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BRITISH
COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE

WOMEN POWER AND POLICY

with special reference to
THE IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL
OFFICE CONFERENCES

REPORT OF CONFERENCE
HELD JUNE 18th & 19th, 1930

Headquarters—

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

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cc. No

British Commonwealth League.

Telephone: Temple Bar 5675. 17, Buckingham Street,
Adelphi,
London, W.C.2.

CONSTITUTION.

NAME.

British Commonwealth League.

To link together organisations of women within the Commonwealth working for the following objects:—

OBJECTS.

- a. To secure equality of liberties, status, and opportunities between men and women within the British Commonwealth of Nations.
- b. To secure for women of the less forward races within the British Commonwealth the fullest possible preparation for freedom, while safeguarding them from the operations of custom or law which degrade them as human beings.
- c. To increase mutual understanding of common problems.

METHODS.

1. To study—
 - a. The rights and status of women within the British Commonwealth of Nations.
 - b. The extent and use of political power in relation to issues affecting equality in Empire citizenship.
2. To take such action as may be necessary to achieve the object.

MEMBERSHIP.

Membership shall be open to—

- a. Any regularly constituted Society in any part of the British Commonwealth which is in agreement with the objects of the League.
- b. Individual men and women in agreement with the object. They shall be called Associate Members.

There shall be a Headquarters Group of Associate Members. Overseas Members of affiliated Societies or Associate Members shall be eligible to membership of the Headquarters Group.

FINANCE.

Societies affiliating shall pay a subscription of not less than One Guinea per annum.

Associate Members shall pay a subscription of not less than 7s. 6d. per annum.

Overseas Members desiring to join the Headquarters Group shall pay a minimum subscription of 7s. 6d. per annum.

COUNCIL.

The business of the League shall be conducted by a Council, to consist of the Honorary Officers, one representative of each affiliated society, and one representative of the Headquarters Group of Associate Members. The Council shall meet annually to elect its Honorary Officers and ten members of a Standing Committee.

STANDING COMMITTEE.

Each Society affiliated to the League may appoint a member to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall have power to co-opt from time to time additional members not exceeding in number one quarter of the number of the whole Committee.

There shall be a Committee on Admissions, consisting of the President and two other Members. The Committee shall be appointed by the Standing Committee and their decision shall be final.

HONORARY OFFICERS.

The Officers shall be President, Secretaries, Treasurer, and Chairman of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall have power to appoint additional officers as required.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

Vice-Presidents shall be appointed by the Council.

Nominations shall be submitted from the affiliated societies: not more than one nomination shall be accepted from each Province or State.

NOTE.—The League has been formed to carry on the work formerly done by the British Dominions Women Citizens' Union and the British Overseas Committee of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

THE FOLLOWING SOCIETIES SUPPORTED THE CONFERENCE.

Australia. Aboriginal Protection League. Federation of Women Voters. Victorian Women's Citizens' Association. Feminist Club. Women's League of New South Wales. Queensland Women's Electoral League. Women's Non-Party Association of South Australia. Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia. Women's Union of Service of New South Wales. Women's Non-Party League of Tasmania.

New Zealand. Pioneer Club.

South Africa. Women's Enfranchisement League of the Union of South Africa.

Bermuda. Bermuda Woman Suffrage Society.

Canada. Montreal Women's Club (Franchise Committee).

British Societies. National Union of Teachers. National Union of Women Teachers. Women's Freedom League. St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance. Women's International League. Association for Social and Moral Hygiene. National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship. Open Door Council. Open Door International. Society for the Ministry of Women (interdenominational). Indo-British Mutual Welfare League. Commonwealth of India League. St. Pancras Society for Equal Citizenship. London and National Society for Women's Service. National Council for the representation of women on the League of Nations. The Mothers' Union. British Federation of University Women. British Social Hygiene Council. National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child. Hendon Women Citizens' Council. Women's National Liberal Federation.

India. Women's Indian Association.

RESOLUTIONS.

These Resolutions fall into two parts (a) those for general use.

(b) Those passed at a special Delegate Gathering for inclusion in a memorandum to the Imperial Conference.

Certain of the Resolutions, with comments appended, were carefully shaped into a Memorandum presented to the Colonial Office Conference.

GENERAL RESOLUTIONS.

- (1) *Resolution of Congratulation.* That this Conference warmly congratulates the women of Canada on the decision of the Privy Council made in regard to admission to the Senate. This Conference looks with interest towards the fuller entry of Canadian women into political life.
- (2) This Conference heartily congratulates those women of South Africa who have achieved the suffrage. It looks forward with interest to the full entry of South African women into political life, and expresses its confidence that the effect of the measure will be definitely to strengthen the work of good Government. Taught by their own experience the members of this Conference urge South African women to continue their work for political and economic equality on organised non-party lines.
- (3) *Bermuda.* This Conference congratulates the women of Bermuda on their struggle for the suffrage. In view of the following facts:—
 - (a) that of a population of 30,884, only 1,377 persons are entitled to vote,
 - (b) that of these 1,377 persons, 216 are plural voters possessing two to eight votes apiece,
 - (c) that since 1691 no change has been made in the distribution of seats in the Assembly,
 - (d) that women, irrespective of colour, education, and stake in the country, are completely excluded from this Legislature and Franchise, whether Parliamentary Municipal, or Parochial.

This Conference trusts that the request of the women of Bermuda, embodied in their Memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for a Commission of Enquiry into the Constitution for the Colony of Bermuda, will be granted without delay.
- (4) This Conference heartily congratulates Amy Johnson on her magnificent achievement. This Conference urges that any restrictions upon the free opening of commercial aviation to women may be speedily removed, and urges the suitable Societies to approach the proper authorities.

This Conference heartily congratulates Lady Squires upon her election to the Newfoundland Legislature.

- (5) This Conference, having considered the Resolutions relating to Aborigines moved by members of the Australian Federation of Women Voters at the Commonwealth Ministerial Conference held in Melbourne, April, 1929, and passed unanimously, regrets to learn that the present Minister for Home Affairs, while having made some improvements in the Aboriginal Ordinances, has taken no steps to deal with those Resolutions relating to the appointment of women as Protectors, Medical Assistants, or Police, or in any advisory capacity. This Conference suggests that the Australian Federation of Women Voters shall in each State take up this question with the Federal Government. Moved by Mrs. John Jones. Seconded by Mrs. Waterworth.
- (6) *Resolutions re Australian Aborigines.* This Conference desires to emphasise and support the following Resolution made by a member of the Australian Federation of Women Voters, and passed unanimously at the Federal Conference on Aborigines called by the Minister for Home Affairs (Federal Government) in Melbourne, April 12, 1929.
 - I. *The appointment of women officials.*
 - (a) That in the future, management of the Aborigines of North and Central Australia, qualified women be given a definite place on any advisory council which may be formed by the Government.
 - (b) That following Mr. Bleakley's suggestion of the appointment of an assistant to each of the (two) Chief Protectors, a woman be appointed in each case, preferably a medical woman.
 - (c) That women with police powers be appointed to act in the neighbourhood of construction camps.
 - II. *Co-operative Protection of Aborigines.* That the Commonwealth Government institute steps to establish *Co-operative Government* with the various States concerned, in the protection of the Aborigines.
- (7) *Mui Tsai.* This Conference welcomes the action taken by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in relation to the Ordinances bearing on the Mui Tsai system in Hong Kong, and urges that there be no relaxation of vigour in enforcing these Ordinances. It further urges that adequate and comprehensive measures shall be taken to provide the necessary shelter, accommodation, education and training of released Mui Tsai.

- (8) *Indian Child Marriage Act.* This Conference congratulates the Women's Indian Association on the passage of the Sarda Child Marriage Act, and urges the strict enforcement of that Act.
- (9) This Conference asks that at least two women be invited as full representatives to the Round Table or any other Conference engaged to consider the future Constitution of India.
- (10) *Franchise in Quebec.* That since the Province of Quebec, the oldest of the Provinces, is the only one which denies its women the provincial vote, while having the Federal vote, this Conference of the British Commonwealth League urges the Provincial Legislature to remove this anomaly as soon as possible; and this Conference further draws attention to the fact that Quebec is now the only part of the self-governing Dominions where women are excluded from exercising the full franchise.
- (11) *Admission of Women to the Ministry of the Church.* This Conference strongly affirms that all professions should be fully open to women. In particular it urges the removal of all obstacles to the free entry of women into the Ministry of the Christian Churches, and any other organised religious bodies.
- (12) *Less Forward Races.* This Conference urges its respective organisations to further the study of problems of social hygiene as they exist amongst the less forward races within the area covered by the different Governments concerned: in particular with special reference to the bearing of these problems upon the status of the women of such races.
- (13) *Nationality.* The British Commonwealth League urges its affiliated Associations in the self-governing Dominions at the Imperial Conference to do all in their power to ensure that their delegation is instructed to vote for the right of a married woman to retain her Nationality on marriage, and thus carry out the recommendation attached to the draft Convention on Nationality.
- (14) In view of the recommendation attached to the draft Convention on Nationality that States should study the possibility of introducing into their law the principle of the equality of the sexes in matters of Nationality, taking particularly into consideration the interests of the children, the British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled calls upon the Government to give facilities for the passage into law of the *Nationality of Married Women Bill*. The British Commonwealth League urges the importance of His Majesty's Government thus giving a lead to the other Governments represented at the Imperial Conference in this matter.

- (15) *Co-ordination of Marriage Law.* That, in view of the fact that women's organisations in Australia are working toward a unified Marriage and Divorce Law, this Conference of the British Commonwealth League affirms the desirability of co-ordinating wherever possible the Marriage, Maintenance and Divorce Laws throughout the Empire.
- This Conference recommends to the Standing Committee that a sub-Committee be appointed to consider and prepare a recommendation for the Imperial Conference, and urges that attention be paid to the question of domicile.
- (16) *Colonial Office.* This Conference recognised the excellent work done by the Advisory Committee on Education; it urges that the system of Committee work be extended to cover more fully matters of health, medical, housing and social service.
- This Conference urges that a larger number of women be appointed on such Committees, and that Reports of the work of such Committees should be published for sale at the Government Stationery Offices.
- (17) The British Commonwealth League in Conference assembled deeply regrets that the Chief Justice of Palestine should propose to forbid to the women newly admitted to the bar at Palestine access to religious and tribal courts, which must seriously lower their dignity as members of his own profession, it deplors the further arbitrary limitation to be imposed at his personal discretion. The Conference, while realising the difficulties necessarily arising in a country of differing cultures, humbly submits that these are difficulties of degree rather than kind, that all innovations which improve the status of women have been bitterly opposed in all countries by religious and legal bodies, but that experience has everywhere justified such innovations.
- The exclusion of women from religious and tribal courts will do much to limit their usefulness in those very cases closely affecting women and children in their home life where oppression and injustice are most likely.
- We therefore earnestly beg that the new members of the bar may be trusted to observe a discretion worthy of their admission to an ancient honourable calling, and that such limitations either for men or women as appear temporarily desirable should be arrived at by professional consultation and not by public ordinance derogatory to the profession even more than to individuals concerned.

In addition, the Resolutions on the Imperial Conference, Part II., Part III., a.b.c., were in principle accepted by the British Commonwealth League Delegate Conferences, and may be applied where needed for particular purposes.

DRAFT FOR MEMORANDUM TO THE IMPERIAL
CONFERENCE.

PART I.

THE FULL CITIZEN STATUS OF WOMEN (Nationality and
Franchise).

A. RESOLUTION ON NATIONALITY.

This Conference, being of opinion that the operation of justice is hindered by the retention in nationality laws of distinctions based on sex, welcomes the statement of the British representative at the International Conference called by the League of Nations for the Codification of International Law that the British Government is in favour of applying the principle of the equality of the sexes in matters of nationality. This Conference is of opinion that the Imperial Conference should take steps to implement the Recommendation adopted in the Nationality Committee of the Codification Conference by the votes of 27 nations including Great Britain and her Dominions, to study how to introduce this principle into the Nationality Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations

B. RESOLUTION ON FRANCHISE.

This Conference desires to draw the attention of the Imperial Conference to the following facts: Since the last sitting of the Imperial Conference *Indian* women have secured the right of the franchise, except for the Council of State. *South African* women of white race have the suffrage. *Canadian* women have by decision of the Privy Council been declared eligible for seats in the Senate. The women of *Ceylon* have secured the suffrage. *Englishwomen* now possess full adult suffrage, on equal terms with men. A *British* citizen woman, however, is deprived of her share in government in Malta, Quebec, and in Bermuda, where under a Constitution whose main franchise is governed by a Constitution of 1691, 30,884 persons are ruled by the verdict of 1,377 male persons, 216 of whom are plural voters. While deploring these anomalies, the Conference feels that the progress made is so clear a proof of tendency that it requests the Imperial Conference to affirm definitely the desirability of placing women citizens on an equal footing with men citizens whenever and wherever self-government develops in areas governed under the British flag.

Notes on Part I.

We beg respectfully to draw attention to Appendix I. (Pamphlet on Nationality) attached. The Memorialists recognise that the Imperial Conference as a whole only express an opinion on matters within the competence of individual Dominions, but they are certain that a declaration in favour of the principles set

out in A. B. above would carry world-wide weight, and encourage those working for these reforms in different parts of the Empire.

PART II.

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON BODIES WHICH
INFLUENCE EXTRA NATIONAL POLICY.

A. LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

This Conference urges the Governments represented in the Imperial Conference to give every consideration to the desire of women to have a fuller part in the deliberations of the Assembly and Conferences of the League of Nations, and to be appointed more freely as delegates and in the various capacities within the delegations sent to the League. The women's Societies would also respectfully draw the attention of the Imperial Conference to the statement made that women have not had the necessary experience of high administrative positions in the Ministries and Public Services to justify their appointment on Government delegations. In order to meet this objection, the women's Societies make urgent request that fuller opportunities of obtaining experience be afforded to women under all the Governments of the British Commonwealth, and that responsible positions be assigned to them on their merits.

B. IMPERIAL CONFERENCE AND OTHER EMPIRE
GROUPS.

This Conference urges 1. That women be appointed as delegates and as Technical Advisers and Assessors accompanying Ministerial groups attending Imperial and other Conferences. 2. That women be included on Commissions, Boards, and other groups dealing with Empire Policy. 3. That in any plan for the establishment of an Empire Secretariat or consultative body all positions under or in connection with it shall be open equally to men and women, at the same rate of pay, and with equal opportunity of promotion, thus carrying out the principle established in Act 7 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

C. BODIES DEALING WITH OVERSEAS SETTLEMENT.

This Conference representing (the Societies participating) urges upon the respective Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations the necessity of ensuring that both in the drawing up and in the administration of all their schemes concerning the migration and placing of women there shall be an adequate number of well-qualified women holding positions of responsibility, both salaried and voluntary; and calls upon women's organisations to further this decision by every means in their power.

Notes on Part II. A.

The organised groups supporting this Memorandum desire to express warm appreciation of the action of the Australian, British and Canadian Governments in sending women as members of delegation to the League of Nations Assembly, and urge that the practice be extended. While recognising the difficulties, the supporting groups urge the Governments represented at the Conference should lead public opinion in the direction of making an increase of women in responsible positions. Objections to the employment of women remain as a prejudice from the times when women's education and status were inferior, and when the scope of the Civil Service hardly included the organisation of social services.

B.

The Memorialists beg to point out that it is fully realised that the responsible Ministers, and they alone, are the proper persons to act as full representatives at the Imperial Conference. But there are also a number of technical advisers and assessors accompanying each Ministerial group, and suitable women could be appointed to these posts. Further, policy is frequently influenced by the Reports and investigations of Commissions, Boards, and other groups. It is respectfully urged that in making appointments of the kind, attention be paid to the possibility of selecting competent women.

PART III.

SOCIAL LEGISLATION.

A. MAINTENANCE AND AFFILIATION ORDERS.

Resolution. The British Commonwealth League desires to bring to the notice of the Imperial Government the urgent need for reciprocal legislation for the enforcement of maintenance and affiliation orders, so that a child may not be deprived of the support of either parent by the fact that they are domiciled or resident in different parts of the British Empire. The League has noted with much satisfaction the extension of the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act, 1920, to most of the Dominions and British Protectorates, but earnestly trusts that those which have so far failed to pass reciprocal legislation will be induced by the Conference this year to come into line on this matter. The League further urges the Conference to consider and recommend an extension of the above Act so that affiliation orders in respect of illegitimate children may no longer be excluded from its provisions.

Notes. Every child has the right to the financial support of its father, and the failure or inability of its parents to form a legal tie should be no reason or excuse for the evasion of parental res-

possibilities. At the present time opportunity is afforded to the father of an illegitimate child to evade legal action by removal even from England to Scotland or vice versa, or across the Irish Sea, whilst a mother who makes a similar move to avoid social disgrace is deprived of the assistance of the Courts in securing maintenance for her child, if the father has remained in her own country. In view of the encouragement of migration from Great Britain to other parts of the Dominions, and the steadily increasing influx of students from Overseas to the mother country, this matter is of vital importance to the welfare of the Nation's children, and requires most careful and sympathetic consideration. Affiliation orders should be enforceable in all parts of the Empire, and with adequate legal safeguards as to the necessary irrefutable evidence of paternity or previous acknowledgment of parental responsibility, it should be possible for a Court to issue a provisional order against a man who has gone Overseas before any Court order has been made.

B. COMPULSORY TREATMENT OF VENEREAL DISEASE.

Vice-Regulation. This Conference urges the Imperial Conference to consider the possibility of taking such steps as may ensure that throughout the whole Empire the system or custom of recognised vice areas, tolerated brothels, the registration or licensing of prostitutes or of houses of prostitution, and the compulsory periodic medical examination for venereal diseases of any woman or class of women, shall be abolished. Instead of these methods now recognised by medical experts, as futile to reduce venereal disease and shown by the League of Nations' report to be a demoralising influence, and the primary agency in the traffic in women, this Conference urges that the attention of the various Governments of the Colonial Empire should be drawn to the declared British policy of non-regulation of prostitution, and that they should be requested to give local effect to it at the earliest practicable date, and include therein:—

- (a) The suppression of all brothels within the Empire.
- (b) The penalisation of men and women who exploit for profit the prostitution of others.
- (c) The provision of adequate facilities for the free and confidential treatment of all persons suffering from venereal diseases.

C. CO-ORDINATION OF MARRIAGE LAW.

That, in view of the fact that women's organisations in Australia are working toward a unified Marriage and Divorce Law, this Conference of the British Commonwealth League affirms the desirability of co-ordinating wherever possible the Marriage, Maintenance and Divorce Laws throughout the Empire.

PART IV.

IMPERIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE LESS FORWARD RACES.

A. PROGRESS AND EDUCATION.

This Conference strongly affirms that the future of the less forward races depends to a marked degree on the progress of the women of such races. It urges that a vigorous policy be carried on for their general development and advancement in accordance with their native characteristics. This Conference urges the need for careful study of marriage and customs affecting women and girls, from the point of view of aiding their social progress; the appointment of suitable women to carry out these investigations and that His Majesty's Government should consider whether present expenditure on education, especially that of girls, is adequate.

B. TEACHING OF SOCIAL HYGIENE.

This Conference urges that consideration be given by the Government and other bodies engaged in educational work amongst the less forward races to the teaching of social hygiene amongst such races.

C. INFORMATION ON PROGRESS AND THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

This Conference, recognising the good work done by His Majesty's Government to improve the condition of peoples of the less forward races, asks, in view of the interest now aroused in this subject among organised women throughout the Empire, that the Colonial Office should publish a summarised Report on work being done in all areas, including statements for each area of (1) expenditure on education and medical and kindred services especially affecting women. (2) The proportion of these local expenditures to total local revenue and expenditure. (3) The number of women employed in responsible positions in such services.

D. SLAVERY.

This Conference desires (a) to place on record its opinion that any system of slavery involving a property ownership in one person by another person or group of persons, constitutes a crime against the whole human race, and calls upon all free subjects to oppose, wherever it is advanced, the claim to property ownership in our fellow human beings. (b) To urge the Governments represented at the Imperial Conference to support the creation of a Slavery Commission, or permanent Bureau, or other extra body under the League of Nations. It urges especially that those forms of slavery where the status of woman is such that her

husband's relatives and other persons exercise over her rights of ownership shall be examined with a view to their ultimate abolition. This Conference urges that both women and men shall in approximately equal numbers hold responsible positions on this Commission.

Note on Part IV. D.

We cannot strongly enough insist on the fact that women of the Empire are deeply concerned at the slavery of women. Men have to a large extent freed men from the degradation of sale, barter or inheritance as if they were cattle. Women are now intent on doing the same for their fellow women, though in their case sale, barter or inheritance is slavery disguised as family custom. While recognising that the necessary changes in custom are disagreeable to their present owners, we urge that personal freedom is the necessary condition of progress, and that the plea of time is hardly justified, at least in those parts of the Empire where for generations there has been the supremacy of the British flag.

PART V.

WOMEN AND THE CIVIL SERVICE AT HOME AND OVERSEAS.

This Conference affirms its conviction that National administration will gain in efficiency and increased public confidence by the full and equal inclusion of women throughout the Public Services; it therefore calls upon His Majesty's Government to open posts Overseas to women on the same terms as men, and urges the other Governments represented at the Imperial Conference to throw open their Civil Services to women on the same terms as to men.

PART VI.

AFFIRMATION ON PEACE.

The object of the British Commonwealth League being to secure the equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women in the British Commonwealth of Nations, this Conference affirms its conviction that the special contributions of women citizens to the problems of the world must be a united effort for disarmament, and arbitration to secure a peace based on justice and the mutual respect and understanding of peoples, and that women will use the security of such peace to raise the level of moral, intellectual and material welfare of the peoples of the world.

British Commonwealth League.

CONFERENCE.

WOMEN POWER AND POLICY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

WEDNESDAY, June 18th, 1930.

MORNING SESSION.

Mrs. CORBETT ASHBY took the chair at 10 a. m.

Mrs. Ashby spoke on the complex Government of the British Empire, and passed on to the work of women in relation to Imperial Problems. She pleaded for the full influence of women in work under the Colonial Office, and urged the training of women going Overseas whether as wives, of officials, teachers, or nurses through some organised group in England. She then introduced Dr. Grace Boelke, who read a report from the Bermuda Woman's Suffrage Society.

BERMUDA WOMAN SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

REPORT TO BE PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE, TO BE HELD IN LONDON, JUNE, 1930.

The Bermuda Woman Suffrage Society held its Seventh Annual General Meeting in March, 1930, and was able to report a steady growth in membership and a year of important activities of which the most notable were the Test Case of *Morrell v. Patterson*, by which the Society sought the decision of the Supreme Court on the question of the right of women to take part in Parochial Elections, and secondly the despatch of a Memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

These two events were closely related.

At the time of the last Conference of the British Commonwealth League the decision had not been given in the Test Case. On June 13th, 1929, the Chief Justice gave judgment with costs against the plaintiff Mrs. Morrell and thereby decreed that under the then existing law women were *not* entitled to exercise the Parochial Franchise.

A General Meeting of the Society was immediately summoned at which two decisions were made:—

First, on the advice of their lawyers, the Society decided not to appeal against the decision of the Supreme Court of Bermuda. They had no financial means in the first place, and even if they had had the necessary funds the lawyers considered that it would merely be throwing good money after bad as they regarded the judgment given as *legally* unassailable. (Only four months later the decision given by the Privy Council in the Canadian Senate case put an entirely different complexion on the matter, but it was then too late for the Bermuda women to appeal).

The Society's second decision was to defer the petitioning of the Home Government until the Legislature had put beyond all possible doubt their final attitude to the claims of the Bermuda Suffragists.

The issue was soon decided and resulted in further humiliation for the women of the Colony. In July the Parish Vestries Act, 1929, passed its final stages containing explicit provisions that the franchise be confined to males. Yet one more chance was given to the Assembly. On October 30th a Bill was introduced to amend the Parish Vestries Act, 1929, so as to enable women to exercise the Parochial Franchise upon the same terms as men.

The sitting of the House on this particular afternoon seems to have been a somewhat hilarious one and the "Royal Gazette & Colonist Daily" in reporting the proceedings remarked:—"the final burst of laughter for the day came when Mr. Spurling moved for leave to introduce and read for the first time a Bill to extend to women the same rights with regard to parochial suffrage and election to parish vestries and offices, as are now enjoyed by men."

Such being the temper of the House it was no surprise when the Bill was rejected with silent contempt on its second reading by a majority of 24 to 8.

The Suffragists now felt that they had exhausted their means of obtaining justice from the House of Assembly and that their only hope lay in a petition to the Home Government. A sub-Committee was accordingly appointed to draft this document and on December 17th this sub-Committee presented its final report in the form of a Memorial addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies which set forth the history of representative institutions in Bermuda over a period of 300 years and of the Bermuda women's fruitless efforts to obtain representation, together with some observations on recent developments in the Colony, and concluded with a prayer that an inquiry be made into the grievances of the women and generally into the working of the existing constitution of Bermuda.

A General Meeting of the Society which was fully conscious of the importance of its decision, authorised the Executive Committee to sign this Memorial on behalf of the Society. Early in January the Memorial was signed and despatched to H.E. the

Governor for transmission to the Secretary of State. It is an open secret that the Governor then referred the matter to his Executive Council and finally despatched the Memorial on February 22nd, together with his comments and those of his Executive Council.

The British Commonwealth League were immediately communicated with and promptly organised support for the Bermuda women. Questions were asked in the House of Commons by Miss Eleanor Rathbone and by Lady Astor, but so far no definite information has been given and at the moment of writing this report the Society is still awaiting the reply of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The text of the Memorial has been published in the local Press and all thoughtful persons are aware that serious constitutional issues are involved. An electoral franchise that has not been widened in three hundred years suggests the need for some investigation, especially when it is realised that under the present system less than 5% of the population is represented. The recent development of the Colony as a pleasure resort brings to its shores every demoralising feature of modern civilisation and exposes the beautiful little island to all the dangers of commercial exploitation. For all these reasons it seems desirable that a larger proportion of Bermuda's inhabitants should have some voice in deciding its and their fate.

We believe that our Memorial presents a case which on its own merits deserves the attention of the Colonial Office. We understand that through the British Commonwealth League our just claims are being backed by important Women's Organisations in England. Therefore we are awaiting events hopefully and would like to think that at the 1931 conference we may be able to report some signal advance in our position.

We much regret that we are unable to send any delegate from our Society to carry our greeting to the 1930 conference of the British Commonwealth League. Never before have we been so conscious of the value of our affiliation with the League, and the Bermuda Woman Suffrage Society takes this opportunity of thanking Miss Collisson and all those others who have found time in their busy lives to take up the cudgels on our behalf and to help to bring political liberty to yet one more little group of women in our British Commonwealth of Nations.

In view of the very heavy cost of printing, the discussions are printed in abbreviated form only; this discussion was intended to lead up to a survey of the position of women's organisations in relation to real power, and so to pave the way for the vital problems connected with the Colonial Office and Imperial Conferences.

SECTION A.

Is the separate organisation of women still necessary? was then opened by DR. JANE WALKER.

Dr Walker spoke in favour of separate organisations. She thought that the views of men and women were not identical, that the numerical superiority of women made it necessary to get this point of view put over, and illustrated her remarks by reference to the British Federation of Medical women.

Dr. Walker was followed by MISS RUBY RICH (Australian Federation of Women Voters), who outlined the position of special political organisation in Australia, and emphasised the need for separate social-political organisation.

MISS MAGNIAC (South Africa) spoke briefly on the needs of the present position in South Africa. She thought there was much need for organisation, and felt that women should consider marriage laws, children's courts, women on Government Boards, the condition of native women, and similar matters. Other speakers followed up the discussion, including, MISS MONICA WHATELEY (Society for the Ministry of women); MRS. FAIRFAX (Countrywomen's Association); MRS. WATERWORTH (Tasmanian Non-Party women's society); MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council); and then resolution 4 was moved.

MISS BARRY moved a rider, and the final form of the resolution stood "That this conference, taught by their own experience, urge the South African women to continue their work for political and economic equality on organised non-party lines."

Resolution 6 was then put from the chair and carried unanimously.

Resolution 7 was moved by MISS COLLISSON, who pointed out that theories of equality which still left closed to women any profession, were in reality theories only. The Conference did not and could not dictate to the Churches, but it could point out how strange the anomaly of refusal to allow entry to the ministry appeared to women in the twentieth century.

The resolution was seconded by MRS. WATERWORTH.

MISS MONICA WHATELEY (Society for the Ministry of women) then spoke to the resolution. She urged the step as a church-woman from the point of view of benefit to the Church, and of the right of women to respond to a call to vocation when that came. She added "go through the gospels, and you will see there is not one word which can in any way make women feel they are not eligible to enter the ministry on exactly the same terms as men."

After discussion the resolution was amended from its original to its present form, by the insertion of the word "Christian" before the word Churches, and by the addition of the words "and other organised religious bodies."

The Conference then adjourned for luncheon.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Chair:—MRS. CORBETT ASHBY.

Resolution 8 was moved by MISS RUBY RICH seconded from the floor. Carried unanimously.

The chairman then introduced MRS. WATERWORTH, who had done special research in the library of the Colonial Office into the numbers of women employed in the Colonial Office in particular services. Mrs. Waterworth at a later stage explained that she intended to put these figures into relation to the size of population, and other relevant statistics. This very valuable piece of work aroused much interested comment from members of the Conference. The Chairman stated that it was hoped that the material might be issued in pamphlet form as it was most necessary to know how far the work of women was being employed amongst the less forward races. The following selected figures are given:—

FIGURES REFER TO WOMEN ONLY.

Kenya Colony Protectorate.

Education Department.

European Education.

Principals, Senior Mistresses } ..	25
Assistant Mistresses }	
Matrons, Assistant Matrons ..	10
Farm School Teachers ..	5

Total 40

Indian Education.

Principal, Assistant Mistresses ..	7
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Arab and African Education

Assistant Mistresses	2
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Public Health.

Medical Division.

Medical Officers, Maternity and Child Welfare Nairobi, Mombasa ..	2
Matrons.	2
Nursing Sisters	32
Mental Hospital Matron (1) Assistant Matron (1).	2
Assistant Female Warden	1

Total 39

Sanitation Division.

Nursing Sisters	5
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Laboratory Division.

Lab. Assistant learner	1
Clerks	2

Administrative Division.

Clerks.	9
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It is worth recording that the Education Report 1928-29 recommends the appointment of a woman health inspectress.

The Medical Report 1928-29 says "the appointment of lady medical officers at Nairobi and Mombasa has resulted in a marked increase in the numbers of women and children applying for treatment at venereal disease clinics."

In Uganda, we find 2 medical officers, 1 bacteriologist, 2 matrons, 24 nursing sisters, and 1 matron for ante-natal, maternity work. No women's names appear on the civil establishment list; the work is evidently done by religious missionary bodies.

In Somaliland no women's names appear.

In Tanganyika Territory. Public health department, the names of one medical officer, one matron, 14 nursing sisters and health visitors. 26 nursing sisters, one matron for a mental hospital appear.

In 1928 no women employed in prisons.

Up to 1928, no women in Education, now, 1 in European Government School, 2 in Indian Government school. No women's names appear in the Secretariat or the Postal Department.

Tanganyika shows 2 sisters and health visitors: 20 ayahs, on Maternity and Child Welfare Research work.

EAST AFRICAN.

Northern Rhodesia.

Governor.

Clerk	1
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Secretariat.

Clerk	3
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European Education.

Clerk	1
Headmistress	1
Mistresses	20
Matrons	4

Public Health.

Matrons	2
Nurses	19

Clerks in Treasury, Customs, Post, Telegraph, etc. No women are employed in Native Administration or Education. The latter is carried out almost entirely by Missionary Societies.

Zanzibar Protectorate.

Public Health.

Matron.	1
Sanitary Superintendent.	1
Nursing Sisters.	5

Education.

Superintendent of Female Education	1
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There are evidently no other women teachers holding government appointments. The native teachers must be paid by missionary societies. The superintendent mentioned above (Mrs. Johnson) has done such good work amongst the Arab girls, that another centre, Pemba of the Chake Chake district, has made a strong petition of a similar school. The absence of women doctors in the Protectorate is given as a reason for the inability to obtain satisfactory examination of girls and guarding of health.

Nyasaland Protectorate.

Public Health.

Matron	1
Nursing Sisters	7

No European women are employed in Education by the Government but a grant in aid is made to the mistress of a European Girls' School, and 10 native women passed the examination for teachers in 1929. Every endeavour is being made to teach girls home and mothercraft.

WEST AFRICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN.

Gambia.

Education Department.

Matron Cook	1
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The work of education is apparently all carried out by religious missionary bodies with grants in aid from Government. Many women's names are mentioned in reports but only one name appears on Civil Establishment list.

Prison Department.

Matrons	2
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Medical.

Sen. Nursing Sister	1
Nursing Sisters	2
African Nurses	12

Public Health Department.

Mother & Child Welfare Nurse	1
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Gold Coast.

Education. (Achimota College).

Head Mistress	1
Assist. Mistresses	5
Kindergarten Instructress	1
Matrons	2
College Secretary	1
Mistresses... .. .	5

Elementary.

Member of Board of Education (Kindergarten Instructor, Achimota College)	1
Organisers of Female and Infant Ed.	5
Headmistress	1
Assist. Headmistress	1
1st. Div. Teachers	2
2nd. Div. Teachers	43

Northern Territories.

Secretary (Board of Education) Headmistress Kindergarten	1
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Medical Department.

Medical Officer	1
Matron (European Nurs. staff)	1
Sen. Nursing sisters	4
Nursing Sisters	38
Ist. Div. Dispenser.	1
1st. Div. Nurse	1
2nd. Div. Nurses	12
Nurses in training	47
Midwife probationers	3

Lunatic Asylum.

Matron	1
Attendants	4

Medical Research.

Pathologist	1
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Post and Telegraph.

Exchange Superintendents	3
2nd Div. Clerks	3
Supervisors	3
Clerks	82

Printing Department.

Bookbinders	10
Assistant Bookbinders	4

Prison Department.

Matrons	5
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Railways.

Telephone Operator	1
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Sanitation.

Medical Officers	8
Nursing Sisters	1
Sanitary Inspectors	2
Nurse-Midwives	3
Nurses in training	9
Health Visitors.	4

Sierra Leone.

Medical Department.

Medical Officer	1
Sen. Nursing Sisters	2
Nursing Sisters	4
Sen. Female Nurse	1
Nurses and Probationers	23
Midwives	2

Sanitary Division.

Health Visitors	3
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*Education.

Organiser of Infant and Female Education	1
Teachers (Model School)	3

Prisons.

Matron	1
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Division of Research.

Clerk	1
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Lunatic Asylum.

Matron	1
Attendants	3

*There are other women with high qualifications teaching, but as in other African colonies and protectorates they are not directly employed by Government but are "attached". The latest blue-book available was for 1927. The reports for the following year showed signs of progress and it may be taken for granted that there are now more women teachers employed by the Government.

Nigeria.

Medical Department.

Medical Officers.	3
Matron	1
Senior Nursing Sisters	9
Nursing Sisters	33

Education.

Principal (Govt. Girl's School)	1
European School Mistresses	2
Secretary to Board of Education	1
Superintendent of Education	1

Mrs. Roberts then read a most interesting paper on "Women, the Colonial Office and responsibility."

Mrs. Roberts said:—

THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WOMEN.

In speaking of the responsibility of women in the Empire overseas, and their contact with the Colonial Office, may I say that I would strongly urge that women should strive to equip themselves for, and should be granted official, responsible positions for the sake of helping forward the progress of *men and women*—white or coloured—within the Commonwealth. That is, that they should take their place as *human beings* working for the welfare of humanity, and not primarily as women working for women. I would emphasise this point especially in connection with the potential influence of women in regard to many native problems, whether they be problems of education and hygiene, or of a moral nature.

In my opinion it would be invaluable to have more women connected with those Government departments that have to do with the teaching of hygiene to natives, whether they be men or women. This is the first essential step in their education, and I am inclined to think it has not taken quite the position it should have in all cases, in comparison with what may be called their ordinary schooling.

Also, I think it essential that men and women should progress on an *equal footing* in the teaching of hygiene that is given them.

While one of the biggest difficulties to be met is the gap between the general education of men and women natives (with the consequent bad results and complications) there has, perhaps, been a tendency to give an undue proportion of teaching in hygiene (sometimes the only education they get) to the women. Also, the cultural side of education—very much neglected but greatly appreciated—might well be taken in hand by certain women teachers. By that I mean handicrafts, and elementary art and music.

And quite apart from any definite questions of education, is the fact that European women, brought, as they are, into close daily contact with the native boys, can exercise on them a really beneficial influence, if only they have some initial knowledge regarding the mentality of these natives—what they respect, and what they can understand. At the best their minds are somewhat of a mystery to us—and yet, a good deal of power is ours if we will use it, and recognise our trusteeship.

But there are probably no *short cuts* to progress, but that one of our chief duties to-day is to discover the *best* methods that will make for progress.

Arising out of this thought—we are faced with the question—are women in the Empire overseas going to progress more

efficiently and surely, in the first place, by a more official representation of women within the Colonial Office, or by pressing in their own countries for more responsible positions within the various Government departments?

It is not always easy to secure this measure of public opinion overseas, and possibly we may even be tempted at times over here to want to force the pace, not realising fully the local difficulties.

It seems to me, however, that women are needed in responsible positions *equally* and *simultaneously* in the Colonial Office and overseas, but above all that the important point is to study certain facts which may help to clarify the position.

I am taking for this purpose, figures, as approximately accurate as I can get them, of women in Government employ in the Rhodesias and East Africa. And I take these because Africa and especially some of the territories I have mentioned are practically the only parts of the British Commonwealth overseas which I know.

In Southern and Northern Rhodesia and in the East African territories—including Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda—there are slightly over 1000 women in Government service. Very probably this figure may now be higher, as some of the reports only hold good up to 1929.

Analysing this figure, it will be found that the posts held are approximately as follows:—

1. Clerks of various grades	.....	.....	434
2. Matrons, sisters and nurses	.....	.....	274
3. Teachers, including Principals	.....	.....	275
4. Post Office employees, higher and lower grades	.....	.....	24
5. Sanitary overseers.	.....	.....	2
6. Medical Officers	.....	.....	3

I do not know how those numbers will strike you, but the effect they have on me is to conjure up in my mind the figures that are *not* there.

Where are the women officers of public health—those concerned with the urgent question of housing and sanitation, as distinct from medical officers of health? There seem to be only two sanitary overseers, and I am not quite sure what that position entails.

Again, what of the Departments of Education, and of Native Affairs, and of Agriculture? It would seem obvious that women should shoulder their responsibility in these—particularly in the two first ones—education and native affairs. And looking into the future, when these countries will almost certainly need more entomologists and architects (here and there only is one to be found now) they should demand and should get, women as well as men in these capacities.

I wonder if I am right in suggesting—as I do strongly—that

the shortest and best way to obtain any of these posts for women is to press for them locally; with the knowledge that we, over here, would support their efforts to the full.

At the same time, and probably arising out of that movement we must urge a direct official representation of women within the Colonial office, in official posts, as well as on committees.

The women who are already on some of the advisory committees are invaluable, but they alone would hardly seem to be adequate from a psychological or practical point of view to represent the women Government employees or women's interests generally, European and native, throughout all the Colonies and the Dependencies.

Further, I would urge most emphatically that women should train and equip themselves more fully than by taking only their respective professional training for these positions. There should be training *over here* for the wives of settlers and Government officials and for any woman taking up work in a tropical country. The mere fact that she lands in a country with some knowledge of its conditions, and its rules for health and hygiene, would make her a far more valuable citizen.

The kind of training I have in mind is elementary information as regards housing conditions—and how to keep these healthy—also about food, and clothing in tropical countries, and also first aid and home nursing for those who have not already taken those courses.

Again for those with families, many valuable hints might be given about the regulation of children's lives in these countries.

Every woman should know, if possible, something of cooking and, as a "council of perfection," should attempt, before arrival, to learn something of the languages of the natives to whom she will mean so much.

These are necessarily rough outlines of ideas, but I feel that they might form the basis of a workable plan to give some of our Colonies more efficient women citizens; and to make life easier at the start for these wives or workers.

Is it too much to say that we have at present too many untrained women (as men) learning by hard experience only, going out to some of these countries, and not getting the fullest possible life out there. That is another idea which might be supported from overseas, and worked out in England—either through official or unofficial channels.

Looking further at these growing countries with their great potentialities, I personally feel that in addition to the methods towards progress and power which I have already suggested, there are others which might be more developed.

There are valuable voluntary societies of many kinds in England which might either have closer links with similar societies overseas, or form overseas branches. These ties are use-

ful, and they make life abroad fuller and more interesting. They link up the home country and the Colonies, and they can often co-operate with Governments. They can be another step towards progress and power on both sides of the ocean, and it is not necessary to have to enumerate them in detail.

Finally there is the somewhat, as yet, unexplored question of business possibilities for women overseas, and the value of those women's experience in business circles over here. There is no time now to enlarge on that subject, but it is one which could well stand more study.

In conclusion, I should like to suggest that women in all lands should, even more than in the past, look at the British Commonwealth as a Commonwealth of nations, depending for their welfare equally—wherever possible—on the responsibilities assumed by, and allotted to, those women as well as men, who are fitted for them. We need to-day to develop as far as possible into a more complete whole, the influence of women. Whether it be in Government spheres, in voluntary social activities, or in business, and in order that that influence may operate in the most successful way, it must be balanced by a corresponding influence of women in the relative spheres and activities over here.

MRS. HOOPER of C.M.S. Missions, then spoke on the Relation between the Colonial Office, and local administration and educational work. MRS. HOOPER said:—

I have been asked to outline the degree of co-operation between Missions and local Administration in Africa and further to say something about the degree to which the Colonial Office aims at helping educational work there. I think that it is extremely difficult to give any very clearly defined picture of this, as people at home and even Europeans abroad, are very ignorant of the diversity of the work undertaken by individual missionaries or groups of missionaries and the hundred and one small ways in which local administration and missions find their work overlapping.

The best Mission seeks to touch every phase in the life of the men and women among whom it works. Individual life, the home life, community life, national life, alike come into the scope of its thought and teaching. If this is kept in mind it may be easier to understand how much the degree of co-operation with local administration depends on the personalities of Government officials and missionaries.

It is impossible to survey the whole of Africa and give details of each part, but perhaps if I can give you some impression of the part of Africa with which I am most familiar, Kenya Colony, it will be possible to find out from others present by comparison, how circumstances differ and alter the state of affairs.

Generally speaking in most parts of Africa, Governments

have realised that Missions have to be taken into consideration, as a force which is affecting African life. In parts of Africa such as Nigeria and Uganda strong Native Christian public opinion demands consideration in administrative developments and in the other Colonies the majority of progressive and thoughtful Africans owe their progress in the first instance to the Mission schools which were in every place the pioneers of education.

It is probable that Government officials receive some instruction in regard to the consideration of Missions and their work, but the degree of their co-operation as I have said is still very dependent on personalities.

It is conceivable where there is a mutual understanding, for a District Commissioner to talk over problems with a missionary who can help the administrator considerably by putting before the people the difficulties of administration. At the same time the missionary, who is in real touch with his people can give the native mind on a question (if it is really desired) far better than the official who suffers from a degree of isolation owing to his official position, and to the practice of rapid changes of station.

The settlement of a district in the native reserve is often due to the integrity and patience of a District Commissioner. The people get accustomed to his methods of administration, his justice and patience in hearing court cases, and his emphasis on certain ideals of behaviour impress the district. His willingness to encourage enlightened thought and improved methods affect progress everywhere and his personal commendation of efforts in the villages towards a higher standard of life assure the people of a genuine interest in their welfare. A steady faith pulls things together and his reasonableness satisfies a whole community. But everyone knows that any day the D.C. may be moved. When this happens a feeling of restless anxiety passes through the district, for all are anxious as to who his successor will be. The whole district prepares for changes. The next man may hold quite different views. He may believe in the native being kept native (as the saying goes). Old institutions and customs however retrograde must be resumed. Schools come in for severe rather than sympathetic treatment. Christian teaching is considered more a menace and disruptive force than one that can give stability and control where old controls have been weakened by the inevitable touch with new civilisations. Mission co-operation is not only hard to give but uninvited and it lapses and probably, though understandably I think, Mission opinion becomes antagonistic. In another year or even less another man comes along and once more everything is in the melting pot and the longed for continuity of purpose with consequent development is interrupted.

The apparent unwillingness of Home Governments to declare a definite native policy which can give to Missions a feeling of security in developing something like a stable native community life, has created a sense of insecurity very detrimental to the

spirit of co-operation and has laid an even greater emphasis on the personal element.

We missionaries who spend our lives four years at a time in a place and return to the same people until we really know many of them intimately do feel emphatically that there should be a policy which can be explained to the people themselves, with regard to their tribal and national development, and that forces not primarily concerned with native welfare should not be able, by wire pulling or any other device, to budge Governments from their declared native policy. With a clear and progressive native policy the possibilities of co-operative work with Missions are obvious. Missions are possibly provoking in that they ask a high ideal of life of their Government officials, and are critical when they do not see it. The African himself in reality demands it also and most of us realise that example is the biggest thing to him. He can talk himself.

In his own pagan life fears and superstitions intensely real control him. Loyalties to tribe and land restrain him. These in Kenya have been broken into in many ways; it seems very curious that there still exists the feeling that to teach the controlling ideal of Christ is out of place in Africa, though those ideals for years have formed the controls of our own public life towards which ideal of peace and love we still strive. This is one of the things that makes the co-operation between officials and missionaries so difficult, for you can readily understand that missionaries very naturally count Christ as the very foundation of their teaching, and cannot consent to offer their people what is to them at least a second best. How much the Colonial Office does or does not do is hard to say. I think it is true to say that where there is no definite native governing body, we missionaries prefer to be under Colonial Office Government. We would rather our people were in the hands of the warm-hearted British Public represented in the Colonial Office than in the hands of a handful of men on the spot who cannot possibly be unbiassed or wholly disinterested. The Colonial Office is to us at least a necessary court of appeal. But what is really of the Colonial Office is hard to determine as it is often used as a stalking horse, or a bogey, as required. I have always felt myself that it is a pity that Party Politics at home are a controlling factor in legislating for native races. How the native peoples under our control live and how to assist them towards attaining a place in the fellowship of nations should be of common interest. Business considerations and national self-seeking should not have power to shake a national desire for righteous trusteeship for the nationals of countries whose land and nationality is as dear to them as our own is to us. The Colonial Office has certainly taken a very real interest in Education. It has its advisory council on African Education upon which both men and women sit. Missions have received grants-in-aid from the Director of Education in all colonies, and realise that they owe a great deal to the help given in this direction. But

here the same problem exists. There is no guarantee of continuity. With changes of Governor and changes of Director of Education there may be changes also in grants given. Policies vary and it is not only the capable conduct of a school which determines the continuity of its grants. The vagaries of a Director of Education may be enough of the change of missionary personnel. This may make a very insidious temptation for the missionary for he realises the grant must not affect his attitude to native problems, and I think he knows too that a grant may be used as a lever. The native has had little to say in the general Government policy of Education in Kenya, though in most Mission stations the school comes a good deal under the supervision of the Church elders who are African men and women.

Girls' education receives considerably less assistance than men's education, partly because there are fewer schools. That there could be more schools and larger numbers in the existing schools is undoubted, but financially there is insufficient money to provide either adequate staff or suitable buildings.

The arrangement with Government in Kenya in the last six years since there have been any grants made to women's education has been that a fixed sum per head per girl should be made for maintenance at a boarding school. The Mission makes its outlay on buildings, equipment, etc., and receives a return of so much per cent on its estimated expenditure. Government has also given the salaries for a limited number of European staff. The initial outlay therefore has been upon the Mission and at present all education of girls is in the hands of Missions. There is a further reason for this being desirable. Mission education is the form of education that really touches the community. Government up to the present prefers to have large and obvious institutions which as a rule educate people by taking them out of their natural environment of the village, and its more ordinary occupations. Exception to this is the Jeanes School at Kabete which owes its origin to missionary suggestion. This type of education does not appear the happiest for African women. The uplift of a community depends on the family life. Family life depends on a man and woman being able to have some mutual understanding of each other's ideals of life, and mutual affection for each other and their family. Institutional life where there is rigid and distant segregation does not give this, when the general level of home life of the pupil is fairly primitive, a certain behaviour is reserved for school and left behind at school on return home.

Mission Schools have at least tried to develop an enlightened community life. Girls have (at least as far as finance allows) an equal place in the organisations of school life. Classes are open to them, they grow up in wholesome touch with the boys they will probably marry. The senior men and women sit together on Church Councils and school councils, and are elected to their places by vote. The Affairs of the Mission community come

before them, and social work for the Community is discussed by them and carried out by the Community.

One of the great difficulties experienced by Missions receiving grants is that this sort of educational development lies outside the Government ideas of what is education. Literary education is stressed, technical education likely to be of use to the European is more encouraged than that likely to be used solely to the financial betterment and uplift of the native himself. Government fears at the moment the development of a too highly satisfactory home life among the African peoples of the reserves, lest the labour market be affected.

The education of women will certainly add to labour problems if the present policy in Kenya is to go on.

The educated woman will not want an absentee husband. She will want a home. Already it costs a man more to marry an educated girl because he has to build her a better house and he does it, he would be criticised if he didn't. He buys her trousseau and he is keen to see her well turned out. There is no point in this unless it is to be kept up.

Marriage customs and other social customs cannot be changed without this growth in the community, both men and women.

Mission education has already made differences. The Christian widow who is of a Christian community can live in her own home after the death of her husband—but only when she is a part of the community. New ideas with regard to illness, its causes and the care of sick people are found with Christian Communities. In every case these things have grown out of the emphasis upon the equality of opportunity for girls and boys in the Mission schools and the carrying out into visible practice these theories.

In Government inspection of Mission Schools the effect of the school on the life of the District is not enquired into, nor are homes ever visited. Inspection is always done by a man, and personally I have often questioned his capacity for understanding the problems of girls' schools.

Education for girls began by Christian African men bringing to the Missions the girls they wished to marry or the sisters for whom they were responsible.

Girls' education must go on in proper proportion with men's education, if the African is to rise to the place in the fellowship of nations which is his. Missions believe in the ultimate possibility and desirability of the African standing shoulder to shoulder with ourselves as a nation. But they sometimes feel very isolated in the vision of this end to their work.

This touches the question of the expenditure of native taxation on the native and many of us feel that the Colonial Office could bring pressure to bear that would secure that native monies should be spent on things affecting native life in the reserves where the natives live. We believe that if direct native taxation were spent upon the native the reserve could see an increase

in well-equipped schools. But it is also fairly clear that in Africa to-day the African is not prepared to receive at the hands of European Governments or Missions a school curriculum which does not in some way approximate to his own sense of his most immediate needs.

No school in Africa to-day is likely to prosper under a staff that will not make their school a full time job both in school and play hours. It is not only degrees and certificates and diplomas that count, and if the Colonial Office really wishes to further education in Africa it must see that the men and women who undertake this work will take it up realising that the first necessity is a whole-hearted friendship with the people among whom their life will be spent.

Resolution 9 was then moved by MRS. HOOPER, seconded by MRS. JOHNSTON.

Discussion took place on this resolution. MISS HELEN WARD (London and National Society), and MRS. WHITE (Open Door Council), felt that the suggested words "ethnological background" meant that investigations would be delayed indefinitely. It was pointed out that the customs which required immediate investigation on account of their terrible cruelty were dealt with under another resolution, scheduled for the next morning. The resolution was finally amended to run "from the point of view of aiding their social progress" and was carried unanimously in that form.

Resolution 10 was then put forward.

MISS STRACHEY (London and National Society) and MRS. OGILVIE GORDON (National Council of Women) moved to amend the resolution: after considerable discussion Resolution 10 as it appears on the present list was adopted and carried.

In view of the late hour, it was agreed to postpone the Resolution on Australian aboriginals until next morning. The Conference adjourned *until 8 p.m.*

At 8 p.m. the Conference reassembled, and heard Captain Cazalet on the Bill to give married women the right to retain their nationality. Mrs. Corbett Ashby explained the position in the international world on this matter, and Miss Collisson spoke on the position in regard to the Colonial Office and information. At 9-15 p.m. an adjournment was made for refreshments in the Library.

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

CONFERENCE.

THURSDAY, June 19th, 1930.

MORNING SESSION.

(Section C.)

Chair: MRS. ASHBY. Resolutions 11 and 12 were carried with slight amendments.

MRS. JOHN JONES, J.P., formerly President of the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement, was introduced and spoke to

THE CASE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINALS IN CENTRAL AND NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

Mrs. Jones said: In the Australian House of Representatives, where no woman has yet taken her place, the sorrowful sighing of the Aboriginal woman of Central and Northern Australia has found an echo for the first time in the Commonwealth Parliament when Mr. Jackson, member for Bass (Tasmania), made his memorable speech on the 13th October, 1927, beginning: "It is fitting that in this the first Session of the National Parliament in our own Capital and territory, attention should be directed to the obligation the nation owes to the aboriginal races of Australia—probably the world will not remember the speeches of honourable members, but it will remember how we treated our Aborigines. We assert the right to every man to live, yet we, the usurpers, deny the aborigines the right to live, or even to *die*, where they like in their native land. The position of the black women lodged at the compound in Darwin when I was there," says Mr. Jackson, "was pitiful. Something must be done for these unfortunate people. Except the work of the Missions, nothing at all has been done, and our responsibility for their depravity lies in the condonation of offences against them, the stealing of their women and the supplying to them of intoxicants in order to facilitate these thefts. Those have been the causes of ninety per cent. of the trouble with the blacks. Most of the diseases from which they suffer have been disseminated among them by members of the white race."

Why are there so many half castes in Central Australia? Mrs. Standley, formerly Matron at Alice Springs Compound, stated: "I cannot keep these little children in the compound. They are enticed out by white men, and more halfcastes are being born."

After the citation of many other native disabilities, Mr. Jackson proposed the appointment of a joint Select Parliamentary Committee to enquire and report. The Committee did not materialise, but instead Mr. J. Bleakley, Chief Protector of

Aborigines in Queensland, was appointed a Royal Commissioner for the Federal Government, to enquire into the state of Aborigines in North and Central Australia.

COMMONWEALTH TERRITORY. During 1928, Mr. Bleakley carried out his enquiry, travelling throughout the areas inhabited by Aborigines in Central and Northern Territory. His report to the Commonwealth Government was published early in 1929. The following are short extracts from the same: "It is universally admitted that the pastoral industry in the Territories absolutely depended upon the blacks for labour, both domestic and field; white women were only enabled to live in Central Australia by the help of their Aboriginal sisters." Of the 21,000 Aborigines in Central and Northern Australia, about 800 are halfcastes; about 2,500 are in employment; about one in twelve is cared for in Government or Mission Institutions. Eighty per cent. of those employed are on cattle stations; the owners may, on payment of 10s. per annum, employ an unlimited number of Aborigines without payment, on condition of supplying them with clothes and food and shelter. While the first two conditions are generally complied with, the third is seldom honoured, the natives living in unsanitary kennels detrimental to their own health and the health of the whites on the stations. No evidence of serious ill-treatment was seen, but the standard of living conditions depended upon the generosity of the employer.

No attempt is made to elevate or educate the young aborigines who work on the cattle stations—they have therefore a *hopeless outlook*. Few employers display any sympathy or interest in the question though uneducated aboriginal children are a menace to the white children on stations.

Old women who have often been the pioneer workers on stations depend for sustenance on the gifts of working natives and on portions of "offal" served out to them on "killing days."

The prostitution of women is often due to semi-starvation—conditions in the camps which mean the women become the easy prey to passing travellers—often they are paid on counterfeit coin. Station managers have no authority to suppress "gin-sprees"—i.e., motor car loads of white men from railway construction camps and bush townships who "hire" gins (i.e., aboriginal women) from their fathers and husbands, generally in exchange for a stick of trade tobacco or a bottle of bad whiskey. *Women in indigent camps* in the vicinity of telegraph stations and police stations have periodical rations of good medicine and clothing material issued to them by the local "Protectors" who are generally unmarried police officers, but some of these camps are large enough to provide whole time work for a "missionary mother" to dispense good medicine and moral protection.

Mr. Bleakley's report was followed up in April, 1929, by a Conference in Melbourne, convened by the Minister for Home Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Of the four women delegates to this Conference, three, including myself, represented the Australian Federation of Women Voters affiliated to the British Commonwealth League, and I had the honour to move the following recommendations to the Commonwealth Government—they were passed unanimously by the members of the Conference, numbering about eight representatives from various States of Australia:—

1. That the Commonwealth Government take steps to co-operate with the States Governments in a general scheme for better conditions for Aborigines.
2. That in the future management of the aborigines in Central and Northern Australia qualified women be given a definite place on any advisory Council which may be formed by the Government.
3. That a protector be appointed, preferably a medical woman, to act as an assistant to the chief protector, one for the North and one for Central Australia.
4. That women with police powers be appointed to enforce the law in the neighbourhood of railway construction camps.

I made the following statement with Mr. Abbott in the chair, and without any dissent being expressed by any member of the Conference:—“If a woman, white or black, has not the control of her body she is a slave. Some of these black women are slaves, their bodies are not subject to their own discretion if they are traded by their black men for tobacco or whisky.”

In summing up the Conference Mr. Abbot said he wished first to state that the women delegates to the Conference had made a most useful contribution, and that he should personally consider their opinions; the Government was however, shortly after defeated, and nothing has been done to further the matters embodied in the Resolutions alluded to by Mr. Abbot. However, the present Minister for Home Affairs has made a statement from which the following are extracts:—

1. The Government proposes erecting a new home for half castes in Central Australia.
2. I have prohibited the chaining of prisoners being brought into stations from the bush.
3. In North Australia an additional medical officer was appointed for whites and aborigines in the inland districts.
4. Until the beginning of this year there was no Government medical officer in Central Australia. A full time Government medical officer has now been appointed, and has been entrusted with the duties of chief Protector of Aborigines in that territory; previously the chief Protector was the Sergeant of Police at Alice Springs.
5. So far as the Government is concerned a steady policy will be pursued of converting single quarters into married quarters, particularly for police officers; and of stationing

- married men in the interior, and by providing medical facilities to the extent of the funds available for the purpose.
6. I propose to recommend for the approval of the Government certain suggestions made by Mr. Bleakley for the amendment of the law, particularly those relating to procuring and soliciting.

No doubt Mr. Blakely (the Minister for Home Affairs) intends to honour these promises, but governments are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and such an important piece of work as the control and protection of Aborigines should be in the hands of a permanent department with an advisory Council of experienced and sympathetic men and women, including educated aborigines. The question of better government for the aborigines is one needing the most delicate and tactful approach from the outsider—it cannot be broached inside the British Parliament, nor yet by direct approach between the two countries, and it must be remembered that besides the difficulty of the government of the Australian Aborigines being a “domestic question” it is further a “domestic” question as between the Commonwealth Government and the government of the various States, who each govern their own aborigines.

Outside of course the moral power of the press there seems to be only one avenue and that is the consideration of the subject by the League of Nations, of which Australia was constituted an original member, and although she cannot be asked for an annual report of the welfare of the Aborigines as is demanded of Australia for natives in her mandated territory of New Guinea—yet she can be asked to honour the agreement made by her with all other national members of the League in Article 23 of the Covenant Sections a, b, and c, by which she is bound to secure *fair* and *humane* conditions of labour and just treatment of native inhabitants in territories under her control and to entrust the League to deal with questions arising in regard to traffic in women and children.

However strongly it may be asserted that the lot of the Aboriginal has been greatly improved, it should be remembered that he cannot own land; has no vote and therefore no representative in Parliament; he has no claim to be educated, he is not legal guardian of his children; he cannot (in Federal Territory) claim to be paid his wages in money; educated half and quarter castes are subject to the same legal and economic disabilities.

MRS. JONES was followed by MRS. MONTGOMERIE BENNETT, representing the Aborigines' Protection League.

MRS. BENNETT said: We are most fortunate in having Mrs. Jones to address us, for she has worked for years in Australia for whites and natives, and she pleaded the cause of the natives at the Ministerial Conference in Melbourne last year, when she was ably supported by Mrs. Ternent Cooke. Mrs. Ternent Cooke is, as you know, one of the two or three women elected to the Advisory Board on Aborigines in South Australia, and is urging

the appointment of women protectors to care for native women and children.

We have to face two serious problems: that the "merciful minority" in Australia is powerless without reinforcement, and that the Aboriginal race is being destroyed rapidly. But to destroy our native race is to destroy ourselves.

DO YOU REALISE that though Australia has signed the Slavery Convention, Australia is breaking the Slavery Convention in the Federal Territories to-day on three counts:

1. In using forced native labour for private profit—the compulsion being dispossession and starvation.
2. In refusing to pay wages to working natives.

You have heard that by payment of a fee of 10s. per annum an employer can obtain from the police a licence to employ an unlimited number of Aborigines, male and female, without paying them. Natives in domestic service in the town of Darwin usually receive a wage of 5s. a week, of which 3s. is paid to them as pocket money, and 2s. is banked in Trust Account for them by the Police who are the official Protectors of Aborigines, with practically unlimited power over them.

Two of the recommendations discussed at the Ministerial Conference were, 1. that working natives should be paid wages, and, 2. that a scale of payment for working natives should be defined; and both these recommendations were fought against and defeated by the representatives of the Northern Territory Pastoral Lessees' Association.

I wrote to the Commonwealth Government to ask what was the amount in the Aboriginal Trust Fund for the Federal Territories, and received a letter dated April 30th, 1930, stating that "for the financial year 1928/29 the amount of £1491 14s. 4d. was paid into this fund."

The Commonwealth Year Book for 1929 gives the numbers of working natives in regular employment in the Federal Territories as

Males.	Females.	Total.
1528	830	2358

so it is reasonable to infer that only about 287 working natives were paid wages, and that about 2,000 working natives were not paid wages; this estimate is based on the 2s. deductions per week from wages earned by Aborigines, but does not make allowance for the 10s. licences to employ without wages nor for the 2s. 6d. contracts to employ for wages, (these sums allegedly paid into the Aboriginal Trust Account), therefore it would appear that the number of working natives paid for their work was even less than 287.

The third count on which Australia is breaking the Slavery Convention in the Federal Territories is removing natives from

their tribe and family to work for the white people in Darwin. A Commonwealth Report (Mr. Bleakley's) draws attention to this astounding fact, that "THE WOMAN SENT UP FOR SERVICE . . . may have left a native husband behind." The reason for recruiting native labour from a distance is that the tribes in the neighbourhood of Darwin have been exterminated.

It is, further, a disgrace to us all that native women should be placed at the disposal of white men.

It is within the competence of any member of the League of Nations to call us to account for our breaches of the Slavery Convention; are we waiting for Persia or Japan to make friendly representations to us before we reform our practice?

I ask that all women will regard seriously the suffering and destruction of the Aborigines of Australia. We can unite in building the Singapore base to keep Australia empty. Then can we not unite to save the native race by rendering justice which makes armaments unnecessary?

I have the honour to second the Resolution which Mrs. Jones has moved so eloquently.

A question was asked as to what was meant by Co-operative Government. Mrs. Jones replied that they aimed at something similar to what was already done in the case of the Bankruptcy Act, in which case once a year the Premiers all joined together to consult and then passed on their resolutions to the Federal Governments. There was no reason why they should not do this to bring forward some formal resolution about the Government of the Aborigines, so that the control should be federal but should be co-operative in finance,—a co-operative scheme such as they had in the Bankruptcy Act.

The resolution was warmly supported by Miss Ruby Rich, Mrs. Waterhouse and others.

Questions were asked as to whether the forced labour of the aborigines could not be dealt with through the International Labour Office, and Mrs. Bennett said she had written, but the reply was they only dealt with forced labour under the lash or under penalties, but could not deal with forced labour under starvation.

The Chairman explained that the definition of forced labour was a very technical one and in the case of the aborigines they were not sent by Chiefs, under a demand, but worked because they needed to do so for a living, and the fact that they were forced into it by being deprived of their lands and of access to food did not make it forced labour in the technical sense.

Mrs. Davies said she came from Western Australia where they had more aborigines than in any other part and there forced labour was not allowed under the Labour Government, and for the shearing the Unions would not allow the white station owners to employ black men. She also pleaded that while the aborigines should certainly be looked after they should not

be educated, for they were quite unsuited for Western civilisation and only wanted to go back into their native bush life.

The Resolution was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN introduced MISS BOYLE.

MISS NINA BOYLE, speaking on the Resolution, said: I have been fighting this question of these forms of slavery for the last 11 years.

There has been a great revival of interest in slavery, owing in a great measure to the activities of the Labour Organization at Geneva. Two forms of slavery in particular have received attention. One is the gross slave-raiding and slave-trading. The other form is that known as forced labour. These are the two forms that affect men. There is no word of the other forms which affect women.

I want to establish it that no human being has the right to own the person of any other human being, no matter in what relation. We have no mention of this gross form of slavery, the disposing of the person of a woman for the profit of convenience of the other members of her family. That she should be so disposed of by father, brother or guardian does not make the disposal any less a form of slavery, and we have for that an extremely substantial definition which has been included in the recent Slavery Convention signed at Geneva and acquiesced in as far as wording is concerned by the 56 national representatives. That is:

Slavery is the status of a person over whom all or any of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.

It is high time we abolished this form of slavery, which is as severe as forced labour or slave-raiding.

A footnote in a book by Lord Lugard says that when the Anti-Slavery Act was passed in 1881 the people who were definitely excluded from its operation were the concubines in the houses of the well-to-do gentlemen who had purchased them, and when a question was asked in the House of Commons they were told it was on the recommendation of a gentleman who represented the Anti-Slavery Society.

Now the reason offered for not freeing women from living in these shackles is that they would immediately take to a life of immorality. Let us look at South Africa, which has been for a long time under a civilised Government. In that country the native woman is buyable, borrow-able and inheritable. If a man dies his widow is inherited by the next-of-kin, regardless of relationship, with the object of cohabitation or farming out to other men. A man has to buy a bride and the expression for the purchase is, translated, "bride-price," a different word from sale or purchase, and it is claimed on the strength of that difference that it is not a sale. Yet you find a girl who has been sold at or

before birth and then refuses to go to her purchaser, she is dragged by ropes to his kraal, because she is his property.

These are forms of slavery so gross and disgusting I cannot understand why they have not claimed attention long before this. The Anti-Slavery Society recently has decided this does not come within its province, so it must come within the sphere of ours and we must see to it in the course of our political activities that we do for our sex what man has done for his—set them free from personal possession, that they may dispose of their bodies themselves.

In South Africa a man may sell his girl to a man who cannot immediately pay the full price. The father then retains equal rights over her and if the final payment is not forthcoming he can take her away from the first man, even if she has children by him, and sell her to another man, and many men find they get more money hiring the girl over and over again to different men instead of taking the full price from one man. If a girl is sold before her birth to a man for his son, and then the son is not born when expected, so that he is much younger than the girl, she can be given to one of the uncles until he is ready. Sometimes a man borrows money to buy a wife and until he pays it back the wife belongs to the man who lent the money as much as to the purchaser. Sometimes the money is borrowed from several men. Sometimes the woman is killed—but nothing is said. But these women must not be freed or they would take to a life of immorality!

Is this slavery or is it not? In Lord Lugard's book you will read the punishment for an unfaithful wife is a public flogging and he thinks this is a salutary punishment and should be maintained. But what of the husband? He can have as many wives as the Moslem law permits and as many concubines as he can afford. How much longer are we going to leave our fellow women all over the world to these forms of slavery?

I have not read in any book that has been published yet on Slavery of those terrible women slaves in Japan, kept in padlocked cages for the purpose of public lust, open and public where everyone can see them. 3,000 of them were roasted to death in the terrible fire that swept over Tokio, in the wake of the earthquake, abandoned by everybody. No-one has spoken of these things.

These things are conveniently crowded into a special Department called the Traffic in Women—but it is slavery. If we allow these things to be dealt with in different compartments, and not dealt with in the one main bulk of Slavery, we are going to lose the game. So we must ask that all these matters shall be dealt with under the heading of Slavery, because the League of Nations gives us a chance. Many people ask me for a definition of the powers to do with Marriage customs, but I can only repeat the definition of slavery under which these customs certainly fall.

If you took that definition into a Court of Jurisprudence you would win on legal points.

In Africa in 1927, two years after the signing of the Slavery Convention, S. Africa passed a Native Administration Act in which they set up Courts of Native Commissioners whose duty shall be to administer the native laws or custom as they shall find it existing, provided it shall not be repugnant to public justice. Therefore by white man's law it is laid down that concubinage by sale is to be the lot of the native woman, and the man who marries legally and retains his concubines still has the right to sell their bodies. If a woman runs away from her husband, every child she bears by the man with whom she runs away belongs to the man who originally purchased her. The Basutoland Commissioner gave his consent to an Act making it an offence for an Basuto woman to cross the frontier without the sanction of her natural guardian, punishable by £5 or three months' imprisonment, and as the status of the native woman is such that she can own nothing, but is herself a possession, of course the punishment is imprisonment. So low is her status in the eyes of the law that in Natal she may not appear in the courts to make a complaint but has to find a guardian to represent her.

These are conditions of slavery and it is time we enfranchised women should raise our voice and demand for those sisters of ours complete possession of their own persons and disposal of themselves and their own property. I appeal to you to go forth to all parts of the world to preach this doctrine of freedom.

Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon wished to propose an amendment to Section B . . . or other suitable expert body under the League of Nations, charged with the supervision of the execution of the Slavery Convention of 1926."

In support of this amendment MRS. OGILVIE GORDON said: We do not want to refer to the Commission but we want to refer to the Slavery Convention. A Convention has been signed by 28 of the States members, but only 17 of these have ratified the Convention, and the slowness with which things were progressing was called attention to by Lord Cecil, but he failed to carry his suggestion for the appointment of an independent expert body. He really wanted a new Commission with the same power of surveillance and supervision as is given to the Mandates Commission and Opium Committee. What he gained last year was only a postponement of his proposals and the promise that the Department would collect reports and would pass them on to the next Assembly, but you quite realise that the collection of reports by an official body and the passing on of those reports without alteration to the assembly or, as they sometimes propose, to the International Labour Office, leaves out the very important fact of the consideration of those reports by a Committee, and their expert report upon the reports, pointing out where they lack pro-

gress, and where they are not bringing the action in various countries within the Slavery Convention. So you would lack the true criticism of an expert authoritative body. Therefore I think that our object, especially of the B.C.L. as representing all parts of the Empire, ought to make very apparent that we want this expert body.

Miss Magniac wished to know what Miss Boyle suggested should be done in the case of S. Africa. She had lived there for ten years in close contact with the natives and the women appeared to her very well looked after and happy, and as the buying of wives was very greatly mixed up with their religion and their tribal customs, we should have to work very carefully.

Miss Boyle replied that she suggested the following:

Abolish the right of any but the father or the mother to receive the bride-price and that no one should inherit that right. She would not necessarily do away with the bride-price because the expectancy of this ensured the father's care and attention to the welfare of his daughter prior to marriage.

No recognition of a marriage arranged in childhood, and penalty for any known case.

Widows to be free once they were widowed, and not disturbed in their occupation of their land.

Inheritance of the persons of women no longer to be recognised or allowed.

Lobolo or purchase, to be recognised as conferring wifehood, and the Native Administration Act of 1927 to be amended in that respect.

She would also like to see steps taken to prevent coercion. She further explained that although it was claimed that the consent of the woman was essential before marriage and was given in Court, and that natives might marry under their own law or under the Law of 1927, or in Church under Roman-Dutch Law, in which latter case there was equal division of property between wife and children on the death of the husband, yet these were not actual facts, for in Natal for instance the Enquiry Officer (usually a native) was not sent until the day before the girl was married, when it was too late for her to do anything, and the Officer's sympathies were usually with the guardians and he would give the girl no protection. Nine times out of ten the white magistrate would only say "Be a good girl and do as your friends tell you and don't give any trouble."

After discussion, the resolution was carried.

RESOLUTION No. 10. MISS ALISON NEILANS.

After reading the resolution Miss Neilans said:

As you know, we have this great Imperial Conference meeting in London this year and the resolution I am putting before you to-day will also be brought forward by other great organisations, and it is a resolution which we have all considered together and gone into and have accepted.

We are covering here the Dominions of our Empire, including the Crown Colonies. The sort of places that are particularly in mind are Hong Kong, Singapore, Malta, Queensland, India, of course, and the difficulties are that in many of these places the British Government has no means whatever of legislating and interfering in matters. It must be done by the consent and wish of the people themselves of the Dominions. In the Crown Colonies we have the power, of course, to interfere, but it is never wise to do this before the people are ready to agree with you. That is why we have agreed to bring this before, first, a Colonial Conference which will deal with the Crown Colonies, and secondly, before the Imperial Conference, to have it on the Agenda that the women of the Empire want the various Governments to put their hands to it and to ensure that as soon as practicable the whole of this system shall be cleared up. Now one point I might mention is that I don't want you to think we blame the British Government, in so far as it has control of, for example, the Crown Colonies. I am bound to admit that from the Colonial Office we have met with great help and courtesy, and there have been two excellent Committees going into the position in Singapore at any rate. Hong Kong is rather a trouble to us and because nothing has yet been done there. The last figures I think for that Colony is that there are 296—350 recognised tolerated brothels each with their staff of women,—women probably brought in from the interior of China in brothel slavery. I ask if you would pass this resolution so that it may go forward with all the big Societies behind it to the Colonial Office and the Imperial Conference.

In reply to a question *re* Queensland Miss Neilans added that there was still a regular compulsory medical examination of prostitutes there, which is, of course, State regulation of Vice.

The resolution was seconded by Miss Collisson, with the agreed verbal alteration in (c) to “. . . steps be taken for the provision of”

Dr. Williams asked for the insertion of the words “together with the provision of free and secret treatment of all persons suffering from venereal disease” after the words “declared British policy of non-Regulation of prostitution,” stating that such treatment was part of the declared British Policy. She urged this on medical grounds. In discussion Mrs. Neville Rolfe explained that the medical point was not on identical lines with the regulation of prostitution. The British Government have prepared a document for the League of Nations outlining its whole medical policy which gives a declaration on the medical aspect of the question. There is no corresponding statement on the prostitution side and the resolution was designed to request that that statement should be made and it was for that reason she urged that the resolution should stand in the form in which it was printed.

Dr. Williams then said that if the word “British” was used in the sense of the British Empire she would withdraw her suggestion for amendment.

The Resolution was therefore carried.

RESOLUTION 8. MRS. HASLEWOOD.

MRS. H. L. HASLEWOOD, then spoke, moving the resolution on Child Slavery in Hong Kong.

CHILD SLAVERY IN HONG KONG.

Lady Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the question of Child Slavery in Hong Kong is one to which you have given so much thought and on which you have received so much information, that there are only three points which I need drive home to-day, and the whole situation hangs upon them.

The first is the question of the enforcement of the law in Hong Kong with regard to Registration.

The Government of the Colony were directed as you know, by the Home Government in September of last year to get registration of all mui tsai put into force without delay, as the first step and the absolutely essential step towards the total abolition of the system. The period allotted was from December 1st to June 1st of this year.

So half-heartedly was the law enforced that out of the estimated number of 7 to 10,000 only between about 600 and 700 had been registered on April 29th. During this period also it was being stated persistently that registration presented unsurmountable difficulties of administration. On the other hand public opinion continued to insist on registration, realising that only by this method could the number and whereabouts of the mui tsai be discovered and their condition dealt with.

Public opinion again produced action, for three days ago a Hong Kong paper was received containing an official statement saying that since the Government took more adequate steps to enforce registration the numbers had quickly jumped up to 1,586. But what is really remarkable about this official statement is the new type of wording which no longer stresses difficulties of registration, but rather minimises them.

Public opinion must again be alert in order to see that the Hong Kong Government continues to make it clear to the Chinese population that they intend registration to be effective; then it will be effective. Means will be found to make it so.

Quite recently a little mui tsai of five years old was suspended by her mistress to a wall and mercilessly beaten with a heavy piece of firewood for hours on end. The witness stated that chopsticks had been forced down the child's mouth and that she had been cut with a pair of scissors. The doctor found a cut on the child's mouth.

In order to terrify the child her mistress had immersed her

in a jar of water and then put her on to the roof of the house to dry. The child's head and body was a mass of wounds and bruises. This case was brought to light by a Chinese woman who had witnessed these and similar scenes. The woman was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

During the month of April we received cuttings from the Hong Kong papers showing 8 or 10 cases of cruelty and of trafficking in children which had been brought into the courts. If registration had been effectively enforced from the first it would have been almost impossible in the majority of cases that these things could have taken place, so greatly increased would the power of vigilance have been.

Again no comprehensive scheme can be drawn up for accommodation for released mui tsai unless registration discloses numbers.

My second point I wish to emphasise concerns the Society for the Protection of Children which has recently been formed in the colony. Obviously one appreciates the work such a Society would be able to do in preventing cruelty but there is a danger that this and kindred societies may be allowed to take the place of the enforcement of law and justice. In any case no society would be able to render any efficient help until registration was complete, as they would have no knowledge of the whereabouts of the mui tsai who are the chief victims of cruelty and traffic.

My third point is this:—It is constantly put forward that slavery cannot be abolished in the British Colony of Hong Kong until it is abolished in China. Little need be said on this point as it is obvious that this is a policy that British people will not accept. It is put forward to confuse those who have no local knowledge.

It is a confession of pure weakness on the part of the colony which has all the machinery of control such as barriers, police supervision of entry, port and harbour control common to every other colony, to suggest that the entry of slaves and the trafficking in them which is going on, cannot be prevented.

To sum up:—

1. Press for complete registration.
2. Beware of any schemes of amelioration which do not aim at direct abolition, or are formed in any way as a substitute for the enforcement of the law.
3. Make yourselves proof against the negative policy that we must wait for China to abolish slavery before doing so in a Crown Colony.

I have here a book which my husband and I have written on the whole question of Child Slavery in Hong Kong.

It deals with this subject in all its various stages, and I am glad to say that the Sheldon Press have published it at the price of only 2s. 6d. Do please buy it.

LADY SIMON. I have great pleasure in seconding Mrs. Haslewood's resolution, more especially as in this gathering of women belonging to the British Commonwealth League we ought to feel it is a great slur on England that in any one of her Crown Colonies there should be such a thing as child slavery. Mui Tsai is a little domestic slave. She is bought with money, she gets no wages, she is made to work, she has no rights and she is punished just at the will of her owner. She can be sold at a profit and her parents never see her any more.

The Resolution was carried unanimously.

MRS. ASHBY then proposed Resolutions on Nationality and Women Lawyers in Palestine, and these were carried. Mrs. Ashby also agreed to draw up a resolution on Peace at the request of Mrs. Byramji.

The Conference then moved for luncheon.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

Chair: MRS. CORBETT ASHBY.

MISS COLLISSON opened, explaining that the proposal was to forward to the Imperial Conference a memorandum covering agreed points. The method was to be that of resolutions, with agreed compressed memoranda attached: in 1926 fifty societies combined under the auspices of the British Commonwealth League had approached the Imperial Conference, for the first time, in this manner. The B.C.L. as the only existing Empire society, had invited all interested societies to co-operate; whether all or many agreed to do so, though indeed many societies had, the memorandum would go forward just the same. The agreed Resolutions are found under "Resolutions."

MRS. OGILVIE GORDON said that the National Council of Women has asked whether their memorandum might go conjointly with that of the B.C.L. Miss Collisson asked leave to explain that the N.C.W. had been invited to co-operate by the B.C.L. three months ago, and had replied that they were not then prepared to do so. They had been invited again later, but only two days ago the B.C.L. had received an invitation from the N.C.W. She had replied that as the N.C.W. had been invited three months ago, she saw no reason why that co-operation should not take place, but she could not, nor could any single member of Committee, agree to do this without Committee consultation. She thought a united front very desirable.

MRS. BYRAMJI then moved a vote of thanks to Mrs. Corbett Ashby, which was seconded by Mrs. Johnston, Madam Alwyn moved a vote of thanks to Miss Solomon, Miss Collisson, and Mrs. Stedman. Both votes were carried with acclamation.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS.

Owing to the general financial depression, no evening reception was this year arranged. But a public luncheon at the Criterion was a great success: the speakers were the Rt. Hon. Shrinivasa Sastri, P.C., on "India to-morrow." and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, on her return from South Africa. The guests included Madame Margaretti, of the Forced Labour Commission, Mr. N. M. Joshi, of the Indian Labour Commission, and other distinguished visitors.

On Saturday, 21st June, a delightful motor excursion took place through the beautiful country round Milton's cottage to Bray and Maidenhead. Guests were met by Lady Snowden, whose kind friend, Colonel Williamson, had provided a punt and motor boat for a river trip, and very refreshing cider cup. Lady Snowden later entertained the visitors to a delightful tea, and the motor returned to London about 8 p.m.

The Conference had a decided note of keen interest and of active discussion: the British Commonwealth League rejoices to find that its work in bringing to the public eye the needs of women as citizens of the Empire is now bearing fruit, and that its insistence on the rights of the less forward citizen woman, to education and to preparation for future citizenship is now supported by an increasing measure of public approval and public support.

Much larger funds are needed to carry on even with the most modest equipment, and with unstinted voluntary labour. For the whole volume of Empire correspondence and Conference work, only one paid officer, the Assistant Secretary, is available. Another five hundred active subscribing members would mean redoubled effort, and increased usefulness, as well as greater effectiveness in reaching objectives.

I desire to become a member of the British Commonwealth League.

I enclose £ s. d. as a membership subscription, and/or

£ s. d. as a donation.

Name.....

Address

PAMPHLET