principle of democracy. The Conference believes that uniformity within the Commonwealth in this matter is essential in view of the refusal in many countries at the present time to recognise the rights of the individual.

It, therefore, urges the Governments concerned to pass into law without delay a measure to extend the franchise to women on the same terms as men.

MRS. STEDMAN found it appalling that it was necessary to continue pressing for such an elementary principle of justice so long after British women and the majority of women in the Commonwealth had achieved the franchise. Quebec was one of the oldest British Dominions and Bermuda the oldest colony. Women in Quebec had the Federal Vote, but they had not been given the provincial vote though by slow and gentle procedure the other provinces had granted it.

Bermuda deserved special attention. Mrs. Morrell, who had been working so nobly and so hard to get the franchise for women, needed encouragement. Enormous benefits had already accrued from the granting of the franchise to women in many parts of the world. There had been improvement in the educational system, in maternal nursing and child welfare, and in the general condition of factory workers. In these days, when all governments demanded equal sacrifice and equal service from their men and women citizens, surely women should be granted that fundamental principle of equality and justice, the franchise. The British Commonwealth was probably the greatest democracy in the world. Therefore the granting of the franchise to the women of Quebec and Bermuda could only be a natural expression of democratic justice.

MISS G. CHOSACK (South African League of Women Voters) seconded the motion. She said that, as she came from South Africa, where the franchise had been extended to women only at the end of 1929, she could sympathise with the women who had not yet received it. Already the women of South Africa had achieved a great deal. It might be said that Quebec was in a peculiar position in that English Common Law did not operate there. But that should not stand in the way of granting the franchise to the women of Quebec.

So far as South Africa was concerned, two of the four women who had been returned to Parliament, Mrs. Badenhorst and Mrs. Bertha Solomon, had been returned by the enthusiasm of the poorer women, who flocked to the polls to record their votes.

It was hoped that those facts would hearten women in other parts of the Empire who were not yet enfranchised.

The motion was carried unanimously.

#### THE MARRIED WOMAN'S RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT NATIONALITY

The Rt. Hon. LORD ALNESS, P.C., K.C., emphasised the importance and interest of the legal position of women who had married foreigners. The law, so far as it related to a foreign woman who marries a British subject and a British woman who marries an alien should be amended.

The law was that an alien woman who married a British subject, was, whether she wished it or not, *ipso facto* compelled to become a national of Britain. Equally, a British woman who married an alien was, subject to an exception which need not be discussed, compelled to be an alien for all time. That situation seemed to sin

against some of our most cardinal and valued principles. Obviously nationality was a sacred right which should not be imposed upon or abstracted from any adult citizen without the express consent of that citizen.

The deprivation of nationality was a penalty imposed upon marriage. The unmarried woman was unaffected by these harsh laws. But directly a marriage was effected between a British woman and an alien this law came into play and, as a penalty for her marriage, the wife became an alien too. Not only was it a penalty upon imposed marriage but upon sex, because it was a law applying only to women. A man in these circumstances had a complete and unfettered choice, but a woman had none. It was a slur not only upon the sacred matrimonial contract but a slur upon the sex of women that they should be subjected to what was often an indignity, whether they wished it or not. The result of the operation of this law was a series of hardships, indignities and prejudices. An Englishwoman who had married an alien could not vote at a municipal or parliamentary election. She could not be a municipal nor a parliamentary candidate. She received no protection from Great Britain when abroad. Here was a very real mischief which demanded a remedy.

The remedy proposed was simple. It was to restore to the British woman the right, which she formerly enjoyed, to retain her own nationality, if she pleased, when she married an alien, and to restore to the alien woman the right which she formerly enjoyed to retain her alien nationality if she pleased when she married a British subject. Lord Alness said he used the word "restore" advisedly, because one could not too often stress the fact that until 1844 an alien woman, if she chose, did retain her own nationality, even though she married a British subject. It was not until 1870 that a British woman lost the right of nationality when she married an alien. He was quite unable, he said, to discover how the British Houses of Parliament came to legislate in that extraordinary fashion. At any rate, his first point in connection with the remedy was that women were claiming not that a new right be conferred but that an old right be restored. The proposal which he was submitting had for many years enjoyed the express approval of successive Prime Ministers of this country and representatives of the British Cabinet. This was a reform which had already been achieved in many countries in Europe and outside it. Great Britain was still awaiting it.

In the second place, the speaker said, he had shown that the remedy was appropriate; no objection could be taken to it on its merits; it was merely a dilatory plea. The argument ran: Nationality is an Imperial task. Great Britain cannot take a step ahead until all the Dominions have come into line and are prepared to keep step with Great Britain. This argument implied that one Dominion, however reactionary, could veto a reform which was just and right according to the Prime Ministers of this country and throughout the British Empire. We had been refused all information in Parliament as to which was the refractory and reactionary Dominion. It did not matter for the sake of the argument which Dominion it was.

The answer to the argument was that it was intolerable that one Dominion should hold up not only all the other Dominions but also Great Britain. There was a second answer, namely, that there was no such uniformity in the British Dominions to-day. Australia and New Zealand had taken the necessary steps. There was reason to believe that Canada and India were friendly, and yet we are told that so long as one Dominion held out, nothing could be done.

It was up to the Government, having avowed the justice and the rightness of the reform, to take active steps to bring the refractory Dominion into line; to convene a Conference, put this proposal in the forefront of the agenda and, by the arguments which had convinced British Ministers, seek to convince the Dominion Ministers of the justness and rightness of the reform. Why should not the British Government take some such active step. If the British Government did convene such a conference and avowed their complete conviction of the rightness of this reform, they could carry all the Dominions with them.

He came to tell his audience that at the Parliamentary end, everything that could be done to push forward this reform had been and was being done. It was up to his hearers and those who supported them to play their part in bringing about this just and right reform. They must by all legitimate means convince the Gov-



ernment that the women of this country were solidly behind this demand. Until then, nothing would happen in the House of Lords or in the House of Commons. It could be done in many ways. Resolutions could be passed by the numerous women's societies nominally supporting this movement—though some of them were doing precious little to forward it. Advocates of this reform could pass resolutions in all the women's societies interested: they could hold public meetings and demonstrations at which resolutions to a similar effect could be passed. All these resolutions should be sent direct to the Government. Deputations could be sent to the appropriate Government departments in order to apply legitimate pressure where it was badly needed.

The next move was in the country and with the women. What they had done before they could do again. Only by these methods would the victory be won and a right tardily granted.

MISS L. HANDS (Federation of Women Zionists) thought more propaganda might be desirable. She enquired whether there were enough local speakers on the subject, since many provincial bodies could not afford to have a speaker from London. More publicity in the press would, she felt, be helpful.

LORD ALNESS pointed out that the provision of speakers was largely a matter of domestic machinery. The suggestion with regard to the Press was a good one.

MRS. FIELDING called attention to the position of the woman graduate who, if she married, was not allowed to vote even by proxy.

LORD ALNESS reminded the Conference that no one had been better aware of that than Miss Chrystal MacMillan, who had initiated the movement.

MRS. E. M. WHITE (Open Door Council) asked what line the authorities were now taking in face of the incontrovertible facts from Australia and New Zealand.

LORD ALNESS: I think that question should be addressed to the Government.

MRS. L. GOLDING (New Commonwealth Society) thought that the point as to there having to be unanimity or uniformity between the Dominions was most undemocratic. If put into practice it would make null and void all the working of the League of Nations. In the case of women who could retain their own nationality when marrying Englishmen, were they women with two nationalities in regard to the law, and were they subject to a passport in both countries?

LORD ALNESS: Yes.

MISS PICTON TURBERVILL, O.B.E. (National Council for Equal Citizenship) thought that continuous pressure by deputations to the Home Office would be more effective than attempting widespread propaganda. It might be hopeful tactics to press for a Government Bill.

LORD ALNESS feared the answer to that question must be in the negative. The hands of the officials at the Home Office were absolutely tied by the attitude which successive Governments had adopted, namely, that no move could be made until the Dominions came into line. He did not therefore think that any pressure on the Home Office would have any useful result. On the other hand, he appreciated the difficulty of arousing public opinion on a subject that affected comparatively few women. Until propaganda had been tried and agitation fomented, it would be futile to reintroduce the measure into the House of Lords. If, on the other hand, one were able to point to meetings being held here, there, and everywhere, resolutions passed by women's societies, and deputations going to the Government, the hands of anyone to whom a Bill might be entrusted would be enormously strengthened.

MISS REEVES (Women's Freedom League) had found no subject which aroused so much enthusiasm as that of nationality. Widespread organisation was necessary to popularise the campaign.

MRS. M. STEDMAN directed attention to the position of children in the event of women being allowed to choose their nationality. It had been argued against the proposal that the children would be placed in a difficult position.

LORD ALNESS confessed that he could not answer the question offhand. He promised to look into it.

MRS. DONZE said that the Nationality of Married Women Committee had not actually dealt with that question, though they held that the mother should have equal privileges with the father as to the giving of nationality to the children.

The motion was as follows:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled reaffirms the right of a married woman to her own independent nationality on the same terms as a man or a single woman.

The Conference calls upon the British Government, in conjunction with the Dominions and Colonies, to remove all disabilities of the married woman in matters of Nationality, and to place a woman in the same position as a man—married or unmarried—or any single woman.

MRS. E. HARTREE (Open Door Council) asked permission to substitute the following, which dealt more specifically with the existing situation:

The Nationality of Married Women Committee calls the attention of the Government to the extreme importance, particularly in view of the international situation, of restoring to British women their former equal and independent nationality rights, and urges the Government to adopt and pass with the utmost speed the Bill introduced into the House of Lords in July, 1938, by Lord Alness, which provides (a) that British women married to aliens shall reacquire and British women who in future marry aliens shall retain their British nationality unless they desire otherwise: (b) that an alien woman married to a British man shall be required to satisfy the same conditions as to residence, oath of allegiance, etc., as are required from an alien man or single woman.

Mrs. Hartree reminded delegates that women's organisations had sent a deputation to the Government, and time and time again they had sent resolutions. Therefore it was difficult to understand why effect was not given to that upon which the Government and the women's organisations agreed. As to arousing enthusiasm in the country, it was, of course, up to women's organisations to do that. She thought that she was right in saying that under the Australian and New Zealand law a woman who married an alien had the right to retain her nationality as long as she remained in the country. That was a slight step forward, but it was unfortunate they could not show Great Britain how to act.

MRS. LINDA LITTLEJOHN pointed out that the Australian and New Zealand Governments had said that that was as far as they could go until Great Britain passed a law on the subject; otherwise an Australian woman married to an alien visiting England would be a foreigner under British law.

MRS. HARTREE added that she could not see why the British Government could not take the necessary action in spite of the reactionary Dominion.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the amendment which Mrs. Hartree had asked permission to substitute did not fully cover the point, though it was an excellent motion, and she hoped the Conference could pass it. The Conference represented the British Commonwealth League. The resolution suggested by Mrs. Hartree asked the British Government to pass a Bill affecting British women. Could it be taken as an addendum to the Conference resolution, and the Executive Committee of the League be given power to combine the two motions to fit the case? The Conference did not desire to appeal only to the British Government.

The Conference having agreed to the re-drafting of the proposed motion in conjunction with that on the Conference agenda,

MRS. J. PRITCHARD (South African League of Women Voters), in seconding, said that the women in South Africa felt very strongly on the subject. They were doing their utmost to get the nationality law altered. It was not for want of pressing the Government that so far no advance had been made. It would, she thought, be helpful if she could take back word that the Conference agreed to the British Commonwealth League supporting any effort made by the women of South Africa to obtain that right.



The CHAIRMAN gave this assurance.

The Hon. MRS. GRANT DUFF (New Commonwealth Society) asked that the question of children should be included in the motion.

MRS. E. M. WHITE asked whether Lord Alness thought that something on the lines of the Guardianship of Infants' Act would meet the difficulty.

LORD ALNESS appreciated the importance of the question relating to children. So far there had been no question as to children, or any allied topic, hinted at in the debate in the House of Lords. He had not therefore applied his mind to that aspect of the matter. He would now do so, in conjunction with Mrs. Donze, with a view to seeing whether, on the lines of the Guardianship of Infants Act, or in some other way, it would be possible to issue a short statement or leaflet on the subject so as to reassure those who had qualms on that score.

MRS. DONZE added that the Nationality of Married Women Committee had published a pamphlet edited by Miss Chrystal Macmillan before her death. It gave information useful to those speaking on the subject.

MRS. E. CLAPHAM (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) pointed out that representatives of all the Dominions were present at the Conference. Could not they think of some means whereby it would be possible to strike again? So far as one could see, there really were no arguments against the removal of the present disabilities suffered by married women in matters of nationality.

DAME MARIA OGILVIE GORDON (National Council of Women of Australia) felt that all present had received fresh encouragement from what they had heard from Lord Alness. It was true that they had a little lost heart after the death of Miss Macmillan. Now they had to show themselves worthy to follow in her footsteps and seize the opportunity to go forward once more, and fight for the removal of a disability which was interfering with the right of a British woman to defend her country in time of danger.

The motions were then carried on the understanding that they be combined as agreed.

A vote of thanks was accorded to Lord Alness for his clear, lucid and encouraging speech and, still more, for his championship in what it was usual to refer to as "another place."

LORD ALNESS, in acknowledging the vote of thanks, said he was truly grateful<sup>1</sup> for having had an opportunity to state the case. He felt that he was preaching to the converted, but it was at the same time a representative audience and he had little doubt that the debate would bear fruit. He reiterated his belief that women themselves could now do more than he in the matter, although he and those with whom he was working would not be lacking in their endeavours to support any action which might be taken. Arising out of what Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon had said, he could not help feeling, as one who had known Miss Macmillan very intimately for many years, that the best memorial to her memory, the one which she would treasure most, would be to see fruition of her hopes based on the passing of an Act of Parliament on the lines he had already described.

#### MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT.

MRS. T. BILLINGTON GREIG emphasised that there were not enough women in Parliament to be effective as representatives of the millions of women electors.

There are, Mrs. Billington-Greig continued, in Great Britain in 1939 no women sitting in the House of Lords, although seventeen peeresses in their own right are entitled to do so. There are thirteen women among the 615 elected members of the House of Commons: nine of these were elected in 1935, a falling off as compared with the two earlier General Elections, four were added at By-elections since. Women hold two per cent. of the available seats in the commons. There is one woman to 46 men. Since 1918 there have been a total of 360 women's candidatures resulting in 65 successes or 18%. If you take away the 39 By-elections in which we scored fifteen elections, the General Election results work out at 16%. In other words one out of every six women candidates has won in a General Election contest

while at a By-election the chances are more than one in three. There is argument for a By-election policy. In 21 years we have been permitted by the party organisations to contest 7.6 of the available seats, have won 65 elections and have had two women in the Cabinet.

Let us now take a wider survey. Beginning nearest home in Eire three women were elected to Dail Eireann in 1933 another falling off from earlier parliaments. There were also four women in the Senate, but this body was abolished in 1936. In Northern Ireland we have one elected woman M.P. who has sat since 1921 and was appointed to a Parliamentary Secretaryship in 1937.

The first and only woman member of the House of Keys in the Isle of Man was elected in 1933.

In Australia there were four women members of State Legislatures in 1936, but one has died since. No woman has yet succeeded in winning a seat in the Federal Parliament.

In New Zealand one woman candidate was elected in 1933 but died in 1935. There is now another woman member who was elected in 1938.

Canada has two women Senators and two elected members of the House of Commons.

There is no woman member now in Newfoundland, though one sat for two years from 1930 to 1932.

South Africa has three women members—two elected in 1933 and another added in 1937.

In Northern Rhodesia there is one woman member.

In addition we have one woman on the governing body in Burma, one in Ceylon and one in Kenya.

The Indian results give a more pleasing picture. In the first election under the New Constitution 52 women were elected members of the Provincial Legislatures. Women were given office in the governments of Assam, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, the Punjab, and the United Provinces. This was in 1937. Then in 1938 one woman was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly.

That is all. In spite of the note of hope from India, satisfaction with these figures is utterly impossible. When we begin to count up all the thousands of men representatives who go to make up all these governing bodies, and the millions of women voters who might be making a free choice, then emphatically our representation is not even remotely adequate to our numbers or our need.

What causes have restricted women's candidatures and women's successes? Here my experience is entirely a home product. I cannot speak as to particular causes and conditions elsewhere, but since the determining factors are similar in so far as women are new voters in all cases, many of my conclusions will apply. Others may be useful as awful warnings.

At the forefront, of course, is the fact that a large proportion of women are not yet politically minded. For many women the details of the day-to-day struggle with living conditions absorb all the energy they have, whether they are willing to be interested in women's progress or not. This mass is being leavened by education and propaganda from a score at least of women's and other societies and movements; but still it is inert.

Apart from the inertia of this mass, the politically-minded women who shared in the struggle for enfranchisement or enrolled in the political parties have not taken the necessary step from *vote-getting* to *vote-using*. One can say even more. Such efforts as have been made to get the women's societies to link up their work with the election machinery of the country and give organised help to women candidates have so far failed.

This is an exasperating result with which no thinking feminist can be satisfied for a moment. How has it come about? First, I would put the passionate eagerness of the struggle for the vote itself—the one-thing-at-a-time-and-that-thing-the-vote policy. It was a necessary concentration, but it had its evil effects. It left women mainly untrained for the next step. Women *on their own* had not faced the problems of electioneering. Their contact with elections had been either as outsiders or as party women. So that they had no plan, no experience, and no guidance when the right to sit in Parliament was conferred upon them.



If we had had to struggle for, say, ten years for this right of election we should have learned to organise our voting power in the interval and made better use by now of both our liberties.

Of course this great break between the brilliant work of women in all camps of action when demanding the vote, and the definite ineffectiveness of our electoral work, would probably not have happened if the world in which we lived had continued on normal lines. The world war, besides being a disaster of dreadful magnitude, devitalised and distracted the women's movement. It scattered women and changed spiritual values for them. It gave them new jobs and new problems. It disturbed what had been certainties in their minds. And at its close there was a new spirit abroad. Men and women alike decided in a lordly superficial way that all the equality women wanted had been generously presented to them, and that only a few malcontents thought otherwise. It was definitely unfashionable to be feminist. It was wrong the time to be assertive.

At the same time the professional women, the social service workers, the housewives and the educationists, who had co-operated in winning citizen-status went back to their various activities to extend and consolidate in a thousand ways, but leaving the political movement the poorer for their departure.

If you stare at a too-near sixpence it becomes large enough to block out the sun or the moon. By concentrating on the value of the vote it came to be endowed with almost magical powers. Its mere possession would work a miracle. This was another weakness which led women of a certain type of mind to ignore the need for action and to expect results without agitation and effort. Whereas the organisation of the cumbersome governing machinery which begins with the voter and ends in Parliament is one of the most expensive, heavy and specialised jobs that democratic humanity could have devised for itself.

Thus from 1918 to 1939 the nominating and running of women candidates has been a limited and haphazard affair, cut off from the active work of the women's societies themselves and regarded as a sort of by-product or side-line of the party women's activities for their parties.

The party women themselves when enfranchised took the line that the parties themselves would put forward women as parliamentary candidates in sufficient numbers, and that any independent action would only "queer the pitch" without producing election results, and that non-party women should now line up in the parties they found most congenial and work through them. There are a good many points to discuss there; but to confine ourselves to the immediate one we have to admit that out of the 65 elections which women have won in twenty-years 62 of them have been won by party women on party lines. But whether in that period that 65 could have been made into six hundred by other methods is a query that no one of course can answer.

My conclusion is not that the political parties have not given the women a fair deal, but that they cannot give the women a fair deal. This the women can only take for themselves by taking political action for themselves. The voting machinery is like a motor-car. It works for those who control and direct it toward definite ends. You cannot expect to share the direction if you take a back seat as a passenger or if you content yourself with cheering vigorously the few successful women drivers who arrive successfully in Palace Yard.

We must all admit that at first everything seemed possible, and that it was easy to be deceived. The parties were either hopeful or apprehensive, or both, and acted accordingly, giving a measure of opportunity to women and watching results. But when they found that they had little to lose in offering the same old fare and the same old candidates to the new electorate they naturally did so. They will continue to do so, so long as we let them.

### Remedies.

Many of the remedies have been implied in my survey of causes. The major one is that the work of all the thousands of women in the women's societies should be definitely linked up with the electoral machinery of the country, national, and local. Work in the air, vague general propaganda, is wasteful and stupid and unscientific. Its percentage of return is infinitesimal compared with the effort.

So every conference and meeting, every leaflet and every speech should have a definite political objective—should be aimed at a particular candidate, a particular Council or ministry or at a particular section of the electorate. Such work should rise to a peak at every election time and be planned and prepared to bring its increase of women candidates as well as its speeded-up harvest of new legislation.

Second, parliamentary work, which is so popular with women's groups, should be recognised as the last logical step in the process of influencing legislation, not the one and only step. Linked with the constituency, with a hundred possible groupings of the electorate, this work will become the actual application of power to the law-making machine. As it is it is done with out any reference to voting power, is never forceful and often entirely ineffectual.

High up on the list of things to be done should be the running of a woman candidate at every By-Election. If after every possible avenue has been tried the running of the woman candidate should not be possible, then a women's propaganda campaign, educative and arousing, should be substituted. Women stand a better chance of election at By-Elections and with really organised help from the women's societies they could hope to win three out of four times.

The educative work of the non-party bodies and even more of the parties should be supplemented by up-to-date and pointed leaflets, constantly re-written for By-Election or municipal contests, or to meet any current issue. Education by up-to-date literature dealing with concrete matters with which the people themselves are in contact is absorbed and understood and produces maximum results.

Within the parties women members should begin to insist upon two things; first, that a greater number of seats should be allotted to women candidates and there should be some fairer apportionment of the safer seats; and second that more effort should be made to present at least a part of their party programmes in a form more akin to the ordinary woman's experience and interests.

Outside the parties women should organise themselves according to their sympathies and convictions into some sort of Election Workers Association or Committee, collecting and training these workers so that they can be drafted into any constituency within reach in which a suitable woman is standing. If this job cannot be done by the co-operative action of the women's societies, then convinced individuals, who know that it is necessary, should call into being a new association to get the job in hand. The scrappy and unorganised help given to women candidates by individual women sympathisers is not enough.

Even in the matter of finance we can take some action, though this is admittedly one of the most serious handicaps to the nomination of an adequate number of women candidates. In the older parties men candidates, having command of more money than women, can make themselves responsible for larger sums in their constituencies. In the Labour Party few big trade unions are prepared to spend their levied funds on a woman outsider when one of their own men at least is generally available. But originally the Labour Party had to face exactly the same problem and solved it by forming the Labour Representation Committee and instituting a trade union levy. The women must enquire into ways and means of doing something on these lines. The sacrifice of one pair of silk stockings per year by each one of the organised women of the country would put ten women into Parliament. Meanwhile the left-front women might turn their attention to the co-operative movement and with Dr. Summerskill ask why the millions of women co-operators should not demand that there should always be a proportion of women parliamentary candidates put forward to be supported by co-operative money.

I have tried to make the picture comprehensive and clear, but naturally in so short a time many details have had to be omitted, but the major point is here in a nutshell. We do not get more women into parliament because we have not organised systematically to that end. We will get them when we do. And along with them we may hope for a speeding up of the legislation we desire and for a truer realisation of the meaning and value of democracy.

KUNWAR RANI LADY MAHARAJ SINGH said that while there were many outstanding women in India the figures, as Mrs. Billington Greig had said, were not altogether encouraging. It was essential that there should be training of women in the matter.



## DIPLOMATIC SERVICES.

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

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled congratulates the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Dominions on their decision to open the India Civil Service and the Colonial and Dominion Services to women.

This Conference is convinced that women have a definite contribution to give to world order, and that they can only make their full influence felt in national and international affairs if they have an adequate share in the framing of policy. Therefore, whilst appreciating what has already been granted, for this purpose they must have an equal opportunity with men to serve in all Government positions at home and abroad, in the Diplomatic and Consular Services, and on all Committees and Commissions, both national and international to which the various Governments make appointments.

It, therefore, calls upon all Governments to give women equal access with men to all key positions where policy is framed, and an equal chance with men to hold those positions.

Mrs. Spiller said that women were asking for no privileges of entry into the diplomatic and consular services or to committees and commissions; they were merely seeking equal access with men. So far as the International Civil Service was concerned, it had been said that women did much better than men in the International Labour Office than in the League of Nations Secretariat. The reason was simple. Many more positions in the International Labour Office had been given to women because on examination they had passed equally with and even better than men. Positions on the League of Nations Secretariat were not a matter of examination but of choice. While there were many women in the Parliaments of the world, it was obvious that as long as women had not also an opportunity of expressing their point of view in the higher posts or in the key positions their influence and capabilities would not be used to the full. In claiming that women should have the opportunity of serving equally with men in the services of the State, on the higher Church Councils and boards of management of hospitals and in other higher positions, there was no idea that they should enter into competition with men. If they had equal chances and equal access to such posts, they could work in co-operation and collaboration with men. Then nobody could predict what could be achieved. The matters that concerned both men and women could not adequately be dealt with by men alone. Women wanted equal opportunity with men in solving the many important difficult problems facing the world at the present time.

MISS NELLIE STEWART (Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia) seconded the motion. She said that in the strictest sense of the word she had never felt that women wanted equality with men; they already had it if they were able to occupy the positions claimed by men. Women had every right to be equal with men in every branch of activity in the world and in every position. As things stood, they were bound to abide by the laws that were all made by men. Actually there was no sphere in life in which a woman, if she exercised her true virtues and was a woman in every sense of the term, would not only equal a man but often surpass him.

Discussion ensued as to the precise wording of the motion, and finally the Conference accepted the amendment proposed by Mrs. E. M. White (Open Door Council) as follows:—

The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled congratulates the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for the Colonies on their decision to open administrative posts in the India Office and the Colonial and Dominion Offices to women.

This Conference is convinced that women have a definite contribution to give to world order, that they can make their full influence felt in national and international affairs only if they have an adequate share in the framing of policy; and that for this purpose they make urgent claim for an equal opportunity with men to serve in all Government positions at home and abroad, in the Diplomatic and Consular Services, and on all Committees and Com-

missions, both national and international to which the various Governments make appointments.

The League, therefore, while appreciating the advances already made, calls upon the Governments of the British Commonwealth to give women equal opportunities and access with men to all key positions where policy is framed, and an equal chance with men to hold those positions.

Mrs. White, in support of the amendment, said that it really was time that the line indicated should be taken in regard to the position of women. They were not being used as they should be. In connection with food storage, women were not being used in positions in which it seemed only common-sense to employ them. Apparently the authorities were still thinking in terms of the last war instead of taking a forward vision. Through generations it had been woman's job to think forward and to provide for her household. The advice that housewives should get in about a week's supply of things that would keep was merely playing with the fringe of a vital subject. There was a piece of national work in which women would be helpful on any board. In that and in other matters women should be given the key positions in which the contribution they had to make could be most effective.

The motion was carried in its amended form.

The Conference concluded with a vote of thanks to Mrs. Corbett Ashby for her Chairmanship.



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