

THE

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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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.

Birth Control—A Policy Without Vision.

A Speech by Mrs. Laughton Mathews, M.B.E., on behalf of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, at the National Council of Women Conference in Manchester.

In asking you to vote against this resolution, I want to say that I realise fully that this is a very difficult question. Anyone who has worked among the very poor—as I have done in the East End of London—knows that the evils which have been spoken of are very real ones. What we have to decide is the best way of dealing with them, and I submit to you that the right way is by social reconstruction and reform.

The doctrine of birth control is a doctrine of pure expediency. It starts at the wrong end. It is attempting to cure our bad social conditions by tinkering with results instead of attacking causes. The real problems to be tackled are housing, unemployment and education—and when I say education, I do not only mean development of the mind, I mean spiritual and moral training and the teaching of self-control from early years.

Why are the families of the poor so much larger than the families of the middle and upper classes? Certainly not because the well-to-do all use contraceptives. To begin with it is a scientific fact that the most highly cultivated species both in plant life and animal life are the most difficult to propagate, and the same applies to human beings. Then, among the poor there are fewer interests, fewer means of recreation, their minds are less developed, and, combined with these facts, their married lives are spent in such crowded conditions that

immoderation in sexual relations is almost inevitable. If all the energy which is being expended on birth control propaganda was directed towards housing reform and better education, we should be nearer solving the problem of the slums.

Whatever your own views may be in regard to artificial birth control, you must remember that the maternity and child welfare clinics are maintained out of public money, and that numbers of people who are forced to contribute, oppose the dissemination of birth control information, not as an opinion, but as a matter of conscience. You cannot force people by law to violate their conscience by giving financial support to something which they believe morally wrong.

Birth control cannot be compared with medical science—it does not attempt to help nature but to frustrate it. There is no comparison between trying to cure the mistakes of nature—probably due either to accident or to faulty living—and using a human faculty and at the same time frustrating its object. Apart from the moral aspect, medical opinion itself is violently opposed on the question. A great number of doctors could not conscientiously give the desired information and in consequence there would be a disastrous split in the ranks of the maternity and child welfare movement. It is significant to note that this subject was debated before the Child

Welfare Group of the Society of Medical Officers of Health in 1925, and that after hearing the speeches no vote was taken, the meeting evidently feeling that the subject was too controversial.

I should like to say that the medical opposition is by no means confined to those who oppose it on religious and moral grounds. A large number of doctors also oppose it on grounds of health, stating that the use of contraceptives frequently results in permanent sterility, and in nervous and other diseases. The prevention of conception is declared even by its advocates to be full of risk except by one method which needs constant care and even medical supervision. Can we expect in the slums the carefulness, cleanliness or skill which the method requires?

I could say more about the medical side but my time is limited and by far the most important aspect of this question is its bearing on morality.

You may possibly think that in passing this resolution you would not be expressing any opinion as to the rightness or wrongness of artificial birth control in itself, but this is not so—in accepting state regulation you express approval or at any rate acquiescence, in just the same way that state regulation of vice accepts the evil of prostitution as inevitable. The whole woman's movement has always been solid against the idea that prostitution is necessary or that it is impossible for men to lead chaste lives. It would be a denial of our faith to pass the resolution which is before you.

In adopting a *policy*, one must not think of individual difficulties, but must have a vision of the future of humanity as a whole and be sure that we are working for the highest ideal for civilisation. Heaven knows we all fall short at times but that is no reason for basing our moral standard on the level of our falls. I do think that we must set a very high ideal in regard to sex relations, because it is such a slippery slope and you don't know where you are going to slide to if you once lower your standards. The Christian ideal on which our modern civilisation has been built up is that in marriage there shall be strict moderation and that out of marriage there shall be abstinence from sex relations. If you

are going to allow married people unlimited licence for self gratification without any corresponding responsibility, what can you say to those unmarried people who find self-control difficult, or to those wedded to a diseased partner, or to married people who are separated for long periods by their professional duties, or to those who have a tendency to sex abuse or to unnatural relations. It is certain that the recognition by the State of birth control as legitimate for married people, will result in an increase of immorality among unmarried people—not only because the fear of conception is removed, but because of a general lowering of moral ideals. To be consistent, the supporters of this resolution should not only accept that but approve it—it is too dangerous to argue that love and mutual help are alone a sufficient end for marital relations, for no one in their senses believes that love is confined to the marriage state.

We cannot sanction the use of contraceptives even in rare cases without opening the gates to the flood. The most difficult cases are those in which the health of the parents renders it desirable that there should not be children. I am told on medical authority that cases where it is not safe for a woman to bear another child are extraordinary rare, especially if she has proper ante-natal care. In these rare cases the only safe way and right way is abstinence, or if this is found too difficult, the limiting of intercourse to the so-called safe period, and if it is not altogether safe neither is the use of contraceptives infallible as even its most ardent supporters must admit. You may think this a hard doctrine, but then ill-health is a hardship. We must just recognise that bad health is a disability and likely to cause suffering. It is equally hard if one partner is suffering from a communicable disease; in this case contraceptives would be useless, they would not prevent the healthy partner from being infected. Whatever reforms you bring about you cannot do away with hardship and suffering in this world. You cannot for instance cure the suffering of those who long for a child and cannot have one, and what is to be the solution if one parent wants children and the other refuses. Anyway, suffering borne in the right spirit

(Continued on p. 89).

Notes and Comments.

BIRTH CONTROL AND THE N.C.W.

The following resolution has been passed by the Executive of St. Joan's S.P.A.:

"In view of the resolution adopted by the Annual Conference of the National Council of Women at Manchester on October 16, calling upon the Minister of Health and Local Authorities 'to allow information with respect to methods of Birth Control to be given by the Medical Officers at Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics in receipt of Government Grants,'—which resolution is contrary to Catholic principles, and also to true feminism—St. Joan's S.P.A. decides to withdraw from affiliation to the National Council of Women.

Elsewhere in this issue we print the admirable speech made by Mrs. Laughton Mathews in moving the rejection of the resolution. We regret that there was no time to take the resolution on women in the Diplomatic Service, etc.

* * * *

We rejoice that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has decided in favour of the claim made by Canadian women to be members of the Senate. Their Lordships find, after convincing arguments and anxious considerations, that the word "persons" include both men and women, and that therefore, women are eligible to be appointed members of the Senate.

It will be remembered that the British North American Act, 1867, empowers the Governor to summon qualified persons to the Senate. This decision of the Privy Council reverses the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

In delivering judgment, the Lord Chancellor said that the exclusion of women from public offices was a relic of more barbarous days.

Our cordial congratulations go to our colleagues in Canada, and more particularly to the five public-spirited women, who brought the case. We trust that this decision will pave the way to the abolition of some of the barriers to women's advance-

ment still existing in the Home Country, especially as regards the House of Lords.

* * * *

In view of recent incidents in Ireland—when women senators and others were not allowed to walk with their male colleagues in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, but relegated to the tail end—we are delighted to publish the following letter from the Catholic Women's League of Germany, a very progressive body. We hope our Irish friends will take heart of grace, and mend their ways:

"Some time ago we were asked, through Dr. Maria Schluter-Hermkes, to supply a few special examples of occasions on which, during festivals of the Catholic Church, women are officially admitted to their rightful position, according to their rank and profession and are not classed as women, without any further recognition.

When the President of the Catholic Union of German Women was elected this year in Freiburg, as the Third Vice-President of the Catholic Assembly, she was allowed as were other women members of the Central Catholic Committee, to have a seat in the Cathedral Choir.

She was also allowed, on the occasion of the solemn open-air service, to kneel in the Tribune, and was the only woman so favoured; this was because of her official position.

In the Corpus Christi processions, the women students, in all university towns, always process in the middle of the whole body of student-representatives.

Further, women representatives of German towns and cities proceed, as we know in the case of Cologne and Aix-la-Chapelle, in the processional ranks with their male-colleagues and like them carry lighted candles, following close behind the Blessed Sacrament.

Hoping we have been of some help to you in supplying these details.

With our heartiest good wishes,
ANTONIE NYNNEN. General Secretary."

German Catholic Women's League.
October 8, 1929.

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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The Royal Commission on the Civil Service.

The appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the conditions obtaining in the Civil Service, provides an opportunity to press for reforms for which the equalitarian societies, including St. Joan's S.P.A., have been working. The terms of reference are as follows:

1.—The structure and organisation of the Civil Service, including methods of recruitment.

2.—Conditions of service in the Civil Service with particular reference to:

(a) The general standard of remuneration of civil servants and the existing differentiation between the rates and scales of remuneration payable respectively to men and women civil servants;

(b) machinery for the discussion and settlement of questions relating to conditions of service; and

(c) the position of ex-Service civil servants in unestablished employment;

3.—Conditions of retirement from the Civil Service, including the retirement of women civil servants on marriage.

It will be noted that the Commission is to report upon the rates of remuneration between men and women. The Government is the chief sinner against the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, and until they reform it is difficult to make headway, their bad example is too great a stumbling block. A recent pamphlet issued by the Federation of Women Civil Servants sets out clearly the present different scales of pay, higher of course for men, though in some instances men and women start at the same salary.

The principle of Equal Pay has been conceded, but the Treasury has shirked carrying it into operation. The F.W.C.S. reminds us that the principle was approved by: The Royal Commission on the Civil Service, 1914; the Machinery of Government Committee, 1919; the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, 1919; and the Subcommittee of the Women's Advisory Committee, Ministry of Reconstruction, 1919. The principle has also been accepted by Parliament. Clearly discussion on the principle is unnecessary, we look to the Commission to find a means of carrying it into effect.

It is not only as regards salaries that the scales are weighted against women, no one will suggest that they are given the same opportunity for promotion, indeed, while the rule holds that a woman must be dismissed on marriage, they are never likely to get fair play.

We do not forget that women are debarred from all posts in the Diplomatic, Consular, Indian and Colonial Civil Services. Would not the Lord Chancellor call this a relic of barbarism?

The chairman of the Commission is Lord Tomlin, and we are glad to see that there are five women among the members: the Duchess of Atholl, M.P., Mrs. Ayrton Gould, Mrs. M. A. Hamilton, M.P., Mrs. E. M. Lowe, and Mrs. Wintringham; all women of wide experience.

There are many enemies of fair play to women in the Civil Service, and feminist societies must pull together if we are to defeat them.

L. DE ALBERTI.

Illegitimate Children.

On Monday, Oct. 7, St. Joan's S.P.A. held a meeting at St. Patrick's, Soho, when Miss Musson, Secretary of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother, gave an address on recent legislation concerning illegitimate children. Miss Musson gave a long list of laws affecting the illegitimate child, and said her Council was pressing for one consolidating act, which would greatly simplify matters; her Council was also pressing for reciprocal affiliation orders throughout the Empire, so that a man would not be able to escape his responsibilities by removal to another part of the Empire. The speaker also dealt with the Adoption Act.

The Chair was taken by Miss Kathleen FitzGerald, B.A., who expressed the thanks of the audience for an admirable speech.

A resolution urging the Government to introduce a Bill for the enforcement of Affiliation Orders Overseas, was passed at the recent Conference of the National Council of Women. The resolution was moved by Miss Musson for the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, and seconded by Mrs. Laughton Mathews on behalf of St. Joan's S.P.A.

As Mrs. Laughton Mathews pointed out, in the Irish Free State there is no law enabling an unmarried mother to take action against the father of her child for maintenance, though Irish feminists had been pressing for such a law to be enacted. We hear that reports of Mrs. Laughton Mathews' speech is being sent to their M.P.'s. by the Irish Women's Citizen Association. It is hoped that the Affiliation Bill will pass the Dail.

Obituary.

We offer our deep sympathy to our member, the Hon. Mrs. Walter Roch, on the death of her mother, Lady Treowen, R.I.P.; and to Mr. Leigh and his family on the death of our member, Mrs. Leigh, Mayor of Knutsford. We last saw Mrs. Leigh at the recent Mass Meeting of Women at the Albert Hall in connection with the Catholic Congress. We were shocked and grieved to hear of her sudden death.—R.I.P.

Birth Control. (Continued from p. 86).

is certainly not the greatest evil in the world, and one might go so far as to say that suffering caused by voluntary self-sacrifice and self-restraint is a part of all noble living. Artificial birth control is a policy without vision, for while it may temporarily relieve suffering, in the long run it must increase it in the same measure as it increases man's subjugation to passion.

I hear this question of birth control spoken of as a woman's question—it certainly is not a feminist question. For one thing modern methods of birth control put all the responsibility on the woman, but worse still is the outlook of those who in supporting this question imply that it is impossible for a woman ever to refuse her husband and that a married woman has really given up the right to her own body. Granted that the tradition of generations has given many people, especially men, a wrong outlook on sex questions, that is not a thing for us to accept and encourage—we must fight against it.

Don't be misled into thinking that anything which is new must mean progress. It is our job to examine new ideas and see what is good and what is bad. I am not going to uphold women as the sole keepers of morality. If all temptation to sin were on the side of men with what face could we talk of an equal standard of morality, it would not be fair,—but we who wish to represent the views of thinking women and who can at least claim to be women who do care for social progress—we must be certain that we have our faces set towards the light.

We have a responsibility now which we did not have before. We have the vote and can get what we want in the way of legislation. Let us be sure that what we are asking for is good.

A service in memory of Dame Millicent Fawcett will be held in Westminster Abbey on November 19, at 12.30. St. Joan's S.P.A. will be represented by the Founder, Miss Jeffery, Miss Gordon, M.A., Chairman, Miss Barry, Hon. Secretary, Miss de Alberti, Editor, and Mrs. Laughton Mathews, M.B.E., Hon. Treasurer.

International Notes.

Le Relèvement Social for October abolitionist paper, warns its readers against attaching importance to official utterances concerning State Regulation of Vice in France, and declares that the country, or rather the authorities, are still faithful to the abominable system. Although France was one of the first nations to sign the Convention for the suppression of the traffic in women, she persists in keeping open her *maisons de tolérance*, which are at the bottom of the traffic, since supplies must be kept up.

So far from yielding, the Minister de l'Intérieure and the Minister of Hygiene issued a new circular in July urging the Prefects to use their existing powers, and to add, when necessary, to measures already taken, in order to make regulation of prostitution more efficient. No, France is not converted, that will come when her women are enfranchised.

* * * * *

We are glad to receive, after a long interval, *Alma Feminina*, a feminist paper of Portugal, organ of the National Council of Women of Portugal. The editorial reviews the position of feminism in Portugal, where the chief obstacles are indifference and misunderstanding. The N.C.W. is unfortunately still the only feminist society in Portugal, but the cause gains ground, and a congress of Lusitanian and Spanish feminists is to be held in Lisbon in 1930. L. A.

St. Hildegard.

From *Korrespondenz Frauenpresse* (Berlin) we give the following particulars of St. Hildegard, the 750th anniversary of whose death has just been celebrated at Bingen on the Rhine. One of the greatest of medieval women, she is all too little known in this country.

Born in the castle of Bockelheim on the Nahe in 1098, she was confined when eight years old to the care of an anchoress, and in time became the abbess of the community that arose from the hermitage.

Her first great mystical work "Scivias" received the papal sanction in 1147. From her childhood the Light that transcends

description shone in her soul; when she writes it is from the depth of the knowledge given her. She traces the Redemption of Mankind, closing with a magnificent vision of the reign of anti-Christ and the final triumph of God. Other works followed, psychological studies in allegorical form. In language comparable to Dante, a hundred years before Dante's time, St. Hildegard describes Hell, Purgatory, Paradise. A deep feeling for nature penetrates her Latin hymns, and it is this same quality which gives to her medical and scientific writings their appeal at the present day. Though much is drawn from antiquity, there flashes out the unmistakable touch of personal observation.

Surprisingly modern too are the hygienic regulations she lays down for her convent: light and airy cells, running water, exercise.

Summoned to Councils and theological discussions she spoke fearlessly, for "her eyes were fixed on eternity." We find her rebuking the Emperor Barbarossa himself, and her letters bear witness to the clearness of her insight. The life of this great woman closed in the odour of sanctity on the 17th September, 1179. M. S.

We are glad that the Government's new Pensions Bill will bring relief to a large number of widows, and that pensioners emigrating to the Dominions will not thereby sacrifice their pensions.

Factories Bill.

On November 4 the Home Secretary received a Deputation from the Equal Rights Committee respecting the proposed Factories' Bill. The Deputation was introduced by Lady Rhondda, and eighteen societies, including St. Joan's S.P.A., were represented. Miss E. M. Froud, N.U.W.T., spoke on the securing of economic emancipation; Miss Whately, for St. Joan's S.P.A., on equal status—feminists ask for an equal status for adult men and women in industry, and the removal of women from the category of the child and young person; Mrs. Archdale, Six Point Group, on the same point. Mrs. Abbott, Open Door Council, asked that no section of the Factories' Bill should give power to base Departmental Regulations, Orders or Special Orders, on sex. The Home Secretary promised to give full and impartial consideration to the views laid before him by the Deputation.

We regret that through lack of space we are unable to report the successful meeting on Equal Pay convened by the National Union of Women Teachers on October 18, at the Central Hall, Westminster, supported by twenty-seven societies. St. Joan's S.P.A. was represented by Miss Monica O'Connor.

The International Labour Organization and the Employment of Barmaids.

We rejoice that the inclusion of a Question as to the desirability of prohibiting the employment of women as barmaids in dock areas, among those to be issued by the International Labour Office to Governments with a view to the adoption of a draft Convention, has been definitely rejected. For this unjust proposal, which would have been as ineffective as it was inequitable, the Commission on Seamen's Welfare has substituted a Question of prohibiting the employment of attendants of both sexes in public houses under a certain age. It is gratifying to learn that Mr. Somervell, British Adviser, supported the rejection of the proposal, saying that it was useless to put to Governments a Question on this subject, since some of them would not accept the proposed restrictions.

Mui Tsai.

The *Times* reports that the Attorney General has introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council, Hong-Kong, to bring to an end the practice of mui tsai—or the selling of female children for domestic service, or indeed, for whatever purpose the owners choose to use them. Societies in this country, including St. Joan's S.P.A., have long been pressing the Home Office to put an end to this slavery under the British Flag, and we trust that effective measures will be taken to abolish mui tsai once and for all. We have recently received news of the sale of a girl of eight for 96 dollars. We are glad to note that the Colonial Office is now making a serious effort to stop this slavery.

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TREASURER'S NOTE.

Many thanks to all those members and friends who helped to make the Jumble Sale a success. This resulted in a net profit of £11 7s. 8d. Our grateful thanks are also due to Mrs. Kerr and those who have helped her with the two very enjoyable dances. The Christmas Sale takes place after we go to press. Those who

are unable to attend the Sale will be able to buy Christmas presents at our office, 55 Berners Street, W. 1, any day between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., and no doubt many people will appreciate the opportunity of "shopping" in peace and quiet.

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Everyone who participated in it thoroughly enjoyed Mrs. Laughton Mathews' flying visit to the Branch on October 15th. We felt very grateful to her not only for her graphic and inspiring account of the Berlin Congress, but also for her interest in our activities, and for her very great kindness in coming to us after a strenuous and anxious day at the N.C.W. Conference in Manchester. More members would have been present at the meeting had it not been in "October week" when those of our members who are teachers in elementary schools were on holiday.

The next meeting is to be devoted to "Women Police," and should prove interesting, as events in Liverpool are moving fast, and the "Women Police Movement Committee" are anxious to enlist our aid in what may well prove the last campaign on their behalf.

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**ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND
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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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