

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

Dame Millicent Fawcett.

The announcement in the Press of the grave illness of Dame Millicent must have come as a shock to many of our readers. We are thankful to be able to report that though she is still very seriously ill there is some improvement in her condition. All who love and admire Dame Millicent in our own and other lands will join with those who have been more closely associated with her in their hopes for her complete restoration to the perfect health and keen enjoyment of life with which we always associate her.

Towards Disarmament.

On Wednesday of last week the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that "as proof of our own sincerity" in entering on disarmament conversations with the U.S.A., the Government had decided on an immediate suspension of work on two cruisers, the cancellation of work on a submarine depot ship and of two contract submarines, and the slowing down of other constructional dockyard work. He added that he looked forward to the achievement of a preliminary Anglo-American agreement in anticipation of the general discussions of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament of the League of Nations. We sincerely hope that this ambition may be realized and that the new preliminary agreement may completely obscure the memory of our ill-fated attempt at a preliminary agreement last year. Meanwhile the Prime Minister may rest assured that he has a wide backing of appreciative public opinion, drawn from all parties, for any steps he may take towards the honouring of Allied disarmament commitments as defined by the Treaty of Versailles. Nor must it be forgotten that his achievements in this direction are "twice blessed." Not only is the cause of Peace served throughout the world, but the cause of social progress at home is served, by the setting free of public money for constructive tasks. The service of motherhood, the development of an adequate housing programme, or school maintenance allowance scheme, are a few of the causes whose immediate stumbling block is typified by the nine figures of our incongruous armaments bill.

Those who Stand to Lose.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to act, speak, or vote fervently in the cause of disarmament when one's entire livelihood depends upon the continued manufacture of preparations for war. And in this connection one of the most reassuring sections of the Prime Minister's statement was his assurance that the Admiralty was co-operating in special rearrangements for the absorption of displaced labour in the Royal Dockyards, and that the

representatives of dockyard labour would be consulted. But the most careful schemes of reabsorption are liable to appear less attractive than an uninterrupted job, and in localities where economic activity is intimately connected with naval traffic one would expect a modified enthusiasm for the Government's programme. It was therefore a peculiar kind of political courage which inspired Lady Astor, who holds a naval constituency by a somewhat precarious majority, to interject into last week's discussion, from the Opposition benches, the suggestion that "this momentous decision towards peace" is far greater than the unemployment question which it raises. If the electors of Plymouth are worth their sea salt it is an intervention which will, in the end, strengthen her in their political and personal regard.

A Dangerous Occupation.

On 25th July the question of maternal mortality was before the Public Health Section of the British Medical Association at its conference in Manchester. In a presidential address Dr. Veitch Clark, M.O.H. of Manchester, referred to the necessity of viewing the incidence of maternal mortality in relation to women of child-bearing age, rather than to the whole population. Thus seen, taking the ratio of deaths to risk, maternal mortality appeared to be three times as dangerous as cancer. The subsequent discussion approached the question from a number of angles: the inadequacy of ante-natal supervision, the possibility of checking puerperal sepsis by institutional treatment, and the improvement of obstetrical training of doctors and midwives. Several speakers seemed to express a certain impatience with lay criticism, more especially Professor Dougal, of Manchester, who said that since the question had appeared in the programmes of the political parties, there had been a good deal of needless exaggeration on the subject. He suggested, however, that in all probability about 50 per cent of our maternal deaths were preventable. This is a formidable indictment not only of the medical profession, but of the social system in which its members operate. The impatience of the lay critic is fed by the facts of life as reflected in the experiences of working mothers: confinements undertaken under housing conditions which make aseptic treatment virtually impossible, the blundering ministrations of inadequately trained newly fledged doctors, the unspeakable agony of operations without anaesthetics, and last, but not least, the sinister counterweight to ante-natal supervision which is provided by desperate and ignorant attempts to terminate unwanted pregnancies. It may be that the technique and devotion of the medical profession is blameless. But even if it is not, there remains a wide margin of social responsibility for a system which has failed to devise the machinery for putting an adequate proportion of its material and technical resources at the disposal of those who, at the risk of their lives, are securing the survival of the race.

The Lock Hospital Again.

In reply to a question from Mr. Holford Knight in the House of Commons on 22nd July, Miss Susan Lawrence stated that the Minister of Health had decided not to publish the reports of the Committee of Inquiry into the management of the Lock Hospital, in spite of representations from the National Council of Women and other organizations. We find it difficult to square this with the utterance of the Minister on 30th April, when he himself urged the publication of the report. *Autre fois autre mœurs*. This reply will cause much dissatisfaction; nor can we feel at all satisfied with Miss Lawrence's statement that the administration of the hospital has improved and that other improvements are in prospect. We referred last week to matters which so far as we know have not yet been satisfactorily cleared up.

To-morrow, and To-morrow and To-morrow . . .

The opening of the Ministry to women came up for discussion at the Representative Session of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference on Tuesday of last week, but with no very satisfactory result. As an amendment to the report embodying a previous decision affirming their eligibility, Dr. Waterhouse, of Richmond College, moved that while accepting the principle, in view of the "peculiar difficulties of the itinerant system" and the lack of demand from the churches, further steps should be suspended pending the forthcoming discussions with the United and Primitive Methodists concerning unity. Dr. Maltby, of Ilkley, who had previously presented the report, stoutly resisted this attempt to shelve the question for five or six years. He protested that there was a real demand for the services of women and that there was not the slightest danger of such action embarrassing the two other churches. The amendment was, however, carried by the narrow majority of 177 to 173, its worst implications being somewhat modified by a subsequent amendment inviting the two other Methodist Conferences to co-operate next year in the appointment of a joint committee on women in the Ministry. When the matter came before the Pastoral Session of the Conference at the end of the week, Dr. Maltby again urged re-affirmation of the principle, stressing the importance of the attitude adopted by ministers in regard to the ministry of women. The Pastoral Session, however, took the same view as the Representative Session, and the above-mentioned shelving decision was duly endorsed. One colleague took occasion to remind Dr. Maltby that he "could not expect to get in six years what the Church had failed to obtain in nearly two thousand years." One might regretfully add a lesson learned in the school of hard experience, that there is a considerable time-lag between what public opinion affirmed yesterday and what the Churches may, given complete assurance of unanimity, affirm the day after to-morrow. But is it inherent in the essential nature and function of Churches that this should be so?

Women's Suffrage in South Africa.

The franchise situation in South Africa is so riddled with currents and cross-currents of intermingled racial and economic animosities that it is difficult to visualize the progress or stagnation of the women's suffrage movement as a straight line between feminism and ante-feminism. The *London Letter* writer of the *Manchester Guardian*, however, quotes the opinions of a nameless correspondent which seem to throw a ray of light on the situation. The abolition of the existing coloured vote in Cape Colony is hanging in the balance, but, in the opinion of the said correspondent, the South African Party is luke warm in the matter, and determined rather to resist any enfranchisement of coloured or native peoples in the Transvaal, Natal, or the Orange Free State. The enfranchisement of European women appears to be the new weapon of racial supremacy and the correspondent is of opinion that "the enfranchisement of women cannot be postponed" and that "the issue of the future is clearly, therefore, passing into the hands of the white women of South Africa."

The Nationality of Married Women.

A meeting of societies interested in the question of the Nationality of Married Women was recently summoned by the National Council of Women. Miss Chrystal Macmillan in a statement on the present position recalled the fact that the Prime Minister had stated to a deputation of women's organizations before the General Election that he approved of the proposals which would enable a British woman to retain her nationality on marriage if she should wish to do so and not force British nationality on women of other countries marrying British subjects. She also stated that the subject will be dealt with at the meeting of the Imperial Conference probably in the autumn of 1930 and at the Codification Conference of the League of Nations, which will meet at the Hague in March, 1930. It is expected that Miss Ellen Wilkinson will re-introduce her Bill on the subject, and it was unanimously agreed that women's organizations should take joint action in urging the introduction of similar Bills in the Dominion Parliaments as well as in connection with the Imperial and Codification Conferences. It was decided at Berlin that a meeting of the committee on the Nationality of Married Women of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage and Equal Citizenship should be held at the same time and place as the first Codification Conference of the League of Nations, and this in itself will ensure the joint

action of many women's organizations. In this matter Great Britain is behind many other countries. In Argentine, Brazil, and other South American nations have accorded to married women their own nationality; Finland, France, Jugo Slavia, Turkey, Russia, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden have given married women certain rights of nationality. Miss Wilkinson's Bill will be one of the interesting events of next session, and women's societies should make this subject a matter for immediate attention.

The Enterprise of the "Daily News".

On Monday of this week the *Daily News* opened its columns to a serious discussion of Birth Control. On its enterprise in promoting frank discussion of a question which is being widely talked about, which has won a place in the political arena, and which is a vital factor in millions of individual lives, we offer it our hearty congratulations. The Press generally has lagged strangely and somewhat unaccountably in the rear of public opinion and public interest as regards this particular subject, and the *Daily News* is doing a valuable piece of pioneer work. There can be little doubt, for instance, that lack of open discussion is partly responsible for the continuance of that vast underground economic exploitation of shy, ignorant, and desperate working women, on which the vendors of fantastically expensive "rubber goods" and deleterious drugs flourish in all large towns to-day. But in one respect we are tempted to criticize the procedure of the *Daily News*: It is surely somewhat incongruous that the discussion of what is primarily a woman's question should be in charge of two men.

Another Penalty on Marriage.

It is very strange the number of penalties and punishments which are inflicted by the Government on women who marry. A case in point is referred to by a correspondent who sends us a letter from the Passport Office informing her that after marriage it will be necessary for her to surrender her existing passport (which is almost new) and to apply for a new one in her married name, and incidentally pay for the same. There are a great many cases of girls who go abroad to get married; they have to procure a passport just for the journey, as it is useless after the marriage ceremony has been performed. Women living in the East frequently make trips home without their husband, so quite apart from the question of dignity, it is essential for a woman to have a separate passport. This is one of the many official penalties on marriage. Surely it would be a simple matter to have the passport endorsed with the holder's married name.

The Distressed Areas.

The report of the Central Joint Committee for the administration of the Lord Mayor's Fund is satisfactory in so far as it reports the cessation of overlapping and duplication. But the large sums spent on boots, clothing, "extra nourishment," supplementary feeding of school children, transfer of juveniles, allotments tell us very little of the real state of affairs. Summer in passing and the hardships of winter will soon be on our unfortunate fellow citizens once again. We hope that soon after the re-assembling of Parliament we shall have from the Government a full statement of their intentions.

A Garden City within a City.

On Thursday of last week Mr. Neville Chamberlain unveiled the commemoration stone of the Larkhall Estate, Clapham, which will consist of sixteen blocks of flats set in an open space with old trees carefully preserved. The idea of a garden estate so near to the centre of London built by a public utility society with assistance in the form of loans from the London County Council for people of moderate means is an attractive one, and it is pleasant to think of this beauty spot in the middle of this populous area south of the Thames. We print in another column an article dealing with this interesting experiment in housing reform.

POLICY.—The sole policy of THE WOMAN'S LEADER is to advocate a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women. So far as space permits, however, it will offer an impartial platform for topics not directly included in the objects of the woman's movement but of special interest to women. Articles on these subjects will always be signed, at least by initials or a pseudonym, and for the opinions expressed in them the Editor accepts no responsibility.

THE SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE MELTING POT.

It is doubtful whether even the more thoughtful members of the public have yet fully realized the drastic nature of the changes which the passing of the Local Government Act will shortly bring into operation. In some quarters there appears to have been a vague notion that its fate would in some way be affected by the turnover of Governments. But a spiritless attempt to suspend the section dealing with the present *ad hoc* Scottish Education authorities failed completely and the Act stands as a permanent legacy from the last Parliament. It remains to be seen whether for good or ill.

The recent publication of the administrative scheme proposed by the London County Council brings home to us more vividly than any hypothetical proposals the wholesomeness of the departure from time-honoured methods which is to take place. Readers of Miss Bertha Mason's valuable articles will remember that draft schemes must be submitted to the Ministry of Health by all Councils concerned and the London scheme is now open to inspection and criticism before receiving the verdict of the Minister. For purposes of this article we can only deal with the bare outline. The twenty-five Boards of Guardians which have hitherto dealt with the relief of distress cease to exist. A Public Assistance Committee of the London County Council will be constituted, which it is proposed shall consist of forty-eight members, of whom thirty-two shall be members of the Council, with sixteen co-opted members, some of whom shall be women. So far so good, for we hear that in at least one large provincial Borough Council it has been decided not to co-opt members at all. The subdivision of the County of London for the new administrative purposes is interesting, and to the casual glance satisfactory. There are to be ten areas and local committees consisting of more than fifty and not fewer than thirty-two members are to be appointed. These local committees consist of "members of the Public Assistance Committee and other persons (including women as well as men) appointed by the Council from within or without its body. Boroughs have been grouped with some care with a view to geographical and other administrative considerations in the formation of these areas; for instance, the City of Westminster is grouped with Chelsea and Fulham.

The more personal work which every Poor Law Guardian knows so well will, subject to the approval of the Public Assistance Committee, be carried out by district sub-committees, consisting of eight to ten persons (no mention of women here) selected from the local committees. But only part of the work

NOTES FROM WESTMINSTER.

Before rising on Friday for an adjournment which is to last until 29th October, the House was occupied chiefly in finishing up its Bills and its necessary financial measures—a dull job; secondarily and more excitingly, in rebutting various Opposition attacks on its policy. Tuesday was mainly devoted to a debate on the Government's action in doing away with the "appointed guardians" placed by its predecessors in charge of the three Unions of Bedwellty, Chester-le-Street, and West Ham where the elected guardians had been suspended on the ground of extravagant administration. The technical form of this debate was a "Prayer" that the Government's action should be annulled, which Mr. Fenner Brockway unkindly described as a prayer "to withhold from the Poor their Daily Bread". The Government's defence was a good one. Mr. Greenwood pointed out that they had in fact merely anticipated so far as practicable the Local Government Act which will bring the administration of relief under the authority of County and Borough Councils. Until the Act takes effect, he has preferred guardians appointed by the elected Local Authority on whom the responsibility is in the future to rest to guardians appointed by a Conservative Government. There was no question of recalling the old elected Board, so that comments on their alleged incompetence and extravagance were irrelevant. Lady Astor rather rashly joined in the fray by alleging that the old guardians were guilty of "corruption", a term with a definite legal sense which was clearly not the sense in which she used the word. A heated altercation followed. On the following day she gave the House a much pleasanter taste of the quality of reckless courage in which she excels by reminding them, in the course of a discussion on the Government's proposal to cancel certain shipbuilding orders for the Admiralty, that Peace is an even greater question than dockyard employment. Some of the instances given by Mr. Fenner Brockway of

transferred from Boards of Guardians with their omnibus powers falls to the new Public Assistance Committees. A very considerable portion will, of course, be taken over by the Public Health Committee, which is to be reconstituted and christened "the Central Public Health Committee." Further, all functions relating to children over three years of age will be relegated to the Education Committee and transferred functions relating to persons suffering from mental infirmity to the Mental Hospitals Committee. This in brief is the scheme which will be described in greater detail in a subsequent issue in our Local Government Columns. There is certainly plenty to think about. The next few months will see the passing of the Boards of Guardians and the centralization of their work at County Hall. The grave dangers have been emphasized repeatedly in these columns and perusal of the London County Council scheme has not calmed our fears. While assured of a certain quota at least of women on public assistance committees, may we count a fair proportion among the members of the other statutory committees and the local committees and sub-committees? The report of the Special Committee on Changes in London Local Government which presented the scheme suggests that "the Council intends to avail itself of the valuable experience of ex-members of Poor Law authorities and voluntary workers in bringing the new scheme into operation." We should like to know what the basis of selection will be and we should like to have an assurance that party politics will play no part whatever in the inauguration of this stupendous new experiment in the public social services.

We have not yet had the opportunity of seeing schemes submitted from other parts of the country, but once again we must remind our readers that when these schemes are ready they are available for inspection and criticism on the part of the public. Women citizens are urged to scrutinize the local Press very carefully during the coming months, holidays notwithstanding, in order that they may not miss their publication. It may not be too late to take steps to press for the better representation of women or more adequate provision of grants for voluntary associations for maternity and child welfare services. Finally, we repeat Miss Fulford's warning in our issue of 19th July: "The remedy lies in the hands of every local government elector; no stone should be left unturned from now up to the election in November, to ensure that the community be no longer deprived of the services of women where they are so urgently needed."

inadequate out-relief by the appointed guardians were most impressive, e.g. a man with wife and three children receiving 23s. relief in kind as sole income, reduced by his refusal to go into the workhouse to 16s.; another couple with three young children and another expected getting 17s. in kind and 7s. in money, the man ordered to go into the workhouse on pain of having the money allowance stopped; a man of 75 living on an old age pension of 10s. and 5s. a week contributed by two married sons, paying 14s. a week for board and lodging; the money allowance of 2s. 6d. allowed him by the late guardians stopped. All these were alleged to be respectable working people with no other income. It is always rash to judge of individual cases without hearing both sides, but if this is the sort of relief scale adopted by the appointed guardians, it is difficult to see how a Labour Government could have continued them in office or indeed how any Government could justify their action consistently with the principle that relief, if given at all, should cover at least the bare necessities of healthy living.

On Tuesday evening the Government came under hot fire from their own left wing; firstly, concerning alleged harshness in the administration of unemployment benefit and secondly, concerning the refusal to admit Mr. Trotsky to this country. On the former question Mr. Buchanan spoke for nearly an hour, but failed to produce any effective remedy for the grievances he was describing. The whole debate revealed the practical impossibility of effectively enforcing the condition that the applicant for unemployment benefit must prove that he is "genuinely seeking work". In large towns such as Glasgow, to which Mr. Buchanan belongs, it passes the wit of man to prove that a certain workman has genuinely sought work. The cute man can easily get off by heart a list of all the addresses at which he might have been expected to call and reel them off to the relieving officer. There

is and can be no proof of his statement, as employers do not keep lists of the men who stand in queues or crowds at the factory gate. The honest, blundering unemployed workman, knowing that all these firms have nothing to offer him, abstains from wasting boot-leather on a hopeless quest, admits this to the interviewing officer, and is turned down. Miss Bondfield's remedy for this appears to be to set up yet another interviewing body, who will try to prove the unprovable. The House manifestly found her device unsatisfactory, and so will the unemployed.

The Liberals joined the Labour left bench in reminding the Government of this country's traditions in the matter of giving asylum to political refugees. Mr. Clynes' lengthy reply amounted to little but reiteration of his previous statement that the right of asylum was conditional and might be refused by any Government which thought the refugee likely to be "a cause of serious embarrassment" to the Government. Just why Mr. Trotsky was likely to be such a cause he did not attempt to explain.

On Thursday the House hurriedly terminated its business, doubtless because those in authority wanted to attend the Royal Garden Party. If this had happened when a different Party was in power, there would probably have been an outcry about it.

The two major debates of the week took place on Friday, on the question of Lord Lloyd's resignation or virtual dismissal and on that of the Young Reparation Scheme. It was generally felt that on the former point the Government made out a good case and that Mr. Winston Churchill's attack showed signs of just the kind of desire to make Party capital out of a delicate question affecting international relationships which he would have been the first to condemn had the position of political parties been reversed. It was a pity that this debate lasted so long that Members flocked out of the House as soon as it ended in search of a late lunch. Hence it was in an almost empty House that Mr. Lloyd George made an impressive and weighty criticism of the Young Scheme, and in a gradually filling House that Mr. Snowden made his equally weighty rejoinder. Not that Mr. Lloyd George's manner showed the least dissatisfaction with his scanty audience. He is, as ever, the King of the Forest wherever he finds himself. Some readers may have seen the magnificent animal film now being shown at the Marble Arch Pavilion. There is a moment in it when an old lion suddenly raises its head to glare and growl at an explorer who is teasing the lion-cub near by. There was a moment last week when Mr. Lloyd George looked for all the world like that old lion as he suddenly turned on his heel to rebuke some noisy interrupters at the far end of the Labour benches, who promptly subsided into their native insignificance.

CROSSBENCH.

THE NEW PARLIAMENT AND LOCAL OPTION.

The General Election is over, and the Temperance question has been fully discussed in many constituencies, Labour and Liberal candidates in many instances having placed Local Option in their Election Addresses. It is possible that it also found a place on the programme of one or two Conservatives, but of this I have no knowledge. There are certainly more temperance advocates in the new House of Commons than we had in the past, and this in spite of the fact that the *Morning Advertiser* on the day preceding the poll, counselled its readers to concentrate, *irrespective of party*, on the defeat of candidates who supported Local Option. Labour candidates were also favoured with a letter from the Secretary of "The Working Men's Club and Institute Union" informing them that proposals such as Local Veto as applied to Clubs, Sunday Closing or the placing of clubs under the control of licensing justices would meet with the strongest objection. Mercifully these types of intimidation met with little response among the rank and file of our people, who are more genuine believers in democratic government than are the supporters of the Trade. If, as the Trade frequently tell us, they are working in the interest of the masses of the people, why are they so desperately afraid of allowing the people to say if they are satisfied? The opposition to Local Option on the part of the Trade and organizations such as the "Fellowship of Freedom and Reform" and the "Working Men's Club and Institute Union" can be traced to their fear that, given the chance, the people of the country will decide that drink, where it is on sale, should be under the control of a disinterested Board of Management, a board who will supply the demand, but *not create a demand for the sole purpose of building up private profit.*

One wonders what are the chances of a Local Option Bill from the present Government.

In June, 1920, the Labour Party Conference meeting at Scarborough, passed the following resolution by a majority of 1,380,000:—

"This Conference, believing that the Liquor Traffic is a trade in respect of which the people as a whole must assert full and unfettered power in accordance with local opinion, demands for this purpose that the localities should have conferred upon them facilities:

- (a) To prohibit the sale of liquor within their own boundaries;
- (b) To reduce the number of licences, and regulate the conditions under which they may be held; and
- (c) If localities decide that licences shall be granted, to determine whether licences shall be under private or public control."

Last year at the Party's Conference at Birmingham the claim made by Mr. C. G. Ammon, M.P., Mr. Morgan Jones, M.P., and others that the principle of Local Option, as expressed in the Liquor (Popular Control) Bill should receive official endorsement was turned down, and instead the Party undertook, if returned to power, to appoint a Royal Commission, "and to report upon what modifications in the law and what changes in the method of control should be made with a view to the necessary legislative action." I spoke against this step, which I felt was retrogressive. I pointed out to the Conference that a failure to act courageously because of the fear of losing votes would certainly disappoint the newly enfranchised women of the country, without whose help, assistance, and idealism we could not hope to put the Labour Party into power.

It is certainly true to say that in a large number of constituencies a stronger temperance policy enunciated by the Party Leaders would have helped individual candidates.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, approved a legislative programme which included Local Option in the form of Local Veto; consequently I think it would be safe to say that the Government could count on their support in any Local Option Bill they might introduce. Whether or no this Bill will be introduced during the lifetime of the present Government depends largely on the women of the country. We have an unique opportunity to carry on propaganda, to make the Temperance question as live a question as we made Votes for Women. This much is certain, women have everything to gain by placing the drink trade under democratic control. Until this is done we cannot substantially reduce the amount spent on liquor. We must not forget that an expenditure of almost three hundred millions a year on drink is a tremendous burden to the country. It absorbs an immense amount of capital and enterprise; but gives a smaller return in employment and wages than any other industry or trade of equal magnitude. It is a source of crime and produces social disorder, poverty, lunacy, and physical and moral degradation, and above all, it prevents the children getting a fair chance. For this reason, the fight for temperance (not to be confused with prohibition) is essentially a woman's job, and we must make it possible for those who desire to drink, to be able to have it under a system which is conducive to temperance. We must accept individual responsibility for this thing which can, if misused, cause such untold misery and suffering. Local Option would give us this responsibility, and none of us have the right to shirk it.

MONICA WHATELY,

Prospective Parliamentary Labour Candidate for St. Albans.

THE CALL OF THE OPEN.

Anyone who has visited the National Parks in the New World, in Canada and the United States, must have returned to England full of enthusiasm for a scheme which induces girls and boys in their hundreds to spend their week-ends camping out either in the open or in simply fitted hutments. At some camps it is usual to have a Nature Guide who will take out parties and teach woodcraft, and something of the wonders of trees and birds and wild flowers. Now in England a proposal to make the Forest of Dean a national park has been warmly welcomed on all sides. Lady Astor, M.P., writing to *The Times*, makes a very opportune plea for the opening in such an environment of camps for working women. As she truly says, a week or two in such conditions would do a great deal to relieve the inevitable dreariness and rush of their working lives, and there is no doubt that they would welcome such an opportunity with enthusiasm. Lady Astor says: "They are splendid young people—energetic, enterprising, gay, and hard-working. If we can only give them the space and the opportunity to widen their lives and refresh their souls by close contact with woods and streams and natural ways of living, not only they, but their children in the next generation, will be the gainers."

THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

By G. W. CURRIE.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT.

The Larkhall Estate, Ltd., is a most interesting enterprise, and the fact that Sir Theodore Chambers is at its head is *prima facie* evidence that it has at its disposal the skill and experience whose presence makes for usefulness and success, and whose absence might easily lead to wholesale miscalculation. No precautions can eliminate entirely the risks and vicissitudes which in the course of two or three generations—and such a scheme is based on a long tract of future time—may come to attend upon its fortunes; but the full information contained in the current number of the *Architectural Review* (July, 1929) contains such proof as can, in the nature of things, be available at the present point of time that this scheme is well thought out and has the prospect of a useful and satisfactory career—useful to those who live in the houses provided and satisfactory to those whose money builds them. These latter do not aim at unlimited profit on a basis of limited liability—on the contrary the prospective return is subject to the limitation under the statutes to six per cent per annum.

Here we have an attractive and well-chosen site, an area of 30 acres, and therefore large enough to secure a real "lay-out" and, obviously, no small measure of architectural ingenuity and indeed beauty. Only a portion of the work is undertaken for the present, but the intention is to press on with the rest of the scheme without delay and when it is completed its authors will be able to point, with pride, to a range of buildings which should have a good influence on South London. The promoters of this enterprise deserve well of public opinion, and we wish to make it clear to our readers that we think so before going on, as we now do, to point out some limitations necessarily characterizing any such scheme. These limitations are not to be regarded as faults or flaws which might have been avoided: they are features inherent in and undetachable from such a scheme. The houses are to cost about £800 each, and are to be let at rents ranging from £70 to £100. Over and above these rents, tenants pay the rates, which are not inconsiderable, and will enjoy valuable amenities. The company, in other words cater, and promise to cater well, for a class of tenant some of whom can face a rent and rate expenditure of well over £2 a week. The rents are fixed on a sound commercial basis, and are presumably open to periodical revision upwards and downwards as the directors find reasonably necessary. The limitation of dividend to promoters has its counterpart in the assistance given by the London County Council, which takes the form of a forty year loan on cheap terms of no less than nine-tenths of the capital required. To this extent and in this way the venture is a London County Council venture, i.e. a ratepayers' venture. With this truth in view, we are unable to agree that the venture is entirely unsubsidized. We do not complain of this; such procedure is all in accordance with the acts and the public policy they prescribe: we are merely pointing out that Larkhall Estate is a rate-supported enterprise. It represents a useful contribution of accommodation for a class—often hard enough pressed—which has too long had to make shift with indifferent conditions. In doing so, the company's plans accommodate nearly three times the old population on the same ground. The substitution of order for chaos is usually sound business; it can pay two dividends—one in cash and another in health. The ratepayers' £200,000 loan (or whatever the exact figure may be) is safe enough and will be repaid in due season. We approve of the action of the London County Council in financing this assistance of Larkhall. We would not seek to exclude from the benefits of a great public policy the insurance clerk or commercial cashier merely on the ground that he has a decent position and a steady £300 or £400 a year with a reasonable prospect of a little more.

But—and here is the whole point—if, as we maintain, the London County Council is wise to do all this, then how overwhelmingly strong is the case for a frontal attack on the slum on a much larger scale than anything hitherto attempted. The slum dweller cannot pay £2 a week for his house: his whole income is often just about that sum and precarious and irregular at that.

WOMEN'S ENGINEERING SOCIETY.

In connection with the Seventh Annual Conference of the Women's Engineering Society, a number of women representing other professions were the guests of Lady Moir, President of the Society, at a dinner at the Lyceum Club, last Saturday evening. The evening went with a swing from beginning to end, and was much enjoyed by all present.

In proposing the toast of women in other professions, Lady Moir said that the ideal of civil engineers was to utilize the forces of nature for the progress of civilization. General Mowat, Secretary of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, who supported the toast, was introduced as one of the earliest friends of the Society. He said that in mechanical engineering women were up against a serious difficulty in the way of training; Miss V. Holmes was the only woman who had successfully run that gauntlet. He urged women to take courage and stick to it, and in time there would be scope even for mechanical engineers.

Professor Winifred Cullis, representing Science and Medicine, responded in a brilliant speech. The earlier part was in witty vein, but she ended on a very serious note, speaking of the use of radium in the treatment of cancer. The treatment, she said, had increased the cures from 10 per cent to 50 per cent, and there was a great deal of hope that the terrible fear which everyone felt of the word cancer would come to an end. At present people were often so obsessed by fear that they did not ask for medical help until it was too late.

Mrs. Helena Normanton, speaking for the Law, said that women barristers were not at all arrogant people; they were very humble and had every reason to be, for they were well kept in their place. She said that there were nearly a hundred women solicitors in this country, and most of them have brilliant qualifications; she did not believe in any boycott of men in professions, but the women ought at least to be brought into the sphere of action. There was a general muddle at present in regard to the position of women, said Mrs. Normanton. They might become engineers but not ministers of the Church; they might not enter the sacred portals of the Stock Exchange nor the House of Lords; they could become a Cabinet Minister but not an Ambassador. While any woman was held back from the position to which her talents drew her, the whole of womanhood was lowered.

Miss Edna Mosely, on behalf of architecture, said that the women architects had encountered no opposition and had had no obstacles put in their way.

Mrs. Willson, of Halifax, who started life as a half-timer in a cotton mill, and is now a successful builder, moved a vote of thanks to Lady Moir, which was carried with much acclamation.

LITTER IN PUBLIC PLACES.

Following on Miss Mason's article last week on "Litter, Local Authorities, and an Exhibition," we are glad to report that in Richmond the Women Citizens' Association and the local branch of the Anti-Litter League are taking steps to prevent the spoliation of their beauty spots. Recently the Women Citizens' Association organized a deputation to the Town Council on the subject of "Town Tidiness," and this has been followed by a "Save the Countryside" Exhibition. The Exhibition which was opened by Lady Fletcher was most successful. Many of the exhibits were lent by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, and there were also several local photographs and various appropriate illustrations supplied by the Surrey Anti-Litter League and the National Trust of Scapa. The Exhibition received considerable notice in the Press and the promoters hope that it has helped to educate public opinion and that it will be an effective means of preserving the amenities of the locality.

YORK CITY COUNCIL AND WORKLESS GIRLS.

At a recent meeting of the York Education Committee Councillor Miss Argles referred to the difficulty of finding employment in the City for girls and stated that out of 332 only 36 had been found work in York. The Council had decided not to take any steps in respect to the establishment of a scheme of working certificates, or the reduction of the insurance age, and many of the girls between school age and insurance age were drifting into idleness and acquiring habits which would in the long run prevent them from obtaining work. It was stated that the position was better in regard to boys as one York firm took all the boys between 14 and 16 that the Education Committee desired to place.

QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT.

Monday, 22nd July.

ELECTORAL LAW.

Mr. Hurd asked the Prime Minister whether in any inquiry into the Franchise Law he will include among the subjects for consideration the position of nurses, who by the nature of their duties are often unable to vote in their places of residence, and the justice of enabling them to give an absent vote as is done in the case of soldiers and sailors.

The Prime Minister: Beyond assuring the hon. Member that the point of his question will not be overlooked in our considerations, I can add nothing to what I have already said regarding terms of reference.

Tuesday, 23rd July.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL LEAVING AGE).

Mr. Sinkinson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the decision to raise the school leaving age on 1st April, 1931, as announced by the President of the Board of Education, is to be applied to Scotland.

Mr. William Adamson: The answer is in the affirmative. But in Scotland, legislation will not be necessary. The Scottish Education Department is empowered by Section 33 (2) of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918, to fix the appointed day.

Wednesday, 24th July.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS: WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Mr. Day asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether any decision has been reached by the League of Nations Council with regard to further proposed inquiries connected with the problem of the traffic in women and children in the East; and will he consider making representations that an Indian representative should be placed on this committee.

Mr. Henderson: The matter was considered by the Council at its meeting in June, and it was decided to communicate with the Governments of countries in the Near East, Middle East and Far East, whose territories were not visited in the course of the previous inquiry, and to ascertain whether they would be prepared to give their consent and co-operation to a continuation of the inquiry. If their replies are favourable the composition of the special body of experts will be considered by the Council, and I would confer with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for India as to the desirability of including an Indian representative.

Mr. Day: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether any replies have yet been received from any of these countries?

Mr. Henderson: Not yet.

EMPIRE SETTLEMENT (WOMEN).

Mr. Walter Baker asked the Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs whether openings exist in the Dominions for women immigrants; and, if there is a demand overseas for women from this country, what steps are being taken to meet the demand and to encourage migration, by financial assistance or otherwise, in this particular connection.

Mr. Ponsonby: Yes, Sir, and there is every indication that the demand, especially for single women trained for household employment, is practically unlimited. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom is keenly alive to the importance of the migration of women. Free or assisted passages to the Dominions are available for women as well as men. Through the Women's Branch of the Oversea Settlement Department and local migration Committees information is freely available, speakers for meetings are supplied, and free literature distributed. The Government has also co-operated in establishing domestic training centres in this country, and further centres are being opened. Arrangements are made in co-operation with the Governments, voluntary organizations and private residents in the Dominions for the reception and after-care of women. I am considering further methods of drawing attention to the openings for women, and the most effective means of stimulating this particular branch of migration.

WIDOWS' PENSIONS.

The Prime Minister said in reply to a question: We propose that the House should reassemble on Tuesday, the 29th October.

The first business before the House will be a Bill dealing with widows' pensions. I am advised that the necessary Bill will not

require to be introduced on a money resolution, and on that assumption the Bill will be introduced to-morrow and circulated during the Recess.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTIONS.

Mr. Reginald Young asked the Minister of Labour if she will, at an early date, ratify the League of Nations Maternity Convention, which has already been ratified by nine European nations.

Mr. Lawson: As regards this and other International Labour Conventions which have not been ratified, it is proposed to examine each of them in the light of the existing law and practice in this country, and, except so far as the proposals of the Government have already been announced, it is not possible as yet for my right hon. Friend to say what action may be decided upon in any particular case.

Mr. Mander asked the Minister of Health (1) whether the Government are prepared to ratify the International Labour Office Convention, 1927, concerning sickness insurance for agricultural workers; (2) if the Government are prepared to ratify the International Labour Office Convention, 1927, concerning sickness insurance for workers in industry and mines and domestic servants.

Miss Bondfield: It is the intention of the Government to ratify these conventions when certain necessary amendments have been made in the National Health Insurance Act as affecting Northern Ireland. The Government of Northern Ireland has announced its intention to introduce the necessary legislation at the first convenient opportunity.

CHILDREN ACT, 1908.

Miss Picton-Turbervill asked the Home Secretary if it is the intention of the Government to introduce in the near future a Bill to amend the Children Act, 1908.

Mr. Clynes: The Government are fully alive to the desirability of amending the Children Act, 1908, so as to bring into closer harmony with modern ideas as to the treatment of the neglected and delinquent child, but can hold out no hope of legislation this Session.

Thursday, 25th July.

NURSERY SCHOOLS.

Lady Cynthia Mosley asked the President of the Board of Education whether he is in a position to state plans for the more general extension of nursery schools; and whether he proposes to ask for powers to require local authorities to establish nursery schools in their areas.

Sir C. Trevelyan: I am considering the best way of securing an extension of nursery schools, but I cannot make any definite statement before the House rises to-morrow.

Lady Cynthia Mosley: In view of the fact that the very poor districts are the districts that most urgently need nursery schools, will the right hon. Gentleman consider giving an increased grant in those districts?

Viscountess Astor: Will the right hon. Gentleman consider receiving soon a deputation from those interested in nursery schools?

Sir C. Trevelyan: I am considering all the aspects of the question, but I shall no doubt possibly see someone.

Viscountess Astor: Will the right hon. Gentleman receive a deputation?

Sir C. Trevelyan: It depends on the deputation. I am very ready to meet any Members of this House, or anybody who speaks for any large body of public opinion.

Viscountess Astor: Would the Minister receive the woman most responsible for nursery schools—Miss McMillan?

Sir C. Trevelyan: Of course I would.

LIQUOR LAWS (ROYAL COMMISSION).

Mr. Toole (by Private Notice) asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet in a position to make any statement as to the composition and terms of reference of the proposed Royal Commission on Licensing.

Mr. Clynes: I regret that I cannot yet make any complete statement of the personnel of the Commission, but I am pleased to be able to inform the House that Lord Amulree, who is perhaps better known as Sir William Mackenzie, has consented to act as chairman. The terms of reference will be:

"To inquire into the working of the laws relating to the supply and sale of intoxicating liquors, and into the social and economic aspects of the question, and to examine and report upon proposals that may be made for amending the law in England and Wales in the public interest."

(To be concluded next week.)

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WOMEN DELEGATES TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Mrs. Swanwick and Mrs. Hamilton, M.P., have kindly consented to speak on those aspects of the work of the League most directly of interest to women's organizations at a reception to be held by the N.U.S.E.C. on Friday, 25th October. This will be a very special occasion, being the first on which we have been privileged to welcome the return of two women members of the British delegation.

BANK HOLIDAY.

The Office will be closed for August Bank Holiday at 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 2nd August, and will re-open at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 7th August.

DEPUTATION ON FACTORIES BILL.

In response to our request the Secretary of State has indicated his willingness to receive after the summer recess a deputation on the subject of the Factories Bill. The points that will be raised are the ratification of the Washington Hours' Convention; the same regulations as to hours in different industries for women workers as for men; the same regulations with regard to prohibition of night work for men and women; and the application of provisions of general safety, including protection from machinery, weight lifting, and lead processes carried on in places other than factories to all workers irrespective of sex.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT.

Societies are again urged to watch closely their local papers for the notices indicating that their county and county borough councils have submitted to the Ministry of Health their schemes regarding the work of Boards of Guardians and the payment of contributions to voluntary associations providing maternity and child welfare services. These schemes have to reach the Minister of Health by 27th and 30th September respectively, and representations regarding them must reach the Minister within four weeks of the publication of the notice stating that they have been submitted. It is of particular importance to watch that provision is made for the full co-operation of women in the administration of relief.

DEPUTATION TO MINISTER OF HEALTH.

Mr. Greenwood received a deputation from the N.U.S.E.C. on Thursday, 25th July, at 12 noon, at the Ministry of Health. Miss Picton-Turbervill, M.P., led the deputation which was composed of Miss Rathbone, M.P., Mrs. Ryland, Mrs. Hubback, Mrs. Corbett, Miss Fulford, Mrs. Stocks, and Miss Tuckwell. As previously indicated, the principal points raised were in connection with the amending Bills on the National Health Insurance Acts and the Widows, Orphans, and Old Age Pensions Act, including provision for dependents of sick and insured persons; medical benefits for dependents; improved maternity benefit; partial pooling of surpluses; rates of pension; general age of dependency; old age pensions and the wife whose husband is under 65; migrants and widows' pensions; voluntary contributors; equality of men and women in insurance. The need for making compulsory certain provisions of the Maternity and Child Welfare Act, 1918, was urged; and other points raised in view of their particular urgency at the present moment were the great necessity for the inclusion of an adequate number of competent women on the committee to be appointed by the Local Authorities for the administration of relief under the new Local Government Act, and all other committees of Local Authorities; the application of rebates for children on the rents of working class houses; and finally, the imperative need of having published the full report of the Committee of Inquiry on the Management of the London Lock Hospital.

Mr. Greenwood, who was supported by Miss Susan Lawrence, gave a sympathetic but non-committal reply to all these points. This was perhaps natural considering his newness to office and the fact that many of the questions dealt with are to be under the consideration of committees not yet appointed.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LITTER.

MADAM.—I am very much obliged to you for the appreciative article about the Exhibition we organized at St. Pancras.

There is one slight misunderstanding which I should be very grateful if you would correct in your next issue: It is stated that this Exhibition has been specially prepared for circulation in the provinces.

The London Society is concerned solely with London, and I have arranged with the Council for the Preservation of Rural England that we will work the London district only. I shall be delighted to send this Exhibition to any place in the County of London or just outside the border, and to give what we call "The Litter Lecture," or "London as it ought to be," during the period that it is on view. We are already in treaty for dates throughout the winter and even for next spring.

PERCY W. LOVELL,

The London Society,
Lancaster House,
St. James's, S.W. 1.

Organizing Secretary.

BRITISH WOMEN DELEGATES.

MADAM.—I hope I shall not seem puerile in commenting on your summary of what I said at the meeting on 24th July for the two British women delegates to the Assembly. I am reported to have shown "that it was essential that the women appointed should have obtained national prestige, if they were to be successful in international spheres." This does not render my thought. What I was concerned to say and what I am glad to emphasize here was that the outcry that women in the Assembly were not "made full delegates" or given positions involving eminence in law, finance, and so forth was founded on an error. The important political speeches must be made by responsible ministers; the leading parts in law, finance, etc., must be given to the higher experts in these matters, and if women want them they must be among these higher experts. There is no British woman yet, who can rank as an equal with the best international lawyers. There will be, I hope.

H. M. SWANWICK.

ELECTORAL REFORM.

MADAM.—The article on Electoral Reform in your issue of 21st June was clearly written by someone imperfectly acquainted with the subject. The article is a perfect mine of misinformation.

(1) The writer says that the three most important proposals before the country are Proportional Representation, the Alternative Vote, and the *Scrutin de Liste*. This statement is quite incomprehensible. The only three substantial proposals before the country are P.R., the Alternative Vote, and the Second Ballot. The *Scrutin de Liste* is the French equivalent of the block vote, a system which no responsible authority suggests for this country.

(2) It is said that the Commission on Electoral Reform which sat before the war recommended the *Scrutin de Liste*. Absolutely untrue. The recommendation of the Commission, contained in paragraph 139 of its Report was: "We recommend the adoption of the alternative vote in cases where more than two candidates stand for one seat." The *Scrutin de Liste* was not even mentioned in the conclusions of the Commission.

(3) It is said in the article that while Oxford and the Combined Universities used P.R., Cambridge uses the "single alternative vote." In fact all three constituencies elect their representatives under precisely the same provisions of law by means of P.R. The single transferable vote is the method by which P.R. is applied.

(4) The writer says: "Putting aside the question which votes are to be treated as surplus," implying that there is an element of uncertainty about this. In fact, all the votes are examined and an equal proportion of all second preferences is transferred.

(5) The suggestion that P.R. was responsible for the defeat of Professor Gilbert Murray at Oxford University has been refuted so often, that I almost apologize for referring to it. As there were 7,900 Conservative votes, and only 3,500 Liberal, Professor Murray's defeat was inevitable. Under the system in force in ordinary two member constituencies, such as Southampton or Oldham, he would have been in a minority of more than 4,000. It is the perversity of the electors, and not the system which must be blamed.

(6) The writer says that Liberals are demanding the alternative vote. This may be true of some Liberals, but the official policy of the Liberal Party is P.R., with the alternative vote in those areas only which are unsuitable for the application of P.R.

There are other statements equally misleading, which it would require too much space to controvert, e.g. that the results of P.R. are largely a matter of chance, and that it gives an opportunity for electoral intrigue. No writer who knew what he or she was talking about could ever say that it was an advantage under P.R. to run an unpopular second candidate in order that the first candidate may get his second preferences. The first candidate will be in a much stronger position by getting the first preferences.

S. R. DANIELS.

Boar's Hill, Oxford.
[We are glad to publish this letter, as we are anxious to open our columns freely to all aspects of the subject of electoral reform.—Ed.]

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