

THE CATHOLIC CITIZEN

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society).
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Daughter of the ancient Eve,
We know the gifts ye gave and give;
Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,
Daughter of the Newer Eve?

Francis Thompson

The Golden Jubilee

By P. C. Challoner

On March 25th, the Alliance will celebrate, with joy and thankfulness, the fiftieth anniversary of the day in 1911, when the first and only Suffrage Society for Catholics in this country was founded at a meeting in Alan's Tea Rooms in Oxford Street. The Society was small but it had the priceless advantage of being sent on its way encouraged by the presence of Alice Meynell, whose imaginative insight embraced at once the injustices suffered by women and the practical means to end them.

There is in course of preparation, a history of The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society (since 1923, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance) which will be ready for the formal celebration of the Golden Jubilee on May 30th, St. Joan's Day, when we shall have with us our international president, Madame Leroy-Boy and representatives of Sections of the Alliance in other lands. Members and friends can then read the full story of the early struggles of the Society and its emergence into St. Joan's International Social and Political Alliance (of which the British Section is a part) now known in many parts of the world as a band of loyal Catholics and fearless feminists.

It was not always an easy road to follow, but when the Papal Medal was bestowed in 1951 on the hon. secretary for her forty years of work for the women's movement, there was reward enough in having the work of the Alliance recognized as pre-eminently *pro ecclesia et pontifice*.

On this golden occasion, many co-workers must be remembered. Gabrielle Jeffery and May Kendall the founders of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, and Miss Gadsby who in the early days carried the Society on her shoulders, and Alice Meynell who commended its work in the first issue of *The Catholic Suffragist*. Leonora de Alberti, the first and brilliant Editor of the paper which was launched upon a world at war in 1915. A series of

able and devoted chairmen, Kathleen FitzGerald, Florens Roch, Virginia Crawford, Helen Douglas Irvine, C. M. Gordon and Vera Laughton Mathews who was also international president until her death so lately mourned; and many faithful supporters who are always remembered at the Mass on the first Sunday in November at St. Patrick's, Soho. The Parish priests of St. Patrick's, Canon Dunford and Canon Reardon, were for many years most valued members.

There have been other friends among the clergy; we particularly remember Bishop Brown, Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., and Father Bede Jarrett, O.P., Father Joseph Keating, S.J., Father Philip Fletcher and Father Filmer and many missionaries have been our friends and co-workers, notably Archbishop Le Roy, Archbishop Hughes, and Soeur Marie André du Sacré Coeur.

This is not the place to speak of our work, in the political field at home, nor of our approaches to the League of Nations and the United Nations. Women in some countries who have borne and are bearing heavier burdens than we have borne, have perhaps struggled more hopefully because of our work and the work of others, for co-operation is the life-blood of the women's movement and we give heartfelt thanks for the colleagues with whom we have shared the burden of the day.

Some women's organisations have seen their specific aim achieved and have celebrated their final victory. St. Joan's Alliance had as its first aim "votes for women on the same terms as it is or may be given to men" and this still remains its aim in countries where the vote has not yet been won on equal terms. The Alliance did not dissolve when equal franchise was won in this country in 1928 and now, at its Golden Jubilee, in some fear and much faith, it has decided to continue as a living body, not only in order to fight the injustices that remain

but in the hope of service to the Church and for the sake of those women, many of them still inarticulate who, by prejudice or custom, are relegated to

a position of inferiority and held back from that true development which is the birthright of all the children of God.

Status of Women Commission

Statements submitted to the Fifteenth Session of the Commission

1. Age of Marriage, Consent to Marriage, and Registration of Marriages

ST. JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE reiterates its desire for a *Convention*, with or without a Recommendation, on the age of marriage, consent to marriage and registration of marriages.

The Alliance reiterates its belief that there should be laid down a universal minimum age of marriage for boys and girls and that this minimum age should be sixteen.

The Alliance does not agree that a specific age should be omitted from the Draft Convention and Recommendation. This, in the opinion of the Alliance, would leave things much as they are.

The Alliance believes that a minimum age of marriage of sixteen should be laid down, partly because even if boys and girls mature physically at an earlier age, they cannot at so early an age be psychologically or spiritually ready for marriage, nor have sufficient maturity of judgement; and partly because there are still some countries where young girls are a source of financial gain to their parents or tribe, and are liable to pressure which they are too young and too helpless to resist.

There is evidence that a statutory age of marriage has risen in several countries since the last report of the Secretary-General on this subject.

Regarding dispensations—the Alliance continues to hold—

- (1) that the granting of a dispensation should be contingent on the adoption of Article 2 of the Draft Convention and Recommendation, providing for the free consent of both parties;
- (2) that dispensation should only be granted for very grave reasons and by a high authority;
- (3) that in no case should a dispensation be given where either of the parties is under the age of fourteen.

The Alliance does not consider that the consent of parents or others on behalf of the girl is sufficient without the consent of the girl herself, given personally, orally, and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage.

Finally, the Alliance would stress the importance of all marriages being registered by the competent authority.

2. Ritual Mutilations

ST. JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE expresses its regret that the Economic and Social Council did not accept the resolution of the Status of Women Commission concerning Ritual Mutilations, passed at the Fourteenth Session of the Commission. The Alliance, nevertheless, welcomes the resolution of the Economic and Social Council which notes that "individual governments are working towards the elimination of the practice of female circumcision." It also notes that certain countries have already passed legislation against this custom.

The Alliance would remind the Commission that it is now nine years since the subject was first discussed by the Commission and a resolution passed which the Economic and Social Council adopted and strengthened at its Fourteenth Session "inviting all States . . . to take immediately all necessary measures with a view to abolishing progressively all customs which violate the physical integrity of women."

It is significant that at the Seminar on the Participation of Women in Public Life, held at Addis Ababa in December, 1960, which was attended by representatives from thirty-one countries and territories of Africa, the delegates condemned in no uncertain terms the practice of female circumcision. (ST/TAO/NR/9, p. 18.)

In the discussion on the subject it was stated that "while it was the duty of all African women to further the development of African culture with its rich and varied qualities, they should join in condemning those customs which are deleterious to health and, indeed, dangerous."

St. Joan's International Alliance trusts that the Status of Women Commission will again ask the ECOSOC to request the World Health Organization to obtain and make available to the Secretary-General for submission to the Status of Women Commission, documented and factual information concerning the physical and mental effects of this custom.

The Alliance is strengthened in this request by the hope expressed at Addis Ababa that the World Health Organization would show that this mutilation has no medical justification and that, rather, it is harmful to health.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE

AND

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society

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Forty-Ninth Annual Report.*

for the year ended 31st December, 1960

It is heartening to record the speech of Her Majesty the Queen at Oxford on November 4th in which she expressed delight to learn that the women's colleges now had full status. "It is, I hope, now generally accepted that women have as much right as men to be educated and generally acknowledged that their education will be of great value to the community.

"There is much need for them in the professions, and who can doubt that a mother and her children will be better for it if she has a cultivated mind. Nor need a woman barter her intellectual life for the happiness and deep satisfaction of bringing up a family. Nowadays she can keep the one without endangering her chances of enjoying the other. Such women are often the happiest of all."

A gracious reply was received from the Queen and Prince Philip to the congratulations sent by the Alliance on the birth of Prince Andrew.

Steady work and progress marked the last year of the first half-century of the Alliance and preparations for the Golden Jubilee and future activities were put in hand.

Political Field.

Hereditary peeresses are still debarred from the House of Lords. On January 28th, the Marquess of Reading asked the Government to give effect to resolutions passed by the House of Lords in favour of the admission of the twenty hereditary peeresses. At the end of the year there were five women life peers and twenty-six women Members of Parliament—thirteen Conservative and thirteen Labour.

Kenya Constitutional Conference. A letter was sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking for an assurance that woman suffrage and eligibility on the same terms as men be written into the Constitution.

The Alliance was happy to entertain its member, Mrs. E. D. Hughes, a Member of the Kenya Legislative Council, who was a delegate to the Conference. She was asked to press this point.

There are few advances to record in the legislative field. *The Indecency with Children Bill* and the *Marital Proceedings Bill* (Magistrates Courts) passed into law. The first closes a gap in the law for the protection of children, the main clause making it an offence to commit an act of gross indecency with or towards a child under fourteen or to incite a child to commit such an act. The

second makes the relief available to a husband substantially the same as that available to a wife, and, in certain circumstances, permits a wife to be ordered to pay maintenance for the husband.

The Offices Bill for "securing the health, safety and welfare of persons employed in offices" was passed into law. Clause 1, sub-section 2 reads "the Secretary of State may provide by regulation for restricting the employment of women in offices after child-birth." At the request of the Alliance, Lord Pethick Lawrence pointed out that many of the women's organisations regarded this subsection "as detrimental to the employment of women and that it interferes with their personal liberty." Mrs. Joyce Butler, M.P., agreed to be on the alert when the regulations came before the House so that action might be taken.

Public Morality

Evidence accumulated during the year of the evils resulting from the Street Offences Act—the growth of undesirable clubs, the blatant advertisements in shop windows, etc. These matters were brought before both Houses of Parliament on several occasions. When Miss Joan Vickers asked for an Amendment to the Street Offences Act, the Home Secretary said that he "did not contemplate amendment to the Act."

Equal Opportunities

Post Office Apprenticeship Scheme. At the request of the Alliance Miss Vickers enquired why applications for the Post Office Student Apprenticeship Scheme were invited only from boys. An unsatisfactory reply was received from the engineering department of the Post Office. The matter was referred by the Status of Women Committee to the Women's Engineering Society.

Oxford and Cambridge Universities both took a further step towards equality between men and women. The Principal of Lady Margaret Hall was nominated a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University and at Cambridge, the Council of the Senate proposed to abolish the limitation on numbers to be admitted to the women's colleges.

It is regrettable that at Oxford, the post of Principal of the Catholic Workers' College is limited to men and that at Cambridge Catholic women undergraduates are still excluded from the official Catholic chaplaincy.

Meetings and Other Activities

The Forty-Ninth Annual Meeting was held on March 19th at 27 Wilfred Street, Westminster with Dr. Shattock

* Subject to confirmation at the Annual Meeting.

in the chair. The Annual Report was read by Miss Margaret Clarke and *The Catholic Citizen* report by the editor, Miss Christine Spender. The chairman expressed sorrow at the great loss the Alliance had suffered by the death of Dame Vera Laughton Mathews and paid tribute to her work for the Alliance. Other speakers were Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, Mrs. Morgan, Miss M. S. Abakah of Ghana. Miss W. M. Price made an appeal for the Dame Vera Memorial for which she kindly agreed to act as hon. treasurer. Miss Carr's appeal for office rent raised £50. Resolutions were passed on the following subjects: Status of Women Commission, Women in the House of Lords, Street Offences Act, Indecency with Children Bill, Domicile of Married Women, Equal Guardianship of Infants, Equal Pay, Taxation, and Education (for text of the resolutions, see *The Catholic Citizen*, April 1960).

The executive committee was re-elected *en bloc* as no new nominations had been received.

On May 2nd, the Alliance gave a party at the Minerva Club to welcome Dr. Maria Schlüter-Hermkes, a vice-president of St. Joan's International Alliance, who was in London for a meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO. The party was attended by representatives of other women's organisations.

On St. Joan's Day, May 30th, Mass for the Alliance was kindly offered by the Rev. Christopher Laughton Mathews. Members attended evening Mass at Westminster Cathedral and the traditional laurel wreath was placed at St. Joan's shrine.

An Extraordinary General Meeting was held at 27 Wilfred Street on October 15th in order to ascertain the views of members regarding the future of the Alliance after the Golden Jubilee celebrations in May, 1961. A lively discussion took place and there was no doubt that the meeting felt strongly that there was still work to be done and that it would be tragic if the voice of St. Joan's Alliance should no longer be heard. A resolution: "That the Alliance continue its work," was passed with one dissentient. A sub-committee was formed to discuss methods of carrying on the work after the retirement of the hon. secretary.

The second item on the agenda — the opportunities available for women in the service of the Church—arose out of discussions which had taken place at St. Joan's International Council Meetings at Geneva and Treves. This had been referred to National Sections for their views. The following resolution was passed with one dissentient:

"In view of the growing desire for the fuller participation of the laity in the Apostolate and recalling the position held by women in the early Church, this meeting instructs the executive committee to take any appropriate steps thought desirable to further the participation and recognition of women in the Apostolate of the Church."

On December 8th, members attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral to mark the anniversary of the day, fifty years ago, when Gabrielle Jeffery and May Kendall decided to form the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, while waiting outside Holloway Gaol for the release of the Suffragettes.

Co-operation with other Organisations

The Alliance is represented on the following Committees: the British Commonwealth League, British Vigilance and National Committee for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons, the Catholic Committee for Overseas Students, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, the Status of Women Committee and the Women's Advisory Council of the United Nations Association.

Representatives attended the Annual Meetings of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, the Anti-

Slavery Society, the Open-Door Council, the Women's Freedom League; and various functions of the British Commonwealth League, including its Annual Conference on the subject of "Women in Scientific and Technical Fields, Opportunities and Frustrations."

Members were present at the annual gathering at Westminster Abbey on February 6th to commemorate Dame Millicent Fawcett and the granting of woman suffrage. In the evening, the Alliance co-operated with the Fawcett Society and the Women's Freedom League in holding a most successful meeting at the Alliance Hall when Miss Joan Vickers, M.P., gave a lecture on "Women and the Vote," with Mrs. Mary Stocks in the chair.

At the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on May 19th, the Lord Mayor unveiled a plaque to the memory of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney, who on October 15th, 1905 were ejected, arrested, and imprisoned in Strangeways Jail for persistently asking whether the Government would give Votes to Women. The Alliance was represented by Miss Branston.

At the Overseas Club on June 13th, under the auspices of the Women's Freedom League, a large and enthusiastic audience, including members of the Alliance, paid tribute to the memory of Mrs. Charlotte Despard and "the women and men known and unknown who fought for the vote for women."

The Alliance regretfully withdrew from the Women's Council co-operating with India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Indonesia, as the category of observer was abolished.

The Status of Women Committee

The Alliance is a constituent member of this Committee which, under the chairmanship of Miss Pierotti, concerns itself with legislation affecting the status of women. The Committee's statement on Domicile of Married Women was sent to the Private International Law Committee to which the Domicile Bill had been referred by the Lord Chancellor; work was resumed on the Guardianship of Infants Bill in the hope of finding a member who would introduce it as a Private Member's Bill; a detailed statement of policy on the separate assessment and taxation of the income of married women was sent to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and to certain M.P.'s, urging that in all cases a married woman's income should be assessed and taxed separately from her husband's. Letters were sent to Miss Edith Pitt, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health and to the women life-peers regarding questions concerning married women in the 1960 Census Order.

The Committee has supported the Bahamian women in their demand for the vote. When two delegates from the Bahamian Women's Suffrage Movement came to London to plead their cause, the Committee discussed with them how best the women's organisations here could be of service. The delegates were received sympathetically by the Secretary of State for the Colonies but nothing could be done, he said, before the Constitutional Committee appointed by the Bahamian Assembly reported in January. The delegates returned to continue their campaign.

United Nations

The Alliance was represented at a meeting of the Women's Advisory Council of the United Nations Association to hear Lady Petrie on the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Miss Ruth Tomlinson conferred with members of the women's organisations at the House of Commons, prior to her departure as United Kingdom delegate to the fourteenth session of the Status of Women Commission at Buenos Aires. At this meeting Miss Barry gave a historical survey of the work done in connection with the League of Nations and the United Nations concerning the minimum age of marriage, free consent to marriage and registration of marriages, now culminating in the Draft Convention before the United Nations. She urged Miss Tomlinson, United Kingdom delegate, to press for a convention for a universal mini-

um age of marriage of sixteen years and under no circumstances to support the granting of a dispensation under the age of fourteen. Miss Barry's paper was afterwards circulated by request. Miss Chave Collisson pressed for further action concerning Ritual Mutilations.

On her return from Buenos Aires Miss Tomlinson reported to the women's organisations and was warmly congratulated on her fine work at the Commission. The name of Miss Joan Vickers was submitted to the Foreign Office by St. Joan's Alliance and other women's organisations for the forthcoming session of the Commission in the event of Miss Tomlinson not being re-appointed. Miss Vickers' appointment was warmly welcomed.

On August 28th, Mr. Hogan, chief of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organisations Section of the Economic and Social Council gave a talk on the "Function of Consultative Status" to representatives of non-governmental organisations, which was much appreciated. The Alliance was represented by Miss Retchford.

Prior to the meeting of the fourteenth session of the Status of Women Commission, a letter was sent to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asking that the United Kingdom delegate to the Commission be instructed to urge the adoption of a Convention on the age of marriage, laying down a universal minimum age of marriage of sixteen; also to urge the Commission to endeavour to obtain factual information from the World Health Organisation concerning the physical and mental effects of ritual mutilations. A further letter was sent expressing appreciation that the resolution on ritual mutilations passed by the Commission was sponsored by the United Kingdom delegate.

Dame Vera Memorial

The British Section of St. Joan's Alliance and the Association of Girl Guides co-operated in the appeal for a Memorial Fund for Dame Vera Laughton Mathews, launched by the Association of Wrens.

£150 was collected by the British Section of the Alliance from members and friends, including the Status of Women Committee of which Dame Vera had been chairman, and from members of the Suffragette Fellowship. This sum was sent to the Association of Wrens. The Fund will be used in the following ways:

At the invitation of Dame Vera's family, to provide in her memory, a mosaic of St. Nicholas, patron of seafarers, in Westminster Cathedral; to provide a copy of her portrait now in the Imperial War Museum, for the WRNS New Entry Training Depot H.M.S. Dauntless at Burghfield, and to provide an annual Bursary to assist the daughter of an ex-Wren in some project which would enable her to widen her outlook and take advantage of better opportunities in life.

Obituary

We record with sorrow the death of the following members: Miss Katherine Rook Davis, Miss Moira O'Hart, Miss Christopher St. John, Miss M. K. E. Walker, and Miss Monica Whately. May they rest in peace.

Press

A careful watch has been kept on the press and letters have been sent to various papers both officially and by individual members as the occasion arose.

Visitors from Overseas

We were happy to welcome many members and friends from Australia during the year. From *Melbourne*, Mrs. Dora Healey; from *Sydney*, Mrs. Bamma, Miss Cape, Mrs. Coombs, Miss Marie Daly, Mrs. Mary Flynn, Miss Lillian Mitchell, Miss Ruby Rich, Miss Margaret Vaile and Mrs. Wilkinson; from *Perth*, Miss Horan; from *Adelaide*, Miss Margaret Dwyer. Also from *Ghana*, Mrs. and Miss Abakah, and from *Greece*, Miss Yolanda Terenzia.

The Catholic Citizen

Letters of appreciation have been received from many parts of the world telling us of the use made of information published in *The Catholic Citizen* in particular concerning the status of women. Circulation slightly decreased this year; this and the high cost of production and postage are responsible for a deficit of £70.

Subjects dealt with in the paper included a wide variety and the writers who deal with them are often experts. Thus we have had articles dealing with the Crowther Report and the education of girls; the effects of the Street Offences Act; the International Abolitionist Conference; Congolese Women; the Role of the Laity; Women in the Early Church and on the future of the Woman's Movement. More technical matters dealt with include report of the I.L.O. Conference on Non-Manual Workers; the United Nations Report on Traffic in Persons; the Status of Women Commission and the U.N. Conference on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders. We are indebted to such specialists as Mademoiselle Baetens (Belgium), Miss Chave Collisson, Miss H. M. Green, Madame Leroy-Boy and Miss Catalina Maxwell.

We were grateful for the Memoir of Miss Christopher St. John by Miss V. Sackville West. Miss St. John's learned articles will be a great loss to *The Catholic Citizen*.

Thanks are due once more to Mrs. Coast, also to Miss E. C. Challoner for kindly addressing wrappers and to Miss Graham and Miss Hope Robson who come each month to send out the papers. Special thanks are due to Miss P. C. Challoner who helps so generously in the preparation of the paper.

Hon. Treasurer's Report

Our expenses in 1960 were £250 in excess of receipts, partly due to a grant of £70 to cover the deficit on *The Catholic Citizen*.

Membership remained steady but donations were less this year. The crippling rent and rates of the office are a heavy drain on our resources and so far no alternative accommodation has been found.

Two successful sales were held during the year, one in the summer at Golders Green, and the usual Christmas Sale at St. Patrick's, Soho. Hearty thanks are due to all who helped in various ways—particularly Miss Carr who organised the refreshments so efficiently and happily.

To cover the excess of expenditure over income, we were obliged to withdraw £230 from the Gabrielle Jeffery Memorial Fund. This left us with £39 in this Fund and a Bank deposit of £170.

Without the regular voluntary help so generously given by the office workers, in particular Miss Brandt, Miss Challoner and Miss Jameson, the Alliance could not exist. Miss Cave has kindly given occasional help and we are indebted to Miss I. E. Fleming for kindly auditing our accounts.

By the death of Miss Katherine Davis, we have lost another member who gave valuable help right up to the month before her death.

Merseyside Branch

Hon. Secretary: Miss Brady, 19 Fairfield Street, Liverpool 7

The Alliance continues to be represented on the Liverpool Standing Conference of Women's Organisations. A donation was sent to the Dame Vera Memorial Fund and members helped to raise funds for the Refugee Year. At a film shown at the White Sisters Convent of the work done by the Sisters in Africa, the proceeds of a draw were sent to C.W.L. headquarters for the Refugee Fund.

The names of three members willing to act as friends to foreign girls coming to Liverpool were sent to the International Catholic Society, Bridgit House, London.

ST. JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE

The seventeenth Council Meeting of St. Joan's International Alliance opened on June 11th in Treves with dialogue Mass offered for the Alliance in the crypt of the Cathedral. Later delegates assembled for their deliberations in the lovely hall of the *Simeonstift*, placed at their disposal by the civic authorities.

The new president, Madame Leroy-Boy, welcomed the delegates, and read messages from members and friends, including one from Madame Grinberg Vinaver, Chief of the United Nations Section on the Status of Women, and Soeur Marie André du Sacré Coeur. In her opening remarks Madame Leroy spoke of the loss the Alliance had sustained by the death of Dame Vera Laughton Mathews, its wise and gracious president for so many years. In a brilliant address the president indicated the needs of the new world, the problems of the new citizens and the need for women to render greater services to the Church than tradition has hitherto allowed, matters which call for audacity and prudence in those who are both Catholic and feminist.

The hon. secretary gave a detailed report of work with the United Nations and reports from National Sections were presented by their delegates. Madame Marthe Gouffé, hon. treasurer, explained the financial situation of the Alliance and appealed to individual members to raise their subscriptions, and Miss Spender, Editor of *The Catholic Citizen* urged National Sections to send more news and in a form ready for publication. A propaganda leaflet was submitted and brought up to date.

Resolutions were passed concerning political rights, marriage, maintenance orders, ritual mutilations, equal moral standard, equal pay and opportunities, age of retirement and right to pension. (For text of the resolution see *The Catholic Citizen*, July 1960.)

At the request of the German Section a full and useful discussion took place on the interpretation of certain aspects of protective legislation.

In view of the forthcoming Ecumenical Council, consideration was given to the present position of women in the Church, and national sections were urged to send to headquarters any suggestions for action they thought desirable.

Finally, it was agreed to invite contributions for a fund from members and friends of St. Joan's International Alliance for a memorial to Dame Vera Laughton Mathews. It was thought to be in accordance with her wishes to send an African woman to represent the Alliance at the United Nations Seminar on the Participation of Women in Public Life to be held at Addis Ababa. There was a generous response and by the end of the year.

United Nations

St. Joan's International Alliance has consultative status with ECOSOC and is on the I.L.O. special list of Non-Governmental Organisations and also on the register of Organisations with which the Director-General of UNESCO has "informal relations."

Status of Women Commission

The Resolutions passed at St. Joan's Council Meeting held in Geneva were sent to the Commission.

The Fourteenth Session of the Commission opened at Buenos Aires on March 28th. The Alliance was fortunate in having Miss Catalina Maxwell as a very able representative at the Commission.

Statements were submitted by the Alliance on the Age of Marriage (E/CN.6/NGO/763) and on Ritual Operations (E/CN.6/NGO/75), Miss Maxwell intervening on both points.

The Council Meeting held in Treves welcomed the Resolutions passed by the Commission at Buenos Aires, recommending the adoption of an International Convention and Recommendation, containing the following substance of articles:

Article 1. No marriage of any person under the age of fifteen shall be valid except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age for serious causes, in the interests of the intending spouses.

Article 2. No marriage shall be valid without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person, orally, publicly and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage.

Article 3. All marriages shall be registered in an appropriate official register by the competent authority.

The Alliance continues to press for a universal minimum age of marriage of sixteen, and to urge that no dispensation be granted for marriage under the age of fourteen.

The Alliance also welcomed the Resolution expressing concern at the continuance of the practice of ritual operations, asking ECOSOC to request the World Health Organisation to communicate such medical information as it has at its disposal to the Secretary-General for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women.

ECOSOC did not accept either of these Resolutions to the Commission but asked Governments for their opinion regarding the advisability of a Convention or a Recommendation on marriage and concerning its provisions. As to ritual mutilations, ECOSOC expressed the hope that Governments would take advantage of all available appropriate services of the United Nations and of the Specialised Agencies which they consider would assist "the complete abolition of all such practices."

Mademoiselle Archinard, representing the Alliance, spoke on both these points before ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations in Geneva.

A Seminar on the Participation of Women in Public Life, organised by the United Nations in co-operation with the Government of Ethiopia was held in Addis Ababa from December 12th-23rd. The Alliance was represented by Miss May Stella Abakah of Ghana who, at the last moment, was also appointed the representative of her Government. It was heartening that African women from thirty different territories, voiced in no uncertain terms their determination to abolish child betrothal and ritual mutilations.

At the *Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organisation on the Freedom from Hunger Campaign* held in Rome in May, the Alliance was represented by Signorina Parodi, and at the second United Nations Congress on the *Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders* held in London in August, the Alliance was represented by Miss W. M. Price.

At the twenty-first Triennial Congress of the International Abolitionist Federation, held at Cambridge from September 27th-30th, the Alliance was represented by Mrs. Mary Flynn (New South Wales) and Miss Brandt (United Kingdom).

Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations

Valuable work continues to be done by this committee. The Alliance is a constituent member of the committee and is represented on it in London by Miss Barry and Miss Retchford; in Paris by Madame Pesson Depret; in Geneva by Mademoiselle Archinard; in New York by Mrs. Grabinska, Miss F. McGillicuddy and Dr. de Spur; in Australia by Mrs. Dwyer.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

We remind members of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting to be held on March 25th at 27 Wilfred Street, Westminster, at 3 p.m., Mrs. Shattock, M.D., D.P.M., presiding. The speakers will be Mrs. M. W. Bentley, Miss Noreen Carr, Miss A. Christitch, Mrs. Hartono-Sunario, Mrs. Hoare, O.B.E., Councillor Miss Hulme, and Dame Leslie Whateley, D.B.E.

We hope as many members as possible will attend the 12.30 Mass at Westminster Cathedral and meet afterwards for lunch at The Chicken Inn, Wilton Road, Victoria, before proceeding to the meeting.

We look forward to welcoming delegates to St. Joan's International Council Meeting from many countries at the end of May. Headquarters has already been notified of delegates coming from Argentina, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland. The preliminary programme will be found on the next page and we ask members to make arrangements to be as free as possible to meet and entertain our guests. Fuller particulars will be given in the next issue of *The Catholic Citizen*. Meanwhile, please make a note of the dates.

By the death of Grace Conway, lately Film Critic of *The Catholic Herald*, the Alliance has lost a faithful friend. She joined the Alliance many years ago and was a generous supporter of our Christmas sales. At one of our Annual Meetings, though as she said, when speeches were made she was generally at the receiving end, she was prevailed upon to speak, for St. Joan's she said, appealed to her for its sanity and the fact that it was out to see that men and women should work together in shaping the world. Miss Conway's weekly column, "Feminine Forum," which she contributed to *The Catholic Herald* some years ago, was always full of interest and humour.

At the Requiem Mass said for Grace Conway at Westminster Cathedral, the Alliance was represented by the hon. secretary. May she rest in peace.

Congratulations to Miss M. E. Herbison, ex-national president of the Catholic Women's League, and a member of the Merseyside Section of the Alliance, on the bestowal of the *Bene Merenti* medal.

The German police are investigating a report in a Turkish newspaper that a German night club owner, having advertised for girls in the press, received from a merchant in Vienna, an offer of Turkish girls for immediate delivery at 300 marks (about £25 each). The night club owner reported the matter to the police.

President Kennedy has appointed Miss Frances E. Willis United Nations Ambassador to Ceylon; she was formerly Ambassador to Norway.

REVIEW

The Old Testament and Our Times. By Margaret Monro. (Longmans, 15s.)

The most surprising sentence of this provocative book occurs in the second paragraph of the preface which tells us that it "is offered to those who come new to the Old Testament." After this the author plunges us into generalised questions of history, philosophy, sociology. There is no preliminary teaching about the sacred character of the Scriptures, of the twofold authorship of the Bible. We are not introduced to the notion of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, compenetration of meanings. Even where (on pages 43 to 48) an attempt is made to study the concept of Old Testament prophecy, the desire to equate the Hebrew prophet with the oracle of pagan gods confuses the mind of the reader.

Miss Monro has obviously acquired a wide knowledge of the Eastern mind. She seems charitably to pre-suppose a like knowledge in all her readers and so allows herself somewhat sweeping generalisations. These and the detailed courses of study which she recommends are challenging and would offer to mature students opportunities for valuable research, comparisons, discussions.

Indeed, one could fear that because of its modest opening and unpretentious style, this book might be in danger of falling into the wrong hands. Surely its value would be greater to the student who comes to the study of the Bible equipped with a basic knowledge of what makes the Sacred Scriptures something apart from all other writings, than to one who comes "new to the Old Testament." To make this point clear we have only to take one or two instances of topics for discussion and see the enormous ground covered by each one. There is a chapter on the "Education of Boys" which appeals to the student's knowledge of the Hebrew language and the practice of alphabetical teaching. From a consideration of the training given to administrators under Solomon we pass to discussion of the Book of Job with the highly difficult problem of pain. Where the matter covered is less vast, the result is happier such as in the chapter on the Education of Girls (pp. 23-27) where we get a truly inspiring picture of the Jewish maiden and her ideal, the *valiant woman* of Proverbs. The author directs our gaze forward to the coming of Our Lady and the Christian teaching on virginity.

Any one assessing the value of this reading course is faced with a subtle and complex problem of time. How far are historical, social and moral notions of today relevant in a particular period of Jewish history?

Certainly this book stirs the reader to thought and further study. In the right hands it should prove helpful and challenging, as a reading course with subjects for discussion.

M. O'Leary

ST. JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE

Eighteenth Council Meeting—London

May 26th—30th, 1961

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

Friday, May 26th—Informal supper at Crosby Hall.**Saturday, May 27th**—Morning and afternoon: Council Meeting. Evening: Reception given by the President.**Sunday, May 28th**—Morning: Council Meeting. Afternoon: Excursion.**Monday, May 29th**—Morning: Council Meeting. Afternoon: Drive through Windsor, Eton and Henley to Party, given in the home of the British Chairman.**Tuesday, May 30th**—9 a.m.: Mass of Thanksgiving at Westminster Cathedral, offered by the Rev. Christopher Laughton Mathews, followed by breakfast. 11 a.m.: Excursion to Hatfield. 7.30 p.m.: Jubilee Dinner.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

*Vera Laughton Mathews in "The Catholic Citizen"
15th March 1936*

The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society (the original name of our Alliance) had one aim, the granting of the vote to women on equal terms with men. We knew that the vote was the first essential step towards other measures of justice, and this has been well proved by subsequent events. The young woman of today can look forward to a very different life from that of pre-suffrage days when it took years of persistent hard work to get any legislation bettering the position of women through Parliament.

Today nearly all the professions are open to women; they are able to sit on juries, to act as magistrates, to be appointed as policewomen. The woman Member of Parliament is no longer "news"; we have had a woman Cabinet Minister, and several women in lesser ministerial appointments. . .

And while working to obtain fair treatment for women in the civil, political and economic spheres, we at the same time are endeavouring to create what is the most important thing of all—an enlightened public opinion, freed of the clap-trap phrases that have been handed down the centuries, based on the recognition of all human beings as equal in the sight of God, possessed of free will in the ordering of their lives and of the divine right of service in the sphere that best suits their own capabilities.—*Echoes down the Years.*

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Patron: *Saint Joan of Arc.* Colours: *Blue, White and Gold*
Organ—"The Catholic Citizen," 6d. monthly.

OBJECT

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

MEMBERSHIP

All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of £1 which includes *The Catholic Citizen*. Men are invited to join as Associates, on the same conditions, with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive.

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