

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

*Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society),
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Daughter of the ancient Eve,
We know the gifts ye gave and give;
Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,
Daughter of the Newer Eve?

Francis Thompson.

The Birth-throes of the New Africa

By P. C. Challoner, M.A.

Soeur Marie-André, Docteur en droit of the Catholic University of Lille, Missionary of Cardinal Lavigerie's White Sisters, and member of the Conseil Supérieur des Affaires Sociales d'Outre Mer, recently undertook a fifteen months' study of African family life,* at the request of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique Outre Mer. During this mission she revisited the interior of French West Africa with which she was already familiar and, in addition, examined the conditions in Dahomey and the Southern Cameroons—the last at the wish of the Apostolic Delegate for French Africa. She gathered information to bring her well-known book on "La Femme Noire en Afrique Occidentale" up to date, but the changes brought about in the last few years justified a new book rather than a new edition.

She travelled among people who knew and trusted her. Her information came from "chiefs, officials, peasants; indigenous priests and religious; mothers of families and young girls, educated or illiterate; Christians, Musulmans, and animists." Talks with these revealed the pain all alike suffered from the problems of the evolution through which they and their people are passing.

What are these problems? The wide discrepancy between the African of the bush and the African of the town; the lure of town life which brings all the problems of economic upheaval to add to the disruption of tribal life; the growth of a class of African functionaries with riches unheard of in earlier days—riches many of them use to "buy" wives; the evils of the dowry system, aggravated by the almost universal substitution of cash for gifts in kind and the enormous increase in the cash demanded; the enforced celibacy of many young, and not so young, men who have to wait years for a wife; the lack of companionship in marriage, owing to the unequal development of men and women; the loosening of the tribal morality without the

**La Condition Humaine en Afrique Noire* par Soeur Marie-André du Sacré Coeur. Préface du Docteur Louis-Paul Aujouat, secrétaire d'Etat au Ministère de la France d'Outre-Mer. (Bernard Grasset, Paris, 630 frs.).

corresponding development of a Christian code; and all the strains and tensions accompanying so rapid an evolution which has moved from a society corresponding to that of the Germanic tribes (from which most of Europe sprang) to modern conditions it has taken Europe centuries to reach.

Soeur Marie-André compares the Roman law and Germanic custom with the African tribal system. There is the same power of the father which is found in Roman society, but in the later developments in Africa she finds paternity and power over the children (girls particularly) belonging, not to the father in the flesh, but to the man who pays the bride price, sometimes only the first instalment, though he may not even know the children he owns. The selling of girls to one bidder after another, the arranged divorces, the forcing of the girl to a marriage she detests by threats and beatings—all these things and many more are pressed home by case after case of such a one here and another there. Such testimony cannot be gainsaid. Soeur Marie-André points out that the Mandel Decree of 1939 by which all marriages are invalid where there is no consent, would be applied more frequently if the girls themselves dared demand its application—but they are deterred by the fear of reprisals; by the argument that they have "une dette dans la peau"; by the distance of the tribunal from their village; by the watch kept by their kinsfolk; and by the difficulty of explaining when the "interpreter" is so often "bought" by the family. Again the decree has partly failed to attain its end because administrators have too often ordered the repayment of the dowry in cases where a girl has refused to marry the man from whom her "owner" has received it, or where a widow has refused to marry her husband's heir. By the decree marriage in these two cases is "nulle de plein droit" and no indemnity should be reclaimed. If therefore the law were enforced, men would cease to pay for girls they might never claim and the custom of the bride-price would die out. Already some parents say, "Nous ne donnons plus nos filles toutes petites, car on

a trop d'ennuis quand elles sont grandes." At the moment Soeur Marie-André estimates that one girl in six is pledged to a man before puberty, one in ten before the age of ten.

The Jacquinot Decree of September 1951 carries the freedom of African women further; it permits women over twenty-one to marry without a dowry, and allows the tribunals to register marriages of girls under that age, without the consent of the parents, where the latter demand an "excessive dowry" i.e. one greater than the amount fixed in each territory by the Chief of the District.

These decrees, says Soeur Marie-André, who was in great part their author, should "free Africa from that thirst for money which has transformed marriage into a shameful traffic; they should restore to the African girl her dignity and her personality, and allow young people to found real homes to the incalculable advantage of African civilization."

Finally Soeur Marie-André does not confine herself to the abuses of the system she has studied with such care, she also gives examples of truly Christian households; the Chief ruling his people with justice, his wife the trusted adviser of the women as he is of the men; a Director of a school whose influence spreads far and wide; functionaries with homes furnished with modern taste, and families in the bush with huts outwardly indistinguishable from those of the pagans amongst whom they live, and among whom happiness in a monogamous household must surely cause reflection.

It is perhaps significant that here too, as in other parts of Africa, there has been an increase in fetichistic practices, which hold the pagans in superstitious terror. Girls are seized and kept in fetichistic "convents" where they learn the rites. From this tyranny too, only Christian teaching can deliver them.

The women of Africa have many reasons to be grateful to missionaries (and so, of course, have governments, as several delegates to the Trusteeship Council have testified); they have particular reason to be grateful to Soeur Marie-André, whose patient, skilled, objective building up of the case against polygamy refutes for ever those who think "native" custom is good enough for "natives." The woman who said, "Même si tu coupais mon corps et celui de mon mari, et que tu les mettes ensemble dans la même jarre, mon corps sauterait dehors pour ne pas rester avec celui de mon mari," certainly did not think so, and others are quoted in the same sense. Let Soeur Marie-André have the last word, "Whether they be white or black, men and women everywhere have the same desires, the same fears, the same legitimate ambitions—because they have all been created by God and destined for the same happiness."

CONGRESS OF SUPERIORS

Reports have just reached us of the first Congress of Superiors General of Religious Orders of Women which was held in Rome in September, 1952.

In His address to Superiors-General at Castel Gandolfo on September 15th, the Holy Father deplored the lack of vocations to-day, which even led to the closing of existing institutions.

His Holiness blamed those preachers, speakers and writers "who have not a word to say in praise of virginity vowed to Christ" but He also asked the Superiors to make sure that there was nothing in their customs, manner of life, or ascetical practice, that caused lack of vocations—things, perhaps, that though suited to the time in which they were instituted, are out of place to-day.

His Holiness then urged the Superiors to be motherly, to be liberal and broad-minded in attention to the training of the Sisters for the tasks that await them and to give them the opportunity and the means to keep their professional knowledge up to date. The Sister should be able to say, "My Superior is giving me a training that will put me on an equality with my secular colleagues."

An important speech was made by Monsignor Pepe who dealt with the necessity of higher studies for nuns, and with the proposed foundation at Rome of a Faculty of Religious Knowledge for nuns and women engaged in apostolic work. After remarking that the level of study should be appropriate to the work undertaken—"in domo Dei Multae mansiones"—Monsignor Pepe pointed out that whereas the necessity of higher profane studies was generally recognised, it was still widely held that higher religious studies could be left to priests. This was a grave error; nuns destined to direct others, to occupy important positions in their religious families or to undertake certain forms of apostolic work were in real need of higher religious culture, and it was the desire of the Sacred Congregation that in every country facilities for such study should be provided (where possible, for religious only). In addition to the institutes or courses of study provided in the various countries it was proposed to found one in Rome to serve as a model to others and to keep the religious families scattered throughout the world in touch with the centre of the Church.

Among Coronation visitors whom we have already had the pleasure of welcoming are Mrs. Coombs, late hon. secretary of St. Joan's in New South Wales and Mrs. Dwyer, president of the South Australia Section of the Alliance. From Melbourne we have been happy to meet Miss Lachal and from Brisbane, Miss Hart.

Notes and Comments

St. Joan's Alliance had the honour to send to H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, on the occasion of the Coronation of Her Majesty, the resolution passed at the 42nd Annual General Meeting offering "with humble duty, respectful homage" and the assurance of prayers "for a long, happy and peaceful reign."

In reply the Hon. Secretary received the following gracious reply:—

"I am commanded to ask you to convey to the members of the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance The Queen's sincere thanks for their kind message which Her Majesty much appreciates."

St. Joan's Alliance, with the whole Commonwealth, look forward eagerly to the Coronation on June 2nd. Members of the Alliance will surely hear Mass on the evening previously (at 8 p.m. in all Churches) and take advantage of the special permission given by the Hierarchy for evening Mass, to pray for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as she requested in her Christmas broadcast.

On May 30th, St. Joan's day, according to tradition, Mass will be offered for the Alliance, this year by the kindness of Father Bernard Bassett, S.J.

On Saturday afternoon, May 30th, there will be a Coronation Party at the Guide Club, Belgrave Square, to welcome Dame Enid Lyons, G.B.E., Vice-President of St. Joan's International, and other distinguished members from overseas. Members should apply immediately to the Office for tickets, 5s., as space will be limited.

The Triennial Conference of St. Joan's International Alliance will be held in Paris on 29th and 30th August. It is open to any member of the Alliance to attend as a visitor and those wishing to do so should send their names to the hon. secretary at 55 Berners Street without delay.

A deputation, sponsored by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, with representatives from twenty-eight organisations was received by Sir Hugh Lucas Tooth, on behalf of the Home Secretary on April 22, 1953. Miss L. Martindale, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.O.G., chairman of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene introduced the deputation. The speakers were Mrs. Lefroy, J.P., Mr. C. R. Hewitt, Mrs. Corbett Ashby and Miss Chave Collisson.

The deputation asked for the reform of the Solicitation Laws and the substitution of a measure dealing with street solicitation by general legislation against annoyance or molest-

ation, and under which the evidence of the person annoyed or molested would be necessary in order to obtain a conviction.

Sir Hugh Lucas Tooth, after listening attentively to the deputation for considerably over an hour, promised to place the views of the deputation before the Home Secretary. St. Joan's Alliance was represented by Miss Barry.

One of the oldest women's societies, the London and National Society for Women's Service has just changed its title. It will in future be known as the "Fawcett Society" to commemorate the names of Dame Millicent Fawcett, under whose leadership it worked when she was President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and of her daughter Philippa.

To celebrate the occasion, the Society held a very pleasant Press party, at which two of the Vice-Presidents, Mrs. G. D. H. Cole and Miss Irene Ward, M.P. were present, together with Nancy, Viscountess Astor, who has been a member for many years, Miss Philippa Strachey and other Officers.

By kind permission of the Mayoress, Mrs. Edwards (who is also a member), the meeting was held at the Westminster City Hall, in the Mayor's Parlour, where hangs Watt's original painting of John Stuart Mill, who in 1886 set up the Women's Suffrage Committee from which the Society later developed.

Tuesday, June 30th, 7 p.m. at the Alliance Hall, Westminster, Dr. Janet Aitken will speak on the battle for the opening of the medical profession to women. Book this date and bring your friends to hear this thrilling story. Dr. Shattock will be in the chair.

We ask the prayers of our members for Mrs. Benjamin, (née Brady) who died on April 8th. She joined the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society at its first meeting and remained a very staunch and generous member till the end. She served on the executive committee from 1915 to 1920 and was the treasurer of *The Catholic Suffragist* from its foundation in 1915 to 1920. Another service she rendered to the Alliance was that of Hon. Auditor, which office she held from 1937 to 1943. After her marriage she resided in the Cotswolds and was, in consequence, unable to attend our gatherings, but her interest in the Alliance never flagged. May she rest in peace.

We offer our deep sympathy to Miss Mann on the death of her father, and ask our members to pray for him.—R.I.P.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE

AND

Editorial Office of "The Catholic Citizen"

55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society

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MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER, *Hon. Editor,*
"The Catholic Citizen."

The Battle for Women's Education

On April 30th Mrs. Barbara Halpern addressed a Meeting convened by St. Joan's Alliance at the Holy Child Convent, Cavendish Square. The subject on which she gave a brilliant talk was "The Battle for Education"—meaning women's education. Miss Phyllis Challoner in the Chair introduced Mrs. Halpern as the daughter of a famous mother Ray Strachey who wrote "The Cause," a classic history of the Woman's Movement.

Mrs Halpern began by telling her audience how she had been brought up on "The Cause," which she had read as other children read Fairy tales, and on bed-time stories of the woman's struggle for emancipation and the vote. She said that she had found these as thrilling as any child's tale of adventure.

Education, said Mrs. Halpern, went to pieces as far as women were concerned shortly after the Renaissance. Before this from the days of St. Jerome and his highbrow matrons and nearer home, of St. Hilda, education was never considered unsuitable for women; it was taken for granted. Even in the Renaissance period women were often given as much education as their brothers if time and money permitted any at all. Then a gradual decay set in and about the time of the Industrial Revolution things had reached such a pass that women were virtually being educated to be completely helpless. There was a conspiracy to keep them in idleness. The Great Steal was in full swing. All their jobs had been taken from women and nothing had been put in their place.

Mrs. Halpern quoted many concrete examples from books at her disposal of this deplorable state of affairs. She gave "Lowood" the school described in *Jane Eyre* as one example. This school was considered one of the better-class schools—and yet what were the girls taught? Mainly strumming on the piano and a series of unrelated facts which were to be entirely useless in after life.

The sketchy teaching of innumerable useless subjects by unqualified teachers makes a dismal picture and the frustration it caused in after life may be clearly seen in such documents as Florence Nightingale's *Papers of Cassandra*. The truth was, said Mrs. Halpern, that the only occupation open to the upper class woman in need of money was that of Governess—and as these Governesses were only ladies thrown upon evil times no-one thought them worthy of more than a pittance. Some of the shameful advertisements of the time of positions open to the Governess were read to her listeners by Mrs. Halpern. But from this side of the problem came the first glimmer of salvation because it was the earnest reform-minded and philanthropic Victorian who in the end took pity on the lamentable plight of the Governess both in employment and when she was past work. And so it was that the Governesses Benevolent Institute was founded which not only took care of the financial side of the help afforded to Governesses but also planned to educate them in the real sense of the word, so that more fitted for a responsible position they could command more money and more respect. Lectures were started in connection with the Institute mainly at the instigation of Professor Denison Maurice, professor of Divinity at King's College, London who formed a Committee of Education. At the same time the Hon. Amelia Murray, a Maid of Honour to the Queen, collected funds for Queen's College and these two ventures coalesced. All sorts of famous people gave their services quite free and the College was very popular.

Meanwhile the Woman's Movement proper was growing in speed and momentum and gathering in all the outstanding women of the day. A number of progressive-minded families, such as the Nightingales, the Garretts, the Foxes and the Leigh Smiths, well-to-do and of the professional class, had daughters who either forced their fathers to educate them or else had the wisdom to educate themselves. From this class came

Emily Davies who was the daughter of a clergyman. Mrs. Halpern told her audience the well-known story of Emily Davies, Elizabeth Garrett and Millicent Fawcett who, together, decided that Emily should break through the barriers of higher education, Elizabeth of the Medical profession and, the ground thus prepared, "Millie" should gain the vote for women. (It is good to know, said Mrs. Halpern, that Emily Davies was able to vote with the rest at the age of eighty-nine.) Together with the famous Miss Beale and Miss Buss, Emily Davies conducted the struggle for the higher education of women. Mary Buss founded the North London Collegiate School, forerunner of the High School (day school) for girls; Dorothy Beale founded Cheltenham Ladies College which is the forerunner of the Girls Public (boarding) School. The founding of these schools implied higher education for the qualified teachers required and here Emily Davies took the lead from the first. Her theory was to attack at the very top, to obtain the very best college education, on entirely equal terms with men. She set about her task with the greatest tact, the greatest femininity and her first goal was to prove that women could pass the same examinations as men. "Punch" and "The Times" laughed at her but she fought on and managed to get ninety-one women candidates to attempt the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. This was not bad but the lamentable failure of these girls in arithmetic showed how much in need they were of external standards of education.

The education of girls was included in the Schools Enquiry Commission of 1867, and this was a very important step forward. Nine ladies had to give evidence before the Commission, among them Miss Buss and Miss Davies. Mrs. Halpern told how Miss Davies gave her evidence in a calm collected manner but that Miss Buss was so nervous that she was in tears! The latter lady had a better effect on the Commission than the former! During the enquiries of the Commission the question of the endowments of girls' education in relation to that of boys came up with favourable results for the girls.

Meanwhile Emily Davies ploughed on towards her ultimate goal of the founding of a woman's college as part of Cambridge University. But first of all she tried to get the London University to open the Matriculation examination to women but this proved to be too rash an effort and did not succeed. As a corollary to this women were offered a special examination for themselves. Emily Davies repudiated this idea with vigour, her object being to prove that women could take their place in the educational system beside men. But some people who were fighting sincerely for the higher education of women thought it would be no bad idea to have these "special" exam-

inations as they did not approve of everything which was incorporated in the male education of the time. In the end these two streams of thought met to form the one stream which now constitutes higher education for both sexes.

But Miss Davies proceeded with her own idea which was to found a college which should have "no higher a position than Trinity College." She "charged on" and by 1869 feeling, on account of Mrs. Grundy, that it was better to start her venture right outside a University town, she obtained a house in Hitchin where a group of five girls came to inaugurate the new experiment. Money was badly needed and in order that the college should be well and firmly founded in an aura of respectability Miss Davies took care that the "right" people would be on the foundation committee—people who in no sense could be called Bohemian or fanatical. The start was very difficult for the poor girls were in the lime-light. Everything they did was watched by a wide and interested public which meant an ultra playing for safety and deference to the conventions in all that did not concern education. There were also troubles about the examinations the girls were permitted to take. Little-go, yes, they could take it as long as they took it privately!

In 1876 the new College moved to Girton in Cambridge. In the meantime Newnham had been founded (1874) by the party in favour of special examinations for women! The Cambridge Tripos examination was drawing near and up to the last moment there were doubts as to whether the women at Cambridge would be allowed to take it. They were allowed to in the end and two of them got seconds.

After that said Mrs. Halpern it was merely a matter of time before the barriers were really down. Oxford was following in the wake of Cambridge in the matter of colleges for women, and so was London University and by 1880 both Oxford and Cambridge formally allowed girls to work for degrees (without of course obtaining them!). The university women themselves were noble supports in the battle as they did so well and kept—perhaps tactlessly!—getting top marks. There was a woman Senior Wrangler in 1880 and a First Classics in 1887, when there was no man First. And then the last and final push home, in 1890 Philippa Fawcett got placed above the Senior Wrangler and the evening this was announced the "boys" jumped over the wall of the women's college to rejoice with their rivals.

Mrs. Halpern illustrated her lively lecture with many readings from "The Cause" and other interesting books, and a warm vote of thanks from an appreciative audience was proposed by a new Committee member Miss Guessard and seconded by Miss Ann Whittles representing the younger generation. **Christine Spender**

THE MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

The House reassembled on April 14th to hear Mr. Butler's Budget. After that, which took four days, came the Transport Bill (Lords Amendment). This debate provoked fierce party warfare, not so much this time over the subject matter of the Bill as over the tactics of party politics. Members sat all night again during the four days of the debate and heated words were exchanged on a number of occasions by a good many members, including the Prime Minister.

As members themselves remarked, it was a relief to come back, when a new National Insurance Bill had its second reading on April 28th, to a question on which both parties were substantially agreed.

This Bill deals with Maternity Benefits. It provides a larger cash Grant, some of which applies only if the birth takes place at home; allows five weeks longer for the pre-natal allowance (i.e. 11 weeks instead of 6) and makes the allowance dependent on contributions, which has not hitherto been the case.

Discussion mostly centred on the home birth grant with members divided into those who wished to see home births encouraged as far as possible, and those who thought that all births should be in hospital. Mr. Houghton spoke for many who were concerned that the weekly allowance was now to be tied to contributions. As he said, "When the married woman was put on the basis of voluntary insurance . . . she might decide not to insure and thereby do herself and her family damage through having no maternity allowance when she had to give up work. . . ." It was for this reason that the grant had been fixed irrespective of insurable status. This has now been done away with, although certain balancing safeguards have been applied. Mr. Houghton and others, including Dr. Summerskill, considered these safeguards inadequate. Mr. Houghton went on to say, "I think there is always this difficulty when we allow people the option of insuring or not, and I believe there has been no more unsatisfactory feature of the National Insurance Service than the dilemma in which many married women have found themselves in trying to make up their minds whether or not to continue their payments." In this connection Mr. Taylor asked the Parliamentary Secretary what proportion of the 119,000 mothers who received that allowance in 1950 had exercised their option not to continue paying. Mr. Turton indicated that 30 to 40 had opted out.

Dr. Stross declared, "I have no prejudices against this Bill because it was conceived by one side of the House and delivered by the other; nor indeed because the conception was, as it were, that of one Minister, who is truly feminine,

and the child was shyly delivered by a man midwife to-day."

Mrs. Braddock summed up the general mood when she hoped that the Bill might be amended in a committee stage. She said, "I hope the discussion will be useful and that the Bill will emerge from the committee a little better than it is now, although it is already quite good."

The Equal Pay question was again asked by Miss Ward on April 23rd. One must admire her perseverance, though little enough, except facetiousness, ever emerges.

The new softening of the Iron Curtain has brought new hope to some who have suffered for a long time. It was good to see that Mr. Hollis raised the question of the Russian wives again on April 15th and was assured by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, "This matter is very much in my mind. It is however a delicate one and I should prefer to make no further comment at the present time."

There are two new women members, Mrs. Harriet Slater, Stoke-on-Trent N. and Mrs. Patricia Ford, Down N. Mrs. Ford made an unfortunate start. On Sunday 26th April an article by her appeared in the *Sunday Express* in which she said, "There is even a room upstairs with a couple of beds, and the old stagers seem to get there first. One night I found both Mrs. Bessie Braddock and Dr. Edith Summerskill stretched out on them and both snoring." Mrs. Braddock raised the matter with the Speaker next day. Mrs. Ford apologised most humbly both to Mrs. Braddock and to Dr. Summerskill and the apology was wholeheartedly accepted and Mrs. Ford's inexperience acknowledged. Mrs. Ford however had admitted that the article had been written for her. It was therefore agreed that action should still be taken in connection with the newspaper and the matter was referred to the Committee of Privileges. The Prime Minister intervened on behalf of Mrs. Ford but Mr. Attlee made it quite clear that her apology had been accepted and that the action was now only directed towards the newspaper.

B. M. Halpern

BOOKS RECEIVED

S.P. Key Words and Key Phrases. (Stonevale Publications, 1s.) These pocket pamphlets in French, German, Italian and Spanish give helpful words and phrases for travellers abroad, with some useful hints at the end.

A Directory of Catholic Schools and Colleges, 1953. (Paternoster Publications, 3s.) As His Eminence Cardinal Griffin says in the foreword, this Directory is a most useful and, in fact, necessary publication for the use of parents and parish priests.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES Political Rights of Women

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was signed on March 31st, 1953, by representatives of seventeen Member States in a ceremony at the United Nations Headquarters. The Convention which will come into force after six ratifications or accessions provides that women shall be entitled to vote and to hold public office on equal terms with men.

Among the signatories were Mrs. Gabriela Mistral (Chile), Miss Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Madame Lefauchaux (France).

Monsieur Picot, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, opening the ceremony, pointed out that the Convention was one of the first instruments adopted by the United Nations in the field of human rights. He paid tribute to Miss Minerva Bernardino, Chairman of the Commission on the Status of Women, as a representative of all women whose work had made the Convention possible. Miss Bernardino said she hoped the Convention would "not be shelved in the archives," but would become a binding juridical instrument.

United Nations. The new Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld has written to express his warm appreciation of "the thoughtful message of good wishes" sent to him by the Alliance on his appointment.

I.L.O. The Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women for Work of Equal Value will become effective on May 23, 1953, twelve months after the ratification by two States. The first to ratify was Yugoslavia, followed by Belgium, and then Mexico—all in 1952. The latest ratification is that of France.

Two Australian members, Miss Aline Fenwick and Miss Betty Kitson have recently been travelling in Sweden and while in Stockholm were entertained at an afternoon tea party by our member, Fru Anna Lenah Elgström, the distinguished Swedish author. Fellow guests were a representative band of Swedish Catholics both men and women, among whom were Rev. Fr. Schmidt S.J., and officials of various organisations including the Director of a Swedish cultural and information council approximating to the British Council in England, and the President of the Catholic University Society and the Vice-President of the organisation corresponding to the Catholic Women's League in Sweden. Fru Elgström gave a brief resumé of the aims and objects of St. Joan's Alliance with special reference to its journal, *The Catholic Citizen* and Miss Fenwick and Miss Kitson then described the activities of the Alliance in England and Australia and also in the international field. Their remarks were received with considerable

interest and followed by numerous questions, especially on the subject of Equal Pay. They are most grateful to Fru Elmström for giving them this opportunity of meeting members of Sweden's extremely small Catholic Community and of making the work of St. Joan's known to them.

We give a very special welcome to the seventh number of *St. Joan's Australia* (edited by New South Wales Section) which reached us a short while ago. It is full of interesting things; to mention two, an article by Mrs. Jean Daly on "Women in the United Nations" and the Broadcast Talk on Mary Ward given by Mrs. Mary Witton Flynn from the Catholic Library.

We wish success to the effort being made for "Interstate interest" in the magazine (i.e. that each Interstate Section in Australia should send in articles of interest or items of news for each quarterly issue)—and we feel sure that this object will shortly be obtained. There is no lack of activity in New South Wales to judge by the reports published.

Lebanon. By a Decree of February 18th, 1953, full political rights were given to women. As the register of electors was not ready in time for the recent municipal elections, the women's organisations had asked for the appointment of women councillors, half the councillors being elected and half appointed. The President of the Republic accordingly appointed three women councillors who sit on the Public Health and Social Service Committee and on the Finance Committee. One of these councillors, our co-religionist, is Madame Laure Tabet, representative from her country to the Sixth and Seventh Sessions of the Status of Women Commission.

Pacific Islands. At a South Pacific Conference on population in relation to resources, a discussion arose over birth control. The Government of Tonga had tried to "educate" its people, but with little success. The Nauruan delegates opposed birth control, and demanded a new home for their people. The New Guinea delegation said they would welcome Nauruans in their under-populated country. The delegates from American Samoa said they had pride in their people and wished them to increase. Means must be found of using the increased man power to get more production.

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EQUAL PAY

We have received the following letter from the National Union of Women Teachers:—

In the 1952 Budget, reliefs and concessions were made to various groups; Now, in 1953, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented an "incentive Budget" which provides for the reduction of Purchase Tax on some luxury goods, the abolition of the Excess Profits Levy, the removal of Entertainments Duty on amateur sports and a reduction in income tax in such a way that people in the higher income groups benefit to a far greater degree than those with low incomes. No provision is made, however, for setting right the admittedly grave injustice of employing women in the public service at lower rates of pay than those of their men colleagues doing the same work.

It cannot be claimed that it is more important to reduce the tax on fur coats and jewellery, gramophones or smokers' requisites than to pay women the rate for the job, but apparently the Chancellor was not even faced with such a choice in priorities for he claims that, taking into account the reduction in taxation, he will still carry forward "a surplus above-the-line of about £109 million, some £20 million more than the surplus above-the-line realised last year.

The cost of the full implementation of equal pay for men and women in the public services has been estimated by the Government to be about £28 million and, in view of the figures given by the Chancellor in his Budget speech, women are again asking what possible excuse there can be for his failure to carry out the Conservative Party's election pledge. As recently as May, 1952, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury reiterated Government support of that pledge, viz:—

"We hope that during the life of the next Parliament the country's financial position will improve sufficiently to enable us to proceed at an early date with the application in the Government service of the principle of equal pay for men and women for services of equal value."

The Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties have each pledged support for the principle of equal pay; and the House of Commons also has repeatedly approved it. Thus, by failing to take steps to establish equal pay for its own employees, the Government is flouting the expressed wish of the House of Commons.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Leonora de Alberti in "The Catholic Citizen," 15th May, 1928.

The second volume of the Sign Post Series on *Social Insurance* by Evelyn Martelli gives a summary of social insurance, as it stands to-day, and makes various suggestions to remedy the defects noted. The book gives special attention to the treatment of women under the Acts, and to quote Miss Rathbone's introduction, finds no adequate justification for the practice of treating women as a separate group of workers. Differential rates of contribution and benefit if necessary should logically be based on the rate of remuneration, and not on the sex of the worker. It appears that the insurance experts connected with the International Labour Office regard the British system of a flat rate—different for men, women and juveniles—as a blot on the British system. Great Britain stands almost alone in this respect, and experience in other countries shows that a graded system is quite practicable. The question is of considerable interest.—*Social Insurance.*

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To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

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