

THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS

JUS SUFFRAGII

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STATUS OF WOMEN AT GENEVA.

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS.

It was interesting and encouraging to note the great improvement in atmosphere and energy between the public opening of the sessions of the Committee and the public joint sitting with representatives of the women's organisations a few days later. Professor Gutteridge was elected Chairman and his interest, geniality, drive, enthusiasm and immense knowledge welded the distinguished jurists into an excellent team in which each member was soon contributing his or her special knowledge and experience.

The Chairman and members of the Committee invited the representatives of the women's organisations to meet them to criticise or add to the first scheme of work which they had drawn up after consultation with the representatives of the Institutes of Private Law in Rome and in Paris. As the document was being worked on up to the last minute we had little time to consider it but all points seemed covered except migration. The suggestion to add this question, made by Mrs. Le Sueur, of the Open Door International, was welcomed by the Chairman.

Three real difficulties confronted the Committee.

I. The geographical scope of the enquiry. A week's work convinced the Committee that the necessary fact finding was even more complicated than they had expected. They therefore decided to make the enquiry in stages: first the status of women under European systems of law and systems derived from them. This in practice will not mean only status of European women, of the Americas, Australasia and the Union of South Africa; it is probable that this first stage will also include status of women under Moslem Law, which is very well codified, and possibly status of women in China and Siam where the new codes are influenced by German law (pre-Nazi). While deliberately taking no decision to exclude any women, the members of the Committee felt that to enquire into status governed by religious custom (India) or tribal customs (Africa) would delay the enquiry perhaps for years and so prevent the women's organisations from using any part of it as a basis for propaganda or action towards a new standard. In regard to the status of tribalised women, it was felt that

ethnologists would be more capable of arriving at an authoritative presentation than missionaries. In this field, the women's organisations were urgently requested to make constructive proposals for the next meeting of the Committee.

II. Another difficulty lies in the division of the work according to the Assembly Resolution, i.e., between the League Committee and the I.L.O. As regards practical work the question was left open, since the publication of the I.L.O. Enquiry into conditions of work of women is now in proof and will be published in June or July. Until the members of the Committee can read it, it is impossible for them to decide how much of it they can use and how much remains to be done, or indeed whether the presentation from a legal point of view is not found to be so different from the presentation by the I.L.O. as to make a double statement necessary to any true picture. Here again the co-operation of the women's organisations was warmly invited in the form of comments, criticisms and suggestions.

Mme. Thibert of the I.L.O. was invited to attend the sittings of the Committee so as to help them on this point. A formal decision cannot be taken before the next meeting of the Committee which may be held in October, December or January. The Committee will then have before it the I.L.O. document, together with the schemes of work and some preliminary material from the Institutes co-operating with the Committee. The plan of work shown to us was divided into: public law, private law and penal law.

III. In regard to the *application* of laws, the Committee was anxious to secure the co-operation of the women's organisations in ascertaining the facts. One or two of the Committee members were nervous of the effect on governments of setting up the women's organisations in judgment on them, but all were agreed that the tabling of laws alone could not give a true picture of women's status, so often profoundly modified by tradition, by the lapse in practice of certain laws, or by the fact that new codes may be ahead of actual custom. Women's organisations must come together to agree on how information can be collected and

collated, since the Chairman made it clear that the secretariat can only accept memoranda from *international* and not national bodies.

Miss Alice Paul for the Woman's Party (U.S.A.) pressed for an interim report on the franchise position, but the members of the Committee were opposed to this, and promised that by working in stages the first part of the report should be ready in two or at most three years.

The meetings of the Committee were held in private according to general custom, but the Chairman and members were most cordial in accepting the lunches, teas and dinners at which they could get into touch with members of the women's organisations. A special word of thanks is due to Miss Hesselgren, our staunch friend, who acted as an admirable liaison officer. Miss Kenyon had come over at great personal difficulty and was as businesslike, competent and energetic as we expect from over the Atlantic. Mme Godjevac, whom we knew already, contributed valuable suggestions. We made a new friend in Mme Bastid, with her cool, clear head. Of course she won our feminine hearts by bringing with her Mlle Bastid—aged three months! Such an example of the new feminism could hardly be resisted.

When we discovered that Messrs. Sebestyan and Ruelle had feminist mothers we realised that though the Committee is strictly restricted to fact finding and is not to make recommendations, we shall have the facts fully and fairly stated. We all know what an immense practical difference there may be between the same facts helpfully or obstructively presented.

Propaganda and education are left to us: the Committee will provide the unassailable basis of fact.

M. I. CORBETT ASHBY.

(Report drawn up for the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations.)

WOMEN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

Mrs. Subbarayan was elected unopposed as Congress member for Madura to the Central Assembly of India, of which she thus becomes the first woman member.

Dr. Edith Summerskill's election as Labour Member for West Fulham brings the number of women members of the British House of Commons to twelve.

In the recent elections for the Kenya Legislative Assembly Lady Sidney Farrar was returned for Nyanza, and becomes the first woman legislator. She defeated Mr. Conway Harvey, who had been the member for 17 years, by two votes.

WOMEN, PEACE AND DEMOCRACY.

As briefly announced in our last issue, this Women's International Congress will take place from May 13th to 15th, in the Opera House, Marseilles, under the general title of "The Moral Aspect of International Relations," and under the patronage of well-known women from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Holland, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, etc.

The programme is as follows:—

The International Situation: Rapporteur: Geneviève Tabouis.

Solidarity and Co-operation between Nations:

From the Political point of view: Rapporteur: G. Duchêne.

From the economic point of view: Rapporteur: Isabelle Blum, Senator.

The defence and strengthening of institutions for the safeguarding of Peace: Rapporteur: Marguerite Louis, Doctor of Law.

Women's Power in the Service of Peace and Democracy: Rapporteur: M. I. Corbett Ashby.

Religious and Spiritual Forces in the Service of Peace and Democracy: Rapporteurs: G. Malaterre-Sellier and Marcelle Bard, Pastor.

Democracy as the Basis for personal, national and international Relations: Rapporteur: F. F. Plaminkova, Senator.

All will be welcome, either delegates from international or national societies, or individuals, who accept the following principles:

1. Independence of States.
2. Solidarity and Co-operation between nations.
3. Respect for international law and for treaties.
4. Search for peaceful solutions of international conflicts.
5. Equality of races.
6. Equality of the sexes.

The Chairman of the Organisation Committee is Mme. Malaterre Sellier, 1, rue de l'Université, Paris, and the Office is at 2, rue de Londres, Paris. Donations may for the present be addressed to: Mrs. Bompas, 12, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

We are glad to be able to call the attention of our readers to this Congress designed to permit women to give expression to their convinced support of peace and democracy, but as its basis is not that of organisation by societies as such, we must state that the Alliance is not taking any official part, and enquiries should be addressed to the Congress Office of which the address is given above.

The Secretariat at Marseilles will be in the Hôtel Splendide, Boulevard Dugommier, well-known to many of our members as the Alliance had its Conference there in 1933. Rooms at this Hôtel cost from 26frs. a night.

The Hôtel Regina, Place Sadi-Carnot, is also recommended, with rooms from 18 frs., the cost of full pension, including wine, service and tax being 62.40 frs. a day.

STATUS OF WOMEN DAY.

We gave particulars of the plans for celebrating May 14th as Status of Woman Day in Great Britain in our last issue. So we now only briefly recall to our readers that on that date there will be a Conference in the morning, a Luncheon, and a Public Meeting in the afternoon at University College, Gower Street. Professor Gutteridge, the British Representative and Chairman of the League of Nations Committee of Experts on Status of Women, will be the guest of honour and principal speaker. Tickets and full particulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, 9, Fellows Road, Hampstead, London, N.W.1.

In France, this day is not a convenient one, owing to the fact that the Women's International Congress on Peace and Democracy will be taking place in Marseilles on the 13-15. The Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes is, therefore, planning to hold its demonstration on Status of Women in Paris on the 20th or 21st May. Its branches in the provinces are also being urged to undertake similar demonstrations during that week.

OBITUARY.

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Sadd Brown, an old member of the Alliance and closely connected with the work of the British Commonwealth League and the Women's Freedom League. Mrs. Sadd Brown will be greatly missed as from the time when she was a militant suffragist, being imprisoned and suffering the horrors of forcible feeding, she had given constant service to the woman's movement. She had a certain tranquil faith in the rightness of that cause which was an encouragement and inspiration to her colleagues. Many of our members will no doubt remember her as a delegate to the Alliance Congress in Istanbul in 1935.

HUNGARY.

The new Electoral Law was passed by the Lower House with very little change from the conditions given in our last issue as regards women. The only concession obtained was that women who have passed the Middle Schools may vote at the age of 26. Miss Anna Kathly, the woman M.P., made a great speech in favour of equal rights for women, and many other members spoke in favour of this principle and the whole debate showed appreciation of women's value in public life.

We deeply regret that what must seem a totally unnecessary distinction between the sexes has been confirmed by this new law, but it is something that at least women are still recognised as citizens capable of electing their representatives and able to be themselves elected.

ROUMANIA.

Madame Meissner, President of one of our affiliated societies in Roumania, has very kindly sent us a translation of those clauses of the new Constitution which affect women's franchise.

Art. 61. The Chamber of Deputies shall be composed of deputies elected by Roumanian citizens who have reached the age of 30 and who are actively engaged in an occupation falling into one of the following categories:

1. Agriculture and Manual Labour.
2. Commerce and Industry.
3. Intellectual Work.

An Electoral Law will fix the constituencies and the electoral conditions for men and women, the procedure for voting, conditions of incapacity, etc.

Art. 63. The Senate shall be composed of Senators nominated by the King and elected by compulsory, secret and single vote of the members of constituent bodies in the State, to the number of and under such conditions as shall be established by the Electoral Law regarding men and women either as voters or candidates.

Mme. Meissner adds that there seems to be a slight difference here from the first draft, which was more clear on the point of equal rights. But the definite conditions can only be known when the Electoral Law is published.

The Princess Cantacuzene has also most kindly sent a translation of the constitution and a notice that the National Council of Women of Roumania is arranging a radio talk on May 16th at 23 o'clock to greet all women's organisations and give them the good news of the enfranchisement of the women of Roumania. The announcement will be made in French, English, German and Italian and will be heard in all European countries and in America.

WOMEN'S SUCCESSES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

During the last few months Czechoslovakian women have won remarkable success in art, sport and public affairs. The State Prize for Literature which is awarded on the 28th October—our Independence Day—was won for 1937 by two women writers: B. Slancíková-Timrava for her life work, and Marie Pujmanová for her psychological novel "People at the cross-roads," the first part of a cycle.

A young woman composer and conductor V. Kaprálová made her début at the concert which the National Council of Women gives every year just before Christmas in the biggest hall in Prague. She is only 22 and she conducted one of her own compositions a "Military Symphonietta," dedicated to our beloved President, Dr. Eduard Benes, who attended the concert with Mrs. Benes. The piece was played by the Czechoslovak Philharmonic Orchestra and is a glorification of the idea of defence of country and nation but

not of war. It was most favourably received by the critics and the composer, who has already produced pieces for piano and orchestra and also songs, was presented to Dr. and Mrs. Benes.

The press of all countries has already reported the extraordinary victory of a Czechoslovak woman rider, Miss Lata Brandisová, who beat all the men competitors in the "Great Pardubičlá," which from the point of view of the difficulty of the course is the second in the world.

Another remarkable success is the recent appointment of Mudr. Marta Johanovská as Councillor to the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare. She is the first woman in our State to hold such a high position. She has been in the government service since 1919 and at the Ministry of Health deals with questions of tuberculosis, venereal diseases and alcoholism, being the financial expert for her section.

County Councillor Mrs. Kubícková has been elected president of the Central Institute for Social Welfare of the City of Prague and is the head of the whole social work of the city.

NEWS IN BRIEF.

Belgium. Ever since 1922, a married woman of full age has been able to obtain a passport without the authorisation of her husband.

France. Women may now serve as Public Assistance Inspectors, having up to now only been allowed to serve as sub-inspectors.

A new profession for women is being opened up, the "nurse-parachutist." Working women are being trained in their free time for this exciting but hazardous task, which can be of incalculable value in time of war, or at other times in regions isolated by flood, etc. Good luck to our plucky sisters!

Bulgaria. Women exercised their new-won franchise in large numbers during the recent elections. We trust that they were able to elect a Parliament which will be ready to increase their rights both to suffrage and to other forms of equality.

Czechoslovakia. Two women have been appointed to the Police for special duties. This is a small beginning, but we understand that the National Council of Women will be asked for its co-operation in considering later on the regular appointment of women to the Police Force.

India. The Central Assembly has passed the Third Reading of Mr. B. Das's Bill to amend the Sarda (Child Marriage) Act by 87 votes to 16. The main purpose of the Bill is to amend the Sarda Act by making it a punishable offence for citizens of British India to contract child marriages in an Indian State.

Mrs. Poonen Lukose has been appointed Surgeon General to the State of Travancore and is the first woman to attain this high office in India. She has already acted as Durbar physician and attended two Maharanis at the birth of three princesses and two princes.

Japan. Baroness Shizane Ishimoto, who for many years has been active in the Birth Control Movement, was obliged in January to close the Clinic of the Women's Birth Control League of Japan, opened last August, in order to conform to the national policy now followed by the Government.

Sweden. In future midwives will be appointed and paid by the State, thus giving needed financial relief to poor mothers.

The well-known actress, Pauline Brunius, has been appointed by the Government as Director of the Royal Theatre in Stockholm and is the first woman to hold such a position.

Australia. For the first time a woman has been elected Mayor in Australia. The Newtown (N.S.W.) Council has elected Mrs. Lilian Fowler as Mayor for the forthcoming year, and she has nominated her married daughter, Mrs. E. Tierney, as Mayoress.

Spain. In Madrid, poor brave Madrid, the women have risen to the occasion nobly as they always do in emergency—that is when they are of necessity permitted to share fully the difficulties and responsibilities of their country. They have formed an association to distribute according to their special capacities women for all public services, and have replaced men everywhere.

THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF MARRIED WOMEN.

"The protection which has been thrown around a married woman already is sufficient, and why she should have money in her pocket to deal with as she thinks fit I cannot understand," said Lord Fraser in 1881, when the House was in Committee upon one of the Scottish Bills which aimed at giving married women the right to their own property.

Now, sixty years later, there still appear to be sections of the community who agree with that point of view.

The economic position of a married woman in England is indeed an unenviable one. She has no claim to any proportion of her husband's income or earnings—the husband, by law, being compelled to keep his wife off the rates—in fact to provide her with bare subsistence; she cannot claim as her own any savings from a house-keeping allowance; and at her husband's death she and her children may find they are penniless because he has the power to will all his money away from her and his family. Granted, and we readily do so, that the great majority of husbands are as good and as generous as they can be to their wives, yet even so the position of a married woman is not a dignified one. When the husband is the reverse of generous, the position may become intolerable. Many a wife whose husband is in comfortable circumstances has no money at all to spend on her own interests. Indeed, in spite of her husband's position, she may be as hard-up as anyone to find a sixpence to spare, even though she may work tolerably hard as her husband's unpaid housekeeper. In working-class families, although the wife may have a greater struggle to make both ends meet, she often has more freedom in the spending of money. As a rule she receives all her husband's wages, frequently handing him back quite a small portion for his personal needs.

Everything is done to discourage the married woman from having independent earnings of her own. The general rule is that married women are excluded from the Civil Service. Quite recently Torquay, Leeds and Southampton were added to the long list of local governing bodies who have decided that the appointment of women employees shall terminate on marriage. The London County Council, although in July, 1935, by 76 votes to 37, deciding to remove the ban on married women teachers and married women doctors, continues rigidly to exclude all other married women employees.

Concluding, therefore, that in this country (and in many other countries) a married woman is entirely dependent on the favours bestowed upon her by her lawful husband, it is interesting to note some of the provisions of the Marriage Law which has operated in Sweden since 1920. Under this law both husband and wife are bound to support each other, and if either of them neglects this duty he or she can be compelled by the Courts to certain duties of maintenance. If the

wife works at home, her work there is reckoned as constituting her share in the support of the family.

A married woman running a home performs a definite task in the economic scheme of things and should be "salaried" like other women workers, leaving her a certain margin to cover her personal needs.

H. BANSKY.

BRAZIL.

The *Federacao pelo Progresso Feminino* is organising Archives of the Woman's Movement not only in Brazil but in other countries in order to provide a centre of study of this great phenomenon in recent social history in South America. This work is being done in connection with the existing library of the Federation at its office, and the field covered will include documentation on legal, psychological, economic, social and intellectual questions.

The Federation is now actively organising a Pan American Day, in which its branches in all the different States of Brazil will take part, to demonstrate Pan American solidarity and support of Peace. The Federation will publish shortly the programme for this Day. It attaches equal importance to the organisation of a "Mother's Day" in which many other organisations are collaborating, and which is designed to stimulate interest in the important questions of the protection of maternity, nursing services and the preparation of women for their great educational and moral mission. This would seem to be the moment for launching the plan formulated by the President of the Federation, Dr. Bertha Lutz, to organise a "Woman's Department" in one of the ministries as an official centre for co-ordinating and directing on given lines the many questions affecting the position of women and mothers in the State. Institutions of this type already exist in the United States, but in Brazil there is need for creating a new and active centre, based on experience already obtained, to help in realising the new ideas which are surging up in the new generation of Brazilian women.

FRANCE.

It appears that the new status of the married woman in France is not clearly understood. Mme Kraemer Bach in *La Française* states that there are cases where married women are being asked to produce their husband's authority for certain activities contrary to the provisions of the new law. She urges women to take the necessary steps to recall to the makers of this demand the illegality of their action, as the full application of the law must depend to some extent on women's will to uphold their new rights.

The case has a somewhat timely interest just now as it is an illustration of the way in which the application of a law may modify or even nullify its real intention, which is one of the points which the women's international organisations made to the recent meeting of the Committee of Experts on Status of Women.

Women's organisations are up in arms against a clause in the new Labour Code which states that the office of arbitrator can be held only "by French citizens in enjoyment of full civil and political rights." This clause which deprives women automatically of exercising a function which directly concerns their interests was passed without discussion! Alas, it is more than probable that the men who so adopted it had no special wish to keep women out, they simply entirely forgot that the other sex existed as far as practical rights are concerned. So much injustice towards women is due to that quite benign attitude on the part of men—they have even been known to apologise for having forgotten all about women!

Le Droit des Femmes once more deals in an energetic article with the proposal to enfranchise natives of Algeria—that is male natives of course—which has been

adopted by the Adult Suffrage Committee of the Chamber. As they point out it is manifestly unfair to allow men of another race, with different and not progressive ideas about women, to legislate for Frenchwomen without their having any say in the matter. The argument that the defence of France cannot be complete without the wholehearted support of these races as full citizens, is well countered by recalling how much, how very much, the defence of France owed to its women in the last war.

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

A Bill to give married women an independent right to their own nationality is being introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Alness, a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This question is again becoming particularly poignant to women of British birth married to Germans. These women are now faced with two alternatives: to register at the German Embassy where they must answer twenty questions about their "race," their knowledge of foreign languages, their work, with name of employer, whether they have a driving licence etc; or become "stateless." If they refuse to give this information for the benefit of the Gestapo, then they cannot get their German passport renewed, but on the other hand have they any hope of being able to obtain a British passport?

I.P.C.—R.U.P.

The Women's Commission of the Australian I.P.C. held an All-Australia Conference in Sydney on April 5th. Women with first-hand knowledge of war as it is being fought to-day, delegates from Spain and China, took part. Miss Courtney, so well-known to all our readers for her peace work and a member of the Women's International Peace and Disarmament Committee and of the British I.P.C. also attended and gave the Conference the benefit of her long experience and wide personal knowledge of women's peace work. Special attention was given in the programme to child education. The New Theatre League presented the anti-war play, "Bury the Dead," giving the proceeds to the fund for Spanish refugee children.

The Swedish I.P.C. held a big meeting in Stockholm on April 5th with the co-operation of the National Union of Farmers and the Stockholm Committee of the Prades Union Congress, under the title: "Freedom and Peace through Co-operation between Peasants and Labour."

The I.P.C. is inevitably much concerned at the proposal that the Council of the League of Nations shall discuss the recognition of the conquest of Ethiopia by Italy. It states that such recognition is inconsistent with the Covenant and is an acknowledgment that might be right. The Executive Committee of the British League of Nations Union adopted the following Resolution on April 13th:

Recalling the resolution adopted by the Assembly of the League of Nations on March 11th, 1932,

That it is incumbent upon the members of the League of Nations not to recognise any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris.

Declares its conviction that the recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia would not be consistent with the obligations of Great Britain under the Covenant, and having regard to the recent reports from well-informed sources that the Abyssinian people are still continuing their resistance against Italian invasion and are doing so with increased success, would not even be in accordance with the present facts of the situation.

The I.P.C. asks all organisations to send telegrams conceived in this spirit, but of course on lines necessarily

differing as regards national policy from the above British form, to the President of the Council of the League of Nations in time for its meeting on May 9th. Copies of such telegrams should immediately be sent to the I.P.C. Office in the Palais Wilson, Geneva, and the suggestion is made that they be published in the national press.

SOCIAL QUESTIONS IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

The Advisory Committee on Social Questions met in Geneva on April 23rd, with Dr. Estrid Hein in the Chair. It heard the report from the Liaison Officer of the I.L.O. on raising the age of admission to industry, technical and professional training and apprenticeship, etc., with an annex on unemployment among young persons.

Miss Whitton (Canada) presented a report on boarding-out—the placing of children in families, either for payment by public assistance authorities or by adoption. The Report emphasised the necessity of ensuring that the home chosen was in every way suitable and also of adequate and constant inspection. Miss Castendyck (U.S.A.) also reported on this question, showing how widely the system has been adopted with good results.

Mme. Vajkai (Hungary) lastly dealt specially with the boarding out of children from industrial areas in the country, including the system of "Colonies" and by emigration to other countries.

CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION CENTRE.

Summary of the Legislative and Administrative Series of Documents of the Child Welfare Information Centre to December 31st, 1937.

Series of League of Nations Publications 1938. IV. 3. Published by Messrs. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 40, Museum Street, W.C.1. Price 1s.

This is the first publication in the Legislative and Administrative Series which is to be published by the Child Welfare Information Centre of the League of Nations. The volume is a summary of material obtained in certain cases from Governments or from other sources. It is not a collection of legal texts, but is designed to facilitate their consultation. The Summary covers the texts distributed to the Advisory Committee on Social Questions between February 1936 and the end of 1937.

The texts are summarised under the following headings: Abortion; Centralisation of Child Welfare Work; Civil Status of Children; Education and Vocational Training (special aspects only); Offences against the Morals of or Taking Advantage of the Weakness of Children; Leisure and Recreation; Maintenance Contributions; Placing of Children; Maternity and Infant Welfare; Child Welfare; Protection of Special Categories of Children and Family Welfare.

(Notice supplied by the League of Nations Information Section).

LIBRARY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

The Monthly Summary of the League for March contains a long article on the League Library which is in process of becoming one of the most important documentary centres in the world. After a description of the structural arrangement, the article gives an indication of the nature of the material and one can well believe that the claim made that for certain questions the collection is unique in Europe at any rate is well founded. General reference books, maps and Government publications may be mentioned as three cases where this is so. While the Library is of course mainly for the use of the secretariat and members of the delegations, etc., it is also available for members of private international organisations by special permit. To the student of

international questions, this Library must be a Mecca, and the description of its organisation, cataloguing, etc., are really fascinating to one who has some knowledge of this modern science.

We have called attention to this great Library, partly because it is well that there should be a realisation of what a great international possession is being built up, and partly also because we know how much this work owes to women. The first Librarian was a woman, Miss Florence Wilson, and from the last published Staff List of the League we see that a woman, Miss Bartlett, is now Deputy Librarian; our own Miss Ginsberg is an Assistant Librarian, and out of the list of 20 names given no less than 20 are women.

WOMEN'S EARNINGS.

The Women's Bureau of the U.S.A. Department of Labour has just published an interesting study on the Differences in the Earnings of Women and Men. The statistical material is of course purely American but the introductory material speaks of conditions which we feel sure could be closely duplicated in any country in the world. After an interesting statement of Government policy which has repeatedly laid down that women's wages should not be lower than men's for the same class of work and the quotation of the Women's Bureau's own standard formulated as "wages should be established on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex or race," the report goes on to discuss the causes of the almost universal lower standard.

This lower wage is found in weekly earnings in industry, in whatever locality or period reported, and in a somewhat less degree, it is the usual case with hourly earnings. It occurs in a wide variety of occupations of many types. It is a well-known situation to the professional woman, especially the teacher, and to other white-collar workers. The data collected in the present report show an almost uncanny uniformity in the differentials of the wages of the two sexes, in spite of changes in the general wage level, in public sentiment, in business conditions, in source of labour supply or in anything else. In more than a decade women's wages in manufacturing bore a percentage to men's wages that varied by not more than a few points from year to year. In clerical work in spite of great changes in office work, since 1914 the ratio of women's median earnings to those of men varied by less than 4 points.

No one will disagree with the statement that the low wages of women produce a low standard of living not only for the women themselves but for their families, especially now that there are very numerous cases where women support entire families. Or that this has an adverse effect on wage levels as a whole and encourages the displacement of higher paid men by the lower paid women.

The analysis of the causes for this condition of affairs is long and interesting though the conclusions are not summarised. In fact there appear to be two main causes, closely connected: (1) the ill tradition (probably dating, though the report does not mention this factor, from the early days of industry when there was a "family wage" paid to the man which included the work of his wife and children), the tendency to think of all "women's work" as necessarily falling into a low category, and the difficulty of getting women to organise themselves strongly enough to be able to enforce better conditions.

It is shown that there is no ground whatever for supposing that in any wide or general sense women are less efficient, less capable of highly skilled work than men. Many instances are given to precisely the contrary effect. Where women do exactly the same work as men, which is rare, they prove at least as satisfactory

And where they are employed on processes different from those done by men, their work is often just as skilled and calls for just as great nervous energy as the possibly heavier type of work performed by men. The report also demolishes the argument that the lower pay of women is justified by the fact that men have to support dependents and women do not. It is stated that apart from the fact that in the States there has never been a system of payments on the basis of dependents, a special study made a few years ago showed that over one half of more than 61,000 women reported upon contributed all their earnings to family support. Later studies confirm this, and tend to show that apart from this category, a very large proportion of working women contribute to the support of others, and the Report adds rather grimly that the unmarried man, who is less likely to assume less responsibility than his sister for their parents' obligations, is not paid less than the family man.

A very interesting and illuminating Report.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

Looking rather idly through the old records of our little paper, we were pleasantly surprised to find among the reports of suffrage activity in other countries, which breathed such a spirit of hopeful activity in spite of so much prejudice and obstruction shown by the Parliaments of nearly all countries, a little joke. This joke is not, alas, out of date, so we are quoting it for the amusement and perhaps stimulus of our unenfranchised readers who in this sad and serious post-war time have perhaps lost much of the gaiety which accompanied that long-ago suffrage campaigning.

A lady there was who said: "Why
Should men have the vote and not I?
To call this democracy
Is naught but hypocrisy—
I'll get me the ballot or die!"

This was quoted from the "Woman's Journal" of the United States, which at that moment was busy organising a monster suffrage parade in New York. It is sad that so much of that gay courage which was born of women's new-found sense of solidarity has been lost.

SECTION FRANCAISE.

CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES.

"La Moralité dans les Relations Internationales."

Marseille, 13-14-15 Mai 1938.

La Situation internationale: Rapporteur général: Genviève Tabouis.

Solidarité et Coopération entre Les Nations:

Au point de vue politique: Rapporteur général: G. Duchêne.

Au point de vue économique: Rapporteur général: I. Blume.

Tout le Pouvoir des Femmes au Service de la Paix et de la Démocratie: Rapporteurs généraux: G. Malaterre-Sellier et Marcelle Bard, Pasteur.

La Démocratie Base des Relations individuelles, nationales et internationales: Rapporteur général: F. Plaminkova.

Présidente du Comité d'Organisation: Mme. Malaterre-Sellier, 1 rue de l'Université, Paris.

Bureau du Congrès: 2, rue de Londres, Paris.

La Conférence aura lieu à l'Opéra, Marseille, et le Bureau sera établi dans l'Hôtel Splendide.

NOUVELLES BREVES.

Belgique. Depuis 1922 une femme mariée majeure peut obtenir un passeport sans l'autorisation de son mari.

France. Les femmes pourront à l'avenir être nommées inspecteurs de l'Assistance publique. Jusqu'à présent elles n'étaient que sous-inspecteurs.

Nous apprenons qu'une nouvelle profession celle d'infirmière parachutiste vient de s'ouvrir pour les femmes — ce qui sera d'une très grande utilité en cas de guerre, d'inondation etc.

En dépit de la nouvelle loi, il apparaît que dans bien des cas, on refuse encore de délivrer certains certificats, passeports, etc. — à des femmes mariées, sans l'autorisation de leur mari. Mme Kraemer Bach dans "la Française" fait remarquer qu'il appartient aux femmes de réclamer l'application de la loi qui sans leur insistance, menace de demeurer lettre morte. C'est là un point intéressant et qui a été signalé à la récente réunion du Comité des Experts sur le Statut Civil de la Femme.

Une clause du nouveau Code du Travail décide que la position d'arbitre ne peut être occupée que par les citoyens français pourvus de leurs droits civils et politiques. Les femmes, qu'on le veuille ou non se trouvent par là même exclues.

"Le Droit des Femmes" reprend encore une fois ses attaques contre la proposition souvent répétée d'accorder le droit de vote aux indigènes d'Algérie, indigènes mâles s'entend. Ce serait vraiment une situation incongrue de voir des électeurs d'une race encore arriérée légiférer pour la femme française qui est toujours dénuée de ses droits civils. S'il est vrai que les indigènes sont des Français, astreints au service militaire, est-il besoin de rappeler la part que toutes les femmes ont prise, dans la dernière guerre pour la défense de la Patrie?

Bulgarie. Très nombreuses sont les femmes qui ont exercé leur nouveau droit de vote, pendant les récentes élections. Nous espérons que le nouveau Parlement ainsi élu, leur accordera la franchise complète.

Hongrie. La nouvelle loi électorale a été votée par la Chambre basse, avec seulement une modification très légère en ce qui concerne les femmes. La seule concession obtenue est que celles qui ont un certificat de l'Ecole moyenne peuvent voter à l'âge de 26 ans. Au Parlement Miss Anna Kethly déplora cette discrimination à l'égard d'un sexe.

Roumanie. Madame Meissner, Présidente d'une de nos Auxiliaires roumaines nous a envoyé une copie des clauses de la constitution qui modifient la franchise féminine.

Article 61. La Chambre des Députés sera composée de députés élus par les citoyens roumains qui ont atteint l'âge de 30 ans et qui sont activement engagés dans un métier ou profession appartenant aux catégories suivantes:

- (1) Agriculture ou Travail manuel.
- (2) Industrie et Commerce.
- (3) Travail intellectuel.

La loi électorale déterminera les circonscriptions, les conditions de vote pour hommes et femmes, la procédure, les incapacités, etc.

Article 63. Le Sénat sera composé de Sénateurs choisis sur une liste établie par le Roi et élus par le vote personnel, secret et obligatoire des membres formant les Corps constitués de l'Etat. Le nombre des Sénateurs et les conditions de vote pour hommes et femmes, en tant qu'électeurs ou candidats, seront spécifiés dans la Loi électorale.

Tchécoslovaquie. Dans les derniers mois les Femmes ont remporté des succès remarquables dans plusieurs branches d'activité que ce soit service public, art ou sport.

Deux femmes ont été enrôlées dans la Police pour un service spécial. Ou nous laisse entendre que le Gouvernement doit demander la collaboration du Conseil national des Femmes pour une extension future de la Police féminine.

Le Prix d'Etat de littérature décerné tous les ans le 28 octobre, jour anniversaire de notre Indépendance a été attribué cette année à Mesdames B. Slancikova-Timrava et Marie Pujmanova. Une jeune musicienne de 22 ans V. Kapralova a débuté cette année à Prague, pour le concert symphonique de Noël dans sa propre composition "Petite Symphonie militaire" dédiée au Président Benes et qui a été jouée par l'Orchestre symphonique tchécoslovaque, conduit par le bâton de l'auteur. Une notable victoire sportive est celle de Melle Lata Brandisova qui a remporté le premier prix de course à cheval dans le Pardubicka.

Madame Marta Johanovska a été nommée Conseillère près du Ministre de la Santé et de l'Assistance.

Madame Kubicková, qui est conseillère de Comté a été élue présidente du Service Social de l'Institut et de la Cité de Prague.

Inde. L'Assemblée centrale a finalement voté la loi Sarada sur le mariage des femmes enfants par 87 votes contre 16. Ce sera désormais un délit de contracter mariage avec un enfant ou entre enfants.

Madame Poonen Lukose a été nommée Médecin Principal de l'Etat de Travancore et est la première femme de l'Inde qui ait atteint cette haute fonction.

Japon. La Baronne Shizane Ishimoto, qui, pendant des années a été la pionnière du mouvement neo-malthusien au Japon, a été forcée de fermer sa clinique, en Août dernier afin de se conformer aux nouvelles directions du Gouvernement.

Suède. A l'avenir les sage-femmes seront payées par l'Etat, ce qui sera d'un grand secours aux femmes de position modeste.

La célèbre actrice Pauline Brunius a été nommée par le Gouvernement, directeur du Théâtre Royal de Stockholm, la première femme en Suède à tenir cette position.

Succès des femmes aux élections.

Madame Subbarayan a été élue sans conteste comme membre du Congrès pour Madura à l'Assemblée centrale de l'Inde, dont elle devient la première femme membre.

L'élection à West Fulham (Londres) de Dr. Edith Summerskill membre travailliste porte à douze le nombre des femmes au Parlement britannique.

Aux dernières élections pour l'Assemblée législative du Kenya, Lady Sidney Farrar a été élue membre pour Nyanza, à la place de M. Conway Harveŕ, qui représentait la circonscription depuis 17 ans.

Célébration du Statut Civil de la Femme.

La date du 14 mai a été annoncée pour la Grande Bretagne. Il y aura un lunch auquel le Professeur Gutteridge, Président du comité des Experts sera l'invité d'honneur. Dans l'après-midi une réunion publique se tiendra à University College, Gower Street.

En France, la démonstration aura lieu à Paris le 20 ou 21 mai, car du 13 au 15, le Congrès International pour la Paix et la Démocratie aura lieu à Marseille.

La Position économique de la Femme mariée.

"La Protection dont bénéficient les femmes mariées est déjà plus que suffisante" disait Lord Fraser en 1881 à une séance du Comité qui discutait un projet de loi écossais, tendant à donner aux femmes mariées le droit

de disposer de leurs biens. "Il est inconcevable ajoutait le noble lord qu'une femme ait de l'argent en poche pour le dépenser à sa guise."

Soixante ans plus tard, nous trouvons encore hélas! certains groupes de gens qui partagent l'opinion de Lord Fraser.

La position de la femme mariée en Angleterre laisse beaucoup à désirer. Son mari est tenu de l'entretenir, mais rien n'indique qu'il doive plus qu'une maigre subsistance. Elle n'a aucun droit légal à une allocation domestique; son mari peut dépenser ses revenus ou gains comme il lui plaît et peut encore déshériter complètement sa famille. La majorité des maris se conduit généreusement. Il n'en reste pas moins que la position manque de dignité, et que dans certains cas par suite de la conduite du chef de famille, cette situation devient intolérable. En général les femmes de la classe ouvrière dirigent complètement l'économie du ménage mais dans la classe moyenne on trouve des hommes, ayant une situation bien rémunérée, et si égoïstes que leur femme est souvent à court pour six pence.

D'autre part on fait tout pour décourager l'indépendance économique de la femme mariée. Seules les femmes célibataires peuvent être fonctionnaires et beaucoup de conseils municipaux forcent leurs employées à démissionner quand elles se marient. En Juillet 1935, il est vrai, le Conseil général de Londres a fait une exception pour les Institutrices et les médecins en décidant par 76 votes contre 37 que le mariage n'était point un obstacle à l'exercice de leur profession.

La réunion du Comité d'Experts à Genève.

Le Professeur Gutteridge a été élu Président. Le Comité a invité les représentantes des organisations féminines à le rencontrer afin de critiquer son programme ou d'y ajouter d'autres considérations.

Trois difficultés réelles confrontent le Comité: (1) L'étendue géographique de l'investigation. (2) La division du Travail entre le Comité et l'O.I.T. (3) L'application réelle ou virtuelle des lois dans les pays respectifs.

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Telegrams: "Vocorajto."

Telephone: Victoria 0285.

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