

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

The Pact in the Balance.

As we write, momentous, though as yet indeterminate, discussions are proceeding at Locarno. For many weeks we have looked forward to the day when these precarious Security Pact negotiations should emerge from the stage of "note circulation" and become the subject of informal discussions between men of goodwill and equal standing assembled round a table. Now that such a stage has been reached we hold our breath in suspense—hoping that the ancient devil of Franco-German rivalry over a changing frontier may be exorcised; fearing that the "old diplomacy" may still prevail in a world which has up till now failed to discard its evil traditions. Meanwhile we must be content to add our cheer to an auspicious opening, and to applaud the spirit in which our own Foreign Secretary welcomed the assembled Press representatives. "No one," he said, "had come to Locarno to impose conditions or to make demands. They had all come as the representatives of free and equal nations to seek a solution of the difficulties lying across their path. He asked that the dead past might be left to bury its dead. That is not an easy request to make either of France or Germany, nevertheless we know that the solid mass of British opinion is behind Mr. Chamberlain when he makes it.

The End of the Sixth Assembly: Compulsory Arbitration.

The Sixth Assembly of the League of Nations has ended, and we must take stock of its work and the effect it will have on the general development of the League. It is unfortunate that the Press of this country has been so obsessed with the Mosul case that it has given small space to the subject of compulsory arbitration and the Protocol, on which there have been most significant debates. The most striking fact of the Assembly this time was the immensely strengthened personnel of the majority of the nations, and of France in particular. A strong belief in the main principles of the Protocol, and in particular in compulsory arbitration, among nearly all the nations of Europe with the noted exception of Great Britain, had much to do with this. There is clearly much educational work to be done on this subject in this country among the women of all parties, for a refusal to accept compulsory arbitration on vital interests is a negation of all that the League stands for. It means that Great Britain is not prepared to undertake in advance to submit disputes of major importance to the test of the judgment of the International Court, but prefers the conciliatory machinery of the Council, on which as a Great Power and a permanent member she can bring more influence to bear on any decision arrived at. In other words, we reserve the ultimate right to be judges in our own cause. We fear that this means that small nations may hesitate to appeal to the League in questions to which Great Britain is a party. Compulsory

arbitration alone can give real security to small and great powers alike. The Sixth Assembly, still more than the Fifth, appreciated and expressed this fact.

A Surprising Defeat.

A Labour woman correspondent contributes the following interesting note: "The defeat at the Labour Conference in Liverpool of a demand for Birth Control information, which had been twice passed all but unanimously by the Conference of Labour women, raises interesting points as to the strength of women in the Labour Party. Unlike the older parties, the Labour Party is built, in theory, on absolute sex equality. In practice, the party machinery, traditional views of women, domestic drudgery, and their own apathy in trade unionism deprive working women of their just share in power and policy. Not that Labour lags behind other parties in this respect; on the contrary, it endorses the largest number of women candidates. The decisions of the Labour Women's Conference are not binding on the Party. It is the National Conference that decides policy and elects the women as well as the men to the Executive, which carries it out. This explains why, at Liverpool, we had the surprising spectacle of a woman member of the Executive and ex-chairman of the Women's Conference speaking against her own women on Birth Control. Had she been elected direct by the Women's Conference this would have been impossible. Delegates, resolutions and nominations to the National Conference come from trade unions and local parties, and, without going into constitutional details, it is fair to say that the masculine voice predominates in their selection. Out of 1,100 delegates in Liverpool only sixty were women. Locally, Labour women are gaining strength by their indispensable election work. They are rapidly learning the use of strike threats and committee and conference procedure. At Birmingham, Labour women showed that their demands are both decided and progressive. They lead rather than follow the other sex. Before long they will know also how to enforce their policy.

Divide et Impera.

In intimate connection with the events narrated above, stands a decision taken on the third day of the Conference shortly before its close. The resolution standing in the name of the Birkenhead Trades Council and Labour Party, upon which we commented last week, was duly moved. Our readers will remember that it called upon women members of the Labour Party to withdraw from Women Citizens' Associations, and sought to endorse the action of the Birkenhead Labour Party in refusing to accept the candidature for local or national bodies of persons who retain such membership. This resolution was ably opposed by Mrs. Baker, of Finchley, who pointed out that W.C.A.'s vary widely in character, and that she herself, as a candidate for the local Council, had received help and financial assistance from a W.C.A. Further opposition was offered by Miss E. Hoctor, of Ashton, and on behalf of the Labour Party Executive, by our old and valued friend, Mr. Arthur Henderson. Eventually the motion was dropped and the next business carried. We congratulate the Conference upon its good sense. As for the statement put forward on behalf of the resolution that the Birkenhead W.C.A. is "anti-Labour," we will only add that a recent meeting of that body, which we had the pleasure of attending, was addressed by a member of the I.L.P., presided over by a Labour Mayor, and was occupied largely with the agitation for a more adequate provision of women police. But it must be admitted that similar hospitality has been offered on other occasions to members of other parties, and this would doubtless, in the eyes of our more hide-bound Labour contemporaries, justify a charge of "anti-Labour."

Meanwhile those same contemporaries are wont to point out that the Labour woman has no need of non-party "loyalties" since all the reforms that women can reasonably require are catered for within the framework of the Labour Party programme. We would suggest, in reply to any such contention, that the events described in the preceding paragraph do not confirm it.

Producer v. Consumer.

For the past fortnight or so the National Food Council has been heavily engaged with the Bakers. On 25th September it issued a report, signed on its behalf by Lord Bradbury, wherein was set forth its conclusion that 10d. is an "unjustifiable price" for the 4lb. loaf. Concurrently the London Master Bakers, with some air of splendid aloofness, announced that owing to a recent reduction in the price of flour the price of the 10d. loaf should in future be 9½d. This did not, however, satisfy the Food Council, which capped the announcement with the statement that a ½d. reduction was not enough—a view which has since been emphatically disputed by the London Master Bakers' and Confectioners' Protection Association. But in the meantime further light has been thrown on the matter by the action of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (a body which operates through the medium of 60 shops scattered over South London) in announcing a new reduction of the quarter loaf from 9d. to 8½d. This decision must, we surmise, prove something of an embarrassment to the London Master Bakers. Nor is this the first time that such embarrassment has been caused. We venture to quote verbatim and *en bloc* Sect. 67 of the interim report of the Royal Commission on Food Prices:—"The attitude of the Co-operative Societies to price-fixing is interesting. Witnesses from these societies have informed us that they are frequently approached by the local master bakers with suggestions that the price of bread should be raised. The witness from the Woolwich Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society stated that, during the years 1922-1924 the bread prices of his Society were on the average ½d. to 1d. lower than the official London prices fixed by the London Master Bakers' and Confectioners' Protection Society. It appears to be the case that Co-operative Societies do very often, owing to their refusal to act with the local master bakers, keep down the price of bread to the benefit not only of their own members but also of their rivals' customers."

Battles Ahead.

Meanwhile the Council has been busy with other affairs. Last week it took expert evidence on the prevalence of short weights and measures—convincing itself thereby of certain grave and widespread abuses. This week it is concerning itself with the milk supply. At the same time its potential activities appear to have caused a flutter in the ranks of the meat traders. At the concluding session of the National Federation's annual meeting at Birmingham last week it was reported that attempts had been made to secure representation for meat traders on the National Food Council. These attempts had not, however, met with success—though a representative of the co-operative societies had been so favoured. Why? We will not insult the intelligence of our readers by indicating the obvious explanation of what the federated meat traders appear to regard as undue favouritism on the part of the Government. For the rest we urge our readers to follow with attentive interest the operations of the National Food Council as recorded in the daily Press; for it is a body which is doing battle, under the ablest and wisest chairmanship we can conceive, on behalf of their immediate economic interests.

"The Woman's Charter."

Under various titles—"Father, and a new Law," "Paterfamilias dethroned" and the like—an anonymous writer, who calls himself "a Barrister," has contributed articles to various widely read papers on the new Guardianship Act, which he describes as the high-water mark of the women's movement up to date! He complains that it gives equality of rights but wholly ignores equality of responsibilities. Mrs. Hubback, in a letter to the *Birmingham Post* in reply to a similar accusation, points out that the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, which for many consecutive sessions initiated Private Members' Bills dealing with this reform, the last of which gave way to the present Government measure, invariably urged that equal rights should be accompanied by equal responsibilities. The inequalities in the new Act are due to

the fear of the Government that equal responsibilities on the part of both parents was not convenient from an administrative point of view—a fear, we may say, which was not warranted by the experience of other countries. On the whole, however, especially in the more serious papers, the two Acts which came into force last week have had a very favourable reception and, we are glad to note, attracted a great deal of attention. We commend to the attention of our readers the brief summary of the terms of the Summary Jurisdiction (Maintenance and Separation) Act, which we print to-day.¹

The Senate Elections in the Irish Free State.

The election for the Irish Free State Senate has been conducted on the P.R. method. As the number of Senators to be elected was 19, and the number of candidates 76, the process of counting is taking time. As the *Irish Times* remarks, "More than half the number have already been eliminated, though their transferred votes, like John Brown's soul, 'go marching on.'" One aspect of the matter is already ripe for comment. No woman will have a place in the new batch of 19 Senators, for the last of the three women candidates was eliminated on Friday. It will be accepted as a general principle that the nation's women "represent important aspects of the nation's life." The Constitution decrees that Senators shall represent such aspects and now, under the first election, no woman has been admitted to the Senate. Furthermore, no guarantee exists that any women will be admitted to the Senate at any future election under the present system. Yet it is certain that the Senate will be required from time to time to shape measures which will affect the social welfare of the women and children of the nation. The impending reform of the method of election to the Senate must safeguard the position of Irishwomen in the councils of the State. The Irish Free State has already shown itself ready to try experiments, whether in the direction of "electrifying rivers," as a recent speaker described the Shannon scheme, or of Family Allowances. Does this utterance of the *Irish Times'* writer foreshadow some provision in a coming electoral reform by which an "adequate number of competent women" shall form a guaranteed proportion of any panel for election to the Senate?

Honour to whom Honour is due.

Mr. St. John Ervine in Sunday's *Observer* asks why Miss Horniman's name has never appeared in an honours list. She has done more for the English Theatre than any other living person: the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester owe their existence to her liberality. Both those theatres, he points out, have profoundly influenced the American as well as the English stage; all modern dramatists and most modern actors and actresses are deep in her debt. Yet no national recognition of any kind has rewarded her generous and far-sighted services to dramatic art. Miss Horniman has won a place among pioneer women in her own line, and directly and indirectly she has advanced the causes to which we are committed, and we join with Mr. St. John Ervine in an appeal to the Prime Minister to remove this reproach of ingratitude by conferring an adequate honour on Miss Horniman at the earliest opportunity.

Married Teachers and Infant Schools.

We read in the *Newcastle Chronicle and North Mail* that married women teachers are still engaged in infant schools in South Shields. It was pointed out at a recent meeting "that one such lady was receiving a salary of £288 for her services." The secretary reassured the Committee by the statement that married women would eventually be dispensed with. He explained that the lady referred to has had great experience and there is a great dearth of teachers for infants' departments. Poor infants—it is not their welfare that the Education Committee of South Shields is concerned with; the reproach that a married woman should receive a salary of £288, or indeed be engaged at all, must at once be removed. The instruction of infants must be left solely to those women, experienced or inexperienced, who have not the good fortune to have husbands to support them. Nevertheless, we cannot help cherishing the hope that somehow or other common sense, strengthened by the recent Poole judgment, will prevail, and that the babies of South Shields will not lose their experienced teacher simply because she is married.

¹ Last week's issue contained a similar survey of the Guardianship of Infants Act; additional copies of both issues may be had on application.

THE SIXTH ASSEMBLY: A REVIEW.

By K. E. INNES.

The Sixth Assembly has come to an undramatic close, after a series of undramatic sessions and Committees lasting under three weeks. Solid work has been done and proposals have been made and endorsed which may have most far-reaching effect; but last year's enthusiasm, engendered by what was believed to be very great progress on the lines of the main task of the League of Nations—the ending of war—has throughout been markedly absent. There is no question as to the cause of the damping-down. Whether one approves of the "putting on of the brake," or regrets the check in the path towards international co-operation, the rejection of the Protocol and the refusal by the British Government to accept even limited compulsory arbitration, are the factors which brought it about. From the point of view of the Continent Great Britain has thus repeatedly been the stumbling-block to co-operative progress. The result has been to give France the lead in the Assembly—a lead which the brilliance and strength of her delegation deserved on its own merits. It was not, however, by any means only France's recognised satellites who upheld the principles of the Protocol and declared in favour of the acceptance of compulsory arbitration for certain classes of disputes. The Scandinavians, the Netherlands and Switzerland all had resolutions to put forward which led again in the direction of the Protocol proposals, more or less completely; and—it is as well we should realise it—no other single nation supported our Government on these questions. It was accepted that without Great Britain the direct approach to the Protocol could not be made. Nearly every speech on the subject except Mr. Chamberlain's, was an attempt to make some constructive proposal that would lead by other paths to the same end. M. Paul Boncour, in a speech that was saved from audacity by its wit and lightness of touch, pointed out that by the various methods even now in process of acceptance and development, we should almost in spite of ourselves, get to something "very like the Protocol." And there, for the time, the matter rests. Probably it was allowed to rest there, with a declaration by one nation after another of principles firmly adhered to—till next year, when Germany will surely be in and taking part in any schemes put forward. The Seventh Assembly is likely, therefore, to be a very critical time in the history of the League. It is to be hoped that the British delegation will go to it equipped with something more constructive on the purely political side than rather lame apologies for British dislike of logic.

The most hopeful political outcome perhaps of this year's work at Geneva is the decision to ask the Council to set up a preliminary Committee to consider methods to be adopted in the

preparatory study of the disarmament problem; with a view to the calling of a Conference to effect measures of disarmament as soon as the Council considers sufficient general security is attained to allow of these. At least, in this way, the Assembly has averted the shelving of the disarmament problem; and ensured its inclusion on the agenda of the Seventh Assembly.

Another proposal, the ramifications of which may prove of the utmost importance was that of M. Loucheur for the summoning of a Conference to consider the economic causes of war. The proposal was modified by Lord Cecil, who asked for reference of the matter to the Council for preliminary study before the calling of the Conference. Adequate preparation is indeed very necessary; but the agreement ultimately to pursue the inquiry, opens up a new and vital sphere of League activity and may have more influence in the course of time on questions of exploitation, of the distribution of raw materials, and many of the economic factors which have led to war.

Among many important, but relatively minor activities, the draft Convention on Slavery will be sent by the Council to all States Members of the League for comments, and to some non-Members, who are specially interested, and will come again before the Seventh Assembly, where, whether approved or not—and some modifications are as desirable as they are inevitable—it will prove a basis for discussion; the giving of the grant asked for, for Miss Jeppe's work of rescue at Aleppo and for the work at Constantinople, was moved by the Duchess of Atholl and renewed without reduction; and the development of schemes for further colonising in the Armenian Republic, may go forward, though this does not seem as certain as it is desirable. It is not always the best friends of the League who stress its useful minor activities, but in a year, when outwardly at least on the political side, there has been a good deal of marking-time, it is of interest to note how steadily, though unobtrusively and often almost un-noted by the Press or the general public, the bulk of valuable work done is being added to and extended. It is to be hoped that the Seventh Assembly will see progress also on the lines of the now accepted formula "Arbitration, Security and Disarmament". Education of public opinion in Great Britain to this end is the most important task before us.

ERRATUM.

We regret that a mistake for which we are responsible occurred in the article on the Sixth Assembly last week. M. Julien Luchaire is the new Director of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, and his name should be read for that of M. Loucheur in the second paragraph. In paragraph 3, "M. Loucheur" is correct.

A CITY OF CONTRASTS.

There are times when a subject widely discussed and prominently before the public seems so immense that ordinary people feel they have no part to play in the means which are being devised as remedies. This is especially applicable to Housing at the present time: the attitude of mind of helplessness on the part of the individual having probably arisen because the question is habitually presented in its technical or financial aspects, and the human side with the bearing it has on the home life of women and children is thrown into the background. With the municipal elections immediately ahead of us it may not therefore be out of place to put aside the wide aspects and concentrate upon the more simple and intimate conditions with the possibility of improvement by local effort which can be made in every area if the ratepayers and the new Councils, setting aside party preference and advancement, grapple with the question from the civic point of view.

To deal at length with different districts in a short space would be impossible. For the purpose of this article, therefore, it is proposed to consider in some detail conditions prevailing in Westminster—a city typical, in one part or another, of many London Boroughs.

It is a city of contrasts, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice on the one side, poverty and squalor complete in its picture of human wretchedness on the other. No matter in what part one may be, side by side with the most beautiful thoroughfares abutting on to the open spaces of the parks there lie narrow courts, insanitary houses, and overcrowded tenements.

There are courts lying close behind the Abbey where families have lived for generations whose homes are now being demolished for improvement schemes. Here, old men and women have

lived through the hot summer days with dust and dirt consequent on house demolition pouring into their rooms, smothering their furniture and bits of things they hold so dear. These houses are being pulled down by the London County Council, the authority specially charged with the housing of the working classes, and yet this, the *Housing Authority for London* had no available shelter to offer those whom it dishoused. Close up to the Royal residences there are courts and ill-conditioned houses the equal of which it would be hard to beat in any district famed only for the poverty of its population. Within a few hundred yards of Buckingham Palace there exist at the present time, and have existed many, many weary years, families housed in the casual wards of the old workhouse, who are faced once more with winter in a building where there is no means of warmth, no light, no ventilation, and a complete absence of anything approaching decent sanitary accommodation. In Soho, that light-hearted region of light-hearted London, the story is still worse. Massed together in block buildings, many rooms practically underground; living off vile smelling passages, the workers of West London's pleasure resorts seek such shelter as may be found. Further out, in that part usually spoken of as Pimlico, families are herded together in houses which, from the outside have something not altogether hopeless about them, but these have long ceased to be the homes of one or even two families. Room by room, basement by basement, they are let out, without any structural alteration, without proper water supply, without one thing to give a man the heart to work or a mother pride in her home. The children in these houses suffer worst, and as one passes by one wonders why it is that "the Lord has laid upon them the iniquity of it all."

Yet, in Westminster the local authority has had opportunities of so exceptional a character that it could, had it chosen, have made the City world-famous for the care bestowed on housing its workers. The landowners are generous: the London County Council holds vacant lands and buildings which, employed for the use of the community would go far to simplify many existing difficulties not only in Westminster but elsewhere; the rate-payers have expressed themselves ready and wishful to understand and help in removing obstacles which may need to be met.

Where, then, lies the difficulty and where is the real solution? These lie, at the moment, entirely in the hands of the electorate, for it is the individual returned to the local council—not the political party represented—with whom will rest the spirit in which the housing problems of the local boroughs are met. At the coming election no elector should be satisfied with a mere general promise that the local housing conditions of the borough will receive attention.

Questions should be asked seeking the candidates' own personal attitude on the subject: their willingness to receive and give information; to explain what the hindrances are, how far schemes are progressing, whether the difficulties lie locally, with the London County Council or the Ministry of Health.

Finance is likely to be put forward as the bogey—only a bogey when it is remembered that economy is wise spending not bad saving. Properly administered, much of the money spent on housing will be saved on public health and police services and saved on unemployment benefits. All these charges on the public purse could be diminished by a wise administration of the Public Health Acts.

In many districts improvements could, without serious detriment, be held up for a little space, and the money earmarked for such purposes devoted to the common good.

Those women unable to take a prominent part in local government, but who are nevertheless convinced that for the moment it is the domestic rather than the public side of municipal service which demands attention, have, in this coming election, and for the next three years, an opportunity of taking a very real part in municipal work. First, to let the cry of party faction go, to do all in their power to get returned men and women keen, not on developing the wealth of the borough in terms of money but in terms of health, contentment, and human happiness; and having succeeded so far as may be, to keep themselves informed as to the activities and policy of their elected representatives upon these points.

D. C. B.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

SUMMARY JURISDICTION (SEPARATION AND MAINTENANCE) ACT, 1925.

This Act, which came into force on 1st October will, in spite of the unsensational character of most of its Sections, offer relief to many unhappily married couples, especially wives, and it is important that our readers should make themselves acquainted with the details of the Act in order that they may be in a position to inform those about it who may need its help. This must be our apology for a fairly detailed exposition of what is familiar ground to many.

It will be remembered that the present grounds on which a woman can obtain a Separation and Maintenance Order are:—(1) Her husband's persistent cruelty; (2) his failure to maintain her or her infant children; (3) his desertion, or an assault on his part. Both a husband and wife can obtain a Separation Order from the other spouse on the ground of habitual drunkenness.

Under the new Act, the following are the grounds which apply to both husband and wife:—(1) Cruelty to the children; (2) habitual drug-taking.

The new grounds on which a wife may obtain a Separation Order from her husband are:—(1) That he has directly or indirectly forced her to lead an immoral life; (2) that he has forced cohabitation knowing himself to be suffering from venereal disease.

Up to the passing of this Act, the wife's right to obtain an Order on the ground of her husband's persistent cruelty or failure to maintain was seriously hampered by the fact that she was bound to leave her husband before making the application. The practical difficulties of this condition were obvious, and the new Act removes it.

The law has been softened by the new Act with respect to a woman who has obtained a Separation and Maintenance

Order, and is guilty of unfaithfulness towards her husband. Under the present law the Court has no option but to rescind the Maintenance Orders, both on her behalf and on that of her children. Under the new Act the Court has discretion not to rescind her Order in cases in which it is proved that the husband has not made payments, under the Order, that he was able to make. Moreover, even when her Order is rescinded the new Act lays down that, provided she retains the custody of the children the Orders on their behalf shall still stand.

The enforcement of Maintenance Orders is facilitated by the Section of the new Act which imposes on a man, under such an Order, the necessity of notifying the Court of changes of address. Another very useful Section provides that Maintenance Orders may be paid if there is a delay of over a week in deciding a case.

So much for what is new in the Act; but we very much deplore the omission of certain reforms for which this paper stands, including the enforcement of Maintenance Orders when the parties are still living together, and the giving of power to the Courts in Separation cases to divide the furniture between husband and wife and to allocate the tenancy as it thinks fit. We hope in the near future that minor Bills will put this and other matters right.

E. M. H.

THE EGGS AND THE ELEPHANT.

When certain representatives of British Trade Unionism returned last winter from a personally conducted tour through Soviet Russia, "it was generally felt," so runs the pamphlet,¹ which lies before us, "that interesting as was their report, nevertheless the general impression of present day Russia was incomplete, in that the delegation had not included women, who it might be urged would be quick to appreciate conditions affecting the work, health, and general conditions of women and children in Russia. Hence arose the idea of a women's delegation." A women's delegation was accordingly appointed, consisting of four delegates representing four trade unions: printing, garment workers, textiles, and general workers, together with a clerical secretary. And here we venture to think an initial mistake was made. Such a delegation should have represented to a greater relative degree the pre-occupations of the home as compared with the pre-occupations of the workshop. Its preponderantly industrial composition is in fact reflected in the considerable amount of space which its report assigns to workshop technique and problems of workshop management in those trades in which its members happened to be peculiarly interested, as compared with the space devoted to matters which a purely male delegation might be expected to neglect. Nevertheless, even from the purely trade union point of view, the delegates have collected some fascinating and instructive material concerning the position of women under the new régime.

Our readers are doubtless familiar with the fable of the benevolent elephant and the partridge's eggs. "Rest assured, my poor mother-bird," said the elephant to the dying creature upon whom he had inadvertently stepped, "I will sit upon your eggs." Faithful to his promise he did so. Similar results are, it may be argued, liable to overtake the woman worker whose male colleague generously invites her to enter on terms of modified equality an economic and social world designed upon his own plan, to meet his own needs, and reflect his own exclusive traditions and ideals. At any rate, somewhat similar results appear to have transpired in Russia—whose economic arrangements are, be it noted, a good deal more capitalistic than the blind partisans or rabid opponents of its present government are wont to admit. What happened was as follows: "One of the first acts of the Soviet Revolution was to proclaim the equality of the sexes." So far so good. The party to which the Duke of Northumberland himself belongs, has done as much. But the Soviet Revolution went further. "At the same time it was recognized that the only way in which to realize the complete equality of woman, in fact, and not only in words, was to grant to her not merely political rights and equality with men but to make her economically independent. The Soviet authorities consequently endeavoured to attract women to take part in the public, industrial, and general economic life of the country. Women were encouraged to enter the industries—with, of course, due safeguards against their employment on work peculiarly harmful to the female organism. The result was a great influx of women into industry." And, of course, into industry they went under strict conditions of equal pay.

¹ *Soviet Russia*. An investigation by British Women Trade Unionists, April to July, 1925. Published by W. P. Coates. 1s.

But alas for the sequel. In 1917 women constituted 47.5 per cent. of the workers employed in industry. In 1924, the percentage had fallen to 27.4. What happened was this: the drastic post-revolution cutting down of staffs, necessitated by high costs, fell mainly upon women. Partly because they were the least skilled workers, partly because "the necessary protection of their labour, such as leave for pregnancy and childbirth, the prohibition of the employment of women on night work, or on heavy and unhealthy labour, occasionally made women's labour more costly than men's." Moreover, "the women being less organized, could less protect themselves against unfair discrimination against them by managers with the old ideas of woman's place being the home." In the matter of pay too, events seem to have falsified the high hopes of the opening years of change. It is true that the principle of "equal pay" remains inviolate. But between rates of pay and weekly earnings yawns a wide gap. In Russia, as in England, women workers have tended to congregate in the lower ranks of industry, with the result that whereas the average earning of a male worker in 1924 is calculated at 44.13 roubles a month, that of a woman works out at 29.88. Certainly "protective legislation" appears, under the Soviet régime, to have been developed to an unprecedented extent—even the menstrual period being provided for in certain classes of work by the allowance of two days' holiday with pay, with special arrangements for the medical certification of irregularities. But it is significant that because "these extra days off make the labour power of women more expensive than that of men, there is a tendency on the part of the women in the trade unions to demand the abolition of this rule." We are reminded in this connexion of a point made some years ago by Mrs. Swanwick in her admirable little book on *Women and Socialism*. She suggests that only under a collectivist system inspired by consideration for the worker's varying capacities in an arena where each has something individual to contribute, can industrial organization be properly adapted to the more complex capacities of women. Certainly under the hybrid capitalism of Soviet Russia such conditions appear to be absent. Women are subject to the full blast of competition in a market where labour power is still a "commodity," and protective legislation inspired, it may be, by the best will in the world, recoils upon them with regrettable consequences: consequences which appear to be intensified by the operation of "equal pay."

When we turn from the labour market to the home, Soviet conceptions of equality as they appear to our British women delegates seem to have realized a greater measure of success. They consider that the more generous provision of day nurseries, communal kitchens, and club life really have lightened the domestic drudgery of the home. And those of us who are prepared to swallow the institution of a purely civil marriage ceremony, together with very generous facilities for divorce when both parties desire it, will find nothing to complain of in the perfect sex equality reflected by Soviet law in the matter of property rights, maintenance obligations, nationality, bastardy, and choice of name. Nor can it be denied that in its treatment of maternity and child welfare the Soviet Government shows a genuine sense of the importance of that side of national life which is the peculiar concern of women.

But how far is all this a genuine fact permeating Russian life to-day? It is difficult to deliver a verdict from the slender volume of evidence which lies before us. It is true that our five delegates and their able young secretary went out with intentions wholly different from those which inspired Balaam, when he set forth on his memorable donkey ride. They went forth to bless, and they have blessed—but not, we are inclined to think, quite uncritically.

The fact is, our readers must weigh the evidence for themselves, and the bigger the weight thrown into either scale, the smaller will be the margin of their error on balance. We can but advise them to throw in this shilling pamphlet along with the rest—adding only that the extraordinarily impressive photograph of a red army parade with which it concludes, is by itself worth the money!

M. D. S.

STELLA BENSON.¹

A new book by Stella Benson is an event which excites us very much. And though this latest volume *The Little World* is not altogether a new book—being the accumulated stray records of many years' journeying, much of it recaptured from

¹ *The Little World*, by Stella Benson. (Macmillan and Co., 8s. 6d.)

the files of the weekly Press—yet it too excites us very much. For it is as Bensonian as ever, which is to say that it is full of fantasy and unexpected magic. Round the world our author takes us, round the world on the hand-to-mouth earnings in diverse rôles of a precarious adventurer. And that done, having put her motley girdle round the earth in something more than forty minutes, round, or at any rate half-way round, she goes again. There she takes leave of us, a sleepy traveller, still travelling, on a "dirty little ship" of the Eastern seas, tossing between the known and the unknown, between "a life of seven-headed snakes and ghosts and gods under a red sinking moon" and "a life in which the cook wants seventy cents to buy a chicken for supper."

Stella Benson writes in this book of Ford cars and the Southern States—of Japanese mountains and Chinese dragons—of little wars and executions—of Anglo-Indian ladies and missionaries—of temple bells, and Yunnanese goods-trains and pack-horses, and turbulent rivers and Scottish engineers, and the sun and the moon. There is a page (whose contents stick peculiarly in our memory) whereon she describes the death and burial of a nameless Japanese sea passenger. There is another which recreates for us the personal relation between an hysterical motor-car and its equally human driver. There are, indeed, no less than 293 pages (this being the measure of her book) each of which provides one or more small memorable and ingenious twist of word or thought to remind us of the very great tractability of language when big things are demanded of it, and of the infinite variety of thought when little things are bestowed upon it.

But alas! in all this wealth of travel Stella Benson leaves no footprint in London. When will she write once more of London—her first-known magic city which she understands as no other writer of her time? Perhaps when she comes home again. M. D. S.

THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS.

In two recent issues Miss Bertha Mason has tried to prick the popular apathy which prevails in regard to Local Government elections. We printed last week a list of questions which deal with reforms for which this paper stands, and we sincerely hope that every reader who possesses a vote will take the trouble to find out the views of the different candidates on these subjects. In another column of this paper an article, entitled "A City of Contrasts," from a well-informed contributor, urges the woman voter to use the opportunity afforded by the coming elections to make the housing shortage a prominent issue. A question on housing, rightly we think, has been added to the short list referred to (see page 294). We maintain that it is impossible for women housed under such conditions as are described in the article adequately to discharge their functions as citizens. The housing evil falls heaviest on the women whose workshop is the home, and it is not inconsistent for those who work for equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women, to place Housing in a prominent place in their programme, and to stress its importance during the coming elections.

AN EXPERIMENT.

We propose to introduce a new feature in our columns this winter, beginning next week. We propose to devote some space to answers to correspondents on subjects dealing with matters which specially concern the policy of this paper. These will include legislation specially relating to women and children and to women citizens, questions of general concern to women, as well as problems connected with local government, the administration of justice and social work. We also hope to be able to reply to requests for information relating to the best openings and training for women in professional and public life. We cannot promise that we shall always be able to answer, for our readers know that our resources in the way of staff are very limited. Fortunately, we do not rely on ourselves alone, but with the help of our special regular contributors, Mrs. Rackham, J.P., and Miss Bertha Mason, the Information Department of the N.U.S.E.C., the London Society for Women's Service, the members of our Advisory Committee, and many of our expert readers whose help is readily at our disposal, we intend to do our best. We feel that by eliciting questions from our readers we shall find out just what they want to know, and that such a column may prove a valuable means of exchange of information. At any rate we mean to try the experiment, and we ask our readers to help us.

THE UNFRIENDLY CRUISE.

Women's International League, 55 Gower Street, W.C. 1.

Last April it was officially announced that the United States Navy Department intended to send a fleet of some 53 vessels, including 11 out of their 18 battleships, to Australia after the completion of their manœuvres at Hawaii. A storm of protest followed. The President was asked to abandon "the unfriendly cruise," as the American National Council for the Prevention of War described it, on the ground that it would in effect be a thinly veiled threat to Japan and that it was contrary to the national policy of "friendship and understanding" and a reversion to the "old standard of dealing with other countries by terror and force," which President Coolidge stated they had "definitely relinquished." The effect of this cruise has been bad from every point of view. Australia quite mistakenly imagined that America was guaranteeing her anti-Japanese policy. Very significant in this connexion is the following sentence from the *Melbourne Herald*:—"We feel comfort in the presence of the fleet of a friendly nation, showing that the coast of Australia is within the range of her protection." Far more deplorable was the effect on Japan. The Government and Service critics were very reasonable, but so thoroughly has the idea that Japan is the mistress of the Pacific taken root that, in the words of the Japanese correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, "the intrusion of other powers is not regarded as having any possible strategic object except in relation to Japan. So Japanese critics have taken at their face value such ideas as the usefulness of Singapore on occasion to the American Fleet . . . and the visit of the American fleet to Australia . . . is regarded as practice in future combined operations against Japan." Japan complains that while she has faithfully carried out her disarmament pledges under the Washington Agreement and thus rendered more difficult the protection of the outlying parts of her Empire, America now threatens her from Hawaii and Great Britain from Singapore. The whole incident is an example of how the race for armaments, and their use, even in peace times, creates misunderstanding, fear, and suspicion, and it is particularly regrettable in view of the recent improvement in the relations between Japan and America. If once Japan is certain that the Anglo-Saxons are uniting against her she will form a group which will include both China and Russia, a development which would threaten not only peace, but present-day civilization.

W. G. R.

HEALTH WEEK.

This week an effort is being made to direct the attention of the country to the problems of public health. Emphasis is rightly given to prevention rather than cure. More adequate housing accommodation, purer food, early treatment of physical defects, the abolition of the smoke nuisance, playing fields for old as well as young, among other necessary reforms, are urged as means of prevention. Domestic Science is only beginning to come into its own. Domestic Science, in the widest sense of the term, applied to the home and on a larger scale to the community, through the agency of the local authorities, will go a long way to prevent disease and to improve the well-being of the people. In addition to this, suitable teaching on Health must be given in every type of school. At a recent Conference of Head Masters a syllabus of such teaching was drawn up for Public Schools. Education, continuous, direct and indirect, in regard to personal hygiene and in regard to the health responsibilities of citizenship for all, is laid down by Sir George Newman as one of the principles which lie at the foundation of a satisfactory public health service.

THE DEATH PENALTY.

The recent execution in Glasgow attended by Mrs. Bell, a woman magistrate, has renewed interest in the question of the abolition of capital punishment. We recommend all open-minded men and women who are considering the arguments on both sides to read a recent pamphlet published by the Howard League, "The Abolition of the Death Penalty in Denmark, Holland, Norway and Sweden" (Howard League for Penal Reform, 18 Savoy Street, W.C. 2, 3d.). This pamphlet contains valuable accounts of the effect of the abolition of capital punishment, written not by extremists or theorists but by experts in Penal Law and Prison Administration in each of these countries who speak with authority.

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LITERATURE.

The following leaflets and pamphlets may be had on application to the Office, 15 Dean's Yard, Westminster, S.W. 1:—

WIDOWS', ORPHANS', AND OLD AGE CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS ACT.

Ministry of Health leaflet W.P. 3. Free.

Speech by the Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., broadcast 22nd September, 1925. Price 1d.

Questions and Answers. Published by the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations. Price 3d.

Pensions. What Widows, Orphans, and Old People will get when they qualify. Published by the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations. Price 1d.

Guide to Widows', Orphans', and Old Age Pensions. Published by the *Daily News*, Bouverie Street, E.C. 4. Price 6d.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Questions for Candidates for Local Elections. Free.

Reasons Why Women are Wanted on Town Councils. Price 1d. The Work Awaiting Women on County Borough Councils. Price 1d.

Women's Local Government Franchise. Price 1d.

Local Government Elections, Qualifications of Candidates. Published by the Women's Local Government Society.

Borough Councils: Their Constitution, Powers, and Duties. Published by the Fabian Society. Price 2d.

Metropolitan Borough Councils: Their Constitution, Powers, and Duties. Published by the Fabian Society. Price 2d.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.

Guide to National Health Insurance. Published by the *Daily News*, Bouverie Street, E.C. 4. Price 6d.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION.

The First Fruits of the League of Nations. Price 1d.

Human Welfare and the League. Price 3d.

The World's Health and the League of Nations. Price 3d.

The League of Nations: What It Is and What It Does. Price 2d.

Organizing Peace. Price 3d.

The League of Nations and the Schools. Price 3d.

An Experiment in a Secondary School. Price 2d.

Notes for Lessons or Addresses to Young People. Price 2d.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONNAIRE.

A new question dealing with Housing has been added to the questionnaire for Candidates for Municipal Elections: "Are you in favour of a policy of continuous building by your Council under the Acts of 1923 and 1924, and of making grants under these Acts to private individuals willing to build houses for the industrial classes in your area?"

NEWS FROM SOCIETIES.

KENSINGTON AND PADDINGTON S.E.C.

In view of the forthcoming Municipal Elections, the Kensington and Paddington S.E.C., working in co-operation with the Kensington W.C.A., has arranged a course of addresses by Mrs. Reincke, to take place on Mondays at 5 p.m., the first of which is to be held on October 12th, at 7 Courtfield Road (by kind permission of Mrs. J. M. Rendel). (Further particulars will be found under "Coming Events.") A public meeting will also be held on Friday, October 16th, at 8.15, in Kensington Town Hall, at which some of the candidates have promised to speak. A concert has also been arranged in aid of the funds of this Society for October 30th, at 8 p.m., at 11 Vicarage Gate, W.8 (by kind permission of Mrs. Clement Davies). Tickets, 6s., may be had from the Hon. Secretary, 190 Church Street, W.8.

* This pamphlet is also issued in the form of a lantern lecture illustrated by 64 slides, which may be hired for 5s. plus carriage both ways from the League of Nations Union, 15 Grosvenor Crescent, S.W.1.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE LAW AT WORK.

MADAM,—I regret having to trouble you with yet another letter on the subject of Commitments to Home Office Schools, but Mrs. Rackham, in your issue of 25th September, attributes an intention to me of which I am entirely innocent, and to remain silent might be interpreted as pleading guilty to the charge. Mrs. Rackham accuses me of desiring to convey a false impression with regard to the period for which children are detained in the Schools. A re-reading of my original letter should, I think, be sufficient to dispel this illusion. I did not mention the age limit under the Act, for the simple reason that Mrs. Rackham herself had not done so, and that I assumed that she and I, together with any readers of her article, were on common ground when discussing the subject.

Had Mrs. Rackham confined herself to urging that the Schools should take full advantage, where circumstances permit, of licensing out, I should not have differed from her. But the lowering of the age limit which she now advocates is a very different matter. In my opinion it would be a most undesirable and unwise policy to adopt, for the simple reason that children who have exhibited, at an early age, symptoms of moral instability and great "emotionality" are likely to pass through very troubled waters during the period of adolescence and therefore all the wisdom, skill, and care available, should be at their disposal during those years, if they are to become upright and self-respecting citizens.

In exceptional cases children might, and should, be returned to their homes before the full term of detention has expired, but as not only the child, but the home is a factor to be considered, great care must necessarily be exercised before following such a course. Unemployment, with all its attendant pitfalls are not to be lightly regarded at any time, but when the unstable child is concerned, they constitute dangers of an unusually grave character, and it is the business of those responsible for the child's future to safeguard it from unnecessary risks at the most critical period of its life.

Mrs. Rackham and I seem to hold such divergent views on this subject, that I fear these arguments are likely to carry little weight with her, but it might not be amiss to point out that all the expert opinion of the day

is in favour of the indeterminate sentence. *Vide* the unanimous decisions of the recent International Prison Congress, as well as the principles laid down in the Borstal Act, which I have already quoted. Mrs. Rackham in her letter of 4th September, when suggesting that the magistrates should fix a shorter term of detention than at present, and that they should have the power of extending the period, remarked that in coming to their decision, they should be partly guided by the School authorities on the child's progress. In her subsequent letter she stated that she had previously written that the magistrates would come to their decision "in consultation" with the School authorities. These two statements differ considerably, but in any case her proposals do not meet the difficulties to which I have drawn attention, and *neither* suggestion was made until after my criticism of her original article appeared. It is unfortunate that a note of quite unnecessary hostility should have been introduced into this correspondence, but I think I can leave it to the sense of fair play of your readers to decide whether it is Mrs. Rackham or I who can with greater reason be accused of a desire to misrepresent their case.

MILDRED PYKE.

WOMEN IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.

MADAM,—You will probably be giving some notice of the recent success of women in the Civil Service Examination. The lists were in *The Times* on 29th September, as you will no doubt know.

Miss Russell-Smith has received notices in various papers as being the first woman to enter the Department of Civil Service, but you will see that Miss Alix Kilroy was also successful. Her name has not appeared in any list except the official *Times* list, but I hope that the *LEADER* will acknowledge the success of *both*. No doubt the name "Alix" led to confusion, as possibly being a man's name.

It is a fine achievement on the part of both.

A. M. DOWSON.

[We are very grateful to our correspondent for calling our attention to a very regrettable omission. Of course we extend to Miss Kilroy the congratulations and good wishes which we offered to Miss Russell-Smith, together with an apology for our oversight.—Ed.]

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Dr. MARIE STOPES, Sir JAMES BARR, M.D., and other Speakers.

Sir JAMES BARR, M.D., in the Chair.

TICKETS, 1s., 2s., 6d., and 5s.—To be obtained from THE LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY'S OFFICES, 14 Harrington Street; MESSRS. RUSHWORTH & DREAPER, LTD., 21 Bassett Street and 13 Islington; and MESSRS. CHAS. WILSON & Co., 11 Commutation Row.

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COMING EVENTS.

GUILDHOUSE WOMEN CITIZENS' SOCIETY.

OCT. 10. 3 p.m. The Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Miss K. D. Courtney on "Family Allowances and a Living Wage."

NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

Scottish Council of Women Citizens' Associations. OCT. 9-10. Annual Conference at Aberdeen. Speakers: Mrs. W. Fyfe, J.P., A. Cormack, Esq., M.A., D. Litt., M. A. Reynard, Esq., and Professor J. Arthur Thomson, M.A., LL.D. Chairman: Lady Leslie Mackenzie.

Chingford W.C.A. OCT. 12. 3 p.m. Miss Monica Whately on "The Right of Married Women to Work."

Repton W.C.A. OCT. 13. 2.45 p.m. Meeting at the Court Room. Speaker: Mrs. Brittain, J.P.

Gillingham S.E.C. OCT. 13. 7.30 p.m. Miss May Smith on "Industrial Fatigue."

Saffron Walden W.C.A. OCT. 13. 7.30 p.m. Miss Rathbone on "Family Allowances."

Fulham S.E.C. OCT. 14. 8 p.m. Miss Beaumont on "The Importance of Borough Council Elections."

Kensington and Paddington S.E.C. and Kensington W.C. and L.G. Association. Course of Addresses on Municipal Elections by Mrs. Reincke, to be held on Mondays at 5 p.m. OCT. 12, at 7 Courtfield Road. Chair: Miss Oliver Stachey. OCT. 19, at 44 Kensington Park Gardens. Chair: Miss Bertha Mason. OCT. 26, at Pembroke Lodge. Chair: Alderman A. J. Allen, J.P.

OCT. 16. 8.15 p.m. Public Meeting at Kensington Town Hall.

NORTH KENSINGTON WOMEN'S WELFARE CENTRE.

OCT. 15. 5 p.m. Public Meeting on Birth Control at Kensington Town Hall. Speakers: Professor E. W. McBride, F.R.S.; Mrs. Jennie Baker and the Rev. Herbert Gray, D.D. Chairman: Lady Balfour of Burleigh.

SOCIETY FOR CONSTRUCTIVE BIRTH CONTROL.

OCT. 21. 8 p.m. Meeting at Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. Speakers: Dr. Marie Stopes, Sir James Barr, M.D., and others.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE, KENSINGTON BRANCH.

OCT. 21. 5 p.m. 50 Porchester Terrace, W. 2. Miss Kate Courtney on "The Sixth Assembly of the League of Nations." Chairman: Lady Buckmaster.

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FELLOWSHIP SERVICES, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 11th October: 3.30. Music; Lecture: Mr. R. Coppock on "My View on Industry"; 6.30, Maude Royden.

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