

**COUNCIL FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN
IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.**

REPORT of the Executive Committee for the Year, February, 1921—February, 1922, presented at the Annual Meeting held in Caxton Hall, Westminster, on March 1st, 1922.

The League of Nations is a body consisting of a large number of nations represented in Council and Assembly by duly appointed delegates. Its aim is to secure the peace of the world and to prevent war. When you ask the League of Nations if it has stopped war, it will tell you that it has a super-human task before it—that the difficulties are colossal and that patience is a virtue.

The Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations is a body consisting of a large number of societies represented on an Executive Committee and in an Annual Meeting by duly appointed delegates. Its aim is:

1. To secure by united effort the representation of women on all bodies within the League of Nations and their appointment to positions in the Secretariat.
2. To co-operate for this purpose with committees or Councils in other countries or with international bodies.

When you ask your Committee if they have secured the appointment of women to all the various committees and commissions of the League of Nations, they can tell you with truth that the task of getting women in adequate numbers into the League of Nations is apparently as super-human a one as the ending of war; that the difficulties are colossal; and that patience is a vice.

Your Committee has met 14 times during the past year and the chief points with which it has dealt have been:

- Traffic in women and children.
- Appointment of a woman to International Health Commission and Health Commission of Labour Office.
- Reform of Constitution of Labour Office.
- Rights of women to vote in Plebiscites.
- Appointment of Woman to Commission for the International Organisation of Intellectual Work.
- Equal status and Equal pay of women in the League of Nations Secretariat.

2nd Assembly of the League. Your Committee addressed an urgent request to the Prime Minister that women should be included in the British Delegation. No reply was received.

Demand for appointment of a British woman Delegate to the League of Nations Conference on the Traffic in Women and Children: June, 1921.

At its first meeting in March, your Committee decided to write to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Minister for Health, urging that a woman be included among the British representatives to the League of Nations Conference on the Traffic in Women and Children to be held in Geneva in June. To this letter was attached a Memorandum mentioning that the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (one of affiliated Societies) and the National Vigilance Association dealt specially with the matter and that other women's organisations

had experts in the subjects. The usual formal acknowledgements only were received, and at its next meeting your Committee decided to put forward for nomination Mrs. James T. Hunter, of Glasgow, who for many years has been intimately connected with vigilance work. A letter was addressed to Mr. Lloyd George and a copy of it sent to the Secretary General of the League. The Prime Minister again sent a formal acknowledgement—and when later on your Committee pressed the Home Secretary to receive a deputation, the reply was that nothing further could be added to the answer already given to a question in the House of Commons, that the Government did not think it necessary to take further steps in the matter, and that a woman representative of the International Vigilance Association would be called to give evidence at the Conference. Your Committee considered this answer a deliberate evasion of the point at issue; for though the presence and evidence of Miss Baker, of the I.V.A.B., at the Conference were invaluable, she had been summoned by the League itself and her attendance in no way exonerated the British Government from the duty of sending a woman delegate. The "Times" published a letter of protest from your Committee and another letter received some measure of publicity in the provincial press.

It is interesting to note that during the last fortnight in June the League of Nations invited various women's organisations to send a woman representative to the first open Session of the Conference, and later on announced that all sessions of the Conference would be open to such representatives, who, however, could actually take no part in the proceedings. There can be little doubt that those responsible for the Conference realised too late, however, what a tremendous stimulus to really practical and progressive action women members of such a Conference would have been. Your Committee in this connection addressed a letter to the Secretary General pointing out the ineptitude of asking women at the eleventh hour to attend this Conference unofficially instead of calling them in from the first to aid the work of the Conference in an official capacity.

International Health Organisation.

One of the earliest activities of your Committee was an enquiry as to the constitution of the International Health Organisation; and in May a statement was forwarded to the League of Nations urging the revision of the constitution of the Permanent Health Commission and the Temporary Standing Committee in such manner that each state thereon represented should have two members—one of whom should be a woman.

Sir Eric Drummond in reply informed us that this statement would be circulated to members of the Council and also to every States Member of the League. But no revision of the constitutions was made and no woman was appointed to the Temporary Health Committee. When your President was in Geneva in September, 1921, she therefore lost no time in circularising every delegation to the 2nd Assembly of the League urging the necessity of a woman member on the Health Committee. Other women's organisations were also bringing pressure to bear to this end; and we are glad to record that the Assembly passed a resolution asking the Council to consider the appointment of a woman to the Health Committee at an opportune moment. It is not a

strong resolution, for we well know that the words "an opportune moment" are capable of very different interpretations. To us they mean "now"—to others they apparently mean "never."

Your Committee are continuing to press the Council of the League to appoint a woman to the Health Committee and have submitted to the Council of the League as suitable for appointment the names of Dr. Letitia Fairfield (Britain); Dr. Alma Sundqvist (Sweden); Dr. Thuiller Landry (France).

Health Section of the International Labour Office.

Your Committee have made similar representations to the International Labour Office as to the necessity for a woman member in their Health Section—especially in view of the fact that the International Labour Office, after the Seamen's Conference at Genoa made recommendations as to the prevention and treatment of Venereal Disease at ports.

Status and Pay of Women in the Secretariat.

Early in March, 1921, disquieting rumours reached your Committee as to the unequal treatment of women in the Secretariat. As your Committee were not in a position to make public the details of some of their information, a letter was sent to the head of every department in the League and in the International Labour Office affirming the satisfaction of women that the League had in its covenant adopted the principles of equal admission, equal pay and equal opportunity of promotion for women. We still have reason to be disquieted as to the opportunities of promotion for women in the Secretariat and a resolution on this subject will be submitted to you to-day.

Revision of Constitution of International Labour Office.

Your Committee are strongly of opinion that while the constitution of the International Labour Office remains as it is, there is practically no hope of women delegates being appointed to the Labour Conferences. In June therefore they drafted amendments to the Constitution and these were forwarded to M. Thomas. It was too late for these amendments to be placed on the Agenda for the October meeting of the Conference but will be submitted to the Governing Body for insertion in the Agenda of the next Conference. These amendments to the constitution of the International Labour Office will be submitted to this Annual Meeting and need not be detailed here.

A Commission for the International Organisation of Intellectual work is being appointed by the Council of the League. The resolution of the Assembly on this subject was perfectly definite and called for the appointment of men and women to carry out this work and your Committee has urged the Council to appoint our President, Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon.

The Right of Women to Vote in Plebiscites.

Information was laid before your Committee in June to the effect that Col. Chardigny, an Officer of the League of Nations, had made a public statement to the effect that women would not be allowed to vote in the Vilna Plebiscite. Your Committee thereupon addressed a letter to the Secretary General asking if this announcement had in fact been made by an authorised agent of the League and reminding the Council that such action was contrary to the guarantees given in the Treaty of Versailles.

Dr. Nitobe, Assistant Secretary-General of the League, in his reply acknowledged that the statement had been made, but without the authority of the Council, which he stated would certainly keep in view the equality of men and women with regard to the right of voting in plebiscites.

Public Conferences. October, 1921.

On October 18th and 19th, two public Conferences were held in the Central Hall, Westminster, the speakers were Lord Robert Cecil, who described the work of the Second Assembly of the League, Dr. Inazo Nitobe who came specially from Geneva to speak on the Social and Humanitarian Activities of the League. Both Conferences aroused much interest—and we are glad to report that expensive as they were to organise there was a very minute profit on them!

Correspondence with Women's Societies in other Countries.

Your Committee consider it essential to keep in touch with women's organisations in other countries. We have circularised every affiliated society of the I.W.S.A. and I.C.W. and many other women's societies. Letters have been received from women's organisations in France, Greece, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, U.S.A., Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales: all of them expressing their warm appreciation for the work of our Council and offering active support whenever possible. A very interesting letter has been received from an individual woman in Russia, regretting the impossibility of organised action on the part of women at this moment.

Withdrawals and New Affiliations.

We report with regret that the National Union of Trained Nurses, Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, Association of Women Pharmacists, College of Nursing, Federation of University Women and Women's Local Government Society, have withdrawn from the Council.

We welcome the affiliation of the Mothers' Union, the Scottish Mothers' Union and the London Society for Women's Service.

General.

Your Committee are far from satisfied with the results of their year's work, yet they feel they have left no stone unturned to secure our objects. But though they are dissatisfied they are in no way disheartened. This year of intensive effort to secure the appointment of women to the *Assembly* and Commissions of the League of Nations has convinced them of the absolute necessity for a body such as our Council.

We have not yet arrived at that state of civilisation where associations for the express purpose of reiterating the need for the co-operation of women and men in specific spheres of public affairs are unnecessary. George Meredith said that women should be the last thing to be civilised by men. He was profoundly wrong. The last thing probably to be civilised anywhere is the average man's pre-conceived notions and theories about women. The League of Nations, in spite of the Equality article in its covenant, is by no means bereft of these pre-conceived notions and theories. We venture to believe that we are one of the necessary agents for its complete civilisation.

Hon. Sec. 306 Scott Ellis / Mrs
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