

WOMEN'S SERVICE

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Catholic Citizen

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

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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's Institutes.

By A. B. WASHER.

"If any revival of a village life is to be secured, it must rest on a revival of intellectual vigour and spiritual interest, and on a vast growth of free association for mutual support and assistance in the pursuit of ideals. . . . The watchwords of the new life of the villages are education and association . . . the spirit of community interest and ideals." (*The Rural Problem*, by A. A. Ashby.)

The last sentence sounds the keynote of the great movement which is revolutionising the countryside, and after ten years amazing activity brought thousands of countrywomen to fill the Queen's Hall last May, when the National Federation of Women's Institutes held its annual meeting; a movement which by its inspiration and teaching could help these countrywomen to fill the Handicraft Exhibition held last autumn in the Drapers' Hall, with their 1037 varied exhibits; and which, further, could so insist on the fulfilment of its ideal of "only the best," that 756 other exhibits (even those carefully selected by the County Committees) were rejected.

Such an Organisation to prove a success must be democratic, and avoid contentious questions. Two matters that are strictly taboo at the meetings are party-politics, and sectarian discussions.

The members of the Institutes themselves are the foundation on which the whole

Women's Institute movement is built. Each Institute sends its delegate to the Annual General Meeting, which lays down the policy of the Federation. This policy is carried out by an Executive, the majority of whose members are nominated and then elected directly by the Institutes themselves by a postal ballot. The various sub-committees are responsible for assisting the Institutes to carry out their aims, the first of which is "to provide a centre for educational and social intercourse."

The Institute meets usually once a month, and at each meeting there must be 'something to hear, something to see, and something to do.' Had we been told ten years ago that an English village could produce Gluck's Orpheus, and then proceed to Purcell's King Arthur, we should no doubt have received the information with the inward suspicion that it was certainly *not* the "villagers" themselves who had been the performers. To-day we know that the "villagers" themselves are the performers, and that Institutes throughout the country are receiving expert instruction not only in Music, but also in Drama and Dancing. It is a commonplace to find Institutes competing and winning trophies at famous Musical festivals throughout the country. Members of the English Folk Dance Society and of the Village Drama Society also tour the country, helping and advising, and many Institutes produce Shakespeare and other

plays, and give exhibitions of Folk dancing.

The second aim—"to stimulate interest in agricultural pursuits"—shows its fruition in the exhibits sent to the Royal Show, the Dairy Show, and to the regular County Agricultural Shows held annually. The County Councils here help the Institutes with lectures and demonstrations on fruit-bottling and drying, jam-making, bee-keeping, calf-rearing, etc. One county issues a Small-livestock stud register, and the rearing of rabbits of the fur breeds is common, and assisted by the offer of the Fur-board to buy the pelts under certain conditions. Another, which has organised a market of garden produce, etc., reports a turnover of £2,600 last year.

The study of domestic science, hygiene, and social welfare, has been so fruitful that in one instance we find an Institute organising a struggle for a pure water supply in its neighbourhood, and in another petitioning the County Council for a qualified teacher of Home nursing. Touring lecturers give instruction in civics and political economy, and keep the villages au courant with the work of the Women Police, legislation affecting women and children, and other important subjects.

The wonderful Handicrafts Exhibition has already been referred to, and the demand for teachers trained to set a standard in various crafts was so urgent that a "Guild of Learners" was formed. The Associates are those who desire to take up some handicraft seriously and are willing to help others to do so, and who will help to maintain the high ideal of excellence in homecrafts set by the Guild. Some of these crafts are glovemaking, embroidery, household jobbing (tinkering, umbrella-covering), chair-caning, toy-making and upholstery.

Co-operation, as we should expect, appeals strongly to the Institutes. Parties for children and old people at Christmas, etc., are a commonplace now; pound days for Infirmaries and efforts on behalf of local hospitals are of frequent occurrence, and in many instances the Institutes make the provision of a Village Nurse possible by their help. One has a medicine chest for the members, another bought a Bath Chair.

One County Federation successfully approached a Railway Company with the request to repair the door of the Ladies'

Waiting Room at an important railway station (a request which, when made by individuals, had been repeatedly turned down).

The actual training in Organisation and business methods, given by the National Federation to the Voluntary County Organisers and the various officials belonging to Institutes and Federations, is one of the most important and valuable parts of the work. And it is doubtful if there has ever been a more precious handbook for any administrative officers than that published annually by the National Federation.

Another of its publications, "Home and Country," has a deservedly great circulation among the members. This magazine of 40 pages is issued monthly, and contains, as well as reports of Institute life and activity, the work of well-known writers, on a variety of important subjects. The magazine is not only self-supporting, but last year handed over a handsome profit to the Federation.

Ten years ago the first two Institutes were founded, in July, 1925, there were 3,366. It is only 12 years ago since Mrs. Watt, the pioneer of the movement in this country, arrived from Canada, where she had been Secretary of the Advisory Board of Women's Institutes, of the British Columbia department of Agriculture. The movement, indeed, originated in Canada, where the first Institute was formed in Ontario in 1897. The need for such organisations was so pressing everywhere that we find them springing up rapidly in the United States, where they flourish with the active help of the Government, and in France, Belgium, Sweden, Poland, Russia, and elsewhere.

When we consider the steady growth of the movement in England and Wales during the last ten years, may we not claim that in it we have found the solution to the "rural problem" which so troubled us in the past, and that by making the lives of the women more attractive and of higher purpose and promise, we make the home-life brighter and fuller. A new factor has come into the life of the village as a whole. We are indeed giving "the rural population more hope and inspiration, developing in those who live upon the land a broader outlook, greater adaptability and initiative . . . and utilising to the fullest advantage human capacity and human powers."

Notes and Comments.

We have received a letter from M. Paul Gemähling, General Secretary of "Pro Familia," stating that the Commission set up to enquire into Moral Problems at Strasbourg having voted unanimously for the closing of the maisons tolérées, the Prefect of the Lower Rhine has issued an order for the closing of these dens of vice by February 1, 1926. We congratulate M. Gemähling and his colleagues on this success, due, no doubt, to the publicity given to the scandalous scenes which took place last Whitsuntide, and to the public protest signed by many citizens, both men and women, including the Bishop, Mgr. Ruch. The letter goes on to say that this is the first time France has taken so important a step, which leads one to hope that she will come into line with other great European countries and be free from the shameful system.

Widows' Pensions, for which we have all worked for so long, is now on the Statute Book. The Act is not all we desired, but the principle of Widows' Pensions is established, and that is a great deal to be thankful for. In its passage through the House of Commons the measure was much improved. The age at which children attending school will receive the allowance has been extended to sixteen; the clause which provided that if a widow were convicted of an offence in a Court of Law her pension might be cancelled or suspended, was withdrawn. Miss Wilkinson, in moving its deletion, received support from all quarters of the House. We offer our cordial thanks to Lady Astor, Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Pethick Lawrence, and all the members who strived to improve the Bill.

We are glad to see Mr. Neville Chamberlain, after careful consideration, has decided to make no change in the Instructions issued to maternity centres for their guidance in dealing with the question of Birth Control.

The Guardianship of Infants' Bill and the Summary Jurisdiction (Separation and Maintenance Bill) have received the Royal Assent. Women's organisations have been working for these Bills for years; neither of them

goes as far as we would wish, but they are a step forward, and as such we give them welcome. We are grateful to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship for their share in the success of the Bills, and to our supporters in both Houses, who carried them through.

We are glad to see that the Theatrical Employers' Registration Act, 1925, introduced by Mrs. Hilton Philipson, has received the Royal Assent. This bill will safeguard theatrical artistes from being exploited by bogus managers, and was greatly needed.

We were glad to see the appeal made by *The Tablet* to French Catholics in support of woman suffrage. *The Tablet* says, very rightly, that: "To silence more than half the people when the voice of France ought to be heard in the choice of a Government, is to sterilise more than half of the nation's moral and intellectual vitality at the moment when it is most wanted. It is noteworthy that Woman Suffrage was warmly supported at the Catholic "Semaine Sociale," held in Lyons last week." In a letter in the same issue, Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B., writes against woman suffrage in a strain, which we thought, was dead and done for in this country. While we are happy to number many staunch friends among the clergy, both secular and religious, Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, and others, now and again a Die-hard will raise his voice, and leave us gasping with surprise.

The Committee recently had the pleasure of meeting at 55 Berners Street, Fr. Pierre Charles, S.J., Professor of Theology at Louvain University, and Père Lallemand, S.J., of Calcutta University, both of whom deplored that Belgian women were still voteless. Suffragists certainly have good friends among the clergy.

We offer our deep sympathy to our member, Lady Laughton, on the death of her son, Lieutenant Commander J. K. Laughton: the prayers of our readers are asked for the repose of his soul.—R.I.P.

Continued on page 69.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181.

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

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Equality of Justice.

For a number of years feminist societies have been urging the repeal of the Solicitation Laws which apply to women only, and under which some thousands of women are convicted every year on the word of a policeman, without further evidence being necessary. Under the existing antiquated laws, a special class of "common prostitutes" is created, and the ordinary safeguards against wrongful arrest and conviction are denied them.

The Public Places (Order Bill) introduced by Lady Astor in the House of Commons in July, seeks to remove this injustice, and to give to prostitutes the same chance of justice in the Courts, claimed by any British citizen.

Clause 1 of the Bill would repeal the existing law relating to women who can be fairly described as "common prostitutes."

Clause 2 applies the law to all persons alike who "wilfully cause annoyance in any public place."

Clause 3 lays it down that nobody can be taken into custody for causing annoyance except by, or on behalf of, the person who is annoyed.

Lady Astor's fine plea for justice for the most piteous of wage-earners, received the unanimous support of the House. She asked to introduce the Bill in order to stimulate the Government to appoint a Select Committee of both Houses to take evidence on the subject from Magistrates, Chief Constables and Social Workers.

"We have done all kinds of things for this most unfortunate and piteous class of

women," Lady Astor told the House. "We have tried appeals to them, rescue homes and detention, but we have always denied to them, what every woman in the country should have, and that is common justice. We who are interested in this, feel certain that if they could get common justice, things would be much better."

Lady Astor said, very truly, that as it stands the law makes the task of the police in keeping public order in our streets and parks, almost intolerable. With the best intentions in the world, it is very difficult for them to know whether any person has been really annoyed. The present position runs counter to the ordinary ideas of British justice. The manner in which the House received the Bill was a triumph for Lady Astor, and we cordially thank her for awakening the interest of Parliament in a reform of the law which is urgently needed.

We believe and hope that the Government views the matter with sympathy, and intends to set up the desired Commission. In this they will have the warm support of women's organisations.

St. Joan's S.P.A. takes a special interest in this matter, and a resolution in the name of the Alliance is on the Agenda of the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Women to be held in Birmingham, September 19 to 25. The resolution, which we hope will be passed unanimously, is as follows:

"This Council, believing that the laws and their administration should uphold the equal

moral standard, calls upon the Government to give facilities for a Bill for the repeal of the laws specially directed against 'common prostitutes,' and to substitute in their place an equal law, applicable to all persons who annoy or molest others in the streets and public places."

L. DE ALBERTI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS—Continued from page 67.

All who stand for equal rights will have followed with keen interest the fight between Mrs. Short, a married woman teacher, and the Poole Education Authority. Mrs. Short, who was employed at the Council Schools, brought an action against the Corporation of Poole for wrongful dismissal on account of marriage. Mrs. Short won her case in the High Court of Justice. Mr. Justice Romer, in summing up, gave his opinion that the grounds of dismissal were not in the best interests of education, or of the efficiency of the school, but were from *motives alien and irrelevant to the exercise of the statutory duties of the Education Authority.* This is precisely what we, and others, have persistently maintained. It is not the business of employers to enquire into a candidate's private means, or domestic duties, it is their business to judge of the candidate's qualifications for whatever position is in question. We offer our grateful congratulations to Mrs. Short on her victory.

* * * *

The Advisory Committee on Social Hygiene, appointed in July, 1924, to advise the Secretary of State for the Colonies on "any questions connected with venereal disease or public morality," referred to them for their advice, have studied the draft ordinance dealing with venereal disease, submitted by the Government of the Straits Settlements, and have reported their unanimous opinion that it should not be passed into law. They say that the ordinance contains a definition of "prostitute," which would include not only habitual prostitutes, but also "any woman who engages in a single act of immorality for gain," and would inevitably lead to intolerable injustice. The Committee condemn State Regulation as useless, and

make wise recommendations for coping with the moral and social problems involved.

* * * *

We have received from Strasburg an interesting and useful pamphlet, entitled, "Une Expérience décisive," dealing with the abolition of State Regulation of Vice in Colmar, and proving clearly that nothing but good resulted from the closing of the maisons tolérées, and the abolition of all registration of prostitutes. State Regulation of Vice was established in Colmar in 1856, and the town soon became a centre to which groups of young men from neighbouring places would adjourn and scandalous scenes took place daily. It was due to the initiative and courage of the Mayor, M. Schlumberger, that the system was abolished, the result being a decrease in venereal disease, and an improvement in the moral health of Colmar. Even during the war the military authorities dared not attempt to revive regulation, so convinced have the inhabitants of Colmar become of the moral and physical evils resulting from this iniquitous system.

* * * *

The new scale of Civil Service Salaries sanctioned by the Minister of Finance of the Irish Free State, has caused considerable excitement in the press of this country. The scale lays down that unmarried men are in future to receive the same pay and increments as women: if they marry, after the age of 25, they will receive the increased men's increments; they are to receive allowances for children, and both men and women on marriage will receive a bonus. The women, however, and here the Irish Free State shows the cloven hoof, are to retire on marriage. We hope to have an expert's review of this experiment in equal pay, and in family allowances.

Miss Forbes-Robertson's At Home.

A gloom was cast over our last "At Home" before the holidays, owing to the illness of our kind hostess, Miss Forbes-Robertson. In her absence, her place was ably filled by Miss Bumpstead, who dispensed hospitality and entertained us by her recitation. Our thanks are due to them both, as also to Miss Wall for her kind help.

Miss Forbes-Robertson begs the prayers of our members during her illness.

International Notes.

Our readers will have known ere this that our Suffrage friends in Belgium have once again suffered defeat, and that the amendment to the Bill that was to have given women the Provincial vote has been rejected both by the Chamber and the Senate, in spite of the energetic protests of the Catholic leader, M. Carton de Wiart. It was in effect an anti-clerical vote by both Socialists and Liberals, of which women are the victims. Melle Van den Plas, in the *Féminisme Chrétien de Belgique*, is, rightly, very indignant over the whole sordid business, and she prints an admirable letter which was sent to every Deputy before the debate on behalf both of the Belgian National Council of Women and the Belgian Federation for Woman Suffrage. Defeat at the moment was mainly due to the Socialists, and many Catholics are indignant, but it is only fair to remember that during their thirty years and more of office they persistently declined to advocate any form of female enfranchisement. We can only extend to our Belgian friends our heartfelt sympathy in this trying crisis.

Miss Alice Paul, so we read in *Equal Rights*, is back in the United States, and busy developing the organisation of the International Advisory Council, which she was mainly instrumental in founding during her recent visit to Europe. Already eleven countries are represented on this Advisory Council by some of their most distinguished women.

It seems probable that three women will shortly present themselves as candidates for the American Senate, in which at present no woman sits. The most likely to succeed is Mrs. Belle Case La Follette, widow of the distinguished Senator, who is being widely urged in Wisconsin to step into her late husband's place. Mrs. La Follette has been for years an active worker in political and feminist circles.

The death is announced of an early French suffragist, Mme. Maria Pognon. She was the first woman to raise her voice publicly in favour of *la recherche de la paternité*, a right so long refused under French law to the mothers of illegitimate children.

We are glad to read in *Stri-Dharma* that a new Age of Consent Bill is to be introduced into the Indian Legislative Assembly this autumn, under the title of Children's Protection Bill. It will not only raise the age of marriage from 12 to 14, but will also protect young girls in other ways, and is in every respect a most necessary piece of legislation.

Melle Vuillliomenet contributes to the *Mouvement Féministe* (Geneva) an excellent report of the Fourth Session of the Advisory Commission of the League of Nations on the Traffic in Women and Children. It appears that France, under the new agreement, has been expelling all foreign prostitutes without troubling to ascertain what is likely to become of them. It has now been decided that before expelling women the authorities must inform some Society dealing with the White Slave Traffic, in order that it may make suitable arrangements wherever possible.

A women's Peace Church is to be erected at Frankfort by members of the great German Catholic Women's League. The scheme, so we learn from *Frauenland*, is due to the late President of the League, Fraülein Hedwig Dransfeld, as a memorial to the men killed in the war and a centre for women's prayers for peace.

V. M. C.

Women Engineers.

Our representative at the International Conference of Women in Science, Industry and Commerce, convened at Wembley by the Women's Engineering Society was Miss M. Fedden.

The first session was opened on July 15, at 11 a.m., by H.R.H. the Duchess of York, whose speech was as charming as her appearance. Lady Astor presided. Miss Kerstin Hesseldren (of the Swedish Senate) spoke first in perfect English, then Miss Ethel Barley, an American delegate, gave her message. Lady Rhondda suggested that fathers should take their daughters into business in the same way as their sons, where they showed an aptitude for commercial life.

Miss Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., made a racy

speech on Industrial Organisation among Women; she said she would rather women would not enter industry if it meant that they became undercutters and blacklegs to men; she told the audience of an amusing experience of the time during the War, when she was trying to induce a Bank Manager to take women into his bank. He demurred at the idea, saying that the ledgers would be too heavy for the girls to lift, but in the same breath asked her if she knew of a charwoman who could come and clean out the bank and incidentally lift down and dust the said ledgers.

Owing to the unavoidable absence of Professor Winifred Cullis, who was to have spoken on Women in Science, Miss Hazlitt, of Bedford College, addressed the meeting on Industrial Psychology and Educational Guidance.

Lady Astor then called for short five minutes' speeches from Mrs. Wintringham, Miss Bondfield, Mrs. Fawcett, and Mrs. Snowden, after which the speakers and delegates adjourned to the Garden Club for luncheon, where they were joined by T.R.H. The Duke and Duchess of York. The Conference, which was ably organised by Miss C. Haslett, was continued the two following days.

On learning that the Government had appointed the Duchess of Atholl as one of the delegates to the Sixth Assembly of the League of Nations, we hoped that being a member of the Government, we should at last get a fully accredited woman delegate, but, unfortunately, the Duchess has been appointed as substitute delegate only. We are frankly disappointed.

On July 24, an informal meeting was convened at Women's Service House, by the N.U.S.E.C., to enable representative women to meet the Duchess of Atholl, and lay their views before her on various questions connected with the League. St. Joan's S.P.A. was represented by Miss de Alberti and Miss Wall. Miss de Alberti, representing also the Council for the Representation of Women on the League of Nations, spoke of the need of women on the Slavery Commission, of another woman on the Mandates Commission, and of their adequate representation on the staff of the Institute established in Paris as Headquarters of the International Commission for Intellectual

Co-operation. Miss de Alberti expressed disappointment that the Government had failed to appoint the Duchess of Atholl as fully accredited delegate. The Chairman, Miss Eleanor Rathbone, said that all the societies shared in that regret.

The Conference convened at Oxford by the International Catholic League (Ika), which coincided with the Catholic Social Guild's Summer School, has been so fully reported in the Catholic Press, that we take it for granted that our readers know all about it. We wish, however, to remind them of the importance of the resolution put forward at the women's meeting, in the name of Countess Walterskirchen, Vienna. If Catholic teachers would take the resolution to heart, our work would be made easier. It is: "That Catholic education for girls, whilst re-affirming the sanctity of marriage, should also be directed towards awakening the social conscience, and that youth should be taught that their individual sanctification should find expression in the service of their neighbours."

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Holiday time is now over for most of us, and St. Joan's Alliance is starting its autumn work in earnest. Money is as urgently needed as ever if this work is to be effective. Members are reminded of Quarter Day, on September 29th, and we hope that many will send us some small donation towards the office rent. We beg them also not to forget our Christmas Sale, but to begin early to prepare for it.

GABRIELLE JEFFERY.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE.

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OBJECT

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

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All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of 1s. Men are invited to join as Associates, on the same conditions, with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive.

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