

# Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society), 55 Berners Street, London, W. 1.

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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.

## Slavery or Service?

By MARGUERITE FEDDEN

One of the most interesting exhibits at the Domestic Service Exhibition was a copy of the proposed service contract between mistress and maid to be signed by both parties at the time of engagement. This charter specifies two hours free time each day in addition to two hours for meals, not less than eight hours uninterrupted time for rest and sleep and two half-days weekly, one of which if possible should be Sunday. Also the servant shall be entitled to fourteen days' holiday after twelve months' service, each year with board wages. There are other points concerning pay, bedroom accommodation and bathing facilities and the mistress promises to employ, as far as possible, labour-saving devices in her house.

There is no doubt that the domestic servants of the future could have the same status as hospital nurses if these reforms materialise. Providing nourishing wholesome meals and keeping the house clean and hygienic are just as important as nursing duties—more so as prevention is better than cure. Who is going to be the Florence Nightingale of domestic service?

It is encouraging that the Minister of Labour is now investigating the problem of domestic service and that the Trades Union Congress General Council recently passed a resolution to establish a Union of Domestic Servants.

Many attempts have been made to train girls for housecraft, but there is not, as yet, a nationwide scheme, though this is badly needed. Talking of mistresses we know there have been some bad ones in the past but we must remember they are not all bad. There are many very good mistresses and some are well-meaning but do not know how to set about their job of being a mistress. Should not there

be a school for mistresses? The Church has definite moral instructions for both employer and employed, ensuring justice to both. She is anxious that both should be conscious of their duties towards one another.

Is it necessary in these days of constricted space for all maids to live in? Can we not visualise the smart peripatetic help who, with her neat attaché case, goes from house to house, dons her smart uniform and gives efficient service for an adequate fee? This would solve the problem of the lonely single maid and her need of an independent life. She would then have her evenings free as have the shop and factory girls. It is on the cards that this scheme would involve a further one—a network of hostels for domestic workers. Whether this would be necessary or not, putting domestic service on a daily basis is well worth trying.

The modern maid's uniform is becoming and attractive. It should merit as much respect as the nurse's uniform. There is one other point, minor but important—surely, as in every other walk in life, the servant should have the right to the prefix Miss or Mrs. instead of the familiarity of her Christian name?

We do not want our young women to be domestic drudges but scientific workers using their heads to save their hands and heels, and taking every advantage of gas, electricity and all modern labour saving devices. We wish rationalisation to be introduced into the home as it is in the factory so that time, labour and money are not wasted.

It is a fallacy to think that every task that is difficult is good and every task that is easy is wrong.

### St. Joan's Alliance in Australia

*Hon. Secretary:* Miss Margaret Flynn, Catholic Central Library, Collins Street, Melbourne.

The first meeting for 1938 was held in the Catholic Central Library on February 28th, Miss K. Walsh, Vice President, in the Chair. Two distinguished members of the Alliance, Miss Anna Brennan, LL.B., Vice President, and Mrs. Agnes O'Dea of New York were the speakers. Miss Brennan who had been a delegate to the Women's Sesquicentenary Conference in Sydney stressed the highlights of the Conference from a Catholic point of view. She gave an account of two important addresses given by Lady Josiah Stamp and our President Dame Enid Lyons. Lady Stamp in her address "Our Responsibilities to the Younger Generation," stressed the need for religious education at home and in the school. Dame Enid Lyons gave a most courageous address from a national standpoint on "The Mother in the Modern World." Other prominent Catholic women speakers were Dr. Dame Constance D'Arcy, a member of the Alliance, Mrs. Fabian Chow, who brought a message from Madame Chiang Kai Shek to the women of the Conference and Miss Anna Brennan.

Our distinguished visitor, Mrs. O'Dea from New York City, spoke on Catholic Action in U.S.A. She described the Chapel cars which were being fitted up and sent out to rural areas, to carry the faith to the man and woman of the "outback" country. "These cars," said Mrs. O'Dea, "have a trailer attached, fully equipped as a chapel with everything the priest needs for the celebration of Mass en route. A kitchen, radio and movie plant are also attached." At the conclusion of her address, Mrs. O'Dea was presented with the badge of the Alliance and unanimously acclaimed an honorary member.

The Alliance was well represented at the Eucharistic Congress at Newcastle. Among members present were Dame Constance D'Arcy, Mrs. Brennan, Mrs. G. Cole, Mr. J. L. Flynn and Mrs. T. Rawle. The Prime Minister and Dame Enid Lyons were prominent at the Congress.

A number of our members have left for overseas. Mrs. Johnson, a member of the Executive Committee, Miss E. Gray, one of the non-Catholic friends of the Society, Mrs. Agnes O'Dea, and Miss Bincham, their destination being London via Rome and the Budapest Congress.

During the 150th Anniversary celebrations at

Sydney a party of women journeyed out to Newtown to attend the first meeting of the Newtown Council for 1938 at which the newly elected Mayor of Newtown, Mrs. Lilian Fowler, presided. Mrs. Fowler, the only woman Councillor, is the first Australian woman Mayor and she has chosen her daughter, Mrs. Tierney, as mayoress. The party were entertained at supper, and St. Joan's Alliance was represented by the founder who conveyed our congratulations and good wishes.

### International Notes

St. Joan's Alliance sends heartiest congratulations to Countess Albert Apponyi, Vice President of the International Council of Women, on the occasion of her 70th birthday. Countess Apponyi has been a member of the Hungarian Government delegation to the League of Nations since 1928 and has had the honour of being president of the Fifth Committee on three occasions. Our delegates have had the pleasure of meeting her several times at Geneva.

Our member Mrs. Hilda Hedstrom Quirk (U.S.A.), is the only woman member of the Boston Municipal Election Commission. She may determine the qualification of male voters to serve on Municipal Councils but is debarred by sex from serving herself. The Massachusetts Legislature of 1938 has, like its predecessors, defeated the bill to make women eligible.

In a recent Decree the Government of the Dutch Indies appealed to the Mohammedans among the population voluntarily to renounce polygamy. This decree has been very favourably received by the organised women of the East Indian Islands, who, in the press, have approved the Government's initiative in the warmest terms.—*I.C.W. Bulletin.*

**International Eucharistic Congress, Budapest, May, 1938.** Hungarian Member of St. Joan's Alliance wishes to take paying guests. Very central. Box 5, St. Joan's Alliance.

**BANKTON HOUSE,** Crawley Down, nr. Crawley, Sussex. Guest House. Large Garden. From 2 gns. Week-ends 14/-, including breakfast in bed.

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### Notes and Comments

On April 4th, at Geneva, M. Avenol, Secretary General of the League of Nations, opened the first session of the Committee set up to study the legal status of women. Professor Gutteridge of Cambridge was elected chairman.

A memorandum was sent in by the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations, St. Joan's Alliance being one of the constituent societies, welcoming the appointment of the Committee of Experts. The memorandum also welcomes the authorization to consult the Women's International Organisations and invite their co-operation. It continues:

The member organisations of the Liaison Committee trust that the enquiry will not be limited to the actual legal position, but will also take into account custom and the application of the law since it is clear that it is practice rather than the theory of the law which in fact determines the status in each case.

To mention another point, the member organisations consider that the right to engage in paid occupation is a fundamental civil right of every citizen and that no survey of the status of women would be complete without this question being taken into account.

The member organisations also feel strongly that the enquiry into the status of women should not be taken to mean only their status under the different European legal systems and systems based on them, but also the status of women under such systems as Muslim law and native or tribal law, which obtain over wide areas and are well worthy of study.

On March 25th the draft of the Unemployment Insurance (Additional Benefits) Order 1938, was approved in the House of Commons.

Among several recommendations are: (1) to increase the adult dependants' allowance (chiefly wives) from 9/- to 10/-, and (2) to increase the weekly rate of benefit in the case of young men between 18 and 21 from 10/6 to 12/-.

During the debate, Miss Rathbone, M.P., pointed out the failure of the Regulations to do anything to improve the rate of benefit to single women. The recommendation of the Trades Union Congress to the effect that the amounts of women's contributions and benefits should equalise had not been discussed at all.

"As it is now, it is notorious that women contributors pay far more in contributions than their benefits are actually worth if these contributions were pooled separately."

"... Vast numbers of women workers are partly or wholly responsible for aged parents, because so often the burden falls on the daughter rather than on the son, the latter having a family to keep, but these women will not get any benefit for their parents under this draft Order."

A Bill to give a married woman the independent right to her own nationality will shortly be introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Alness, a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

The Department of Civil Aviation (part of the Air Ministry) is now prepared to appoint women who are qualified pilots as operations officers at civil airports at salaries of £400—£525 per annum.

The ill-wind of "war and rumours of wars" is blowing women a little good. But unfortunately the rates of pay are lower than those of men in equivalent posts.

The members of the Royal Scottish Academy, at an assembly in Edinburgh, have elected for the first time a woman as an associate member. She is Mrs. A. E. Haswell Miller, of Slateford, Edinburgh, wife of the Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.—*Daily Telegraph.*

"Too many women teachers allow family claims to spoil their chances of professional advancement in a quite unnecessary way. Younger women are sometimes bullied into this by their fathers and brothers, to whom the professional status of woman is still a novelty, but older women have not this excuse and some of them allow their hearts to sway their heads unreasonably."—*President's address to Annual Meeting of Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools.*

We offer congratulations to Miss Hannah Margaret Cross who is the first woman barrister to be appointed a member of the General Council of the Bar, the ruling body of the Bar.

We draw the attention of our readers to the Status of Women Demonstration on May 14th at University College, London, and the Rally of Catholic Women at the Albert Hall on May 23rd, for both of which meetings the Alliance is jointly responsible with other organisations. Full particulars will be found in our advertisement columns. Please apply to St. Joan's Alliance, 55 Berners Street, W.1, for tickets as soon as possible.

## ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

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 MRS. SHATTOCK, M.B., B.S.  
 MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER, *Hon. Editor.*

## 27th Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held as usual in St. Patrick's Club Room, Soho Square, on March 19th. In the absence of Mrs. Laughton Mathews, on account of her daughter Elvira's illness, the chair was taken by Dr. Shattock. A message of sympathy and good wishes was sent to Mrs. Laughton Mathews by the meeting.

After Miss Billing had read the Annual Report its adoption was moved by Miss Christopher St. John. She spoke of the value of individual women's achievements in proof that women are not deficient in qualities considered to be especial to men. Bernard Shaw had declared of Dame Ethel Smyth's music "it cured me forever of the delusion that women could not do man's work in art and other things." The Director of the Royal College of Music had told her that among his pupils the majority of the most promising young composers were girls.

The Committee, she went on, during the year had done everything to protest against any discrimination between men and women. We must realise that women share in the responsibility for restrictive legislation; the vote means responsibility. The whole trouble was that the people who are really interested in equality were a small fighting force, while the great bulk of women did not care. It was more difficult to bring Equal Status into the street than Votes for Women, for it is a less alluring slogan.

Miss St. John said that she was also particularly interested in the married woman's right to work. She had been reading a biography of Maria Teresa, who though she had sixteen children in nineteen years, could show such energy in the colossal work of governing the Austrian Empire. Maria Teresa had never had justice done to her, because she was a

woman, and the credit was often given to her minister, who did not appear on the scene till she had been ruling ten years and accomplished many of her reforms. It was hard to see why marriage should be considered a bar to an occupation such as teaching. The question here was not only one of ability but of a woman's freedom to determine her own destiny.

Passing to another point, Miss St. John said that many Catholic journalists seemed to want to sweep all women back to what they called The Home. The home of old days was indeed a fine occupation, in which women could find scope for their abilities, but with industrialization and urbanisation family life had changed. The CATHOLIC CITIZEN was always welcome, and she could not express sufficient admiration for its Hon. Editor.

The adoption of the Report was seconded by Mrs. Whittles, who said she had been for a long time in tropical countries where there was more *being* than *doing* for women. She was reminded there of Sir Richard Steele's letter to his "darling Prue," telling her that all she had to do was to continue being a perfect darling. She considered the Alliance had done particularly good work in bringing to the notice of the world the status of native women in tribes where they were still considered mere goods and chattels.

Miss Walmsley, M.A., of Birmingham, moving the adoption of the Financial Statement, said she was amazed at the low cost of the work of the Alliance compared with its richness in results. Values in terms of money were misleading. The greater part of the work was done without any cost whatever, through an ability and devotion no money could buy. She wished to give formal thanks to the Hon.

Treasurer and to all those who make the work so successful.

Miss Webber, seconding the adoption of the Financial Statement stressed the value of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN, and in particular its book reviews, of a type not usually found in the ordinary press.

In the absence through ill health of the Chairman and Hon. Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, who sent a telegram of greeting, Miss Mary Parnell presented the Liverpool Report.

The Chairman then welcomed five members from the newly-formed Oldham Branch, warmly congratulating them on their success.

Miss Stella Mannion, its Hon. Secretary, said that Oldham could not yet present an annual report, because the branch had not yet existed a year. It was born last December, and Miss Parnell came to the birth. Miss Mannion added that she would like to emphasise the importance of women police, for Oldham was officially credited with three and possessed in reality only one. They had lately had one of the worst cases of child assault, involving three twelve-year old girls, and yet the authorities said there was no need for police women.

Before the yearly resolutions, representing the programme of the Alliance were put to the meeting, a resolution was put by our Hon. Auditor, Mrs. Benjamin, who moved that the annual subscription should be raised to 5/- to include the CATHOLIC CITIZEN. After this had been freely discussed, the previous question was carried, therefore the subscription remains unchanged.

An appeal for donations was then made by Mrs. Garrard, which resulted in a collection of £29.

The following resolutions were then put from the Chair and carried:

## 1.—STATUS OF WOMEN

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance welcomes the appointment of the Committee of Experts set up by the League of Nations to determine the scope of the contemplated comprehensive study of the legal status of women in the various countries of the world.

It trusts that the status of women of all races will be included in this survey and that consideration will be given both to prevailing customs and to the practical application of laws. Further, it urges that the right to earn be regarded as a civil right common to citizens of both sexes.

It expresses satisfaction that power has been given to this Committee to consult women's international organisations and to invite their co-operation and hopes that a representative of women's international organisations may be invited to act as "observer" in accordance with the precedent of other League Committees. It further suggests that Mrs. Corbett Ashby would be

the most suitable person to act in this capacity.

## 2.—EQUAL POLITICAL RIGHTS

(a) St. Joan's S.P.A. urges that in all territories under British administration women be granted equal political rights with men.

(b) *Women in the House of Lords.* St. Joan's S.P.A. demands that peeresses in their own right should have a seat and vote in the House of Lords and further, that in any measure designed to reform the Second Chamber men and women should have the same right to sit and be elected.

## 3.—EQUAL MORAL STANDARD

(a) St. Joan's S.P.A. re-affirms its demand for the repeal of all existing legislation specially directed against "common prostitutes."

(i) It urges the Government to amend Sections 2 S/s (1) and 3 S/s (2) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 which, by excluding "common prostitutes and women of known immoral character" from the operation of the law against procurers, encourage a traffic in such women. It further urges that the words "under 21 years of age" be deleted from Section 2 S/s (1).

(ii) *Solicitation Laws.* St. Joan's S.P.A. regrets that the Government has taken no action to remedy the present unjust solicitation laws, calls for their repeal, and the substitution of a measure dealing with street solicitation by general legislation against annoyance or molestation, and under which the evidence of the person annoyed or molested would be necessary in order to obtain conviction.

(b) *Child Assault.* St. Joan's S.P.A. calls upon the Government to introduce and pass into law a Bill providing more effective safeguards for the protection of young children from sexual assault.

(c) *Illegitimate Children.* St. Joan's S.P.A. calls upon the Government to introduce and pass without delay a bill providing for the enforcement of Affiliation Orders Overseas on similar lines to the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act 1920.

## 4.—EQUAL PAY AND OPPORTUNITIES

(a) St. Joan's S.P.A. calls upon the Government and Local Authorities to establish among their employees a system of Equal Pay and Opportunities for men and women, and freedom for married women to decide for themselves whether or not they shall engage in paid work, thus setting an example to other employers.

(b) *Factories Act 1937.* St. Joan's S.P.A. protests against those clauses of the Factories Act, 1937, which class adult women workers with young persons to the detriment of both and which make regulations for the health, welfare and hours of work of workers which do not apply equally to both men and women.

## 5.—INSURANCE

St. Joan's S.P.A. views with concern the proposal to isolate a special class of women for pensions at a lower age than other contributors. It believes that the only remedy for the injustices suffered by women under various insurance schemes is to establish a system of equal benefits and contributions, in all national insurance schemes. It welcomes the acceptance of this principle by the Trades Union Congress.

## 6.—CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS ACT

St. Joan's S.P.A. protests against the exclusion of women whose incomes are between £250 and £400 from the benefits of Insurance to which men

of that income level are admitted, thus establishing a new inequality between men and women. It calls upon the Government so to amend the Act as to remove all inequalities between men and women.

## 7.—NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance deplors the fact that the recent Imperial Conference "did not arrive at an agreement in favour of any change in the existing law," and calls upon the Government to inform the other Dominions of its willingness to act on the policy declared to be that of the British Government at Geneva in 1931 and never since repudiated, whereby a married woman shall have the same right to her independent nationality on the same terms as a man; to introduce a Bill to give effect to this in the British Parliament, and to propose to the Dominions that legislation on these lines shall be adopted throughout the Empire.

## 8.—INCOME TAX

St. Joan's S.P.A. demands that the income of married persons shall be separately assessed and separately taxed.

## 9.—SLAVERY

(a) St. Joan's S.P.A. demands that in all territories under British jurisdiction it shall definitely be laid down that no woman, whatever her race, shall be sold by her father or alleged proprietor; that no marriage contract shall be made for any girl under 14 years, or for a girl over 14 years without her consent and that there shall be no inheritance of a widow by her husband's heirs.

(b) St. Joan's S.P.A. welcomes the publication of the Minority Report of the Mui Tsai Commission, signed by Miss Picton Turbervill, and the fact that the Malayan Government has accepted its main principles. It trusts that an ordinance will shortly be passed implementing these principles and it urges the Government to press for their acceptance by the Government of Hong Kong at the earliest possible moment.

## 10.—MATERNITY SERVICES

St. Joan's S.P.A. notes with satisfaction the progress made towards a more adequate maternity service owing to the passing of the Midwives Act.

## 11.—WOMEN POLICE

St. Joan's S.P.A. calls upon the Government to further legislation making it compulsory for Watch Committees and Standing Joint Committees to appoint a sufficient number of women police.

## 12.—BIRTH CONTROL

St. Joan's S.P.A. deplors the policy of the Ministry of Health in allowing in certain cases information on artificial birth control to be given at centres maintained out of public funds. It urges its members to watch the matter in their Local Councils.

## 13.—DIVORCE

St. Joan's S.P.A. deplors the extension of the grounds for divorce under the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1937.

## 14.—STERILISATION

St. Joan's S.P.A. records its opposition to the introduction of any legislation designed to promote the voluntary or compulsory sterilisation of mental defectives.

## 15.—EDUCATION

(a) St. Joan's S.P.A. calls for fair and adequate financial treatment of Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

(b) St. Joan's S.P.A. urges upon the Govern-

ment the necessity of providing adequate and equal facilities for the education of "native" girls and boys under British rule.

Several members spoke on resolutions of which they had a special knowledge. Miss Walmesley told the meeting not to let sentiment run away with them where the demand for spinsters' pensions was concerned. It was very easy to pity women but woman's crying need was justice not pity—in this case justice under national insurance schemes. Miss Parnell encouraged the Alliance in its work for the women of "native" races and for the "mui tsai." These women and girls were our inarticulate sisters and needed our help. Miss Moclair from Carlisle said a word on the new Contributory Pensions Bill under which she had herself suffered and about which she felt very strongly. Miss Graham told of progress in the appointment of women police, and Miss Jeffery of the great impetus given to maternity and child welfare work by the passing of the Midwives Act in 1936. Miss I. R. V. Welch the Alliance's representative on the Income Tax Reform Council spoke on the resolution demanding that the incomes of married people should be separately assessed and separately taxed. Miss Annie Mannion (Oldham) said a few words on married women's work, more especially with regard to women teachers.

The Meeting was very well attended by members old and new and was extraordinarily alive, everyone showing the greatest interest in the proceedings.

B. B. C.

**"Pin Money" for Women.**—Evidence that only one out of every thirty members of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs is supported by the household in which she lives is presented in a study by the Public Affairs Committee, New York. The study, the results of which run counter to the common notion that women work mostly for "pin money," is based on a survey of more than 58,000 members of the federation and is published as a pamphlet, "Why Women Work." The 12,000 replies received from members of the federation showed that seven out of ten of the women working were single, but that 48 per cent had dependents, while one out of every six had the entire responsibility for a household of from two to eight persons. The earnings of the small "pin money" group—those supported by their household—were considerably less than those of other classes.—*The Commonweal.*

## Sky-Rider—An Impression

Amelia Earhart's "Last Flight"\* is a book that, while recording achievement, discovers to us a personality that is very attractive. It is a book not to read, but to live with and to treasure; a book to turn to for courage and inspiration. For those who know the lure of great distances, it revives memories and stirs ambition, and the magic of its words opens our eyes to unseen spaces.

Here is a woman whom neither continents nor oceans satisfied. She sought the companionship of the stars, and, in isolation amidst the sky's immeasurable beauties, she found contentment. Efficient mechanic, and skilled navigator as she was, she yet declared: "The lure of flying is the lure of beauty."

That partly explains why this triumphant woman who won world-wide publicity and praise, cared nothing for these things; at least, not for herself. But graciously and gratefully, and with no false humility, she accepted the world's tribute impersonally as a tribute to womanhood, and to woman's achievement. And she strove to materialize the gains of her own experiences by encouraging the extension of women's activities in the engineering and aviation department of Purdue University, Indiana.

For most of us, places have character; so, for this far-flyer, continents had traits. "Africa smells," she states tersely, referring to the land-derived odours that pervade the sky-ways. Dakar's streets are "tropic comic opera"; nevertheless she receives a swift, clear impression of Africa's intelligent and majestic peoples that stabs her American conscience.

The last words that Amelia Earhart herself recorded of her flight are noteworthy. In New Guinea, ready for the long Pacific crossing via that infinitesimal spot called Howland Island, she wrote: "I shall be glad when we have the hazards of its navigation behind." What foreknowledge had she of her fate? What menacing music did the Pacific breeze play upon the harp-strings of her vivid consciousness?

We turn with sorrow and with pride to the letter left behind to be opened by that remarkable husband of hers, in case of her non-return: "Please know that I am aware of the hazards.

"I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others."

Words that evoke in all of us, pride and

\* *The Last Flight.* By Amelia Earhart. Arranged by G. P. Putnam. (Harrap 9s.)

gratitude. But who can tell what will be the response in "deeds, not words," to the challenge? Women the world over must not leave such a challenge unanswered. St. Joan, call forth the adventurers! EVELYN BILLING.

## Australian Aborigines

An official statement made on behalf of the Aborigines Progressive Association by its President and Secretary, J. T. Patten and W. Ferguson, for the 150th Australia Anniversary Celebrations, says, "The 26th January, 1938, is not a day of rejoicing for Australia's Aborigines; it is a day of mourning."

"We do not wish to be 'studied' as scientific or anthropological curiosities. All such efforts on our behalf are wasted. We have no desire to go back to primitive conditions of the Stone Age. We ask you to teach our people to live in the Modern Age as modern citizens. Our people are very good and quick learners. Why do you deliberately keep us backward? Is it merely to give yourselves the pleasure of feeling superior? Give our children the same chances as your own, and they will do as well as your children!"

"We ask for equal education, equal opportunity, equal wages, equal rights to possess property, or to be our own masters—in two words: *equal citizenship.*"

A deputation representing the Aborigines Progressive Association, and including two women of aboriginal race, was received by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. J. A. Lyons, on January 31st. Dame Enid Lyons was present. Among requests put forward by Mr. J. T. Patten were:

The raising of all aborigines to full citizen status and civil equality:

- Equal educational opportunities with white people.
- Benefits of legislation, workers' compensation and insurance and old age and invalid pensions.
- Wages in cash and not by orders.
- Issue of rations
- Apprenticeship systems.
- Similar marriage laws to whites and no marriage colour bar.
- Equal opportunities for settling on the land.
- Maternity allowance and free hospital treatment for all aboriginal and half-caste women.

"Women protectors and welfare officers both in town and country are essential. Where practical these should be women of aboriginal race. The appointment of woman protectors in outlying districts who have been trained as nurses would be of great benefit to both aborigines and whites."

The deputation opposed the policy of segregation, but urged the retention of present aboriginal reserves as sanctuaries for aged or incompetent aborigines.

In reply, Mr. Lyons said the Government was in sympathy with the deputation and was prepared to call a conference of the States to discuss the whole question with a view to finding what was best to be done.

## The Legal Position of the Black Woman

By Soeur Marie-André du Sacré Coeur, Missionary of Notre Dame d'Afrique, Docteur en Droit

Woman, even in primitive societies possesses a social influence; and as Mr. Hardy has justly said, our action in the colonies "will remain ineffectual so long as we have not gained the native woman to our cause."

Now in French Nigeria the woman has no legal existence of her own, she belongs to a male of the family and is under his power and he is not always the father or the "head" of the family. Another relative sometimes has property rights over a young girl and can dispose of her as he thinks fit. The marriage contract is often concluded when the future wife is still a child—it can even be concluded conditionally before her birth. An intelligent civilised girl can be given in marriage to an old man or to a leper, whom she does not wish to marry at any price. It is difficult for her to escape from this wretched lot, because the native courts must, legally, judge solely with an eye to native custom.

The profound degradation in which custom maintains the woman is rendered still more terrible when it is compared with the evolution brought about among the natives by forty years of French occupation.

The instructions issued in 1920 favouring the liberty of the woman have remained a dead letter; they have clashed with the narrow interpretation of the principle of respect for native custom. But this principle which dominates all our colonial politics and has always to be maintained is not absolute; it has one exception—when custom is contrary to natural law and to the principles of French civilisation. Now it is quite evident that the undisputed dictum of public law "that there is no marriage without consent" is an essential principle of our civilisation, and in consequence applicable to all our subjects, more especially when they themselves demand its application. Therefore it is desirable that a decree should be promulgated, not to deny native custom, but to direct its evolution and to give liberty of action to those natives who have raised themselves to a higher level of morality and civilisation. To this end it would suffice to declare as completely contrary to the principles of our civilisation, and in consequence prohibited and null before the law:

(1) All marriage contracts made for girls who have not reached puberty.

(2) All marriage contracts made *without the consent* of girls who have reached puberty.

(3) Every claim which would withdraw a young girl from the paternal or maternal authority, even if this were done in virtue of "native custom."

(4) Every claim on a widow or any other woman inherited by native custom if the woman refuses to go to the inheritor to whom she is assigned.

If the European Administrations adopted these measures they would gradually have some effect and would be the starting point of a social and material progress which would do honour to colonisation.—*Univers*.

### Equal Rights Hearing

Mrs. Mary Murray, a keen U.S.A. member of St. Joan's Alliance spoke recently in her capacity as President of the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Women's League of New York at an Equal Rights Hearing before the Judiciary Senate Committee. Mrs. Murray in the course of a speech contending that so-called protective legislation had thrown thousands of women out of work and that in her experience "night work" was far more convenient for the married woman obliged to support a family than day work, said:

I am a Catholic. I and my children live up to the teachings of my Church. I have brought them all up that way. I belong to all the associations in my parish. I am an arch promoter of the Sacred Heart League, which is considered quite an honour. The promoter of that league, a Jesuit Father, told me one time when I came here to speak for the amendment:

"You tell the priests there who are against working women, that I was in Washington, St. Aloysius Church, and I saw the women marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, stoned, insulted and ridiculed. I never thought that I would live to see the day that they would win suffrage. Now that they have, you tell the priests in Washington who are opposed to you that the working women have the same right to industrial equality as political equality."

Mrs. Murray "was left a widow—with five children, the eldest being seven years, the youngest one year." "Of course I had to get a job to support myself and my children."—(Equal Rights.)

*Catholic Action*, organ of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, U.S.A., reports that

a speaker at the same hearing was Monsignor John A. Ryan, Director of the National Council of Catholic Women Social Action Department.

We cannot agree with most of Mgr. Ryan's speech, as reported in *Catholic Action*, and we think he has badly misunderstood what feminism stands for. But we are rejoiced that he asserts that "there is no reason, either of justice or prudence, why women should not have equal rights with men as regards control over children, property and residence."

"... Women are men's equal as persons. That is to say, they possess the same essentials of human nature, the same sacredness of personality and the same moral rights to the opportunities of reasonable living."

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Your Hon. Treasurer wishes to thank all of you who have sent your annual subscriptions to the Alliance and *Catholic Citizen*, together with those who at the Annual General Meeting gave donations or promises.

We should be most grateful if those who have not yet sent their subscriptions would send all they can as soon as they can.

C. J. GARRARD.

### Catholic Woman Pioneer of Maryland

Our contemporary *Equal Rights* (U.S.A.) publishes an article "Early American Pioneers of the Woman's Movement" in which we find reference to Margaret Brent, that staunch Catholic pioneer of Maryland.

Margaret Brent, the first white woman to hold land in her own name in Maryland, was a feminist. Margaret never married. Her sister Anne became the wife of Leonard Calvert, governor of the colony, but she died long before her husband. Leonard Calvert appointed his sister-in-law Margaret the executor of his estate, and the colonial assembly made her attorney for Lord Baltimore, so that she might collect rents in his name.\* These responsibilities led Margaret to ask for political rights. Regarding this, the "Maryland Archives" for January 21, 1647, has this entry:

"Came Mistress Margaret Brent and requested to have vote in the howse for herself and voyce also for that at the last court . . . it was ordered that the said Mistress Brent was to be looked upon and received as Lps. attorney. The governor denied that Mistress Brent should have any vote in the house. And the said Mistress Brent protested against all proceedings in this present assembly, unless she may be present and have vote as aforesaid."

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