

THE

# 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.

## Children's Allowances. To Whom Paid?

By ELEANOR F. RATHBONE, M.P.

The newly issued Family Allowances Bill contains the astonishing provision that where man and wife live together, the children's allowances "will belong to the man," and this apparently even if the children are the wife's by a previous marriage. The allowance can only be taken from the man if a Court of Summary Jurisdiction so decides, on proof of his unworthiness.

Consider the effect of this provision if not changed before the Bill becomes law. The great majority of husbands are decent, kindly men, who will no doubt allow their wives to draw the money (as the Bill makes possible). But in a measure affecting, as the Government anticipates, 2,600,000 families from the first, a very small percentage of cruel or greedy men may be actually a very large number. Such men will hold on to the money and few wives will dare to appeal to a Court.

This provision flouts all precedents and previous experience. New Zealand, and—more recently—the Australian Commonwealth and U.S.S.R. all grant State-paid children's allowances paid to the mother, except where she is proved unsuitable. The British proposal sets a bad example to other nations contemplating similar schemes. It also flouts the declared opinion of 160 M.P.s of all parties who have just signed a memorial to the Minister in charge of the Bill urging payment to the mother (except where proved unfit); also the policy of the Liberal and Labour Parties; the Labour Party having at its recent Conference recommended this as "some recognition of motherhood."

We who for many years have worked for Family Allowances have done so chiefly for the sake of children and of the nation, which so badly needs more children to avert what Sir William Beveridge and other experts have described as impending race suicide. But an additional motive has been to raise the status of motherhood. This proposal will have just the opposite effect, by indicating that the State still regards the mother as merely a dependent, and giving her a strong inducement to go out to work for wages which will be legally hers, rather than bear more children. She may bear them at the risk of her life, and spend her days and nights in caring for them,

but because her husband earns—not the allowance paid for by tax-payers of both sexes—but usually the rest of the family income, the allowance is to be his property! Surely it should "belong to" the child, but the mother should be the trustee for its expenditure, and where she is unfit, the authority entrusted with administering the Act should—as the Australian Act provides—be empowered to investigate and decide to whom it should be paid.

There is still time to persuade the Government to change its mind, or at least to allow Parliament a free vote on an amendment in Committee, **if those who agree would write at once to their Parliamentary representatives at the House of Commons urging them to support the change; and to sign the Memorial if not already done.**

Other improvements in the Bill may be thought more important, e.g., a larger allowance than the 5s. proposed. But while amounts can be increased later, the vast numbers affected may make a change in the payee administratively impossible. Also, fathers who would accept the mother's right without question at first, might resent a later change as reflecting on their conduct.

Hence the need for prompt action as the only means of averting this most reactionary and unjust proposal.

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The Family Allowances Bill introduced into the House of Commons on February 14th, proposes that 5s. a week be paid for every child after the first, up to the age of sixteen years. This is in addition to provision in kind, including free meals and milk in schools. The Bill passed its second reading on March 8th when Sir William Jowitt, Minister of National Insurance, announced that the Government would allow a free vote on the question whether the allowance shall be paid to the father or the mother, on the committee stage of the Bill. The article printed above was sent to us by Miss Rathbone in the form of a letter. She is the pioneer of family allowances in this country, and must be congratulated since her long and persistent advocacy of this cause is now bearing fruit.

## Notes and Comments

Mass will be offered this month at St. Patrick's, Soho, for our founder, Gabrielle Jeffery, and for the first editor of *The Catholic Citizen*, Leonora de Alberti, whose anniversaries occur on March 19th and 26th respectively. We know all our members will remember them with gratitude and affection in their prayers. *R.I.P.*

We have written to the Prime Minister urging that competent women be included in the British Delegation to the San Francisco Conference. Already, we understand, Miss Virginia Gildersleeve has been appointed to be a member of the United States Delegation. We would like to see Dame Enid Lyons, President of our Australian section, among the Australian delegates. We hope, too, that there will be an adequate number of women on the various commissions and committees set up by the Conference.

It is desirable that the Conference draw up a charter of human rights, and this should lay down specifically the principle of the equality of men and women as citizens.

Up to the present about 60 women have been adopted as parliamentary candidates by the various parties. We urge members to be on the look-out for women who would be willing and able to stand, and then to take active measures within their own local political parties to get such candidates adopted and supported.

We offer congratulations to Miss B. M. Denis de Vitre on her appointment as Staff Officer to advise Inspectors of Constabulary on all questions concerning police-women and women police auxiliaries. Her headquarters will be at the Home Office, and her appointment covers England, Scotland and Wales. Only last year Miss de Vitre was appointed an Inspector by the Chief Constable of Kent; she joined the Sheffield City Police in 1928.

We also congratulate our co-religionist Miss Cecily Hastings (a descendant of Warren Hastings), who at the age of twenty has taken up her duties as British Vice-Consul in the Consul-General's Office in New York. This is another temporary breach in the barrier against women in the Diplomatic and Consular Services.

Dame Vera Laughton Mathews, Director of the W.R.N.S., attended at Buckingham Palace recently where she received the insignia of the Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire from the King's hands. Christopher and David had a day from school to come up to London for this great occasion, and Elvira also had leave from her naval station. Dame Vera had the honour of being received by the Queen the previous week when Her Majesty evinced great interest in the work being done by the Women's Services.

The following letter has been received from the First Lord of the Admiralty, dated 27th February, 1945:—

"I write in reply to your letter of the 10th January asking for an assurance that 'under no circumstances shall brothels be opened for the use of H.M. Forces, and that in countries where licensed brothels exist these shall be declared out of bounds to every member of H.M. Forces.'

"As stated in earlier correspondence, it is the practice to place brothel areas out of bounds to naval forces, where local conditions permit of this without placing a whole town out of bounds and without unduly curtailing recreational and social facilities. It would, of course, be entirely contrary to Admiralty policy for brothels to be opened by naval authorities."

## International Notes

**Australia.** Miss Flynn writes that the Alliance is taking up the question of domicile so that women who marry men from overseas may keep their Australian domicile. This is a very important matter and must not be confused with the issue of divorce.

**Brazil.** A very welcome letter from Miss Lisboa tells us that she is continuing her work for l'Alliança so that Catholic women may be made to realize the necessity of pulling their weight in the woman's movement. Women, having won many rights under the Constitution of Brazil, may think there is no longer any need for an organisation such as ours, but Miss Lisboa, like ourselves, sees plenty of work ahead. Doña Olympia de Passos is acting as treasurer of l'Alliança. We have happy memories of her visit to London and of her work for us in Geneva.

**France.** It is with great pleasure that we have received news from Mademoiselle Lenoel. All during the occupation she has been anxious about us, as we have been about our French colleagues. We are thankful to know that they are all safe though many of them have been through great suffering. Several of them took part in the Resistance Movement and gave help to the Jews.

The Feminist Movement is resuming its activities, and l'Alliance is represented on a National Committee which is concerning itself with the forthcoming elections at which, for the first time, women will have the same rights as men. A conference is being organised to acquaint women with their newly accorded rights. Mademoiselle Lenoel tells us with what joy they welcomed the arrival of the British in France, and commends us for having kept St. Joan's flag flying through these difficult years.

**India.** For the first time women were empanelled as Jurors with men at the third Criminal Sessions of the Bombay High Court.

**Malta.** At a meeting of the Maltese National Assembly on 17th February, a delegate had the temerity to move that the presence of a woman press delegate (the Hon. Mabel Strickland, a Vice-President of our Alliance) was unjustified and formed a precedent. The motion fell to the ground as no other of the 387 delegates had the courage to second it!

**South Africa.** Father B. Huss, C.M.M., has an interesting article in the *Southern Cross* on the splendid work of African nurses. It is good to note that the South African Trained Nurses Association champions the rights of trained African nurses, and maintains that the "conditions applying to pensions, salaries, emoluments including vacation, sick leave, workmen's compensation act, should be as inclusive as for European nurses." The S. African Bantu Trained Nurses' Association was formed in 1926, and has branches in many parts of the Union.

**Sweden.** The International Co-operative Women's Guild *Bulletin* tells of a proposal from the Government of Sweden for holidays with pay for housewives. A committee has been asked to prepare a report for Parliament. In 1938, when a statutory right to two weeks' holiday with pay was given to most workers, women's organisations with Government help began experimenting in order that unpaid home-makers should have a share in this scheme. The Government granted a subsidy making it possible for two thousand women to spend ten days at Folk High Schools while the students were away. Half travelling expenses and an allowance for board were paid, the women's organisations bore the remainder of the cost. The new proposal will grant the housewife a legal right to this holiday. *E.F.G.*

## Look to Your Votes

The new Representation of the People Bill received the Royal Assent on February 15th. This Act amends the law relating to parliamentary and local government franchises; provides for the resumption of local elections; and amends the law relating to elections, including redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections.

There are two important changes in the Act:

- (1) The local government franchise is extended; all persons registered as parliamentary electors for residence or business premises will automatically be registered as local government electors.
- (2) The former qualification of being the wife (or husband) of an elector is abolished.

This practically means adult franchise for both parliamentary and local government purposes.

Should a General Election be held between April 1st and September 30th, 1945, it will be fought on what is to be called "the May 1945 Register" which has been compiled from identity card records for residential qualifications and applications from persons entitled to a business qualification vote. It is therefore important for all voters to see that their names are on this May Register. They should inspect the lists which should now be open to inspection at the various Town Halls and principal Post Offices. Should their names not appear on such lists,

they should at once send in an application to the registration officer at their local Town Hall. The last day for objections varies in different localities; in some it is as early as March 24th, in others April 15th, so there should be no delay in inspecting the list and sending in your claim should your name be omitted. We presume that all our members in the Services have completed the declaration cards and, where necessary, appointed proxies.

A new "Annual Register" will come into force on October 15th each year. On this Register the local government elections for 1945 will be fought, and the General Election, should it be initiated between October 1st and December 31st, 1945.

There have been no local government elections since 1937, so great changes are likely at the forthcoming elections. Councillors will be elected for London Boroughs and Municipal Boroughs on November 1st, 1945; for County Councils on March 8th, 1946, and for District and Parish Councils on April 15th, 1946. All councillors must retire at these dates except in Municipal Boroughs and District Councils where only one-third of the councillors must retire.

We hope that some of our members are thinking of offering themselves as candidates in these elections. If so, will they let us know at once so that we may support them wherever possible? *F.A.B.*

## In Parliament

**Equal Pay—February 21st.**

Mrs. Tate asked the Prime Minister whether the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on equal pay specifically included the power to make recommendations.

Mr. Churchill: No, sir. The Commission was required by its terms of reference to consider the social, economic and financial implications of the claim for equal pay for equal work and to report.

Mrs. Tate: The House understood that in the setting up of the Committee it was implicit that there should be recommendations, and do you think it is worthy of a Government led by a man as great as he is to try perpetually to hold back the tide of progress by these pebbles of prejudice?

Mr. Churchill: I neither deserve the excessive praise nor the excessive blame in which you have enshrouded this supplementary question.

**War Gratuities.**

Mr. Tinker, one of our Catholic M.P.s, has tabled a motion to which many other Members have added their names, that the war gratuities scheme of the Government should be amended "so as to make one uniform rate according to length of service applicable to all ranks, whether men or women." Wing-Commander Errington has an amendment that "men and women of the same rank are to be treated equally."

There is considerable dissatisfaction in the Women's Services with regard to the Government scheme which, based as it is on length of service, should therefore allow no pretext for sex discrimination.

**Women's Land Army—February 20th.**

Mr. Hudson, Minister of Agriculture, said: Lady Denman's resignation, which I very greatly regret, means a heavy loss to the Women's Land Army, to which she has given most valuable leadership and loyal service since its inauguration.

Her resignation was based on the fact that members of the W.L.A. were not included in the schemes, particularly the Business Grants Scheme, which had been announced for financial assistance to the Women's Auxiliary Service and the Civil Defence Services.

As indicated in the recent debate, the Government

consider that while the members of the W.L.A. have rendered national service of the highest value, often at great personal sacrifice, the differences in the conditions of recruitment and service existing between the W.L.A. and other services preclude treatment on the same basis.

The case of the W.L.A. is under separate and, I can assure members, most sympathetic consideration, (See back page.)

**Nationality—8th February.**

Mrs. Cazalet Keir asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government will now consider implementing the policy declared in 1931 by introducing legislation to allow British women to retain their nationality on marriage with an alien.

Mr. H. Morrison: It is not possible for H.M. Government to introduce such legislation without prior consultation with the Dominions. No suitable opportunity for consultation has occurred, but the matter will not be overlooked.

Mrs. Cazalet Keir: May I ask the right honourable gentleman whether he will undertake to try and see that this matter is placed on the agenda at the next Imperial Conference?

Mr. Morrison: I will do my best, and I would certainly like it to be there, but of course it must depend on how much pressing business there is before that Conference. . . . I think that the House will agree that it is desirable that citizenship of the British Commonwealth should stand on the same basis if we can possibly do it.

The injustice of our present Nationality Laws is seen from a new angle in the case of women conscripted and sent abroad who marry foreigners, and in so doing lose their British nationality and the protection of the country they are serving. Their marriage does not release them from service. Meantime we note that the Prime Minister in his speech to the House on the 27th February said: "H.M. Government will never forget the debt they owe to them (the Poles), and I earnestly hope it will be possible to extend the freedom and citizenship of the British Empire to all who have fought if they so desire it." Why, then, should H.M. Government deny British citizenship to those serving their own country?

## Reviews

**What Every Citizen Should Know. Local Government in England and Wales, 1944.** (Published by the National Women's Citizens' Association, price 1s. 6d.)

This booklet provides useful information about the complex structure of local government in England and Wales. Details of the historical background, functions and composition of the five principal types of Local Authorities, viz., County Boroughs, Administrative Counties, Boroughs, Urban Districts and Rural Districts are clearly set out, but, as anticipated by the authors, the Local Government Bill recently introduced into the House of Commons will to some extent affect existing practice, for instance, the Local Government franchise is now in line with the Parliamentary franchise.

The purpose of the booklet is to interest citizens, and especially women citizens, in the vast field of public service, covering Education, Public Health, Maternity and Child Welfare, Public Assistance, Housing, etc., open to those who are willing and able to take an active part in their local government. Generally speaking, no special qualifications are required, and it is to be hoped that Catholic women will take their full share in the work which so intimately affects the daily lives of all.

A well-deserved tribute is paid to the way in which Local Authorities have carried out the extra responsibilities placed upon them during the war, i.e., Civil Defence services, Salvage work, British Restaurants, Evacuation and Reception schemes, besides maintaining their essential services. The problems of peace may well be as difficult, though we may hope less hazardous, than those of war, and it would be excellent if the time so generously given during the war to fire-watching, first-aid work, etc., could now be placed at the service of the community for post-war reconstruction.

M. O'C.

**Harriet Tubman.** By Earl Coward. (Associated Publisher, Inc., Washington, D.C.)

This book, "that the white publishers would not issue" because it concerns "the people that the white rulers are slow to free," gives an account of the amazing work of a negro slave woman who, having escaped herself, devoted her life to the rescue of her fellow slaves. She brought scores of slaves, men, women and children, by the "Underground Railroad" from the unfree States, first into the "free" States, and later—after the passing of the "Fugitive Slave Law," to Canada, where she bade them "shake the Lion's paw" in freedom. She took an active part in the Civil War as authorised agent for the military authorities, and by organised raids freed hundreds more of the enslaved in the Southern States.

She recognised the harmful effect of slavery on the free as well as the unfree—and it is good to know that she received support from the leading suffragists of the time who fortunately saw, as she did, freedom as one and indivisible.

It is the story of a great woman sincerely and movingly told.

P.C.

**50 Faggots.** By Julian; illustrated by John R. Biggs. (John Miles, 7s. 6d.)

This book, a reprint of the series of articles published in the wartime *Catholic Herald* under the title "Earth and Ourselves," has in its essays, with their vivid titles, and in the woodcuts which decorate them, sincerity and simplicity and that concrete quality which is an English distinction. There is no learned botany or natural history, but much accurate and imaginative observation, allusiveness, always apposite, to folk lore, fairy lore, hagiology and literature, and humour used sparingly and rightly. A pleasant little book, unusually well produced for these days.

H.D.I.

*The Universe*, in a review of Father Terence Connolly's "Francis Thompson" published in U.S.A., quotes the following story of Wilfred Meynell's indignation when someone asked him whether Mrs. Meynell might accept an invitation for a week-end. "My permission!" exclaimed Mr. Meynell, "the day that Mrs. Meynell must ask my permission for anything she would do, or I must ask her permission for anything I would do, I hope we shall never see each other again." Younger members may not know that Alice Meynell was one of those who helped in the very early days of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society. She served for many years on our executive committee.

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**Becoming One—The Need for Christian Unity.** By Rev. Herbert Keldaney. (Paternoster Publications, 4d.)

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

*From The Catholic Citizen, March 15th, 1920.*

Mr. Grundy's Bill, which would give women the franchise on the same terms as men, abolishing the age limit of 30, passed its second reading in the House of Commons without a division on February 27th. Lady Astor chose the occasion to make her second speech in the House, and said that she wanted the Bill not for the sake of the women, but for the sake of the country. The country never in its life needed women's courage more than now. She only wished hon. members could see the letters she had received since her maiden speech. It would be an eye-opener. There were thousands of these letters, and they were on a high level, and of such hope, both spiritual and material.—*The Franchise Bill.*

*The largest*

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*in the South of England*

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## THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN & ST. ELIZABETH

60 Grove End Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.7

We ask for prayers for Gertrude Vaughan, subscriber to the *Catholic Citizen*, who died at St. Leonards-on-Sea in February. An enthusiastic fighter in the ranks of the W.S.P.U. during the suffrage campaign, she served a term of imprisonment. She was a journalist and writer, the author of several novels and of some delicately fanciful poetry. *R.I.P.*

**W.L.A.** On March 9th, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that the Cabinet had decided against giving any gratuities to the Women's Land Army. Many M.P.s have protested against this decision and a motion has been tabled asking for reconsideration of the matter.