

WOMEN'S SERVICE
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THE

Catholic Citizen

Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrag. Society),
55, Berners Street, London, W.1.

Signed Articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

Vol. XXIX. No. 9.

15th SEPTEMBER., 1943.

Price Twopence.

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.

The Beveridge Plan.

By HELEN DOUGLAS IRVINE.

Everyone knows the Beveridge Plan by repute and some have bought the cheap summary of it on sale all over the country. How few have read every word of this long, this wordy document, or even of its summary! Since the plan has no final character, but is explicitly offered to us for our criticism, we contribute these notes on how it would affect women.

Whoever understands the principles of insurance is staggered by the fact that while its intentions are benevolent, all the persons insured under it would not have a complete guarantee that they would receive the benefits for which they paid premiums. Married women would not have this security. On the contrary.

In the first place, every woman would lose when she married the accumulated premiums which she had paid during her single life, and would be obliged to requalify for insurance if she kept on her old job or took a new one. And if she did so requalify and were disabled or unemployed, she would be entitled to 6s. a week less in benefits than a spinster. The suggestion is made in the plan that £10 be granted to her when she marries, perhaps in settlement of the debt constituted by accumulated premiums. Tempting as this sum would be to many young couples, it is distressingly like a bribe—a little ready money to buy off a just claim—and the proposal for it should be rejected unhesitatingly.

Secondly, a married woman who was earning would, under the plan, draw a pension, in respect of her contributions, when she reached the age of sixty, but only until her husband attained pensionable age, after which a "joint" pension would be paid to him.

Thirdly, the plan proposes that "if a marriage is broken through the fault or with the consent of the wife, she should not have a claim to benefit." In fact, the contract with her is to be broken in deference to a social prejudice, not to a moral law since no faulty conduct of a husband affects his claim to benefits.

Similarly, Sir William Beveridge's report opines that to pay maternity benefit to an unmarried insured mother would "probably be felt right," overlooking the fact that maternity benefit is among the rights for which women contract when they become insured.

Besides thus overriding rights of property established, at least implicitly, by the payment of premiums, the plan

would perpetuate the economic and social inequality of men and women, especially married women.

It would exclude housewives, whether or not they were earners, from direct insurance, entitling them indeed to medical services and pensions, but unfairly exacting part of the payment for these benefits from men and from boys over sixteen years old. It would give housewives no claim to that part of unemployment or disability benefit which would be payable to their husbands in respect of them. When a husband retired, his wife would share his pension as his dependent. The plan would definitely give the status of dependents to housewives.

Further, it would exact lower contributions from employers for the women than for the men in their employ, and would thus bolster the existing practice of remunerating women at a lower rate than men, whatever their work may be and however they may do it. Female labour would still be cheap labour, and would therefore still compete unfairly with male labour.

The age of retirement would be sixty-five for men and sixty for women.

A proposal that a married woman who is an earner should insure herself only optionally is likely to have a depressive effect, moral and economic, on such a woman and on her relation to her employer.

The plan does not overlook the unmarried women who work without pay, domestically or otherwise, for their relatives. They are to be capable of qualifying for pensions, but this qualification is to depend on the contributions their relatives are "reasonably expected," although in no way compelled, to pay for them. Here is no security for this considerable class of industrious spinsters.

In two instances the plan ought to alter its nomenclature: maternity benefit should be called family benefit—has not every child two parents, both of whom, and the child itself, are beneficiaries?—and provision for widowhood should be known as temporary unemployment benefit, so that its name might correspond to its character as this is defined in the plan.

We hope that these injustices will be corrected before the plan is embodied in a law. Women ask for no preferential treatment—not, for instance, for equality of benefits without equality of obligation—but only for justice, and they make the demand on behalf not of women only but of the whole nation.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

On the eve of the debate on the Government's White Paper on Educational Reconstruction the Alliance sent to every M.P. a copy of the Bishop of Pella's pamphlet, "The Case for the Catholic School" (C.T.S., 1d.), which explains the claim of Catholics for equality of treatment in the matter of education. A covering letter asked for help "for removing what we consider to be a penalisation for conscience' sake of a large number of citizens."

St. Joan's intends to resume its monthly meetings, and has the kind permission of the Newman Association to hold them in its rooms in Hereford House, 117 Park Street (one minute from Marble Arch). They will be held on every fourth Thursday at 6.30. The first will be on the 23rd September, when Mrs. Montgomery Bennett, who has spent most of her life working among the Australian aborigines, will speak out of her extensive first-hand knowledge on "Modern Stone Age Children." Miss P. C. Challoner, M.A., in the chair. Members are urged to come to this exceptionally interesting meeting and bring their friends. R.S.V.P. if coming for buffet supper (1s. 6d.) at 6 p.m.

We have received from the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society a copy of their "International Colonial Convention." With its general principles, admirable as they are, we are not directly concerned, but among the grounds on which it demands that there be no discrimination in law or practice, we would urge that sex be included as well as colour, race, language and creed; also that the minimum wages demanded apply equally to men and women. We urge further a fuller definition of slavery to cover betrothal by means of bride-price, child marriage and all forms of coercion in marriage.

In the debate on Colonial Affairs in Committee on July 13th, we not only the following points, among many of very great but more general interest:—

(a) There is only one, recently appointed, male probation officer in Nigeria to deal with the "fearful problem of the children of promiscuous polygamy." Surely this state of affairs calls for the appointment of at least some women officers.

(b) A West African Chief, in imposing an annual education tax of 2s. on men and 1s. on women, said that in view of the failure of the government to supply funds, "I have been making the deduction that our salvation lies not without, but within. We have decided to wage war against illiteracy by the introduction of mass education."

(c) A speaker, urging the development of the fish supplies of the African Lakes, drew attention to the "very careful surveys" that had been made for the past fifteen years, and paid a humble and genuine tribute to the women who have taken part in this service for their great skill.

The Minister of Labour informed the Diamond Jubilee Congress of the Women's Co-operative Guild that when, after Dunkirk, it became necessary to draft women into industry to replace men taken for the armed forces, he had calculated that three women would do the work of two men, but that the average production of two women had since been proved to be slightly in excess of that of two men in 1939. Moreover, the number of women recruited for industry had exceeded his original estimate by 30 per cent. As a result, total production had more than doubled his estimate of 1940.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

The Electrical Age (a special South African number) publishes a message from Field Marshal Smuts to the women of Britain. He mentions how impressed he was during his visit last year "to see the range and scope of the war activities in which women were engaged. . . . It may be a development that has come to stay." The Field Marshal concluded his message by saying: "In the post-war years, the experience that has been gained now will lead to some re-orientation of attitude towards the part that women can play in modern enterprise. Barriers to industry, commerce and the professions can no longer be justified on the mere grounds of sex alone. Women have earned the right to share in the responsible tasks of peace as well as of war, and many of the old economic taboos that hampered the free activities of women have disappeared for good."

China. *The Universe* tells us that the only university honour that Madame Chiang-Kai-Shek accepted during her visit to the United States was the honorary degree of doctor of laws of Loyola University, conducted by the Jesuit Fathers of Los Angeles. On receiving the honour, Madame Kai-Shek referred to the benefits her people had derived from the efforts of the Jesuits since the 14th century. She mentioned that one of her ancestors, Dr. Paul Hsu Kuang-ch'i, was received into the Church by the Jesuits in 1603.

Eire. We offer our congratulations to our member, Miss B. Stafford, on being appointed a member of the Youth Unemployment Commission.

Greece. Members who had the pleasure of meeting Madame Zarras, our ardent Greek colleague, during her stay in London, will be pleased to hear that we have had a cable of greeting from her new address. Her genial presence and infectious enthusiasm are much missed in her absence and we look forward to meeting her in a liberated Greece, where her countrywomen will find in her a courageous champion.

U.S.A. Among the surprises brought about by the war is a flying nun, not a passenger nun, but a real nun aviator, who but for the strict wartime regulation against civilian flying would ere this have had her pilot's licence. It is the *Catholic Times* that tells us of the Franciscan Sister Mary Aquinas, who flies in her habit, which is warm, fixing the earphones over her veil without difficulty. Sister Mary is one of a group of nuns who have taken a course in aeronautics in order to be able to give a pre-aviation course to would-be aviators.

E. F. G.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

Leonora de Alberti in the "Catholic Citizen,"
September 15th, 1918.

"It is said that the order has been issued in the interests of the soldier. Is it indeed in the interests of the soldier to instil into his mind that the authorities are anxious only to protect his health and care not a jot about his morals? By condoning vice and creating a false impression of security the authorities are doing precisely what they are endeavouring to avoid—by increasing the volume of immorality they are increasing the volume of disease."—*Regulation 40D.*

Parliament on Working Women and on Families.

Two recent debates in the House of Commons, which contains 601 men and 14 women, have concerned women closely. On 3rd August the subject was women in national service. Dr. Edith Summerskill, who was supported by several members, spoke of the women in the Auxiliary Services who, except the doctors, are paid at rates which are two-thirds of those fixed for men in the armed forces. She reminded the House that a parallel grievance was removed when recently the Minister of Production decided on equal pay for men and women ferry pilots. Sir William Jowitt justified the government's practice more ingeniously than convincingly, alleging that the numerous men in the services who have non-combatant jobs, often sedentary, may have to exchange them, in an emergency, for actual fighting. This hardly met the case of the A.T.S. who are on A.A. gun sites. He declined to say whether, if military service is compulsory for men after the war, it will be so for women also.

Several members condemned the similar system of paying women less than men in the civil service. Miss Rathbone, who instanced the Colonial Office, and Miss Irene Ward commented on the failure to give women responsible positions in government offices, and protested against the rule that women who marry must retire from the civil service and the teaching profession. Sir William Jowitt stated that the differentiation of pay reproduces the general practice of private employers. As for the marriage bar, he averred that a government department may retain any married woman in its service, and exercises this power "not infrequently."

The House was on the whole adverse to the proposed compulsory registration for national service of women between forty-five and fifty years old, Lady Davidson and Mrs. Adamson pronouncing it mistaken because these women are already very busy, and unnecessary because some younger men and women are still unemployed or under-employed. Mr. McCorquodale, for the Ministry of Labour, assured the House that if these women were called up, their domestic responsibilities would be taken into consideration. An old bugbear was revived by Sir Henry Morris Jones when he said that women of these ages should not be even registered compulsorily because they suffer from "age

disturbances and disabilities." He forgot that they are already, in their vast majority, fully employed—domestically, as wage-earners, professionally, or as managers of their own businesses.

Lady Davidson and Miss Ward drew attention to the scandal that women in industry receive no unemployment benefit when they are pregnant, and to the deplorable lack of hospital accommodation for women in childbirth.

Their remarks are pertinent to the debate a fortnight earlier, when the House faced the startling fact that these islands are inhabited by two and a half million more people over sixty, and two million fewer under fourteen, than during last war. Miss Rathbone's suggested remedies were family allowances, improved communal services, more generous admission of foreign immigrants, and the education of the public in general and of girls, the future mothers, in particular. Mr. Griffiths analysed the present parents' revolt: fathers and mothers fear war, unemployment and poverty; women avoid both the dangers of childbirth and its interruption of their normal life, and, often unjustly, of their earning capacity. Moreover, the desire to bring new beings into the world is weak in a mechanical civilisation which has robbed human personality of value and dignity. Several members emphasised the shortage of housing for families, of maternity hospitals, of midwives, of maternity and child welfare centres and of nurseries, and Dr. Summerskill stated that seventy-five per cent. of the mothers of the present day bear their children without anaesthetics. Mr. Lipson said local authorities should not be allowed to dismiss women from their employment either because they marry or because they are pregnant.

Captain Elliston, Sir Francis Fremantle and Wing Commander James dealt with the lamentable consequences of the present unrestricted sale of contraceptives. Sir Francis Fremantle regrettably defended their use in some circumstances. He pleaded for a wider recognition of the permanency of the marriage tie.

The Minister of Health, winding up the debate, announced that the government intends "to institute an inquiry on the broadest basis into the whole question of birthrate and population."

Public Morality.

The debate in the House of Commons on 15th July, which preceded the resolution to continue the Emergency Powers Act, evoked some telling speeches against Regulation 33B. Dr. Thomas pointed out that it deprived a woman who was wrongly informed against of the right to take any action for damages, and added that it "is not obtaining the results we were told it probably would. V.D. is still increasing." Sir Archibald Southby condemned the Regulation because it has instituted "the system of the secret informer . . . the principle on which the Gestapo grows and flourishes." "Let us by all means," he said, "use any powers we can get to combat this appalling disease, but if treatment must be compulsory, it should be compulsory on both parties. I would prefer to see the disease made compulsorily notifiable." Dr. Morgan, who called the Regulation "disgraceful," refused to believe in the efficacy of compulsory notification or treatment of V.D., and asserted that a woman informed against may be subjected to painful or even injurious treatment. He recommended that the disease be combated by education and by lessening facilities for drinking. "There should be better facilities for crusaders who are getting individuals for treatment. There should also be

proper methods of persuasion by women police . . . this Regulation is the most dirty piece of work that has ever been seen in British history." Mr. Ivor Thomas implicitly conceded that the Regulation infringed on liberty, but was "prepared to go some distance in scrapping an academic conception of liberty if we could stamp out this danger."

These speeches should be read in conjunction with certain passages in a declaration recently issued by the Catholic Hierarchy of Scotland. The Scottish Bishops are anxious that the education which would combat sexual promiscuity should have not a material basis but a moral one. They deplore that existing methods of public education favour mere instruction, the mere presentation of facts, rather than the training of character and personality, and they blame this preference for the present "laxity of moral standards resulting in the increasing spread of venereal disease and the like." The weakness "is obvious in the present campaign against venereal disease, which, although the question raises fundamental moral issues, has been approached purely from the point of view of medical instruction."

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES.

Sir William Jowitt has very justly protested in the House of Commons against putting women on committees "just because they are women" or men "just because they are men," adding, however, that women are apt to have certain kinds of special knowledge which fit them for certain work, for instance, work concerned with "maternity and child welfare." He was answering a previous protest by Lady Astor against a great numerical preponderance of men in a number of committees appointed recently. She instanced a committee set up to look after employment in the domestic service of institutions, which includes two men and only one woman. Similarly, the committee in charge of the education of children orphaned in the Blitz consists of nine men and only one woman. The commissions charged to enquire into higher education in the colonies and in West Africa include, respectively, eleven men and two women (Miss L. H. Penson and Miss Margery Perham) and ten men and two women (Miss E. C. Martin and Miss Margaret Read). The committee of seventeen set up to consider the post-war employment of men and women qualified for responsible work has only two women (Mrs. Mary Hamilton and the Hon. Eleanor Plumer). Is a real search made for qualified women when these bodies are appointed?

In Parliament, July 1943.

Mr. Pethick Lawrence asked the Home Secretary whether he anticipates an early opportunity of further consultation with the Dominions with a view to seeking a way round the difficulties regarding a revision of the law relating to the nationality of married women.

Mr. H. Morrison: Whether there will be an early opportunity for such consultation must, in present circumstances, be a matter of some uncertainty, but, as I told my hon. friend, the matter will not be overlooked.

OBITUARY.

We ask the prayers of our members for the repose of the soul of Mrs. More Nisbett, who died on July 15th. Mrs. More Nisbett was Chairman of the Edinburgh Branch of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and contributed several expert articles to the *Catholic Citizen*. She was an inspector of the Women's Auxiliary Service and did much pioneer work for women police. She gave evidence to the Street Offences Committee set up in 1927, bringing out the need for an equal moral standard. Our members will perhaps remember her best for her gift of oratory.

We also ask prayers for our member Mrs. Dixon-Davies, founder of the Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare and of the paper *The Ark*; and for Father Laurence Stafford, brother of our member, Miss B. Stafford, who was a well loved chaplain in the British Army during the last war and with the 10th (Irish) Division at Gallipoli, and who was a faithful reader of the *Catholic Citizen*.—R.I.P.

STUDY WEEK-ENDS.

Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle,
33, West Heath Road, N.W. 3.

Sat.—Sun. "The Relation Between Religion and
Oct. 2—3. Aesthetics," by Fr. Gervase Mathew, O.P.
Sat.—Sun. "The Mind of St. Paul," by Fr. Richard
Oct. 9—10. Kehoe, O.P.
Sat.—Sun. "Ancient Heresies in Modern Thought,"
Nov. 13—14. by Fr. Mark Brocklehurst, O.P.

Liverpool and District Branch.

Hon. Secretary: Miss Mary Hickey, c/o 81, Park Road East, Birkenhead.

We are grateful to Miss McNeish for her work as hon. secretary for the last two years and greatly regret she is unable to continue.

A meeting was held on August 28th, by the kindness of the Misses Barry, at Birkenhead, when Miss F. Barry spoke on the present position as regards the nationality of married women. A resolution was moved from the chair by Mrs. McCann, calling upon the government "so to amend the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, that a married woman should have the same right to retain or change her nationality as a man, married or unmarried, or any single woman." The sum of £2 11s., of which half was sent to headquarters, was collected.

Oxford Branch.

Hon. Secretary: Miss J. M. Scott, c/o Women's Service Library, 56, Woodstock Road.

Our thanks go to our first hon. secretary, Mrs. Burrough, who is obliged to resign for domestic reasons. On July 11th Miss Douie gave an interesting address on the history of the women's movement.

The Branch will hold meetings on Modern Trends in Education at Cherwell Edge at 5 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month. On 10th October Dr. Mary Ruddy, Sunday of each month.

BLANKET BILL.

A large and enthusiastic meeting, reminiscent of the old days of the suffrage campaign, was held by the Women's Publicity Planning Association at the Central Hall, Westminster, on 4th September on the **Equal Citizenship (Blanket) Bill**. More than £500 was collected.

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Stop Press.

We offer our deep and loving sympathy to our former chairman, Mrs. Laughton Mathews, C.B.E., for the death of her husband, Gordon D. Mathews, a generous and loyal friend to St. Joan's Alliance, and also to her daughter Elvira, our member, and to her sons Christopher and David, for their grievous loss of their father. May he rest in peace. We know our members will offer prayers for all the family.