

# Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society),  
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Signed Articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

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Daughter of the ancient Eve,  
We know the gifts ye gave and give;  
Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,  
Daughter of the Newer Eve?

Francis Thompson.

## Women in the Long Parliament

By HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE

Ten years ago sixty-seven women stood for election and nine of them were returned to the Long Parliament, which included at last fourteen women. Throughout the decade the women members were on the alert; often they worked, whatever their party, as a team. Lady Astor, our pioneer woman M.P., was one of them, and she will indeed be missed from the new Parliament.

Four women held offices of state under the Long Parliament. Miss Horsbrugh was Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health in the Coalition and to the Ministry of Food in the Caretaker Government; Miss Ellen Wilkinson was Parliamentary Secretary first to the Ministry of Pensions, then to the Ministry of Home Security; Mrs. Adamson was Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions, in charge of civilian war orphans; Mrs. Cazalet Keir was Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education.

Three useful Acts were introduced by women—the Poor Law Amendment Act by Miss Irene Ward; the Hire Purchase (Regulation) Act by Miss Wilkinson; the Adoption of Children Act by Miss Horsbrugh. Moreover, Miss Eleanor Rathbone is mainly responsible for the Family Allowances Act.

This Long Parliament made several laws which affect women intimately. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937 and the Matrimonial Causes War Marriages Act of 1944 are regrettable since both facilitate divorce. The Factories Act of 1937 continue the unjustifiable inclusion of women in the same category as young persons. The Widows, Orphans and Old Age Pensions Act excluded from its benefits women, but not men, whose incomes were between £250 and £400 a year. But against these deplorable or faulty measures others can be set which are impeccable. There are the Midwives Act of 1936, the Married Women's Tortfeasors Act almost entirely drafted by the late Chrystal Macmillan, which was brought into force in 1936, the Inheritance (Family Provision) Act of 1938 which gives a spouse certain claims on his or her spouse's estate, the Nurses' Act of 1942. And there is Mrs. Tate's conquest in 1943, after nearly four years of battling, of Equal Compensation for Civilian War injuries.

Courageous, vain attempts were made to change the law under which British women married to foreigners acquire the latter's nationality automatically. The Imperial Conference of 1937 came to no agreement about its alteration. Two Bills which would have preserved these women's original nationality, one presented by Colonel Cazalet, and the other, in the House

In 1942-3 Lord Balfour of Burleigh in the House of Lords and Colonel Cazalet in the House of Commons moved the desired amendment to the Government British Nationality and Status of Aliens Bill, but obtained no more than the Home Secretary's pledge that he would be "on the look-out" for "a suitable occasion" for seeking "in consultation with the Dominions" "a way round the difficulties which prevent further action."

Mr. Turton's Public Places (Order and Decency) Bill, framed to supersede the disgraceful solicitation laws, was dropped. A motion for the annulment of the infamous Regulation 33B was defeated by 244 votes to 31.

The Education Act removed the bar in the teaching profession against married women but did not equalize the pay of men and women teachers. Nor did it give financial equality to Catholic schools.

Twice the Government was defeated on the question of the rate for the job, in 1936 and in 1944, when Miss Wilkinson and Mrs. Cazalet Keir moved its introduction, respectively in the Civil Service and in the teaching profession. But in both instances Government reversed their defeat by turning the issue into a vote of confidence. All that was obtained was the setting up of the Commission on Equal Pay, which is debarred from making recommendations.

The reform of the Diplomatic and Consular Services, announced in the House in 1941, leaves women still excluded from these services. (But one or two women have acted as temporary attachés.) In 1938 the ban on the employment of women in the India Office and the Dominions and Colonial Offices was removed.

Regretfully we omit commissions and committees of which women were members, White Papers they helped to produce, petitions they introduced, and we have space barely to allude to the new public role assigned to women, ultimately on the responsibility of Parliament—the fine Women's Auxiliary Services and the W.L.A., the women in Civil Defence, the conscription and registration of women for national service. One commission we must mention, the Mui Tsai, whose woman member, Miss Picton Turbervill, produced a minority report of which the recommendations, implemented in 1939, protect girls in Hong Kong and Malaya against sale on any pretext, whether marriage, adoption or other.

Nor can we pass over the White Paper on the forced marriages of African girls, which was the result of questions asked in Parliament by Miss Rathbone at

## Notes and Comments

The Alliance has written to the party leaders asking them whether, if their party be returned to power, they will advise an indication in the King's Speech that all discriminations against women and disabilities now imposed on them, both legal and administrative, shall be removed.

We note the following statement in Mr. Churchill's last election broadcast:

"A Royal Commission is now sitting on equal pay for equal work between men and women.

"The Commission must carefully consider where the true, permanent and lasting advantage to women in particular occupations lies in this matter, but I trust the new Parliament will establish, in an effective manner, the principle of the complete equality of women in industry and in all walks of life and before the law, and that this will be achieved without any diminution in the chivalry and the protection of the strong right arm of the male warrior or tolier."

\* \* \*

Eighty-eight women, an unprecedentedly large number, were candidates at the General Election—15 of them Conservatives, 22 Liberals, 40 Labour, 5 Independent, 4 Commonwealth and 2 Communists. We hope such as are elected will include those who worked for women in the Long Parliament, and many others who will follow this good example set them.

\* \* \*

On Tuesday, July 31st, the eve of the opening of Parliament, a mass meeting will be held at the Central Hall, Westminster, under the auspices of the Status of Women Committee and with Mrs. Corbett Ashby in the chair. The newly elected women M.P.s will speak. Tickets for reserved seats (1s. 6d.) may be bought from St. Joan's Alliance or one of the other co-operating societies. Come and bring your friends.

\* \* \*

Answering in the House of Commons on June 13th a question about the proposed grant of British nationality to Polish subjects who have fought with the Allies, and its possible extension to the officers and men of the Royal Yugoslav Forces, the Home Secretary said that "preliminary consultations with the Dominions are proceeding satisfactorily." Is it too much to hope that similar consultations are in course about the restoration of British nationality to British-born women married to foreigners?

\* \* \*

We register a protest against the rates of training allowances announced in the House by the Minister of Labour on 14th June—women and girls to receive in every case a less allowance than men and boys, the weekly rates for the former varying from 47s. to 25s., those for the latter from 60s. to 27s.

\* \* \*

We propose to deal fully with the San Francisco Conference in a future issue. Meanwhile we record our great satisfaction at the clauses in the draft Peace Charter which "reaffirm faith" "in the equal rights of men and women," state that no restrictions are placed on the eligibility of men and women to take part in any capacity, and in conditions of equality, in the principal and subsidiary organizations of the United Nations, and profess an intention to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all "without distinction as to race, language, religion or sex."

## Heroic Malta

At the Interval Club on the afternoon of June 20th, the Alliance was privileged to receive Miss Mabel Strickland, one of its vice-presidents.

After tea and social intercourse, the occasion resolved itself into a meeting. Miss Challoner, presiding, welcomed Miss Strickland, saying we honoured her as a symbol of heroic Malta and alluding to the part she had played in winning rights for women in that island, particularly when in 1931 she gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Maltese affairs. Dame Vera Laughton Mathews spoke of the close connection of the navy with Malta, and Miss Strickland as a symbol of the island's historic defence.

Miss Strickland, in her speech, referred very modestly to the *Times* of Malta and the vernacular paper which she brought out unfailingly while Malta was under siege.

She sketched the moving story of Malta's defence. The loneliness of the island when the British ships left its harbour; the "enormous joy" of its people when Sir Andrew Cunningham brought more ships; the gallant air defence, for a time by only three planes; the first great naval battle in Malta harbour in 1940; the cutting of underground shelters, which were nearly eleven miles in length at the end of 1941, when the Germans had been bombing the island solidly for five months; the burning of ships in the harbour in March 1942; she made us live through these poignant episodes. She spoke of the pride of the islanders when the George Cross was granted to their island in April 1942. The food shortage was, she said, "a thousand times worse than the bombing," but Lord Gort taught the islanders to share their wheat and food. Yet, although certain convoys reached the island, only thirteen days' rations were left on it in November 1942. One baby died out of every three born during the siege; infantile paralysis crippled many children; the old and the weak died. The strongest defensive element on the island was the integrity of its family life.

After the terrible straits, when the island was no longer besieged and had sufficiency of clothing and of food except milk—so many milch goats had been killed—some ten months followed in which the islanders convalesced from starvation and its consequences. They had given their people a heritage of honour but they themselves had, at this time, a natural difficulty in changing their mood of heroism to a practical one.

Miss Strickland attended, as press delegate and the first woman delegate, the representative assembly summoned, at the request of Great Britain, to contribute Maltese opinion to the work of framing a constitution for the island. She referred in her speech, in terms of great respect, to the *Women of Malta Association*, and appositely this organization's first annual report reached us soon after the meeting.

This Association was founded on 28th January, 1944, for a purpose identical with that of our own Alliance, to secure for "Malta's women equal rights with men in accordance with the tradition of all Christendom." Its first aim is to obtain political equality for women in the new constitution, its ultimate end "to raise the general status of women in Malta, politically, socially and economically." Like our Alliance, it is a non-party organization and "is not anti anything except evil, and injustice to women."

Its chairman is Mrs. Josephine Burns de Bono who, like Miss Hélène Buhagier, its honorary secretary, has been a delegate of the National Assembly of Malta since its fifth meeting on 6th April 1945. This implies that "the principle of women's equal rights with men" has

*Continued on page 28*

## Parliament Month by Month

The Caretaker Government's short period of office, from Whitsun to June 15th, was not productive of much valuable Parliamentary work: members were too busy throwing electioneering mud about, and crowding in as much abuse of their opponents as could possibly be tacked on to the matter in hand. Some serious work was of course done, notably on Scottish education and the distribution of industry, but the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker had rather heavy going, most of the time, keeping the House in order.

The most important date, from our point of view, was June 15th, when the Royal Assent was given to the *Family Allowances Bill*. Tributes were paid to Miss Rathbone from many quarters of the House.

Several interesting questions were asked by women members. On 13th June Miss Ward asked about the *Admission of Women to the Foreign Service*, and was answered by Mr. Law: "It has been decided that a committee should be appointed as soon as possible to consider the question of admitting women into the Foreign Service." Replying to her further question whether he would speed up the proceedings of the committee, since application for entry into the Service must be made by December 1st, he said somewhat equivocally, "I shall do nothing to delay them," whereupon Captain McEwen commented, "Will my Rt. Hon. friend bear in mind always that this is an entirely unsuitable occupation for women?"

The Prime Minister on the same day answered Mr. Logan's question about fears of dismissal entertained by men and women war workers, impromptu because it had failed to reach him previously. He said: "I am not in any way prepared to deal with the very difficult, delicate and also immense questions connected with the *function of women in the immediately post-war world*. I imagine that many will seek release to retire to their homes. The arrival of the demobilised army men will

make great changes. I remember being much worried about this when I was Minister of Munitions at the end of the last war, when I had, I think, over 1,250,000 women under the direct control of that office. It all worked out quite all right for, the actual moment when men came back, the women in many cases gave up their jobs. My misfortunes did not begin until a year after that." The fact that the Prime Minister mistook a general question for one about women alone, shows that the problem is, at the end of this war, again much on his mind.

Miss Ward asked the Prime Minister on June 14th whether any decision has been reached as to whether the *Women's Auxiliary Services* will, in future, become part of the regular services of the Crown. He replied that the matter is under consideration.

On June 7th Dr. Summerskill asked the Secretary of State for India how many expectant mothers working in the mines in India have been prematurely confined in the mines and in their homes or hospitals, respectively, and how many of these mothers and babies have died. Mr. Amery replied: "There is no record of any child being born underground. I am asking the Government of India how far they can supply the other information desired by the hon. member. The hon. member will be glad to know that in April last the Indian Legislature amended the existing law to make it illegal for women to work underground in the mines for ten weeks before and six months after confinement, while the hours of work are severely limited for a further three months. The rates of benefit during these periods of absence have been increased." Dr. Summerskill was still not satisfied and neither were other members, although Mr. Amery assured them that "The Government of India are as anxious as members of this House to terminate the employment of women in this way."

B. H.

## Reviews

*Enjoying the New Testament.* By Margaret Monro. (Longmans, 10s. 6d.)

There are a few who learn to swim by jumping into deep water; their courage often spoils their technique, and the best swimmer is generally the best taught.

Miss Monro, as a wise teacher, leads us to the "waters of life" by encouraging us in the comfortable sunny pools to play and learn happily and safely. Then she gradually leads us to have confidence in deeper water, and finally to breasting the waves and swimming boldly out to sea. Our faith is strengthened and encircled the more we study the Word of God, and though Miss Monro's book is a little expensive, it is full value. Perhaps later on a cheaper edition may bring it to many more of those for whom it is meant, so that the New Testament (and Miss Monro's guide) may be kept in the mending basket or on the kitchen shelf, as she so happily suggests.

This book is for both Marthas and Marys, and though the "pencil and paper" recommended might lead to pots boiling over and holes unattended, yet it is admirable for those with less pressing duties.

All who read and use this stimulating book will indeed "enjoy" the New Testament in a new way, and doubtless remember the author with gratitude in their prayers.

U. P. BUCKMASTER.

*Sex Enlightenment and the Catholic.* This manual by Father Leycester King, S.J. (Bellarmine Series, edited by the Jesuit Fathers, Heythrop College, Burns and Oates, 6s.) meets a long-felt want. The author states principles and suggests their application. The parents' obligation is made very clear, and the difficult question of who is responsible, should the parents fail in their duty, is answered by Roman documents dealing with it. This is both a practical and a learned exposition which should be read by Catholic educators as well as by parents.

Enlightenment is obviously desirable; in many cases it may be absolutely necessary. But if the task is bungled, more harm than good may result; there may be an insult to the child's feelings which, coming from a trusted person, may do great harm.

Only in one or two places does Father King sacrifice clarity to terminology. "All-embracing affective drive" and "entrance into the dynamic aspects of life" are expressions which look happier in text-books of dynamic psychology than in general literature.

In the discussion on the relationship between the sexes, the equal responsibility of both partners might have been stressed. "Girls should realise that they are largely in control of the situation. . . . A caress . . . may have . . . a violent effect on the boy." Not on the girl? The burden of responsibility must be shared, not shifted

There is a passing allusion to a belief in an "inhibited and dessicated spinster . . . of the rigid, frigid, scarcely human type"—surely a rare type of human being? If found anywhere, may she not be the product of centuries of petty tyrannies and cruelties, and should we perhaps refer to her only if we join in a reverent *mea culpa*?

F. MACKENZIE SHATTOCK, M.B., B.S., D.P.M.

**Are You Looking for Employment?**, an up-to-the-minute and attractively produced pamphlet, published by the Women's Freedom League (6d.), should be consulted by every woman who is. It gives essential information as to training and prospects in jobs suitable for women, young and not so young. Jobs for those who must earn from the start, and for the part-time worker, are listed too, and directions for finding fuller information are given.

M. J.

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Leonora de Alberti in "The Catholic Citizen,"  
July 15th, 1920.

"The following is the report of a speech made by the Bishop of Northampton at a meeting of the Union of Catholic Mothers held recently in Edgbaston:

"His Lordship said the advent of the new woman was for years ridiculed in the press and in comic opera, but she had, notwithstanding, come into her inheritance, and anyone with sense would have seen that it was inevitable. . . . The main reason for conferring citizenship upon women was that women might speak for women. The object would be lost if they allowed themselves to be led by men. Women must not sell their newly gained freedom to eloquent leaders who would try to persuade them to give up their power. These leaders would invite women to delegate them, and let them speak and legislate for women. Women must keep the ultimate power in their own hands, and let the leaders be their servants, not their masters."

"This is the undiluted doctrine of feminism as preached by ourselves and other suffragists for many a weary year. We are delighted to find this doctrine put forward by so powerful an advocate as the Bishop of Northampton."—*Notes and Comments.*

Liverpool and District Branch, Hon. Secretary, Miss Mary Hickey, 81 Park Road East, Birkenhead.

An interesting meeting was held at Greenheys Road, by kind permission of Mrs. McCann, chairman, on June 25th, for members to hear the programmes of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties. The speakers were Alderman Miss Fletcher, Conservative; Miss Herbison, election agent for Mr. Lyon Blease, Liberal (who was a champion of votes for women in the old days and wrote "The Emancipation of Englishwomen"), and Mrs. Demaine, Labour. All three gave lucid descriptions of the aims of their parties. Much discussion followed and many questions were asked, especially about Catholic schools, the point being stressed that "Catholics are whole citizens, paying equal taxes and giving equal state service with their fellow-citizens."

We hear with regret of the death last December of our old member, Maude Walpole. She died in France, where she had lived throughout the war.—R.I.P.

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### Heroic Malta—continued from page 26.

been accepted by the Assembly as one to be included in the draft constitution. The report shows the Association's first year of life to have been very active.

Its representations failed to persuade the Lieutenant Governor to support the part-time employment of married women teachers in the present emergency. But when it reminded him of the offer made by the Convent of the Sacred Heart to establish a training school for women teachers, it was successful, so that this school has been established.

The Association presented a petition for the introduction in Malta of legislation like that which in Great Britain protects from the death sentence unmarried mothers convicted of infanticide, and obtained from the Governor an assurance that he had, and would have, this matter much at heart.

It energetically advocated that full use should be made of Malta's woman power, that women who had taken part in the Battle of Malta should receive the recognition awarded to women engaged elsewhere in civil defence, and that Maltese women should be admitted to the women's services. When, however, protracted negotiations failed to secure that Maltese girls might join the ATS in conditions deemed suitable by the Association, the matter was dropped because of this body's "sense of loyalty to the general war effort."

The Association also presented to the secretary of a fund collected in Scotland for the betterment of conditions in Maltese villages a memorandum which asked that part of this fund might be applied to the training of nurses in the Blue Sisters' Hospital.

It is our duty to see that the new constitution, when it comes before Parliament, gives full equality to women.

H. D. I.

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Many members have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1945. Let them meditate on the time, energy and paper wasted on reminding them of this duty, and then, with haste and a little shame, send the 5s. which covers the subscription to the Alliance and to the "Catholic Citizen," and any additional sum they can afford.