

THE

Catholic Citizen

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

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

Vol. XXIX. No. 11.

15th NOVEMBER, 1943.

Price Twopence.

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 Emancipation of the Housewife.

Our October Fourth Thursday provided a lively discussion, held by the courtesy of the Newman Association in their rooms, on the emancipation of the housewife. Miss Eleanor FitzGerald read out from the chair five basic principles which have been laid down by the Alliance. Women should be free (1) to choose marriage and its obligations or not, and (2) to choose how they will fulfil these obligations; (3) no economic necessity should drive a married woman to earn outside her home; (4) she should be free to choose whether she will thus earn or not; (5) respect for the inherent rights of personality and for the freedom and responsibility proper to human dignity must be ensured to married women.

Several mothers of young children then spoke. Mrs. Halpern referred to the failure of the appeal in the Blackwell case, which we report on another page, as showing how little conservative opinion has advanced since the days, a century ago, when a married woman was regarded by the law merely as a *feme couverte*, and since the days nearly a century ago when Caroline Norton achieved, for married women, the right of property in their own earnings, the right to have their maintenance provided through a trustee, and the right to inherit, to bequeath and to sue. She remarked on the peculiarly strong feeling which complicates any issue involving the right of property, especially if a married couple be concerned. No one has ever dared attack that citadel constituted by a man's earnings, but the Blackwell case shows not only that a married woman has no right to any property which she does not bring into the family, but also that even her earnings are insufficiently protected.

The Countess d'Hollossy declared herself unable to speak for her own country, Holland, so much has it changed during the German occupation; her reference was to women in general. She said that the three obligations, all equally binding, of a married woman are to care for her children, for her home and husband and for the community. She must beware of extremes—of losing interest in everything outside her family, thus impairing her value as an educator, and of neglecting her family for the outside world. If she choose to work outside her home, she can and should interest her children in her occupation. Madame d'Hollossy proclaimed herself the advocate of all public services and practical devices which lighten household labour, and the decided opponent of crèches. Fathers and mothers should jointly share the mental and material responsibilities of the family and

fathers should be made to understand that there are many little duties in the home in which they could help.

Madame Leroy, who is Belgian, believes that the law should not forbid married women to work but should provide easier working conditions for them. She holds that fathers and mothers should decide together what care their children should have. Mothers should remember that babyhood is very short, that they need relaxation, that by developing themselves they can help their husbands, their children and the community. She advocated communal services and communal kitchens which would lessen women's drudgery and allow the development of their personality to the benefit of all.

Mrs. Russell considers that, since there is no essential difference between the male and the female mind, the popular idea that a woman must choose between marriage and a career is not reasonable. But practical considerations favour it. While household work could be lightened by public services and gadgets, the problem of bringing up children remains, in a world where nannies are all but extinct, and its solution is necessary to check birth prevention. Like Madame d'Hollossy, Mrs. Russell disapproves of crèches, and she spoke of the long holidays during which schoolchildren are on their mothers' hands. She thinks it would be helpful to free housewives from money worries—by the provision of family allowances, which should increase with each successive child.

Opening the discussion, Mrs. James, even more ardently than other speakers, pressed for public services which would relieve mothers of drudgery. She suggested the provision of a subsidised domestic service which would transfer labour from one section of the community to another. She reminded us that almost every woman earner faces an economic slump when she marries—no more perms for her, no pocket money, no outings.

Dr. Shattock said that the established practice in the medical profession is to allow women to retire from their paid work for a time in order to have children, and Miss Challoner urged that industry adapt itself similarly to the family.

Several speakers opined that fathers should help mothers to look after the babies, and the house too. Professor Veraart, the well-known Dutch economist, the only man who took a prominent part in the discussion, suggested "that the financial problem could be solved if parents had, by law, to pool their incomes, and got, also by law, equal rights in spending the common money."

BLACKWELL CASE.

On 28th October the Court of Appeal decided against the appeal by Mrs. Dorothy Ursula Blackwell for the reversal of the recent decision by the Oxford County Court that a sum of £103 10s., standing to her credit with the Oxford and District Co-operative Society, was not her property but that of her husband from whom she was separated in 1941. It was not disputed that this money represented her savings out of her housekeeping allowance and the profit she had made by taking in lodgers from 1936 onwards.

Miss Colwill submitted that Mrs. Blackwell had an agreement with her husband that any money she made out of the lodgers was for her separate use. She made this profit by her physical effort. She had saved money for herself and her child by the skilled exercise of her profession of housekeeping, earning it by reason of her equal partnership with her husband. If she were not entitled to her savings, her position was worse than that of a paid housekeeper.

Lord Justice Scott said it was "rather hard on a husband" that his wife should save for herself and her child. Lord Justice Goddard suggested that she might let her husband go short of food while she "built up a banking account." facetiously, he pictured her giving him corned instead of roast beef for dinner. It would, he said, be "a dreadful thing" to hold that her savings were her own; it would tempt husbands to stint their wives. He repudiated any suggestion that a wife was employed by her husband to housekeep for him. Lord Justice Luxmoore averred that a wife has "a status which a housekeeper has not," and that to decide she was his housekeeper would "upset law which has been established for many years." Lord Justice Goddard opined that even if a married couple agreed that the savings out of the housekeeping money should be the wife's such agreement would not necessarily constitute a legal contract. He also said that profits from taking in lodgers belonged to a husband, to whom the lodgers' money was paid although his wife received it.

Dismissing the appeal, Lord Justice Scott said, "There is no justification at all for the contention that where a husband hands to his wife an allowance for housekeeping purposes, the husband is to be taken, as a matter of law, as presenting savings out of that money to the wife for her sole use." Lord Justice Luxmoore and Lord Justice Goddard agreed. Meantime Dr. Summerskill, supported by 43 other M.P.s, has tabled a motion calling for the amendment of the Married Women's Property Act, 1882, to secure to married women a legal right to reasonable savings from their housekeeping allowance.

The next meeting of the Alliance will be held on Thursday, November 25th, at 6.45, by kind permission of the Newman Association, at Hereford House, 117 Park Street, W.I.

Mrs. Katherine Bompas will speak on the Beveridge Plan as it affects women, Miss Pauline Brandt in the chair.

Don't forget St. Joan's BRING-AND-BUY CHRISTMAS SALE of new and secondhand articles, to cover the debt on the CATHOLIC CITIZEN, at St. Patrick's club rooms, Soho Square, on Saturday, December 4th, from 12.30 to blackout. Lunch and tea provided. Bring your gifts with you to the hall, or send them, in cash or kind, to the office as soon as possible. Please price your gifts.

J. M. ORGAN, Hon. Treasurer.

We mourn the death of several valiant feminists. F. de G. Merrifield was among the earliest members of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and a loyal and active member of the Alliance. Her father was a pioneer among feminists, who supported Dame Millicent Fawcett when, in Brighton in 1870, she horrified conventional opinion by advocating votes for women from the platform of a public hall. "He would have been a woman suffragist if he had been born on a desert island," Dame Millicent said of him. His daughter was worthy of him.—R.I.P. Frances Sterling is remembered by some of us as a leader, with Edith Palliser, of the historic Mud March of 1905, the first of all the women's suffrage processions. Like Miss Merrifield she inherited feminism, for her mother was treasurer of the London Society for Women's Suffrage, the oldest of the suffrage societies. Miss Sterling worked in the constitutional movement, in the London Society until its amalgamation with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, after which she was secretary of the latter organisation. For ten years she was treasurer of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance. She was an old subscriber to the *Catholic Citizen*, one who took out extra subscriptions to allow the paper to be sent gratis to young people. Lida Gustava Heymann, who died in Switzerland in August, was a leading German suffragist and the editor of a women's political paper in Germany. She had been vice-president and international executive member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom since the Zurich Congress in 1919. With her friend Anita Augspurg, she upheld the cause of international goodwill in Germany until she was exiled by the Nazi government.

* * *

We offer our warmest sympathy to our members, Mrs. Smiley for the sudden death of her son Patrick at the age of 20, and Dr. Kathleen Gillow for the death of her husband. We ask for prayers for them and for Philip Beevor Jeffery, who died recently in Buda Pesth. He was the brother of our founder, Gabrielle Jeffery.—R.I.P.

MEETINGS.

At the Silver Jubilee Votes for Women meeting in St. Ermin's Hotel on 16th October, which was organised by Mrs. Gye, of the Suffragette Fellowship, in conjunction with the W.F.L. and our Alliance, our member, Mrs. Barbara Halpern, made a thoughtful and original speech on "Should Married Women Earn?" The other speakers were Dr. Edith Summerskill, M.P., and Mrs. Amy Bush. Miss Charlotte Marsh was in the chair.

The National Council of Women of Great Britain, at their conference in October, considered, among other subjects, the deplorable fall in the birth rate and the fallacy that women are mainly responsible for the spread of venereal disease, and they urged the compulsory appointment of women police. A resolution, proposed by the executive, that new proposals for the erection of more denominational schools should be duly considered was regrettably defeated.

The London and National Society for Women's Service protested, at their general meeting, against the current propaganda which would induce women to withdraw, after the war, from public activities, confining their energies to domestic matters and the care of children, to the impoverishment of home and national life.

Fundamentals in Post-War Planning.

Believing in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and therefore in the dignity and worth of human personality, we maintain that all schemes of reconstruction and post-war settlement should recognise the inviolable right of the individual, irrespectively of creed, race, sex, or class, to life and bodily integrity; the right to worship; to marry and participate in family, civic and national life; the right to earn, to contract, to possess and use property; the right to speak and write according to the conscience and ability of the individual;

And, believing that it is the function of the State to

uphold justice, to reconcile authority with individual liberty, the dignity of the individual with the welfare of the State, and the legitimate concern of every human being for himself, his family and his country with the concern for other families and other peoples;

Further, believing that the inadequate participation of women in public life has led to an ill-balanced development of human society:

We maintain that no plan or scheme will be acceptable, or workable, unless based on these fundamental principles.

The Beveridge Plan.

Dr. Letitia Fairfield writes:

I cannot think that Miss Helen Douglas Irvine's article on the Beveridge Plan gives a fair account of the benefits it would confer on women. . . . She overlooks, for example, the recognition for the first time of the housewife as an individual member of society, with rights of her own but with a primary obligation to her family. This passage of the report is surely entirely in accordance with Catholic teaching. There are, moreover, such clearly feminist items as equal benefit for men and women, the assumption of a comprehensive medical service for all . . . the basic policy of family allowances and the universal pensions scheme.

On specific points raised by Miss Irvine it is worth noting that the 6s. less payable to the married woman than to the spinster represents a deduction in benefit proportionate to an assumed rent which the spinster pays herself, but which for a married couple is included in the husband's benefit. Whichever partner in marriage has a rent allowance it would be manifestly absurd to allot it to both. Secondly, the proposal that married women also who work should choose whether they enter insurance is not a satisfactory method of preserving the element of choice which is valuable in a democracy. The employer's contributions are not affected whatever she decides and her relationship with him cannot therefore possibly be impaired.

The basic fallacy in Miss Irvine's argument is her assumption that social insurance is comparable with a commercial insurance contract, where specific benefits are bought at an agreed rate. Social insurance is really a form of taxation plus redistribution. The contributions are collected from the population in receipt of incomes, to provide sufficient purchasing power for redistribution to those without incomes. . . . The contributions under the British scheme form a pool of purchasing power, but they do not and are not intended to buy the benefits. (Whether women contributors to the pool take out a fair share of the whole is a question which can only be fairly and adequately answered if this view of the scheme is understood.) Personally I feel that women stand to gain substantially and that they should support a plan aimed at promoting the health and welfare of the whole community.

Miss Helen Douglas Irvine (Editor) answers:

In our issue for 15th January, 1943, we signalled as welcome innovations the recognition in the Beveridge Plan of the right of housewives to be regarded as workers and of the right of single women to the same benefits as

single men, and we commended the Plan's provision of family allowances. In our tiny paper we may not repeat ourselves. Need we say we agree that a married woman's primary duty is to her family? But this does not imply that a housewife has no rights which are her own responsibility. We blame the Beveridge Plan because it allots her only indirect and derivative rights, thus relegating her to a dependent status. As for the medical service which the Plan provides, is it a "feminist item"? As well might our good highroads be called feminist because women walk on them as much as men.

Why is there no deduction from the benefits payable to agricultural labourers, proportionate to the less rent which they pay? "The average of actual rents," says the Beveridge Report, "runs from 16s. a week in London to 7s. 6d. in Scotland and 4s. 7d. in agricultural households" (par. 199). And Scottish agricultural labourers pay no rent. Why is it only married women who are to suffer this deduction? Why not one of two single people who live together? And why are married women to receive for the premiums they may have paid as spinsters only a lump sum which bears no proportion to the payments they have made?

In what way would the choice of married women to enter the scheme or not be an exception to the general character of choice, which Dr. Fairfield rightly describes as a "valuable" element "in a democracy"?

My basic assumption throughout my article was that Sir William Beveridge used words correctly. Insurance is not "a form of taxation plus redistribution." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines insurance as "the action or a means of ensuring or making certain." Neither social nor any other adjective which does not connote a negative can nullify the meaning of this English word, commonly and correctly understood by the people of this country. Nor is a premium a tax: the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as quite something else; as "the amount agreed on, in an insurance policy, to be paid at one time or from time to time in consideration of a contract of insurance."

Dr. Fairfield, however, acknowledges that the Beveridge Plan does not ensure or make certain its benefits to all payers of premiums; in other words, she concedes that the plan is no insurance. "The contributions," she says, laudably avoiding Sir William Beveridge's misleading use of the word premium, "form a pool of purchasing power, but they do not . . . buy the benefits." Most true.

As for her statement that women should support the scheme because they and the community stand to gain by it substantially: surely we ought to be sure it is honest and fair before we consider what profit may be derived from it.

REVIEWS.

Where Love and Friendship Dwelt. By Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. (Macmillan, 12/6).

In this book of delightful memoirs Mrs. Belloc Lowndes describes the France of her youth, as she knew it on her return from England to her French home, at the age of seventeen. We get a vivid glimpse of her French relatives and of French rural life.

The latter half of the book is the most interesting. The young Marie Belloc calmly decided to become a journalist and writer despite all manner of discouragement. She also harboured a strong determination to go to Paris whenever she could. Somehow she carried through both plans; women journalists were not very well looked upon in the England of the time and travelling alone was unknown for young women. Nevertheless Marie Belloc became a journalist and she arranged that journalism should commission her to go to Paris as often as possible. Her old nurse acted as chaperon in the first instance; however, friends and relatives in Paris soon made chaperonage unnecessary.

The contacts and friendships of these days were many and fruitful. Some of the famous writers interviewed in bold and friendly spirit by the young Marie Belloc were noted for their boorishness, but she never let the reputations of the great deter her, once having procured an introduction. In this way she came to know Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet and his son Léon, Anatole France, Sardou, Dumas fils, and she describes her touching friendship with Verlaine.

There must have been something peculiarly fresh and sincere about the young Marie which held attraction for these famous men, so that in every case she extracted the best from them. C.S.

Christianity in the Market Place. By Michael de la Bedoyère. (Dakers, 6s.).

It is refreshing to come across a writer who is not afraid to face the religious question as it really is to-day, and who states his impressions fearlessly and without bias. Mr. de la Bedoyère, while a loyal and sincere son of the Catholic Church, refuses to adopt the ostrich-like attitude common to so many Christians; neither does he indulge in groans and tears over the degeneration of the world or take refuge in pious quietism. Rather he is a soldier, a pioneer in the Church's ranks, ready to do battle, if necessary, for the fundamentals, but eager to carry out a reconstruction on the whole Christian front.

Mr. de la Bedoyère does not consider our world hopelessly wicked and vile. He has a very healthy understanding of the courage, heroism and martyr spirit that inspire even the false ideologies by which we are surrounded. Mistaken though the followers of these various "isms" may be in their idealistic outlook, it cannot be denied that they call forth in the men and women who believe in them an unswerving fidelity, determination and ruthless self-sacrifice, qualities common among the early Christians, but conspicuously lacking in many of their descendants at the present time.

Mr. de la Bedoyère would have Christians tackle the world by fully recognising the good abounding in it. It is futile and dangerous to be always stressing the evil in the world and failing to point out and utilise the good in it. It is up to us to carry the Christian faith and its principles through the world, in all our dealings with the world, in every one of the circumstances of life, "a monsternance carrying Christ and Christ's order into the world's market place."

H. M. D.

Nina Boyle. By Cicely Hamilton. (Nina Boyle Memorial Committee, 3d.).

This sketch of Nina Boyle—at the Jubilee luncheon last February "as trenchant, as witty, as astonishingly fluent as the Nina Boyle who once fought the battle of enfranchisement"—has been written in support of the fund to establish in her memory an annual lecture on one of the subjects which most interested her—women's citizenship, coloured women's right to physical and spiritual freedom, the Save the Children Fund, the danger to Europe of militarist domination. Subscriptions to the memorial will be received by the treasurer, Miss Marie Lawson, 52/54, High Holborn, W.C.1.

The Equal Citizenship Bill. By Dorothy Evans (Women's Publicity Planning Association, 1s. 6d.).

The proposed text of the "Blanket Bill," designed at one stroke "to free our laws and regulations, present and future, of sex-discrimination," is printed in full, together with a useful analysis of existing inequalities.

Light Is Come. By Thomas Doran. (Samuel French, 2s.).

This Nativity play tells the great story simply, reverently and with a real sense of the theatre. An appended note contains practical directions; the setting is of the simplest; no properties are needed save what everyone has to hand; the cast includes sixteen actors with speaking parts and as many or few "angels" and "merchants" as is desired. We strongly recommend this play to parishes and convent schools arranging Christmas entertainments. It can be given either in a hall or in a church.

H.D.I.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

Leonora de Alberti in "The Catholic Citizen," November 15th, 1918.

In addressing the Senate he (President Wilson on the Women's Suffrage Amendment) said: "Through many channels I have been made aware what the plain struggling workaday folk are thinking, upon whom the chief terror and suffering of this tragic war falls. And this is that women shall play their part in affairs alongside of men upon an equal footing.—Notes and Comments.

The largest CATHOLIC HOSPITAL in the South of England

The Hospital was founded in 1856 by four Sisters of Mercy on their return with Florence Nightingale from the Crimean War.

The Hospital contains 158 beds, including 31 beds for Paying Patients. Private rooms are available from 8 gns. per week. Eight beds are set aside for Priests and Nuns from the Diocese of Westminster.

Trained Nurses sent to patients' own homes. Apply to the Superintendent in charge of the Trained Nurses' Institute, 32 Circus Road, N.W.8.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN & ST. ELIZABETH

60 Grove End Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.8