

WOMEN'S SERVICE  
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# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

## AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

#### Honours.

The Birthday Honours List published last Friday is conspicuous for its inconspicuousness. We will leave to our disgruntled trade union friends the unmannerly innuendo that political levies are not the only way of replenishing political war chests. We have as a matter of fact given up criticising Honours Lists. Nevertheless the women who appear in them (and perhaps this is why they appear so sparsely) are markedly less politically serviceable than the men. We venture to suggest that Dame Emily Penrose, D.B.E., late Principal of Somerville College, has been of very little use to any political party, yet every reader of this paper knows of what supreme use she has been to the cause of women's education and how materially she has contributed to the repute of her college, her university and her sex. In view of the shining decoration with which an invisible fairy godmother invested Dame Nellie Melba at birth, in view also of the restricted sphere from which female honours are drawn, there seems little enough that a well-disposed Government could do to record appreciation of her generous and public-spirited use of a unique voice. It was, however, a happy thought to shift her up from the D.B.E. to the G.B.E. Class of the Order of the British Empire. The investiture of Princess Mary with the G.B.E. suggests the dispatch of a scuttleful of coals to Newcastle; nevertheless everyone will rejoice in this gesture of popular homage to a very well-loved princess who shows a singular capacity for radiating kindness and unassuming simplicity through an enveloping mist of glitter and formality. Equality or no equality, we shall regret the day when the sinister phrase "for political services" will qualify the name of a woman in an Honours List, and we rejoice that this day has not yet arrived.

#### The Irish Free State Elections.

The full list of nominations for the Irish Free State elections includes the names of eleven women. These are divided as follows: Government two, just double the number nominated the first time; Sinn Fein, i.e. followers of Miss McSweeney, have nominated three, including Miss McSweeney herself; Fianna Fail, following Mr. De Valera, two; Clan Eireann, followers of Professor Maginnis, one; and one "Independent Republican." Women will take most interest in the two women who stand on an entirely Independent platform, Miss O'Farrelly, who stands for the National University, and Mrs. Noel Guinness, nominee of the Irish Women Citizens' Association for County Dublin. The last named is fighting a difficult battle in a constituency con-

taining 100,000 voters. Canvassing has been carried on with energy, and as an outcome many women are voting who "never bothered themselves about them things before." Even if Mrs. Guinness fails to score the success which her courage merits—non-party candidates are even yet rather under a handicap in Ireland—the canvass and the outdoor meetings have provided valuable political education for women voters.

#### Margaret Bondfield and Protective Legislation.

Miss Margaret Bondfield, speaking at a plenary session of the International Labour Office Conference, stated that British working women believe that women require legislative safeguards because of the higher labour turnover, due to the fact at any rate in Great Britain of the non-permanent nature of women staffs in industry. Women enter industry as young girls; they marry and go out of industry; later they may return as widows or married women whose husbands cannot support them. They have, therefore, she pointed out, a broken industrial record and are not like men able to maintain organization to the degree of efficiency which made collective bargaining sufficiently powerful in their case. While we do not deny the facts she set out, they do not in the least do away with the point that much of the enthusiasm of the male Trade Unionist legislation is due to the almost undisguised hope that it will result in limiting women's employment. It would be indeed very hard to find a case apart from provisions for maternity where protection really needed by women is not equally desirable for men also. Protective legislation not only puts an unfair handicap in the way of the woman worker but it postpones the achievement of adequate safeguards for the welfare of the man. We hope to return to this in a later issue.

#### The Statute of Limitations.

Forces are being mobilized for the battle which will be fought out on 14th June in the Congregation of Oxford University over the question of whether the number of women students shall be limited by statute. The effect of such a statute would, if it is passed, be to limit the number of undergraduates in residence at the Women's Societies to a maximum of 840, and to prevent the foundation of any new college for women if it would make the proportion of women to men in the University more than 1:4. In *The Times* of 2nd June, the promoters of the aforesaid statute state their case, with a sense of some grievance, that the anti-limitation party have been unresponsive to proposals for compromise. It is a curiously naive case, ably summarized in the last paragraph: "Women students," we are reminded, "have been admitted at Oxford to full membership of the University, which they do not enjoy at Cambridge, at Harvard, or at Yale. In Oxford the women already amount to about one in five of the whole number of students, as against a proportion of about one in eight at Cambridge, and the success with which other Universities have maintained their barriers deflects the whole force of the current against Oxford." They quote Cambridge's ambition, as expounded before the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge, "to remain mainly and predominantly a men's University" and express the hope that "all members of Congregation who have the same hopes for the future of Oxford will vote *placet* on 14th June."

#### The Women's Case.

On 3rd June, the Principals of the four women's colleges, and the Chairmen of three of them, explained, through the same medium of *The Times* letter, the reasons for rejecting a compromise. They were, they said, prepared to accept a compromise which bound the women's colleges not to increase their numbers without twelve months' notice, and indeed to ask their councils



not to propose any further increase for another ten years. They were not prepared, however, to "assent to University legislation against the foundation of another women's college." Meanwhile, they pointed out that already under existing statutes no new women's college can be admitted to the University without fulfilling difficult conditions and by a vote of Convocation given after full consideration by the University. They condemned the whole proposal as an unwarrantable interference with college autonomy, and pointed out that by legislating against future foundations the University of Oxford would proclaim to the world that it was more concerned to preserve an arbitrary ratio between men and women than to "leave itself free to determine questions of future foundations, whether for men or women, on their merits in the light of the educational needs of the time." Their case is unanswerable. Under existing conditions the statute is pointless, for the proposed limit is substantially in excess of the limit which the five women's societies (i.e. the four colleges and the Society of Home Students) have already imposed upon themselves. If it ever acquired point under conditions whose exact nature nobody can foresee, it would have to be, and would be, repealed. But though pointless, it is nevertheless obnoxious. It would be deplorable if Oxford University were to imprint upon its statute book for future generations to mock at, the transitory and nameless fears of a group of disgruntled men who to-day chose to regard the higher education of women as a menacing "current" deflected "against Oxford."

#### The New Poor Law and Rural Areas.

Perhaps the strongest objections to the proposals of the Ministry of Health for the reform of the Poor Law have come from the rural areas, where the difficulties of substituting committees of the County Councils for Boards of Guardians are certainly greater than are corresponding difficulties in the case of the County Boroughs. On Wednesday, 1st June, the Minister of Health met representatives of the Unionist agricultural Members in the House of Commons, and agreed on a scheme as a basis for discussion between the Minister and the Local Authorities concerned. The new scheme will provide, as in the original proposals, that the present Boards of Guardians should be abolished, and that the County Councils should be responsible for the administration of all institutional relief. For other forms of relief the non-county boroughs and district councils within the county are to be Guardians for their respective areas, and the new unions will coincide with such areas. The new Boards of Guardians for each union will be composed of rural district councillors with a proportion of councillors of the non-county boroughs and urban district councillors comprised within the area. The expenses of the new Guardians are to be borne out of the rates of the new unions; the cost of running poor law institutions are, as originally proposed, to be a county charge. We await with interest the comments of the local authorities concerned.

#### The Nation's Health.

The last of the three annual volumes of the Registrar-General's Statistical Review for 1925 appeared last week. It records a marked increase in the maternal mortality rate of from 3.90 per 1,000 births in 1924, to 4.08 per 1,000 births in 1925. Deaths from tuberculosis in 1925 show a striking decrease, especially among women. Of the total deaths, 40,387, 22,234 were men, and 18,153 women. For men this is the lowest record of the present century, except 1923, when there were 22,085 deaths. For women it is without exception the lowest record, 1923 coming next with 18,703. Unfortunately the cancer death rate was in 1925 the highest yet recorded. The deaths from this cause totalled 51,939, i.e. 24,002 men and 27,937 women. The increase has, however, been much more rapid in the case of men than of women. Since 1911-14 the percentage increase has been: males 13 per cent., women 2 per cent., both sexes taken together, 6 per cent.

#### Sickness Among Women.

The revelation by the National Deposit Friendly Society at last week's conference of a 30 to 40 per cent. excess of sickness among its women members once again raises the question which we considered in our notes of a fortnight ago. What is wrong with the health conditions under which these insured

women live and work? The fact quoted above arose in the course of a discussion on an amendment moved by the Liverpool branch, the object of which was to admit women to Class A, which is at present only available to males in good health and free from hereditary complaints. In moving this amendment, Mr. Garrett pointed out that if two children joined the Society, a boy and a girl, the boy was registered in Class A, while his sister, who according to medical calculations had the better chance of life, was only eligible for Class B. In reply, reference was made to the heavier sickness rate among women, and it was pointed out on behalf of the Society that although the weekly sickness benefit was 3s. a week more for men than for women, the average sickness payment to women members was 23s. as compared with 17s. 6d. for men. In view of these facts it is not surprising that the Liverpool amendment was lost by a large majority. When one considers the general conditions under which in the past girls have mismanaged their health: the comparative lack of exercise and regular feeding, the continual dovetailing of domestic duties with outside work, culminating in the various mismanagements of married life to which we referred a fortnight ago, this relatively heavy sickness rate, though it remains deplorable enough, does not appear very surprising. One can but hope that, within a measurable distance of time, tennis courts, modern clothes, swimming baths, and a generous overhauling of the National Health Insurance system will have done their work, and the superior vitality of the female organism to which Mr. Garrett referred will show itself not merely in greater expectation of life, but in an equal expectation of continuous good health.

#### Women's Institutes in Conference.

The Annual Meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes was a fine affair. The Queen's Hall was overflowing, and the meeting went with a snap and vitality unusual at annual gatherings. It was a great triumph to be able to announce that the Federation no longer looks to the Government for a single penny towards its running expenses. In the short space of ten years it has not only achieved the establishment of nearly 4,000 separate Institutes, but has also developed the scope of interests dealt with at these Institutes. The revival of village industries, the encouragement of music, folk songs and dances, lectures on subjects of literary, historic or general interest: all these have a place in the activities of the Institutes. We are delighted to know that at last week's meeting a resolution was passed changing the rules so that Institutes will from now on be able to discuss controversial matters (other than those dealing with sectarian or party political subjects). Other resolutions were passed on the need for telephone development, more teaching in domestic science, extension of agricultural education for women, etc. With regard to the Poor Law, it was agreed to consider the Government's proposals further before committing the Federation.

#### Edinburgh Corporation—Provisional Orders.

Our readers will remember the account in our issue of 20th May of a deputation of women's organizations to the Edinburgh Corporation to speak against the application which is being made in the above Orders for compulsory powers for the removal and detention of persons suffering from venereal disease. A counter petition has now been organized by the Scottish Federation of Societies for Equal Citizenship signed by individual ratepayers. There appears to be no intention on the part of the Edinburgh Corporation of withdrawing the objectionable clause. The next step in a private bill of this kind is for the Secretary of State for Scotland to decide whether there is sufficient ground in the petition for objection to the relevant clause. If he considers that there is, the Chairman of the Private Bills Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons consult as to the desirability of having a Commission of Investigation. If not the Bill goes forward.

#### First Woman Winner of Newdigate Prize.

The Newdigate Prize for English Verse at Oxford has been won by Miss Gertrude E. Trevelyan, of Lady Margaret Hall. It is, indeed, a fine achievement that so soon after University prizes have been open to women this most coveted, perhaps, of all prizes has been won by a woman student. We offer Miss Trevelyan our wishes that her career will be as great as that of many of the Newdigate winners in the past.

#### AGE OF MARRIAGE.

A question which has been occupying the minds of many men and women engaged in public work in this country, and which has been several times referred to in these columns, is that of the legal age of marriage. It will be remembered that the Home Secretary stated on 30th March that he found the subject "terribly difficult", and was obviously not prepared to do anything at present.

The Child Welfare Committee of the Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young Persons of the League of Nations has just issued an extraordinarily interesting report on "The age of marriage and the age of consent in relation to the moral protection of the young", in which questionnaires on the laws relating to these questions are answered by the member States of the League.

We will confine ourselves here to those answers dealing with the age of marriage only. The report shows that legislation restricting the age of marriage is effected in three possible ways:

- (1) By fixing a minimum age not subject to exception.
- (2) By fixing a minimum age under which marriage may take place by dispensation.
- (3) By laying down an age, generally the age of majority, under which the consent of a third party to the marriage is required.

Some countries use all three methods of legislation, others only one, and others again a combination of any two. Where the minimum age of marriage is not subject to exception it is in many cases, as might be expected, very low, and probably bears little relation even to the lowest age at which marriage actually takes place in the country.

In countries where the minimum age is subject to dispensation, the minimum age of marriage is higher and bears a closer relation to the age at which a certain number of marriages take place. The granting of dispensation is generally vested in a high officer of the State, and is only exercised for urgent reasons. The most common reason for dispensation is that in which the girl is about to become a mother and in which marriage will enable the child to be born legitimate.

In most cases the age of marriage for men and women differs, though in a few countries we find the minimum age subject to no exception, the same for both men and women. Such, for example, is China, where the minimum age is sixteen years, and Turkey, where it is fifteen years.

As regards countries in which the age for men and women is different, the highest age for men is the age of majority in Danzig and Germany, and the lowest twelve in Hungary; for women the highest age is sixteen in Egypt, Esthonia, Latvia, and the lowest twelve in Great Britain and many of its Dominions,

#### THE CENTENARY OF JOSEPHINE BUTLER. 1828-1928.

By T. M. TURNER.

"HER NAME IS A BANNER."

In April, 1928, the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene will celebrate the Centenary of the birth of its Founder, Josephine Butler. Readers of THE WOMAN'S LEADER will remember how this heroic woman challenged and destroyed, in this country, that most brutal form of sex subjection, the system of State Regulation of Prostitution; and how, having won the victory here, she challenged the system wherever it was to be found, with the result that regulation in its old form has either been abolished or become utterly discredited. Her dauntless courage and beautiful personality have become a legend, but time has a curious habit of giving a halo to the rebel safely dead, while it conveniently forgets the fundamental principles which inspired the rebellion. Josephine Butler has a vital message for our own time, and we who gather to honour her name must resist this tendency to put her among the saints, if it means merely giving her a halo, and then forgetting her challenge. We must, if necessary, destroy the halo in order to reveal the clear-sighted woman whose vision, and deep understanding of the springs of human conduct, make her one whose message is for all time. It was not her goodness nor her purity, though both were positive qualities, but her passionate belief in freedom that made her—and makes her still—the champion of the prostitute against cruelty and injustice. That profound belief in freedom and justice informed her whole attitude to life. It frequently brought her into conflict with sincere religious and social workers who were unable to understand that freedom is the basis of all morality and that no lasting good can come from actions, or laws, which are founded on inequality and injustice.

Greece, Hungary and Italy. As regards countries which have a minimum age subject to exception, the highest age for men is the age of majority in the Scandinavian countries and Finland, and the lowest age is seventeen in Japan. The group of countries which show the highest age with regard to women, i.e. eighteen, include again the Scandinavian countries, and the lowest, fifteen years, include Belgium, France and Japan.

It is interesting that India, in cases not covered by special Marriage Acts, has not defined the age at which marriage may lawfully be contracted, but has laid down that a marriage may not lawfully be consummated where the wife is under thirteen—a year higher than in this country.

We find thus that Great Britain is among the most backward countries with regard to this question; it is clear that a reform in this direction is long overdue. True, the number of cases of girls married under fifteen is too small even to be tabulated in the Census Report; at the same time cases do arise, and it is noteworthy that in the Report of the Committee of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children it is pointed out that the low age of marriage is used as a cloak for luring away quite young girls by an offer of marriage, real or bogus.

In considering what should be the minimum age in this country, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, at its last Annual Council, proposed that this should be not less than the age of consent. It is hoped that if and when such a reform is reached, that no exceptions or dispensations will be allowed. After all, the reason usually advocated, viz. that a child is expected, necessarily means that the man concerned has been guilty of a criminal offence against the girl. If dispensation can easily be obtained in such cases, the advantage of raising the minimum age would be largely nullified. If dispensations are not to be easily granted, it is laying an almost intolerable burden on the official and court concerned to determine in which cases they should be given. Should the age of marriage be raised, the question will have to be decided whether marriages below the legal age are to be void or not. In view of the fact that if, through misrepresentation or otherwise, such a ceremony was gone through and the marriage declared void the man could not be required to maintain the wife, nor could any child be legitimated, it would probably be better that such a marriage should be made an offence, but that it should remain valid.

It is important that all interested in this subject, and especially women's organizations, should study the various aspects of the problem, and especially the Report referred to above, and do all they can to bring pressure to bear on the Government to introduce legislation so as to bring Great Britain into line with the more advanced countries.<sup>1</sup>

None knew better than she, that, though the form of regulation can be broken, the spirit survives as long as the belief in the power of coercion exists in human hearts. Therefore she regarded no victory as final; she insisted that there must always be a body of people on the alert against new and subtler forms of the old slavery. She wrote in 1898, twelve years after the abolition of Regulation in Great Britain: ". . . Their first thought is, after their open declaration of the failure of the present system, 'What can we put in its place?' They are, therefore, imagining and proposing certain legal enactments and police measures, which, though they may not intend it to be so, inevitably lead to the restoration of some system based on the false principles which are at the root of all Regulation. There are always the inequality between the sexes, the negation of personal rights, and tyrannous and almost irresponsible powers placed in the hands of the executive."

Her words were prophetic, for this is exactly what has happened. In the United States of America, in Scandinavia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland regulation has been abolished; but it has been replaced by systems of compulsory reformation for prostitutes, and compulsory measures for the treatment of disease, which contain in themselves the element of regulation. Again and again Josephine Butler insisted that the State could not deal effectively with prostitution. Her contention that bodies of "men transformed into officials"

<sup>1</sup> The National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship is asking the Home Secretary to receive a deputation on the subject.



could not effect a reform that can only be effected by moral and social influences of a very different character has been proved up to the hilt in the United States, where a most determined effort is being made to suppress prostitution by law. In principle the law is equal; in effect it is put into operation against women only. Prostitution is a legal offence and so is aiding and abetting, yet the Courts have decided that no man can be convicted as a principal in an act of prostitution since "prostitution is an offence of women only." Entrapment of women not necessarily prostitutes is practised. Plain clothes police officers hang about the streets or make assignations with women and having induced them to make immoral proposals to them, they then arrest them. When convicted on the evidence of the plain clothes officer who has "entrapped" them, the women are surgically examined; if diseased, they are imprisoned till cured. Needless to say these methods have had a most demoralizing effect on the police. The new "suppression" like the old "regulation" is founded on injustice, inequality, and belief in the double standard of morality; it will prove equally inadequate to suppress prostitution or diminish disease.

In this country, thanks to Josephine Butler, there is no regulation, nor is there any system of compulsory measures for the notification or detention of venereally diseased persons. But there remain the Solicitation Laws. In 1872 Mrs. Butler wrote as follows about these laws, and her words are still true: "When we put forth our plea that the State should keep its hands off this matter entirely, we immediately hear the cry, 'But surely you will punish solicitation.' On this head I will briefly record my own conviction, opposed, as I know it will be, to that entertained by many religious men at this moment. *All the proposals for dealing with solicitation, and other repressive measures applied to women alone, while they have an appearance of virtue about them have this evil in them, that they tend to foster in the minds of men the unequal standard which is at the bottom of the whole mischief.* Christ said, 'Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her.'"

These laws are old, unjust, and unequal between the sexes. They give too much power and place too great a responsibility on those police officers who have to administer them. Apart from the suffering they cause to the women who come under them, these "special laws" are a source of danger to the ordinary citizen, who is liable to wrongful arrest, and to blackmail. Recent cases in the Courts, and notably the case of Miss McArthur, who has just obtained £300 damages from the Glasgow police for wrongful arrest as a prostitute, prove that this danger is not an illusory one. No body of men, however excellent, ought ever to be trusted with arbitrary powers of this kind, which make them, in effect, the guardians of public morality. Mr. Forbes Lankester, K.C., who was, until quite recently, a Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate, says on this point: "I yield to no one in admiration of the way in which the police discharge their primary duty to the public in the protection and defence of the life and property of His Majesty's subjects, but I do not regard them as ideal custodians of public morality, and the sooner they are relieved of their duties in this respect the better it will be for their own reputation and the safety of women lawfully using the public streets."

There is only one way in which we can pay honour to Josephine Butler, and that is to carry on the work she began, in the spirit in which she conceived it. Let us sweep the present Solicitation Laws from the Statute Book as she swept the Contagious Diseases Acts from it. Then, as we gather together next April to give thanks for the beauty of her life and the splendour of her achievement, let us determine that her work shall go on, and her challenge be heard, until justice and freedom are in very truth the basis of all morality.

(Continued from next column.)

just put this. I do not put it to the meeting, because you will not all be Parliamentary candidates. . . . Let me put it to any provincial candidate at the next election. You will be asked: 'Are you in favour of a man having the vote at 21 or not?' He will be a bold man who will stand up and say 'I am not'. He will find it politically, in my view, an impossible position to maintain. 'Twenty-one' would immediately be taken as the slogan of both the other parties, and to take away a franchise centuries old in a democratic country is a thing which, in my opinion, is not practical politics. I for one not only look with no apprehension at the enfranchisement of both sexes at the same age, I welcome it.

"I believe that a democracy is incomplete and lop-sided until it is representative of the whole people, and that the responsibility rests alike on men and on women."

## EQUAL FRANCHISE.

Extract from the Prime Minister's speech at the annual meeting of the Women's Unionist Organization, 27th May, 1927:—

"I will say a few words about an old political subject—the franchise. I have always held the view, and have urged it in season and out of season, that our party, of all others, has nothing to fear from any broadening of the basis of representation. The party has thrived on every extension of the franchise, contrary to the prophecies of our opponents and every club grouser in our party. . . . It was Burke who said long before a popular franchise of any kind came into being: 'The art of representation is a progressive one.' Whoever does not realize that will be swept away. It can hardly be said that we have been unduly precipitate in extending the franchise either to men or women. The position of the Unionist Party to-day has been made clear by Mr. Bonar Law in 1922, and by myself on subsequent occasions. . . . I stated at the election of 1924 that the Unionist Party was in favour of equal political rights for men and women. In my view there are one or two things we should all remember. Sex is no longer a disqualification. (Cheers.) The principle was conceded in 1918. So it is not unfair to say that the onus lies on the opponents of an extension of the franchise to say why the arbitrary age of 30 should remain. Mr. Bonar Law himself said in 1922: 'I have been a consistent supporter of women's franchise, and even at the time that the Franchise Bill of 1918 was passed I felt that the discrimination in age between men and women should not be permanent. I think so still.'

"There is another Bill, or rather Act of Parliament that I have not seen quoted, the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919. Under that Act any woman—it does not say whether she is a 'flapper' or not—may practise as a solicitor or a barrister or a doctor, or enter the Civil Service or the police, and we know many women not unsuccessful in trade or business. Is there anything unfair, foolish, illogical, in saying that women who are qualified in any of these ways by law are unfit to vote? A woman of 30 may serve on a jury, she may be a doctor of medicine, she may give a death certificate, she may decide on a question of life or death, where an operation may take place, but there are people who say she is not fit to vote. That is rather difficult to defend in public. It is said there are more women than men if they all had the vote. That is quite obvious. There is no point in the argument unless you believe that the possession of the vote is the beginning of a sex war. No one claims that, and the same argument has been used on every occasion when the franchise has been extended, to suit the case. At one time, 'The poor are in the majority, they will swamp the rich.' At another time, 'The uneducated are in the majority they will swamp the educated.' Every attempt to equalize, to make fair that great democratic basis on which we rest has been met by the same kind of arguments repeated *ad nauseam* in a hundred forms to try and impede, to postpone the inevitable reform. In all the Dominions, except South Africa, where there is no woman's vote, in the United States of America—that is to say, in practically all the countries inhabited by the English-speaking peoples—the full franchise from 21 is in force.

"I think perhaps the most foolish—I was going to say of the arguments, I merely say of the observations—which have been made against the proposed change is the inclusion of all working women, the professional women that will be included in any extension, under the generic term of 'flapper'. The figures have been quoted over and over again that the extension of the age to 21 means 5,000,000 more votes, that nearly 2,000,000 of those will be women over 30, who, owing to the peculiar nature of the existing election laws, have so far not been able to get on the register, that something like 1,750,000 are between the ages of 25 and 30, and that the rest belong to that unhappy age from 21 to 25. We are told that there is a great deal of silliness among young people. I remember hearing that when I was young, and, of course, it is true. There always will be, but even if we do not like the silliness of 21, it is vastly less offensive than the silliness of middle age, and the silliness of middle age is far less offensive than the silliness of senility. I am quite aware that there is a strong feeling, which has shown itself in many of your associations, that there should be a franchise for both sexes at the age of 25. I can quite understand the feeling and it may well be that were a Government giving the franchise to-day to the people of this country for the first time that would be a proposal well worth thinking of. And if the country—if there be strong feeling in the country that this would be a better thing to do, there will be full opportunity for their representatives to express their opinions in the course of the debate when the Bill is in Parliament. I will

(Continued in previous column.)

## EQUAL FRANCHISE.

### Equal Franchise and the By-Elections: Westbury and Brixton.

Equal Franchise is well to the fore at the Westbury By-election. Questions have been asked, literature has been distributed, and on Friday a crowded and enthusiastic meeting of women, organized by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, was held at the St. James's Hall, Trowbridge. Mrs. Blanco White, as chairman, explained the non-partisan character of the meeting, and in describing the present political situation with regard to equal franchise, gave her impressions of the recent Albert Hall meeting. Unfortunately, after promising to attend, the Conservative candidate, Major the Hon. Eric Long, found that his engagements made this impossible. This was the more regrettable as there is reason to believe that he favours the age of 25 as the voting age for men and women. Mr. Harcourt Johnstone (Liberal), who has already shown his sympathy with equal franchise in Parliament, and Mr. George Ward (Labour) stand for equality of voting rights at the age of 21. Work will be started immediately at Brixton, and offers of voluntary help will be welcomed at N.U.S.E.C. headquarters, 15 Dean's Yard. No form of propaganda is so useful as that carried on at by-elections when the attention of the populace is focussed on political issues, and never has this by-election work for equal franchise been easier than at the present moment when it has come into the limelight of practical politics.

### The Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee.

At a recent meeting of the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee, the following resolution was passed unanimously:—

"That this meeting of the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee (twenty-two affiliated organisations) notes with satisfaction the Prime Minister's unequivocal advocacy of Equal Franchise in his speech to the Unionist Women's Organisation on May 27th, but regards with some anxiety the suggestion made in certain quarters that the new Session be postponed till next year, and, in view of the short time remaining for effective action during this Parliament, urges the Prime Minister to adhere to his original intention of starting the new Session this autumn and to introduce the Equal Franchise measure in November."

It was agreed to hold a Trafalgar Square Demonstration on Saturday, 16th July, at 5 p.m., of which full particulars will be given later. Open-air campaigns are being organized, and in London weekly open-air meetings are held in Hyde Park, Regent's Park, Clapham Common, Highbury Corner, and Jack Straw's Castle.

## THE WOMAN'S PROGRAMME AT EAST WILTS.

We print below a brief summary of the views of the three candidates at the East Wilts By-Election so far as they have been elicited in spoken or written replies to the questions sent them by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship:—

Equal Franchise: Major Long, "On the same terms as it is given to men"; Mr. Johnstone, "Equal franchise at 21"; Mr. Ward, "Equal franchise at 21."

In favour of equal pay and opportunities?: Major Long, "I am prepared to support any measure which has or may secure the unanimous support of the Civil Service"; Mr. Johnstone, "So far as physical difference between the sexes permit"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

Against restrictive legislation?: Major Long, "This question is too indefinite to make statement on"; Mr. Johnstone, "So far as physical differences permit"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

In favour of employment of married women?: Major Long, "A matter for local authorities"; Mr. Johnstone, "A matter for compromise"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

Equal Moral Standard: Abolition of solicitation laws and of State regulation in the colonies?: Major Long, "Yes"; Mr. Johnstone, "Yes"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

Women police legislation compulsory on local authorities?: Major Long, "I do not consider this step advisable"; Mr. Johnstone, "Yes, but doubtful about powers of arrest"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

Women in the League of Nations?: Major Long, "No definite opinion"; Mr. Johnstone, "Support"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

(Continued at foot of next column.)

## THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTES COME OF AGE.

In future years the rapid and vigorous growth of the Women's Institutes following upon the enfranchisement of women, will be regarded as a social portent comparable perhaps with the spontaneous growth of consumers' co-operation after 1844. And when its history comes to be written it may be surmised that Chapter II will begin with the eleventh annual general meeting held on 31st May and 1st June, 1927, in the Queen's Hall under the chairmanship of Miss Grace Hadow. For at this meeting it was announced that the movement had at last become economically self-supporting and intended to ask for no more Government subsidies. Nevertheless both Miss Hadow and the Minister of Agriculture, who addressed the meeting and congratulated it upon its membership of 3,800 Institutes, were emphatic that financial independence should not extinguish the now traditional co-operation which exists between the Women's Institutes and the Board of Agriculture. The variety of subjects subsequently discussed illustrates the versatility of this astonishing movement. Rural education in cooking, dress-making and handicrafts, overseas relations, the development of telephones, oil-pollution of seas and rivers, the after-care of schoolgirls, dancing, singing, poor law reform, motor traffic and the preservation of rural scenery. The list recalls an old encounter of our own in the streets of Oxford with a musician of considerable distinction. "Where are you off to?" "To the ——— Women's Institute." "What are you going to do there?" "I'm going to skin a rabbit and after that I'm going to play them Schumann's 'Carnival'." This is typical of the life of a Women's Institute. It is a thing of infinite variety, mingling the usefulness of the earth with the glory of the skies. The one thing lacking at last week's gathering was the presence of the President, Lady Denman. The recent death of her father, Lord Cowdray, necessitated her absence. Both the fact of her absence and its cause were a matter of keen regret to all who attended.

## SOME NEWS ITEMS ABOUT WOMEN.

Miss Ann Elizabeth Duncan signed the Sheriff Court Roll last week and became the first practising woman lawyer in Aberdeen. She served her apprenticeship with the firm of Lumsden and Davidson, with whom she is still at work.

Miss Violet Markham (Mrs. James Carruthers) has been asked to allow herself to be nominated as the next Mayor of Chesterfield. It is to be hoped, for the sake of Chesterfield, that she will accept the invitation, for a more suitable and eminent Mayor could hardly be found for that particular borough. For many years Miss Markham has been actively associated with its civic life; she was its first woman councillor, the founder of its Settlement, and of its very flourishing Women's Luncheon Club, as well as a county magistrate for the district. Suffragists will remember her first as the most formidable of the "Antis," later as a very outspoken convert to the cause for which her peculiar qualities of lucid thought and strong leadership had always, in spite of herself, provided a splendid advertisement.

On 1st June Colne Town Council conferred the freedom of the borough on Miss Christina Hartley. Miss Hartley, who has held office as Mayor of Southport, has been in the past a generous benefactor of Colne, and is the first woman to receive the freedom of the borough.

Miss Ida Lloyd Roberts.—At the eighty-fourth annual meeting of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on 2nd June, the President, Lieut.-Col. Brittlebank, announced amid applause that for the first time the Williams Memorial Prize for the best student in the year's final examinations had been awarded to a woman—Miss Ida Lloyd Roberts, of Liverpool.

(Continued from previous column.)

Birth control information at clinics in receipt of Government grants?: Major Long, "Yes"; Mr. Johnstone, "Yes"; Mr. Ward, "Yes."

Family allowances?: Major Long, "Little hope of any Chancellor of the Exchequer being able to finance such a project"; Mr. Johnstone, "An open mind with bias in favour"; Mr. Ward, "I can only support a National Scheme, being opposed to priority of sympathy to any section."



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS.

By BERTHA MASON.

## BOROUGH AND COUNTY LIBRARIES.

We have received by the courtesy of the Secretary, a copy of the report for the year 1926 submitted by the Executive Committee to the Trustees of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust last March. The lessons of the years 1913-25 were summarized, we are told, in the report for 1925. The 1926 report now under review, while carrying on that record in so far as it is continuous, emphasizes new policy, new features, and new developments, some of which are described in the general survey, others in later sections of the report. The remainder of the report falls under eight main headings, representing the broad divisions of the current policy of the Trustees, each is full of interest and worthy of attention. As our space, however, is limited, we think it well in this article to concentrate on the work of *Section B*, which deals with Libraries under three headings: (1) Borough, (2) County, (3) Special, as being the subject most likely to interest members of local authorities.

(1) *Borough Libraries*.—Good progress was made, we are told, during 1926 with the erection of new Borough Library buildings for which grants had been promised, and five new libraries were opened at Gateshead, Grantham, Llanelly. At Leeds the first of three new branches, the Burley branch, was opened. Buildings in course of erection, notably at York, Withington (Manchester), and Pembroke (Dublin) have been opened this year. "Municipal enterprise and the liberality of other donors, supplemented and in some cases stimulated by the Carnegie policy, have provided a Public Library service in practically every community which is large enough to maintain it adequately at a reasonable cost."

It is instructive, continues the report, to note how eagerly the public responds to improved facilities. At Gateshead, no less than 9,000 new borrowers were enrolled in six months; 6,000 new books had to be added. The new Barking Library, opened in 1924, records a further increase in gross issues of 20 per cent (juvenile 50 per cent). The new Airdrie Library, opened in 1925, records issues of 102,300 for 42 weeks as compared with 73,000 for the previous 12 months. The Ipswich Library, opened in 1924, shows issues of 419,000, an increase of roughly 100,000 over those of the previous year. In all these instances, "modern planning under liberal administration, with free access to well-filled shelves, has produced results which show that the rate-payers are reaping immediate value for their expenditure."

A couple of pages is devoted to defects of the Borough Library service and remedies for the same. It is pointed out (1) that many towns are maintaining a Library service on an uneconomic basis, the rate levied is not sufficient after paying overhead charges to provide an adequate supply of books and periodicals, the result being that such libraries cater almost entirely for the reader of simple tastes, and do not benefit the scholar, the student, the artist, the commercial man, or the scientist. (2) The same criticism applies generally to the ordinary conception of the personnel of Library staffs. The standard of salaries is too low to attract the class of men and women who are competent to act as literary advisers. In some libraries the custodian is only a caretaker; in many the librarian has no trained assistance whatever. (3) Many library buildings are inadequate and out of date. (4) In many towns there is a lack of co-operation between the library committee and educational agencies. Such towns are however, yearly becoming less numerous as the immense advantages of co-operation are becoming recognized.

In the light of these conclusions, the trustees have decided to abandon the policy of *building* grants and to offer assistance in *book-purchase* to medium and small towns, *provided the local authority* agrees to make more liberal provision. It is pointed out that a comparatively small addition to the rate would make all the difference to the real efficiency of the service. The slight increase suggested, even in the present period of financial stringency, is reasonable, if only as a matter of ordinary business, for it is economically unsound to incur heavy overhead expenditure and yet to produce a result which disappoints all concerned. The public store of books must be kept up to date, fresh and clean, if the community is to derive full value for its capital and current expenditure. The Trustees' new book-purchase grants are, therefore, accompanied by conditions designed to assist local library committees in their often disheartening efforts to put their libraries on a basis of efficient public service. It is encouraging to learn that Local Authorities have responded readily as soon as the reasons for the conditions were understood.

(To be continued.)

## NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

President: MISS ELEANOR RATHBORN, C.C., J.P. Hon. Treasurer: MISS MACADAM.  
Parliamentary and General Secretary: MRS. HUBBACK.  
Offices: 15 Dean's Yard, Westminster, S.W. 1.  
Telephone: Victoria 6188.

WEEK-END SUMMER SCHOOL AT ILKLEY,  
1st to 4th July, 1927.

## PROGRAMME OF LECTURES.

Friday, 8.30 p.m., Equal Franchise and other Legislation affecting Women and Children, Miss Macadam, M.A.; Chairman, F. H. Fawkes, Esq., J.P., C.C.

Saturday, 10.30 to 12 p.m., Problems of Population, Mrs. Stocks, B.Sc. (Econ.); 12 to 1 p.m., Business Meeting, Problems of Organization; afternoon, Excursions on the Moors and in the Valley of the Wharfe; 8.30 p.m., Women and Social Insurance, Mrs. Hubback, M.A.

Sunday, 4 p.m., Tea at Upper Ewe Croft, followed by a discussion on the Object of the N.U.S.E.C.—"What is Equality?"—to be opened by Miss Macadam; 8.30 p.m., "The Married Woman, her Employment and Legal Status," Mrs. Hubback.

Accommodation may be reserved at well recommended hotels at prices ranging from 10s. to 18s. a day. All the hotels are in good positions near the moors. *Applications for rooms and tickets should be made as soon as possible to the School Secretary, Mrs. Lovelock, 23, Richmond Place, Ilkley. School fee, 5s. Single lectures, 1s. 6d.*

## EQUAL FRANCHISE AND THE E.P.R.C.C.

The Executive Committee has decided, on the invitation of Lady Rhondda, to join the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee, on the understanding that the N.U.S.E.C. need never be committed to any course of action of which it does not approve. Particulars of a Demonstration which is being organized to take place in Trafalgar Square on 16th July will be given later. We hope that the N.U.S.E.C. will make a fine show on this occasion.

The Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee organises "group lobbying" of Members of Parliament on Equal Franchise on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5.30 p.m. onwards. A steward will be in charge. Those of our members who feel able to go will be welcomed.

## GARDEN PARTY AT AUBREY HOUSE.

Monday, June 27th, 4-6 p.m.

We are expecting a fine gathering of old Suffragists and others to the Garden Party in Aubrey House, when we have the honour to have as our chief guests Mrs. Stanley Baldwin, Dame Millicent Fawcett and Dame Rachel Crowdy. All our members are asked to note this date and to tell their friends. Tickets, price 2s. 6d. (including tea), can be obtained from Headquarters.

## NEWS FROM SOCIETIES.

## NEWPORT WOMEN CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION.

To widen their knowledge in the general affairs of public life and business the Newport (Mon.) Women Citizens' Association held during the early winter months five o'clock tea meetings at a local café to hear addresses by and submit questions to leading citizens.

The first meeting was held in February, when an address on Municipal Matters and experiences in the Mayoral Chair was given by the Mayor (Councillor A. T. W. James).

This was followed in March by a meeting addressed by Mrs. Jens Müller, J.P. The speaker dealt at length with the absolute necessity of having women magistrates, especially in cases involving women and children.

In April a meeting was addressed by Alderman Parry, J.P., who was recently created a Freeman of the Borough for his services in obtaining for the town an adequate supply of water. He spoke on the Talybont Water Scheme.

The last meeting in May was addressed by the Postmaster, J. A. Bytheway, Esq., on the work of the Post Office. This interesting meeting is to be followed up by a visit through the Post Office of members interested.

The N.W.C.A. hopes to continue these informal meetings in the autumn, as they have proved a great success.

## CROSBY HALL.

A CLUB AND HALL OF RESIDENCE now open for  
WOMEN GRADUATES OF ALL NATIONALITIES.

For further particulars apply to—

THE WARDEN, CROSBY HALL, CHEYNE WALK, S.W. 3.

## WESTBURY PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION, JUNE 16, 1927.

## CANDIDATES.

Harcourt Johnstone, Esq. (Liberal).  
Major the Hon. Eric Long (Conservative).  
George Ward Esq. C.C. J.P. (Labour).

A crowded and enthusiastic meeting was held in St. James' Hall, Trowbridge, on Friday, 3rd June, at 3 o'clock, when women of all parties were present to hear the views of the three candidates on questions specially affecting women and children. Mrs. Blanco White presided. Mr. Harcourt Johnstone and Mr. Ward attended personally, but Major Long, who had also promised to be present, was unable to fulfil the engagement owing to meetings in other parts of the constituency. Mr. Johnstone has already proved his support of equal franchise in the House of Commons. The answers of the three candidates to our questions are given elsewhere.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## BIRTH CONTROL.

MADAM,—There appears in your issue of 27th May a letter which, in spite of pressing affairs, I cannot let pass unchallenged; firstly, because of its writer's extraordinary ignorance of woman's psychology and ideals; secondly, because I consider it harmful and misleading.

(1) The average woman does not "enjoy herself" in the same way as the average man: most women would no doubt prefer abstinence, but are too considerate of their husband's natural desires to demand it. (Incidentally, how thankful those of us should be who possess a husband with ideals so much higher than those of your correspondent, a husband who does not look upon his wife as "a thing of pleasure to be thrown aside when pleasure is exhausted," but as an equal in all things, a beloved companion and honoured mother, whose health and happiness, with that of their children, he would ensure above all things!)

(2) Your correspondent quotes the opinions of two medical men to back up his own; I could quote half a dozen equally eminent doctors whose opinions are quite opposed to his, not to mention the vast number who have an open mind on this most important subject. In my experience of women in four European countries, I know of many whose health has been wrecked by too frequent child-bearing, but not one who has been harmed, or even alleged to have been harmed, by enlightened methods of birth control. Moreover, it is a matter of observation and common knowledge that the wisely placed offspring of parents who have awaited suitable conditions for bringing children into the world, are both healthier and happier than those of a sick and harassed mother in an overcrowded and therefore often neglected home, with insufficiency of food and other physical necessities—not to mention the spiritual needs of individual love and care, quiet and privacy. The most frequent source of the degradation of marriage and humiliation of womanhood, in my experience, is *unwanted maternity*, the price of a husband's momentary pleasure and satisfaction. The question of birth control is a so much wider one than your correspondent seems to have any conception of, that I can only end by advising him to study it more deeply in *all* its aspects, spiritual, physical, and economical, as well as medical.

M. CROOK.

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92 Victoria Street, London, S.W. 1.

## WOMEN IN THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL.

MADAM,—I wonder if it is generally known that the Lay Board of the Royal Free Hospital contemplates closing three of its House posts to women. It has gone so far as to advertise in medical papers for men substitutes. There are nine of these posts, and hitherto they have been exclusively filled by women. They are held for a period of six months, being the completion of the medical training, giving practical experience which has to be gone through before practice as a fully qualified person can be entered upon. Thus six women per annum will lose this opportunity of completing their training, and it is computed that it will put back the medical woman's cause four years. St. Mary's Hospital has already closed its doors to women students, although in the examinations a largely predominating number of them passed where the men failed.

May I appeal to any who are subscribers to the Free Hospital, or who have influence with members of the Lay Board, to make a vigorous protest to prevent this new injustice to women coming into being.

F. E. MATHEWS.

12 Stanley Crescent, W. 11.

## THE REORGANIZATION OPTION OF THE OXFORD BILL.

MADAM,—Those who by their support of the Reorganization Option in the Liquor Control Bill propose to alter the Licensing System, should look ahead, lest the Will-of-the-Wisp of "disinterested management" lead them into a deeper morass.

Disinterested Management is no new proposal. A generation ago the Bishop of Chester led the agitation which resulted in the establishment of Trust Houses. There are upwards of 200 such houses in which the profits paid to shareholders are strictly limited, and the disinterestedness of managers is secured by commissions, paid upon all sales other than intoxicating liquors. The results vary according to the style of the House. When it is a Hotel supplying liquor with food, but with no open bar, the results are satisfactory. Where there is the open bar, no amount of "disinterested management" can check the consequences of intoxicants consumed without any food to lessen the effect of the drug upon the system of the customer.

In a town in Cheshire, there are two fully licensed houses within a stone's throw of each other, one the Tied House of a Brewery Company, the other a Trust House. In the witness box at the Sessions a police representative said there was more drunkenness from the Trust House than from the Tied House.

The Oxford Bill is termed a Local Option measure. But what an illogical proceeding—to offer to the community an option between the two extreme courses of either prohibiting ALL liquor selling, or else giving to the trade in intoxicants, a new sanction, investing it with a new glamour in the eyes of the people, who are just awakening to the fact that it is a destructive trade.

"But it is in order to control it," we are told. Once the reorganization option is passed local control in that area ceases. There is no plan for consulting local residents, no educational force of a contested election. No appeal from the decision of the selected (not elected) members of the Liquor Board or Advisory Committee. But the Bill is a departure from the principle of all Temperance legislation in the past which has been along the lines of suppression. Within the last twenty years we have prohibited young children, child messengers, young people under 18 from consuming liquor on licensed premises.

What is needed at the present time is further progress along the prohibitory path.

(a) By creating machinery to register (by ballot) local opinion to guide magistrates when considering "the needs of the neighbourhood."

(b) A short Act on the lines of the 1908 Bill (which passed through all its stages in the House of Commons, was turned down by the Lords, and so helped to swell the wave of popular opinion which subsequently passed the Parliament Act) fixing the period at the end of which Compensation would cease to be paid.

The Scotch Local Option Act of 1913 gave seven years. This might be extended to twelve for England.

(c) Further education of the people—adults as well as children—as to the effect on the human body of small repeated doses of alcohol. And above all

(d) Education and agitation for the abolition of the open drinking bar.

(Mrs.) B. SHILSTON WATKINS.

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A Warden is required in September for Queen Margaret Settlement, Glasgow. Candidates should have training in and experience of Social and Settlement Work and be able to undertake the training of students. A University degree is essential. For particulars apply, stating qualifications, to the Honorary Secretary, Queen Margaret College Settlement Association, Queen Margaret College. Final applications, accompanied by three recent testimonials and two personal references, should be lodged with the Honorary Secretary by 25th June, 1927.

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COMING EVENTS.

**BLIND SOCIAL AID SOCIETY AND LITERARY UNION.**  
 JUNE 15. 7.30 p.m. 12 Buckingham Street, Strand. Miss Beaumont on "Equal Franchise as the Key to Citizenship."  
**NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.**  
**Westminster S.E.C. JUNE 14.** 8 p.m. Caxton Hall. Miss Macadam on "Votes for Women." Chair: Mrs. Hoster.

**Maidenhead S.E.C. JUNE 15.** 6 p.m. Abbotsleigh. Mrs. Ryland on "Equal Franchise."

**SIX POINT GROUP.**  
 JUNE 8, 9 and 10. Exhibition and Sale of Handicrafts and Hobbies at 92 Victoria Street, S.W. To be opened 8th June at 2 p.m. by Miss Mabel Lucie Attwell.

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**EAST CLEVEDON, SOMERSET.**—To let, furnished, from July 25th. Small House; 3 sitting, 4 bedrooms, bath (h. and c.), separate lavatory, kitchen with usual range, also gas cooker, scullery (h. and c.), water, larder, etc., small garden; 4 gns. per week during August and September. Special terms for a long let. Near golf links and sea.—Apply, C. Browne, 30 Park Hill, Ealing, W. 5.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**LONDON AND NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE,** 35 Marsham Street, Westminster. Secretary, Miss P. Strachey. Members' Library. Books on Suffrage, Sociology and Economics, Hansard, latest Government Publications, Periodicals, Newsclippings. 10-8 (except Saturdays).

**FELLOWSHIP SERVICES,** Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 12th June. 3.30, R. Wheeler, M.A., "Some Ancient Civilizations of Britain." 6.30, Canon Raven of Liverpool Cathedral.

**EDUCATED HOME HELPS BUREAU,** 190 Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W. 1 (new address), requires and supplies educated women for all domestic work. Registration: Employers, 2s. 6d.; workers, 1s. Suiting fee: Employers, 7s. 6d.; workers, 2s. (Victoria 5940.)

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