

MONTHLY NEWS  
of the  
**Conservative Women's Reform  
ASSOCIATION.**  
NEW ISSUE.

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"But that which put Glory of Grace into all that he did was that he did it for pure love of his country."—*Bunyan.*

The Conservative Women's Reform Association fills a place taken by no other body, but it believes that all societies, particularly those of women, which are working on constitutional lines for the good of the nation should have acquaintance with the efforts of similar organisations. This is important not only to avoid overlapping, but that experience may be shared, and, where desirable, mutual aid given.

We therefore propose to publish from time to time a short account of the work of other associations, particularly those in which our members are interested.

#### **The Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council.**

BY THE HON. SECRETARY, MRS. TORREY.

Amongst the interesting developments of women's intellectual activity may surely be ranked the work now being done by the Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council. It started at the end of 1913 through the desire expressed by a group of Members of Parliament "for the formation of a Committee of women who will allow us to keep in touch with them, and who will collect and digest exact information on questions concerning women and children which may come before Parliament." The conception of such an organisation was of high interest, it was to be political, it was to be strictly non-party, through it women social workers were to come into direct touch with Members of Parliament interested in the special subjects under discussion and a progressive and intelligent criticism of legislation was thus to be brought forward. The idea took shape and was organised under Sir Charles Nicholson as first President of the new Committee. Mr. C. Beck (Liberal), Mr. Whitehouse (Labour) and Mr. Goldsmith (Unionist) joined as Parliamentary Secretaries, and under this able leadership the Joint Advisory Committee soon began to do useful work and justify its existence.

The government of a democratic State always awaits a mandate to act. If legislation is demanded it must first be convinced that it is to the advantage of the Government to undertake such legislation and that enough support will be forthcoming to prevent it from being led into a losing struggle to the discredit of its power. Every reform, even those vitally needed, must, if they are to be favourably considered, be introduced at

an opportune moment. Vested interests and officialdom have to be overcome, the very persons to be benefited may be the fiercest opposers of change, and last but not least, public apathy has to be removed.

Taking these fundamental laws into account, the Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council, after deciding to take up a question, start to obtain such direct information as will ensure convincing proof of the need for the proposed change and for its urgency.

As an example of the work done by the Council we can instance the Clause introduced into the Education Act of 1918, to provide education for over forty thousand crippled and maimed children. This was not a haphazard experiment in education, for during a period of twenty years it had been proved that the few schools which existed for these children were doing truly remarkable work. Many of the children, after some years of care and instruction in special schools were able to enter the ranks of normal children, and finish their education in the ordinary elementary school. A high proportion, some of whom shewed a marked development of ability in arts and crafts, entered industrial life direct from the training of the special school, and in spite of physical disability became self-supporting citizens. Last, but not least, happiness was brought into lives which previously, when not actually neglected and cruelly treated, were "untaught, undisciplined, and without hope or prospect in life."

When the clause for providing for the education of these children was first mooted the President of the Board of Education met the suggestion with point blank refusal, he ended by adopting it into the Bill as a Government Clause, and it was eventually passed unanimously by a crowded House. This result was accomplished by the careful collection of conclusive evidence, both of the good done by existing schools, and of the cost to the nation of maintaining a large number of crippled, untrained, uneducated adults in State work-houses and institutions.

As another instance of the work that is being done by the Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council may be cited the endeavour to improve the health of the nation by calling attention to the grave danger arising both to children and adults from insects and vermin. Statistics have been collected and tabulated proving how remiss Local Authori-

ties have been in putting into force the Cleansing of Persons Act, 1897. This Act is a permissive Act and indolent Local Authorities are not compelled to avail themselves of its provisions. The Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council are now pressing for the Act to be made compulsory, and that no scheme for new Housing areas should be adopted by the Local Government Board unless proper accommodation is provided to individuals for eradicating the evil of vermin. Public baths, if used for this purpose, bring only temporary alleviation from discomfort, and constitute a grave danger to the rest of the population.

Amongst other vital reforms at present under the earnest consideration of the Council comes the change needed in the system of dealing with offenders against decency and public order, and other law-breakers. To criticise and improve the administration of our prisons, although a matter of urgency, is only the first and temporary step towards reform. The social conscience of the nation must be awakened to see that a deep-seated change of attitude towards crime and a scientific dealing with criminals is needed.

Following, therefore, reforms in administrations, will come the task of establishing that the present system has failed in its results, is out of tune with modern thought, and is wasteful to the State in expenditure and in the wreckage of human life.

The world of to-day is a new world, and privilege is shifting its ground, this must bring much of our legislation under a fierce light, leading perhaps to intemperate and hasty change, unless we prepare ourselves to understand questions before-hand, and lead reform. The most hopeful incidence in a position full of danger is the advent of thinking women into the arena of domestic politics, and the whole-hearted acceptance by men of the help they can give.

The membership of the Joint Advisory Committee was at first kept small, so as not to exceed the numbers of a deliberating and working Committee, summoned as a whole to discuss measures in concert with Members of Parliament, but as work grew it became evident that there must be a constant flow of new blood from which Sub-Committees could be formed. The Joint Advisory Committee enlarged itself into the Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council, which Council now welcomes, as Associates, all women interested in social reform, especially those holding office as elected or co-opted members of the Local Authorities throughout the country.

The positive contribution that women can bring to the elucidation of social questions is to-day receiving glad recognition. The Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council has set up practical machinery for criticising and reporting on legislative questions. Legislation may follow or may be delayed, but the question has become no longer nebulous, it has been built up according to ascertained facts, and these facts arrest the mind, force people to think, make it more difficult to lead a blind life and open the way for progressive legislation.

### Our Work.

#### Meeting of Women's Council.

The first meeting of the Council of the new Association was held on March 25th at 32, Sloane Gardens, by kind permission of Mrs. Gilbert Samuel.

In the unavoidable absence of the President, the Chair was taken by Lady Trustram Eve, Chairman of the Executive Committee.

The Chairman's opening address was devoted to a sketch of the aims and objects of the Association, and she pointed out that the many reforms needed for the welfare of the community could only be obtained by combined effort and urged upon members the importance of increasing the membership of the Association.

An interesting account of the funds raised by the Association during the War for patriotic and philanthropic purposes was given by the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Kenyon Slaney, who, however pointed out that this account rightly belonged to the former Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Fabian Ware. Particulars were given of the work of the office since the beginning of the Autumn Session including the organisation of the various meetings and courses of lectures. The Chairman gave a short account of the procedure in the London County Council in place of the speech on the Municipal Government of London.

Resolutions on the subject of the Women Police and their powers, on the necessity for series of meetings being held on the subject of the "British Constitution," and a resolution in favour of women on juries were discussed and referred to the Executive Committee.

#### Executive Committee.

The following resolutions have recently been passed by the Executive Committee:—

- (a). A resolution in favour of Widows' Pensions sent to several Ministers and to the Party Whips.
- (b). That this Society urges the Government to provide in the coming Finance Bill for the separate taxation of the incomes of husband and wife.
- (c). That this Society regrets that only one woman has been appointed to the Royal Commission on Income Taxes, which consists of twenty-four members, and urges the Chancellor of the Exchequer to appoint a fair proportion of women to the Commission and to ask the women's organisations of the country to suggest names of suitable women.

The support of the Executive was also given to two resolutions moved by the Legislation Committee of the National Council of Women to be placed on the Agenda for the Annual Meeting of such Council.

1. That the wives of men qualified to sit on Juries and women so qualified in their own right be made eligible to serve on Grand, Special and Common Juries.
2. That the wives of men qualified to act as Justices of the Peace and Women so qualified

in their own right be made eligible to act as Justices of the Peace.

The Committee further consented to join a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject of the separate taxation of the incomes of husband and wife.

#### Equal Pay for Equal Work.

The Debate which was held at the Caxton Hall on March 28th was a great success and we publish below a report of it which appeared in the "Queen," which will be interesting both to those who were present and to those who were unable to attend.

"The Debate arranged by the Conservative Women's Reform Association on 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' resulted in an admirably clear statement of the problem and a brief but adequate review of the economic and ethical considerations that govern its solution. Major Hills, M.P., who took the chair, pointed out that a fair wage might be regarded from two aspects, that of its relation to the needs of the worker and that of the value of his work to the employer. Except in the case of a minimum wage, the last standard was the more convenient, and was generally adopted, but those who object to giving women the same wage as men for the same work justify themselves by saying that a man's needs are greater, and that men usually have families to support. To deny women equality in wages was, he showed, to cut across the trade union doctrine of the 'rate for the job,' which ignored the personality of the workers and their varying degrees of skill. Even piecework is not necessarily payment by results, for all piece-workers have a guaranteed minimum. During the war women workers obtained the same guaranteed minimum as men. In comparing the value of men and women on time rates it is necessary to compare their productivity, speed, and efficiency over a considerable period. This had been possible during the war, and had shown that in many occupations women had proved not merely equal but superior to men.

Mrs. Barton, of the Women's Industrial Council, speaking in favour of equal pay, said that the common practice of paying women about half men's rates for exerting the same effort for the same number of hours tended to bring down men's rates of pay. The standard might be kept up by excluding women from any particular industry or by insisting upon equal pay. During the war exclusion had proved impossible, and now it would hardly be sufficient to keep up men's standard owing to the competition between different trades, which led to some approximating of wages in them. She advocated equal pay because it was reasonable and because inequality brought down the standard of life of both sexes.

Miss Nora Milnes, of Edinburgh University, speaking against equal pay, said that it would do nothing to lessen the difficulties of self-supporting women. These arise chiefly because women are debarred from many occupations, and insistence on equal pay will stereotype this exclusion. Women are less valuable to employers because

they are likely to marry and give up work. The lessened chance of marriage does not lessen this objection, because it is impossible in selecting women workers for promotion to know which of them will marry.

Mrs. Corner, of the Fabian Society, desired that wages should be fixed according to the value of the work to the employer; its value to the State is the essential factor. The differentiation between men's work and women's is often purely artificial, as in the case of the Whitehall lift women, who were refused men's rates because they could not repair the lifts. It came out at an official enquiry that the lift men who were paid on the higher scale did not, in fact, repair lifts, were not able to do so, and were by circular forbidden to try. After Mrs. Drake had discussed some of the difficulties of applying the principle of equal pay for equal work a show of hands was taken, and the resolution that this meeting is of opinion that 'Equal pay for equal work is both reasonable and practicable' was carried by a considerable majority."

We desire to draw the attention of our readers to two very important Bills which are now passing through Parliament. The one dealing with the Ministry of Health, which passed its third reading in the House of Commons on April 9th and the other with the question of "Housing." We propose to give details of these measures as soon they are on the Statute Book.

#### Speakers' Debating Class.

The Education Committee is making arrangements for a Speakers' Debating Class, to start early in May, for those members and others who are anxious to learn the principles of debate and to gain knowledge of all aspects of the various problems of the day. The first course will consist of six classes, one a week, to be held at 11 a.m. at the Office, 48, Dover Street. The actual dates will be announced later. The fee for the course of six classes will be 7/6 or 1/6 for a single class.

It is considered desirable that the Association should have a short motto expressing its aims after the same manner as that of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association "Loyalty, Insistency, Moderation." Any suggestions will be gratefully received.

The Education Committee has received many requests to form a library for the use of members. They fully realize the value of a library where books on subjects of current interest can be studied; but at present there are no funds available with which to make purchases in any quantity. They have, however, already received several gifts and loans of books, dealing mainly with the subject of "Socialism." These can be referred to at the Office, but for the present cannot be borrowed. Any gifts or loans of books will be most gladly welcomed, and the Committee would suggest that the owner's name should be clearly written in any book that is lent.

## SPRING IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS.

I met Miss Exquisite walking down Regent Street this morning. She was dressed in a light costume—silken hose and shoes to match, a hat that glowed with bright-hued flowers, and into her sable stole was tucked a bunch of violets, breathing fragrance.

Out of all the throng of pedestrians who were out enjoying the bright sunshine, she alone seemed really in harmony with the brightness of the genial Spring morning. Everyone else remained muffled up in Winter furs and coats that had lost their first freshness and spoke of Winter rather than Spring.

"Good morning," I cried, by way of greeting, as I joined her in her stroll—"You're the very person I'm looking for—someone with the mood of the moment. Compared with you every other woman looks a frump. How do you achieve the miracle?"

"It's all a matter of environment," smiled Miss Exquisite, dimpling with pleasure at my compliment. "Put yourself in the right atmosphere and you're always in tone with your surroundings."

"Haven't you noticed that even the most dowdy of women manage to lose their frumpiness when they're in Paris, and take on a smartness and style and that peculiar air of elegance that signifies the soul of Paris?"

"Yes—in Paris—But where do you discover it here? I've spent my entire morning looking for some woman who expresses the gaiety of the Spring. I've been in the Row, in Piccadilly Circus, in Bond Street, but my search was in vain until I met you."

"I find it here," announced Miss Exquisite, stopping outside Swan and Edgars, the great Corner Shop of Piccadilly Circus, and holding out a perfectly gloved hand, preparatory to dismissing me.

"There isn't a day but what I find my way in here on some pretence or other. It's as stimulating as a trip to Paris since their new Spring models have arrived! A walk through these showrooms not only keeps me in harmony with sartorial perfection, but abreast of the newest fashions as well—familiarizing me with the latest modes, so that instead of being behind the times and fashions, I'm in front of them, having absorbed their influence long before they are common property. That's the way to score a sartorial success," she announced. "Saturate your mind with the newest modes, and you can't help dressing well. You'll find the finest fashions here, and see them at their best and brightest. My mission to-day is to purchase my new Frock, Gloves, Hose, Shoes, etc., for a smart dance I have an invitation to, and also one of those new cretonne parasols and a hat that's the very thing to wear next Sunday. I saw them in the window yesterday, and I assure you they're guaranteed to turn every woman's head with envy. It's all very well for poets to sing of Spring in the country. Believe me, the spirit of Spring is here—in Piccadilly Circus."

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