

# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

## AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

#### New Year Legislative Changes.

Several important Acts came into operation on 1st January. Some of these were fully discussed in our survey last week of legislation for the past year. The clause in the Lead Paint Act prohibiting the employment of women and young persons does not, however, come into operation until November, 1927. The Legitimacy Act and the Adoption of Children Act and the Midwives and Maternity Homes' Act were also summarized last week. It is significant to read in Sunday's papers that already an application for legality of adoption has been made. Members of women's societies should mark with interest that out of six statutes coming into force with the beginning of the year, no fewer than four fall into the category of "legislation affecting women" and that strenuous Parliamentary work was done on their behalf. Of the other two, one provides wireless licences free for the blind, and the other deals with the weighing of fat cattle before sale on the markets.

#### The Protection of the Consumer.

On 1st January, 1927, the first of the new orders issued by the Minister of Health for restricting the sale of preserved foods came into force. Their object is to prohibit the manufacture of any food containing chemical preservative with the exception of certain scheduled goods in the preparation of which an infinitesimal amount of prescribed quality is permitted. These are sausages, bottled, tinned and dried fruits, wines, cordials and mineral waters, jam, sugar, coffee extract, and pickles or sauces made from fruit or vegetables. The Ministry is meeting the temporary difficulty of retailers who have uncleared stocks of preserved food on hand by the suggestion that "Local Authorities will probably consider it desirable to refrain from instituting legal proceedings during the next few months where they are satisfied that reasonable efforts have been made to clear old stocks . . ." Any measure which tends to diminish the reliance of the consumer upon preserved foodstuffs is probably, given our present standards of variety and quality, a step in the direction of improved public health. Thus we must welcome the extended use which the Minister of Health has made of his statutory powers. Nevertheless the essential conflict between organized expert producers and unorganized inexpert consumers, which is

characteristic of modern economic life, remains. The National Food Council, in calling attention to the evil of food adulteration, has touched a fringe of the problem which constitutes its sphere. The problem which constitutes its sphere is in turn a mere fringe of the wider problem of economic exploitation under a system of trustified production and non-competitive price fixing. The consumer who puts his trust in administrative orders issued on his behalf by a cautious government is a very long way from economic salvation.

#### Sustained Effort.

It is clear that 1927 will see an intensification of the demand for "the vote for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men." The council meeting of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship will provide the occasion, on the evening of 3rd March, for a mass meeting in the Central Hall, Westminster, at which Miss Margaret Bondfield will be among the speakers. The Women's Freedom League is holding, on 20th January, at the Minerva Café, High Holborn, a meeting to demand that Equal Franchise shall be included in the King's Speech. Sir James Remnant, M.P. for Holborn, will also be asked to receive a deputation on the subject from representatives of organizations in his constituency. And it is expected that many of his colleagues will be similarly afflicted during the early part of the Session.

#### Education and the B.B.C.

We shall watch with great interest the educational activities of the British Broadcasting Company under the new régime. An interesting series of talks has already been announced in consultation with the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Lady Denman, Chairman of the Federation, will give an introductory talk on Wednesday, 12th January, and on 19th January Miss Rhoda Power will begin a series of six talks on "Village Life in Olden Times"; on 12th March Mrs. Maciver will begin a second series on "Citizenship in Practice." This is not the first time that 2 LO has dealt with citizenship and central and local government. Many of our readers will remember the different groups of talks provided by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, as well as single talks by representatives of other societies, and at other broadcasting centres in Birmingham, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow women's societies have provided talks on citizenship. But we think that this is the first time that a series of talks has been instituted in connection with any definite organization, and it seems very appropriate that this new move should begin with the Women's Institutes scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country. We see in this new development the solution to the hitherto insoluble problem of an adequate supply of speakers for many types of women's gatherings, and hope it may be further explored.

#### The Education of the Adolescent.

Those better qualified to do so than ourselves will be invited to state their views on the report just published of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education on the Education of the Adolescent. Concurrently with the report appears a reply from Sir Eustace Percy, the President of the Board of Education, dealing with one of the most important of its recommendations: the proposal to raise the school age to 15 from the year 1932.

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We do not propose here to discuss this or the other recommendations, but it does strike us as very unusual and highly undesirable for the report of an expert Consultative Committee to be, so to speak, strangled at birth by an official pronouncement.

#### The Most Dangerous Occupation.

The "Winter School" of Sanitary Inspectors and Health Visitors held at Bedford College last week gave rise to some peculiarly interesting discussions. In the course of them Dr. Louise McLroy launched an attack against the existing medical service in relation to maternity. There is, she asserted, "no other branch of medicine which is allowed to be so haphazard." "What doctor would be allowed to perform an operation for appendicitis in a little kitchen with very bad light?" In addition to bad environment, there was, she pointed out, the further difficulty of obtaining medical practitioners in serious cases. This led her to the prophecy that in the next ten years we should see the establishment of a complete obstetrical service throughout the country. We heartily agree with Dr. McLroy's condemnation of the scant consideration at present accorded by society to those who are engaged in the dangerous occupation of motherhood. But we feel that the "right to strike" is an essential condition of such improvement. Society will accord due consideration to its mothers when these are in a position to say "under such and such conditions we will fulfil our vital function, but we will not bring children into a world which is not decently prepared for their reception."

#### The Persecution of Married Women.

Evidently the Plymouth Education Committee is contemplating adherence to the policy of compelling women in their employment to resign on marriage, for the *Western Morning News* of 29th December, contains a vigorous and unanswerable letter by Dr. Mabel Ramsay in vindication of a woman's right to manage her personal affairs in her own way. She points out that no attack is projected against the married charwoman, so that the plea of concern for the future generation falls to the ground. If, on the other hand, the committee's concern is for the proper diffusion of salaries, then, where a male employee marries a woman with property, an inquiry into his economic position should logically follow. But this appears to be no part of the Plymouth Education Committee's intended procedure.

#### A 27-hour Day.

A prosecution was reported from Sheffield during Christmas week of a cutlery trade employer who had employed seven women and one girl for a 27-hour's shift, with five intervals totalling four hours. The Chief Inspector of Factories for the district, who prosecuted, described the case as the worst he had come across in the course of thirty years' experience. The hours in question were, of course, merely the more spectacular stretches in a long tale of overwork, and the £24 fine (£3 on each summons) seems a relatively mild imposition upon the employer in question.

#### Family Endowment Overseas.

The recent decision of the New South Wales State Industrial Committee in favour of family allowances as an alternative to a rise in the basic wage for all males, appears to have borne fruit in the shape of a new Government Family Endowment scheme. This scheme involves an additional annual cost upon industry of £7,000,000, or about 6 per cent of the wage bill. Such a sum will provide allowances at the rate of 6s. per week per child under 14 in the case of all employees (whether covered by Federal or State awards) whose annual income does not exceed £750. According to the *Daily Telegraph* of 28th December, the scheme has been endorsed by the Labour caucus, though certain sections of the Labour party still prefer, as an alternative, an unconditional increase in the basic wage without regard to family needs. Meanwhile, certain sections of the employers are urging the removal of the family allowance charge from industry to the national exchequer.

#### Edmonton's New District M.O.

The Edmonton Guardians have taken the step of appointing for the first time a woman district medical officer. The appointment was not accomplished without "liveliness", one guardian remarking that in some cases it was not desirable for a woman doctor to officiate. In reply it was pointed out that if a woman doctor ought not to examine a man, then a man doctor ought not to examine a woman, also that the dissentient guardian

was himself liable to be nursed by a woman if ill. Eventually the motion to appoint Dr. Fanny Cattle in preference to three male candidates was carried by 22 votes to 12.

#### A Plea for Women Police.

On 30th December a widely representative deputation waited upon the Exeter Watch Committee to urge the appointment of women police with the powers and status of constables. It was introduced by Mrs. Browne, a member of the Watch Committee itself, and comprised representatives of the Equal Citizenship Society, and the Exeter Free Church Council. It was also emphatically supported by Lady Florence Cecil, wife of the Bishop of Exeter, from whom a letter was read. The Watch Committee undertook to give due consideration to the matter.

#### "Five Quarters" at the Guildhouse.

The Guildhouse in Ecclestone Square has issued its programme of "Five Quarters" Sunday afternoon discussions for the coming spring. It consists of fourteen addresses on "The World's Beliefs." Dr. A. B. Cook will expound *Agnosticism*, Mr. G. A. de Zoysa, of the Buddhist Mission, *Buddhism*, Mr. Malik *Hinduism*, the Chief Rabbi *Judaism*, Dr. Mattuck, *Liberal Judaism*, Dr. Delisle Burns *Experimental Religion*, Professor J. P. Bruce *Confucianism*. This is not the whole story, but merely a sample of the fascination of the subjects expounded and the eminence of their expounders. The fourteenth lecture deals with *Christianity*, but its interpreter is "to be announced later."

#### An Overseas Pioneer.

Last week the ninetieth anniversary of the foundation of South Australia was celebrated in Adelaide. Few of the original pioneer immigrants, very naturally, have survived to participate in the event. But among those who have, the senior pioneer is Miss Fisher, one of the earliest group of immigrants in 1836. She is about to celebrate her 100th birthday.

#### Women and the Bar.

In Queensland the first woman barrister has now been called to the Bar. She is Miss M'Gregor, the daughter of a Brisbane solicitor. In this country, another pioneer achievement is marked by the call to the Bar of Miss Ma Pwa Hune, the first Burmese woman to take such a step.

#### Women and Honours.

The New Year Honours List accords niggardly treatment to women on the whole. One title falls to a lady already titled: the Dowager Countess of Jersey, who receives the D.B.E. for her imperial services as President of the Victoria League. The Kaisar-i-Hind medal for services in India falls to five men and five women. For the rest women are rigidly segregated in the civil division of the C.B.E. and O.B.E. which contain no men—a very distinguished and public-spirited group. But there are indications that the traditions of industrial life are reproducing themselves in the *London Gazette*. What those conditions are, our readers will learn from our leading article.

#### Nine Distinguished Women.

The C.B.E. is awarded to Mrs. Boyce for political and public services in Surrey, to Miss M. H. Irwin, general secretary of the Scottish Council for Women's Trades, to Mrs. Kimmins, founder and hon. secretary of the Heritage Craft School for Crippled Children, to Miss K. J. Stephenson, J.P., vice-chairman of the Wiltshire County Council Public Health Committee, to Mrs. Strong, for services to archaeology, to Mrs. Vlieland for political and public services in Exeter, and to Miss A. E. Wark, chief woman inspector at the Board of Education. The O.B.E. is awarded to Miss H. M. Milson, principal clerk in H.M. Private Secretary's Office, and to Miss M. Polson, Superintending Clerk (acting) at the Ministry of Health.

*POLICY.*—The sole policy of THE WOMAN'S LEADER is to advocate a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women. So far as space permits, however, it will offer an impartial platform for topics not directly included in the objects of the women's movement but of special interest to women. Articles on these subjects will always be signed, at least by initials or a pseudonym, and for the opinions expressed in them the Editor accepts no responsibility.

### EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.

Last month a woman member of the Manchester City Council, Councillor Annie Lee, introduced a motion at a meeting of the Education Committee on the subject of equal pay for equal work as between men and women. She made the concrete proposal that the appointment of several women attendance officers (already decided upon) should be deferred for six months in order that the Council might have the opportunity of considering the question of salaries. In explaining her motion she pointed out that in the Council's advertisement it was proposed to give men school attendance officers a maximum salary of £4 13s. a week and women a maximum of £3 18s., though the service rendered was to be identical. The motion failed to find a seconder, and was accordingly dropped without discussion.

In this incident we have, curiously enough, a comparatively rare combination of circumstances. Unequal pay for equal work as between men and women, though it is a reality which dominates economic life, is not usually embodied in a perfectly straightforward sex discrimination for a given job. Throughout industry it is thinly disguised by some variation in the job, combined with a custom differentiating men's jobs from women's jobs. In the medical profession, the prevalent exclusion of women from the higher posts achieves the same end. In the teaching profession, however, we find sex differentiation widespread and unashamed, and now here in the municipal service, Councillor Annie Lee has put her finger upon a clear case.

Why, then, seeing that the principle of "equal pay for equal work" is one which commands ready acceptance, at any rate in trade union circles, seeing, too, that Councillor Annie Lee is not the only woman member of the Manchester Education Committee, did this ostensibly equitable and moderate proposal fail to command any support whatever? It was an equitable proposal because rightly or wrongly salaries are professedly based upon the value of work done and in this case the work demanded of men and women was identical. It was a moderate proposal because—unlike any proposal to pay salaries at the male rate to all women teachers, it would have involved only a negligible addition to the burden of the rates. Why, then, did it meet with such scant consideration?

We do not know any more about the matter than is contained in the bare facts chronicled above, but these suggest certain pertinent considerations which were doubtless present in the minds of the committee. In the first place, it must be remembered that the Whitley Council for the municipal services has laid down 100:75 as the standard ratio between the remuneration of men and women. The Manchester Education Committee therefore, though offering its women attendance officers something less than equal pay, was at any rate offering them something more generous than the standard ratio, for £3 18s. is more than three-quarters of £4 13s. In the second place, though it is true that salaries are based upon the value of service rendered, it is also true that the value of a service itself depends upon the number of persons ready and able to perform it. It is in fact determined by supply and demand conditions in a labour market where women owing partly to their restricted opportunities are relatively cheap. Thus the public authority which gets its female labour at a lower rate is, it may be said, merely conforming to economic circumstances which are not of its making. In the third place there remains the probability that men attendance officers are burdened with more economic dependents than their

women colleagues. In theory at least their salaries will have to cover the needs of a wife and children.

Now of these three considerations, the second and third are the most significant. They are, in fact, very significant indeed. To take the first: it is true that a single small sectional levelling up of pay in a given occupation would merely disturb the relativity of earnings, and that the general inferiority of women's earnings is due to deep-seated causes of which restricted opportunity and the probability of early retirement on marriage are among the most important. It is therefore true that the real fight for equal pay must take the form of an attack upon causes rather than an attempt to correct results: that it must be waged as a battle against closed occupational outlets and the deliberate exclusion of married women from jobs which they may desire to retain. Nevertheless, "to him that hath, shall be given," and if a public authority (which is under no economic constraint to bow to the exigencies of marginal value in a competitive labour market) can set a standard of equity without imposing an undue burden upon its ratepayers, there is everything to be said for setting such a standard. Those of its members who are anxious to promote the extended employment of women must of course be careful to see that their work really is equal, before equal pay is accorded, otherwise their dismissal will in all probability accompany the establishment of equal pay. But in the case in question there is no reason to suppose that women attendance officers were desired solely on account of their relative cheapness.

There remains the other consideration: the probable family needs of the men. But the facts of the case reduce this consideration to an absurdity. The men in question were to be accorded a surplus of 15s. a week; but does anybody suggest that this represents even a faint reflection of the additional expense which the support of a family at its period of maximum dependency imposes upon even the most modest of professional workers? If it is really regarded as social provision for the rearing of a future generation it is a mere mockery. If it is not, then it is an inequity. But absurd and inaccurate as this consideration may be when it is expressed in pounds, shillings and pence and applied to a concrete case, it remains, or should remain, an important consideration, and we are once again reminded that any general application of "equal pay for equal work" must logically involve separate provision for the dependent families of men or women workers (as the case may be) through some form of family allowances. And the experience of Continental public authorities, who have as a matter of fact established the principle of equal pay for equal work with this accompanying condition, strengthens our belief. Meanwhile—here again the case of the school attendance officers would have provided an opportunity of setting a standard. It would have been impossible for any sane member of the Manchester Education Committee to have proposed the application of a system of family allowances to attendance officers alone. But the levelling up of the women to an equality with the men would have thrown into sharp relief the fact that society as at present constituted makes no adequate or deliberate provision for the maintenance of the family.

For all these reasons—and many others besides—we therefore greatly regret that no member of the Manchester Education Committee was prepared to give Councillor Annie Lee an opportunity of developing her case for equal pay for equal work, as applied to the remuneration of attendance officers.

### LODGING HOUSES FOR WOMEN.

By M. J. WILDE.

It seems perhaps rather uncharitable to venture to criticize any book written with the intention of bettering the condition of homeless people, but in reading Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's book *In Darkest London* it is felt there are a few points which require comment.

Perhaps it would be well to state very shortly the arrangements made by the Metropolitan Asylums Board for dealing with the class described by Mrs. Chesterton as "outcast."

When about 1912 the homeless poor on the Embankment were very numerous, the Ministry of Health (then the Local Government Board) instituted a scheme for dealing with this condition. The casual wards of London were transferred from the Poor Law Guardians to the Metropolitan Asylums Board on 1st April, 1912, and about that time the Poor Law Inspectors' Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor was formed at the

Ministry of Health. In addition to the M.A.B., most of the bodies dealing with the homeless poor and the destitute were represented on it—the Church Army, Salvation Army, etc., and these undertook not to give relief to individual cases in a certain specified area—the Embankment, Strand, and the neighbourhood of the West End theatres, but to co-operate in a scheme by which with the aid of the police, such cases were to be directed to an office known as the Homeless Poor Night Office which the Committee previously referred to decided should be opened on the Embankment under the control of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The police were supplied with tickets, and every apparently homeless person found in that area between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. was given one and told to apply at the office. There the facts of each case were inquired into by the superintendent and the man or woman was ultimately provided





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