

MONTHLY NEWS
of the
**Conservative Women's Reform
ASSOCIATION.**
NEW ISSUE.

President: THE COUNTESS OF SELBORNE.

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"FOLLOW LIGHT—DO THE RIGHT."

Our Work.

A propaganda meeting, at which we are appealing specially for an audience of women between the ages of 20 and 30, will be held at 26, Hill Street, by kind permission of Lady Delia Peel. Lady Trustram Eve will be in the chair, and Lady Amherst of Hackney and Lady Lloyd-Greame will speak on "The Value of Politics." It is hoped that the response will be good and the audience interested: for women must remember that if they are to prove themselves the equals of men in all that appertains to citizenship, they must see to it that the political apathy of the younger women which is so noticeable at the present time, is done away with. Broadly speaking, a man's political consciousness begins earlier than a woman's: and there can be no reason why this should be so.

Our readers are not to be allowed to forget the "Fancy Fair" to be held at Claridge's on April 29th and 30th. The C.W.R.A. are responsible for three Stalls: Antique and White Elephant, Produce, and Advertisements, and for the side shows. Other stall holders are the National Council of Women, The Young Women's Christian Association, The London Society for Women's Service, The Girls' Friendly Society, and the Indian Women's Educational Association. These stall holders will pay us for their stalls. Speeches by well known speakers will be held during the afternoon.

Owing to lack of space, our article on politics will not appear in this issue.

The Representation of Labour on Boards of Directors.

There is probably more loose talk about the association of labour with the management of businesses than about any other subject in the world. Everyone is desirous of seeing harmonious relations in the workshop. Everyone realises the evils of the present conflict and friction, most people agree that there should be some change. Many people, perhaps a majority of the Country, believe that this change should take the form of closer union between employers and employed. So far so good: up to this point most of us are agreed. But when you go on to argue that the difficulty

will be solved merely by the election of workers on to boards of management, it is necessary to be perfectly sure of our meaning. Do we mean that industry is to be jointly managed, and by whom? Who is to choose the representatives of labour? Are they to be responsible to the Government, or to their trade union, or to the shareholders? In short, whom do you mean to elect, how do you mean to elect them, and what powers are they to have?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to go back to fundamentals. If you take any industry, such as the production of coal or cotton, or any service such as the supply of water or transport, you can judge it from different points of view. From that of the state, of the community as a whole, it should perform some useful service under good conditions of labour. It should give the public something which they want. It should pay good wages, provide healthy conditions, and offer an occupation which benefits the physique, the self-respect, the citizenship and the spiritual life of those it employs. Lastly, its equipment should be up-to-date, its management skilful, and it should pay a fair return on the capital employed. The last condition is necessary in order to prevent the country's wealth being squandered in foolhardy enterprises.

That is industry from the standpoint of the State. When you consider it from other aspects, such as the interests of the men employed, of those who invest their money in it, or those who manage it, you will find this:—All the above factors are present but their relative proportions vary. The employed look chiefly to wages, security and conditions, the shareholders to security and profit; the managers to their scientific interest, their salaries, their careers, and what not. Each party, naturally and properly, thinks of industry as it affects himself. Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not the least mean that industry is a conflict of selfish interests. Far from it. The interests are often unselfish. Workmen will give up a profit for themselves in order to secure more for their fellows. Employers will run their works at a loss during bad trade. Industry is not a conflict of selfish interests. But it is a conflict all the same.

It is essential that this should be recognised. Conflict there must be, because interests are divergent. But there need not be quarrelling.

Barristers compete with their fellows, but do not necessarily hate them. Political opponents are often the best of friends. But there must always be an acute contest between them, and that contest remains, however you wrap it up.

But out of this contest something emerges. Just as the State's interest is greater than that of the different elements in industry, so is the interest of the concern itself. The whole is greater than its parts. The business itself is something different from the divergent factors in it. It stands, in a sense, midway between them and the State. A gas company has not necessarily fulfilled its obligations because it provides good wages, good dividends, and pure and cheap gas. There is something more. It should be an efficient concern of its kind, it should be the best. There is an impalpable quality it should possess, bad to put in words, but not hard to understand. Beside the interests of the State, of employed, of managers, of shareholders, there is the interest of the business itself.

Now let us come back to our working men directors. Let us see what their election on to the boards of management means, and how it fits in with what has just been said.

From the point of view of personal fitness, there is not a shadow of doubt that many Labour traders would make admirable directors. Any Dock Company would be benefited by Mr. Bevin's advice, Mr. Thomas would be valuable to any railway. Mr. Smillie or Mr. Hartshorn could give the greatest help to any colliery company. That is not disputed. But that is not the whole case. The real question is, who is to nominate them and whose interests are they to serve when elected. There is no doubt about what the Labour leaders want. They make no secret of their claim. It is that trade unions should elect them, in the interests of labour.

It is this that most people find so difficult to accept. They have no personal quarrel. They admit the integrity and ability of the men in question. But they say it is impossible to allow any outside interest to control a business. And they would make the same objection whatever that outside interest was: whether it was the State, or an employers' federation, or a municipality, or a trade union.

That is the difficulty. The industry itself would suffer. It would be less good of its kind. It is more than doubtful if the employees would benefit. And as to the community's interest, a conflict at its heart would assuredly not help it.

What then is the answer? Are we to stay as we are? Is the demand of labour for a larger control of its own conditions to be ignored? Are workmen to be told that their place is the workshop and that the management is for their betters?

No we cannot stay as we are. And there is an answer. But it does not run on one line only, for it covers a wide field.

First of all there are Whitley Councils. These Councils, be it remarked, are founded in the knowledge that the interests which they represent are divergent. At the same time they contain the germ of joint management. And this joint management proceeds not on the lines of unification, which is involved in electing working men as directors, but on that of allotting spheres of interest. To put that rather more plainly, Whitley Councils are based on the principle that labour will emancipate itself by settling more things for itself. Hours of labour, workshop regulations, sanitary conditions, holidays, are all matters in which workers are vitally interested. The Councils provide machinery for extended control over these. Some progress has been made already, but there will be more in the future. How far the system will go no one can say. It may go so far that it ends in joint control. But this will be a joint control reached by allotting to each factor its proper sphere of interest: not by merely trimming workmen into directors. Workmen in their sphere will control their own destiny. The boundaries of that sphere are extending and will extend further yet. He would be a bold man who prophesied what the future would bring.

Next it would be invaluable if more experiments were tried. State management is too unpopular at the moment for its extension to be acceptable: but still, useful trials could be made. However, leaving that on one side as impracticable, why should not common ownership be tried? It has always been a matter for amazement that trade unions, with their vast funds, have not tried it. They might buy a factory, and allow the operatives to manage it, charging them a fair interest on the capital. A sane employer might try it. Trade Unions, however, have always set their face against it.

There are many possibilities. Men's minds, too, are more fluid than they were, and people are willing to try experiments which would have been flouted before. Our industrial system, it is true holds the field. No one has yet found a means of producing more cheaply. It pays the community to allow private individuals to make bicycles, for instance, and to make huge fortunes out of them, rather than to make them in State workshops, and sell them at cost price: because you and I get our bicycles far cheaper than if Government made them. The modern industrial system supplies our needs more cheaply than any yet tried, and in this sense it holds the field. But only in this sense. There is nothing final about it. In the past it has changed, and so it will in the future. Indeed it is changing now.

Personally, though I do not believe that the goal will be reached by the simple expedient of electing trade union leaders as directors, I do believe that things are moving towards joint management. But it is very different from the joint management usually talked about.

Women's Work and Wages.

During the early period of the war one of the acute problems which confronted the statesmen of this country was the unemployment among civilians, and above all among women. Some of the more far-sighted among the women realised from the first that this unemployment could not continue if Great Britain was to be victorious, they realised that every scrap of power, be it man power or woman power, would be needed and that such advice as was given by the head of a government department to Dr. Elsie Inglis was simply the result of crass ignorance. This gentleman, of the heavy father type with which we are familiar in melodrama, met that most brilliant and courageous medical woman's offer of help by a curt "The only way you can help Madam, is to go home and keep quiet." Hardly had this reply received the wide publicity which it deserved before the official feeling began to change. The women who had been told to go home and keep quiet were suddenly exhorted, commanded, begged and implored to come forward and help to win the war. "Your King and Country needs you" was the clarion call no longer to the men alone, but to the women nurses and V.A.D.'s, women in munitions, women in camps and canteens,—the W.A.A. C's, the W.R.E.N.S., the W.R.A.F.'s found themselves hard at work, and that in a veritable blaze of universal approval. This state of things continued until the end of the war, and the Prime Minister was hardly felt to have uttered more than a pardonable exaggeration when he declared that the women munitioners had won the war.

Since Armistice Day the hoary pre-war prejudices revived with an added bitterness borne of the jangled nerves from which everybody seems to be suffering since peace was signed. Again women are superfluous, again women are to go home and keep quiet, again no woman must work for wages while any man needs a job. The Pre-War Practices Act was inevitable, given all that had gone before. During the war the government in its desperate need, had pledged itself to the Trade Unions that, in brief, no woman should be continued in man's work when the war was over. Inevitably, ever since the passing of the Act there has been constant controversy between the various interests involved in regard to what is "man's work." A thousand new processes have arisen since June 1914, which of these are ordained by nature to be done by men alone? But a more serious problem than any which have arisen under the Pre-War Practices Act, is that involved in the women's pledge, whether explicit or implicit, that, however great their need, they would never willingly stand in the way of any man who had been on active service and desired to return to his trade. Public opinion has warmly endorsed this attitude, but, it must never be forgotten that the women

assumed it of their own free will and not as the result of outside pressure. But the women's just and generous gesture has been used as a tool against them. Under the plausible pretext of a desire to see justice done to the man who had risked his life for the country, women have been dismissed wholesale from innumerable occupations in which they had made good, in order that men, or mere youths, who have never worn khaki may be taken on. Quite recently Lieutenant Commander Astbury speaking in the House of Commons put the matter quite frankly: "Women should leave not only Government departments, but municipal bodies, and make room for men." The natural chivalrous feeling of all patriotic women for the men who risked their lives in the war, must not blind them to the fact that they are up against a very determined effort to put women back, not temporarily but permanently into a few unskilled and badly paid occupations euphuistically described as women's work. Field Marshal Sir William Robertson has recognised the insidious peril and meets it with a few words of soldier-like directness: "Women have the same right to work and live as men. I detest the idea that women should be mere dolls and playthings."

Closely allied to this problem of equal opportunity for men and women to make good in any occupation, is the problem of equal pay for equal work. Mrs. Sidney Webb in her Minority Report has shown, with a lucidity all her own, how these two things hang together and how, if women are to enter into competition in the labour market with men they must do so as comrades and not as black-legs. The Trade Unions recognise much more clearly than was formerly the case, that in this matter of pay, men and women must stand or fall together—that it is quite impossible for men to keep up a decent wage standard for themselves if there is ever at hand a mass of cheap women's labour to be had. On one pretext or another great efforts are made by reactionaries to establish sex differential rates i.e. while continuing to pay men, old or young, good, bad or indifferent, on a well-defined standard rate, to pay women, because they are women, lower rates for the same types of work. Mrs. Webb shows clearly the fallacy of this "differential" system as applied only to a sex and not to all differentiations of value as between the work of one worker or another in the same grade and type of work.

The Government, who should be model employers show a deplorable backwardness in understanding the perils of this double economic standard. Only a few weeks ago the Treasury sent out an intimation to the Scientific Institutions coming under its scope, that the equal scales of salaries which, all honour to the departments in question had been the rule, were to come to an end. That most enlightened organization, the National Union of Scientific Workers has always demanded equal qualifications and equal pay for men and women workers in

science, and the retrograde action of the Treasury has placed them in an intolerable position. The National Union of Women Teachers are fighting an uphill fight for the recognition of the great principle in the teaching profession and it is in this profession above all others that the absurdity of the differential system most appears, for not only do men and women hold the same qualifications but in certain cases, women have super added to the qualifications possessed in common with their men colleagues, certificates in needlework and domestic science. The time worn plea that the man has a wife and family to support, though deserving of full weight cannot be accepted as conclusive, for a moment's reflection shows the entirely mongrel wage system now in being, neither a widow with six children, nor a man with one or more, are in point of fact paid according to their responsibilities. Now that more and more women, by necessity or by desire are engaging in the honourable pursuit of adding to the nation's wealth, in a time of sore need, the whole range of traditional sex differentiation and prejudices calls for scientific consideration, and these few words are written in the hope that women organized in political groups will recognize more and more the vital importance of these economic problems.

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Wed. before Easter. No Lecture.
Wed., 30th Mar. "The Development of Character through Self Expression." ... Miss LENA ASHWELL.
8.15 p.m. Chairman ... Miss ALICIA LEITH.
Wed., 6th, Apr. "Penal Reform." ... Miss MARGERY FRY.
8.15 p.m. Chairman ... Mr. W. CLARKE HALL.
Wed., 13th, Apr. "The Influence of the Modern Stage." ... Miss CICELY HAMILTON.
8.15 p.m. Chairman ... Miss NINA BOYLE.
Wed., 20th, Apr. "Some Aspect of Physical Research." ... Mr. FREDERICK BLIGH [BOND].
8.15 p.m. Chairman ... Mrs. T. DEXTER.

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