

THE
WOMAN'S LEADER

IN POLITICS
 IN THE HOME
 IN INDUSTRY

IN LITERATURE AND ART
 IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
 IN THE PROFESSIONS

AND

THE COMMON CAUSE

VOL. XII. No. 45.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1920.

PRICE 3D.
 Registered as a Newspaper.

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THE COMMON CAUSE PUBLISHING CO. LTD., 62, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1

and all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND
COMMON CAUSE.

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION.—British Isles, 17s. 4d. per annum, post free; Abroad, 17s. 4d. Subscriptions should be sent direct to the Manager, THE WOMAN'S LEADER, 62, Oxford Street. Increased rate payable on renewal of Subscription.

CONTRIBUTIONS should be addressed to the Editor, who, however, accepts no responsibility for unsolicited matter. MSS. not used will be returned if accompanied by a stamped envelope.

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PROSPECTUS.—The Common Cause Publishing Co. is issuing new £1 shares to the value of £10,000. Prospectus and all information to be obtained from the Manager, Common Cause Publishing Co., 62, Oxford Street, W. 1. Telephone: Museum 2702.

NOTES AND NEWS

A Truce of God in Ireland.

The Society of Friends is publishing the following statement, with which all shades of thought and political opinion can hardly fail to agree—: "We desire to support most earnestly the suggestion made in the House of Commons, and by religious leaders both in England and in Ireland for a Truce of God, during which all parties may come together. In such an atmosphere alone, with its cessation of crime and violence, can a just and lasting settlement be reached, and we unite in the prayers of all who are working to bring this about."

Italian Women's Suffrage.

On the 19th November the Italian Chamber of Deputies, by 240 votes to 10, passed the new Bill which gives the municipal franchise to women. This law, which doubles the body of electors, was passed, almost without discussion, almost by surprise, in the form of an amendment to the wording of the Reform of the Municipalities Bill which is under discussion at present. Faced with this amendment, the deputies, who nearly all of them had votes for women on their programme, and who were publicly committed to it, were put in the position of approving of it or opposing it publicly. The amendment was carried practically unanimously! This is a victory which Italian women have reason to be proud of, and on which we must congratulate them heartily, even before the final confirmation, which takes place by secret ballot at the end of the discussions, puts it into full effect. One could wish, as several newspapers have pointed out, and as it was remarked in the Chamber of Deputies itself, that "such an important, constitutional, political, and moral reform" might have been examined more thoroughly and voted on more universally (numbers of delegates absented themselves at the critical moment), and especially that many, even among those who passed it, had not often, in the lobby, made sceptical and derogatory remarks about the admission of women to political life. But even this is of practically no importance so long as the vote by secret ballot does not annul the public voting of November 19th. The new municipal electoral law is contested on more than one point, chiefly by the opponents of proportional representation. It is to be hoped that on the day of the secret ballot the secret opponents of woman suffrage will not join with the opponents of proportional representation in order to kill both birds with one stone.

The Fitness of Women to Rule.

"I vote for the granting of the suffrage to women," declared a Deputy from Central Italy, M. Gaetano Salvemini, "because I am certain that women will use the franchise to instil more vitality and efficiency into public administration with regard to social and moral problems, which touch women more directly and more intensely than men; infant welfare, the battle against intemperance, social hygiene, the fight against white slave

traffic, reforms of charitable institutions, &c. I vote in favour of the amendment also, and in fact especially, because I am convinced that women, especially those who concern themselves with their homes and their families, acquire, in the exercise of their many and complex duties as mistresses of their homes, and instructors of youth, a sense of reality, an adaptability, a psychological intuition and a power of self-sacrifice far above those of ordinary men. And these are precisely the qualities which contribute most to the formation of the politician and the citizen. Moreover, the experience of history shows that women called upon to govern, either as queens or as regents, have always been excellent Heads of the State." And after having added that it would be better to fix the "political majority" at 25 years of age instead of 21 in order that women might have "time to acquire the aptitudes which are the result of natural experience," the Italian Deputy begged the Chamber not to give the country the disconcerting exhibition of throwing out the reform at the secret ballot, after the practical unanimity of the public voting.

The Political Franchise.

But this fear, which several of the papers have also shown, does not appear to be justified. It will be difficult to reverse the machinery, and Italian women take comfort from the fact that after the vote of November 19th with regard to the municipal elections, the Parliamentary Commission charged with the preparation of the reform of the political franchise approved, on the 25th November, of granting the franchise to women and have instructed the Deputy M. Modigliani to present the Chamber with a recommendation to that effect. The country itself is prepared for the official entry of women into political life, and many hope that they will bring with them a very necessary modification of electoral morals—how necessary will be realised by all who witnessed the recent elections.

Municipal Councillors.

Aldeburgh has returned Miss Pettit in the recent local Town Council elections. She has been on the Town Council for three years, and this November was unopposed. A woman has been made a municipal councillor for the first time in India. Indore is the progressive town in question, and the case is all the more remarkable in that it is in an Indian State where the laws and regulations of the Municipalities of British India do not exist.

Children's Courts.

There is reason to hope that the clause which provided that Children's Courts in the Metropolis should consist of a Stipendiary and two Justices—a man and a woman—may be restored before the Juvenile Courts (Metropolis) Bill reaches its final stage. At the Conference of Women Magistrates, Miss Margery Fry proposed a resolution regretting the change made in Committee and stating the opinion of the Conference that the

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original proposals were in the best interest of juvenile offenders. The London magistrates have passed a similar resolution. The alteration was, we understand, carried by only one vote and without a full understanding of the interests involved.

Scottish Housing.

The Housing (Scotland Bill) which provides for the compulsory hiring of empty houses until 1923, presents a perhaps unpleasant remedy for an appalling state of things. Overcrowding in Scotland, in urban and rural areas alike, has existed for so long and in a degree so intense that it is extraordinary that a highly civilised community should tolerate it, especially in a climate which forbids the open-air life that makes houses almost a superfluity in some parts of Southern Europe. Mr. Munro said in the House of Commons that in Largs six hundred out of two thousand houses were rented by non-residents and stood empty for most of the year. We have our week-ender in the South, but the Scottish problem is much greater. While the housing shortage continues, and three families of well-to-do artisans will live (perhaps are obliged to live) in a three or four-roomed flat, there should be no question of better-off people in thousands keeping two houses for a single family.

Labour Exchanges.

The Committee of Enquiry on Labour Exchanges has issued its report. Without finding justification for any sensational charges of incompetency or lack of adaptation of means to ends, the Committee is of opinion that the placing of one in three of the workpeople registered during the year (though the number of vacancies notified is half the number of applicants for work) is unsatisfactory. It is admitted that many of these arrangements are for very short periods, and there is a suggestion that if such round pegs as there are were fitted into round holes periods of unemployment would not be so rapidly recurrent. The Committee reports in favour of a greater use of Local Employment Committees. It may be that Exchanges, dealing as they do mainly with the less skilled workers in incompletely organised trades, have to meet with difficulties that outsiders do not fully appreciate, but it is obvious that a great many improvements might be effected, particularly in the matter of sympathetic interviewing, and that unless they adopt better methods they are likely to be overwhelmed in dealing with the new burden of unemployment insurance. The report implies, very justly, that new premises and better paid and trained staffs are a necessary preliminary to better work. Indeed, it is clear to all unofficial observers, that the Exchanges either ought to be twice as good and twice as popular, or they ought to be abolished. They cannot be popular until they are good, or good until they are popular, but the thing is only a vicious circle in the sense that it depends almost entirely upon £ s. d.

Unemployed Juveniles.

Mr. Grundy asked the President of the Board of Education whether he was aware of the increasingly serious problem of juvenile unemployment in London, Liverpool, and other centres, and whether any special steps were being taken to deal with this phase of the unemployment question. He pointed out that after the Armistice educational centres of emergency schools were provided in centres where unemployment amongst juveniles had reached serious proportions, and the attendance of the children was secured by the fact that the out-of-work donation was paid there. He further suggested that it might be advisable to assist and encourage local authorities to form these emergency schools now, and to provide funds for them, and scholarships for maintenance grants for children, in order to encourage their attendance at these schools. Mr. Lewis replied that educational funds could not be burdened with the cost of payments to unemployed juveniles, merely so as to induce them to attend classes regularly; and he doubted whether, in the absence of special financial incentives to regular attendance, there was much prospect of these suggested educational centres proving a success. Mr. F. Roberts drew the attention of the House to the fact that the large number of children leaving school at the end of the Christmas term will further accentuate the problem. The juvenile employment exchanges have been instructed to give these children the last consideration in filling vacancies, and Mr. Roberts asked if any steps were being taken to encourage these children to remain at school. Mr. Lewis thought the local education authorities would encourage the children to continue their education, but added that the success of their endeavours, must depend largely on the co-operation of the parents. The parents would probably be only too ready to keep their children at school if the difficulties of obtaining employment were thoroughly understood by them,

and if they realised the attitude of the juvenile employment exchanges. The unemployment of a child of that age for any length of time is likely to have serious results on the development of its character, and, therefore, on the whole of its future life.

A Deputation on Divorce.

A deputation of the Divorce Law Union has waited on the Home Secretary to present a petition praying the Government to carry into effect the recommendations of the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce. Among the women members of the deputation were Lady Wiltoughby de Broke, Dr. Sloan Chesser, Miss Anna Martin, and Lady Maud Rolleston. The Home Secretary held out hopes of a Bill in the near future and assured the petitioners that they had a friend in the Lord Chancellor. In the meantime there is a prospect of equalising the position as between rich and poor by a clause of the Administration of Justice Bill, recently introduced into the House of Lords by the Lord Chancellor. If this becomes law, some divorce cases, at any rate, may be tried by judges at Assizes, when the heavy cost of bringing witnesses and principals to a London Court may be avoided. Opinions about facilities for divorce differ very widely, but no thinking person desires that they should, as now, be governed by geographical or financial considerations.

Criminal Law Amendment.

The Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to consider the three Criminal Law Amendment Bills, has reported in favour of taking the Government Bill as a basis. They are impressed by the view put forward by several witnesses that the question of communication and prevention of venereal disease should be dealt with in a public health Bill rather than in the present measure; they do not, however, ask for the omission of the clause relating to this subject. Differences of opinion on the question of prohibiting advertisements of means for preventing venereal disease were not reconciled; the Committee calls the attention of Parliament to this subject.

Women Police for Ireland.

During the last week or so the authorities in Ireland have decided to take steps against women suspects, and a large batch of women police has been sent over to Ireland. These women are members of the Women Police Service, a volunteer force unattached to Scotland Yard. A certain number were sent over earlier in the year to be used in searching women in connection with the military raids, and the job is not likely to be without its dangers and discomforts.

Women at the Board of Education.

Sir H. Brittain asked the President of the Board of Education how many efficient single women dependent on their earnings, who are sitting for the forthcoming examination as writing assistants, have been given notice of dismissal, and how many of the men introduced into the Board under the Lytton Report, have had the previous clerical or professional experience necessary for Board of Education work. Mr. H. Lewis replied that five such women have received notice of discharge, and that the ex-Service men introduced into the Department under the Lytton Report, have not been there long enough for a definite opinion as to their suitability to be formed. No man, he added, is appointed, except on the recommendation of the Joint Substitution Board, which satisfies itself, in all cases, that the individuals submitted are qualified to perform the clerical duties required of them. This is an excellent example of Parliamentary evasion, and no reason is given for the discharge of the five "efficient single women dependent on their earnings." While this sort of thing goes on, there is no reality in the Government's pledge of equality of opportunity for men and women.

University College Hospital.

During the war University College Hospital opened its doors to women medical students; the male students have recently protested against the presence of the twenty-five women students, saying that it is difficult to work with women, that the best men from Oxford and Cambridge do not now come on to University, and that the hospital's football standard has gone down. The Board of Directors have agreed to reduce the number of women students to twelve this year, and next year to exclude them altogether. Women now studying at University cannot hope that other hospitals will give them the positions as house-surgeons and house-physicians, for which they had

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