

# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

## AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

#### The London Conference.

As we go to press the London Conference is meeting in plenary session for the discussion of the Committee's reports prepared during the week-end. The old conflict between economic and military security continues to dominate the scene, and difficulties "which are not regarded as unsurmountable" have not yet been surmounted. The present phrase of the conflict takes the form, broadly, of a tug-of-war between the banking and financial interests, which require above all things a guarantee of German economic stability as security for their bondholders, and the French political interests, which stick obstinately to such rights of coercion as might, in the opinion of the financiers, endanger that economic stability. Meanwhile, Europe holds its breath.

#### Labour and Women.

Our attention has been drawn to the fact that in estimating what women were likely to receive from the Labour Government last week we made no reference to the Government's attitude in connection with the Civil Service and Equal Pay. We have already stated in these columns, and would like to state again, that we do feel with regard to this important matter that the Government is quite definitely not fulfilling its pledges with regard to Equal Pay for Equal Work. We are hoping shortly to publish an article on the whole position in the Civil Service in order to point out the present anomalies and injustices.

#### Guardianship of Infants Bill.

This Bill has now passed its third reading in the House of Lords ; its stages in the House of Commons will not be taken till the Autumn.

#### Legitimacy Bill.

The Legitimacy Bill passed its Committee Stage in the House of Lords on Thursday last, and will have passed its Report Stage by the time this is in the hands of our readers. The Bill was passed without a division, but certain important amendments were added. Lord Cave moved, on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was unable to be present, that the proviso which has been frequently referred to in these columns should be reinserted as follows : "Nothing in this Act shall operate to legitimate a person whose father or mother was married to a third person when the illegitimate person was born." The Amendment was supported by the Bishop of Southwark, and opposed by Lord Haldane and Lord Buckmaster, who both pointed out that the House of Commons had rejected the amendment. The Earl of Middleton proposed an amendment which had been inserted in the House of Lords when Lord Buckmaster's Legitimacy Bill was under consideration earlier in the Session, and provided that no one should be legitimated unless both

parents had avowed in writing on or before the marriage the paternity. This amendment also was carried, though the objections to it were admirably set out by Lord Buckmaster. A correspondent, in writing to us to protest against this last amendment, states : "Parents will marry in the future who will have no knowledge of the benefit which they can bring to their previously born child, and it may be the child who in subsequent years realizes that the marriage of his parents ought to have legitimated him, but owing to their ignorance, not their fault, it has not done so. As the Bill previously stood, the fact that the parents had married would have automatically legitimated the child, and at any time application could have been made to the Registrar for re-registration." We feel convinced by our correspondent's arguments, and hope that this amendment may be thrown out "in another place." It is difficult now to see what the attitude of the House of Commons is likely to be on this important amendment.

#### Lower Rents for Big Families.

Mr. E. D. Simon's amendment to authorize local authorities to discriminate between the rent chargeable to tenants with dependent children in such a way as to lower the rent in proportion to the number of the children, was unfortunately defeated by 317 votes to 50. Mr. Simon, in stating the case for the amendment, showed how "the housing situation of this country is that the parents of young children, just those who most need a good-sized, well situated and, if possible, well-planned house with garden, are the very ones who cannot afford it." He illustrated his contention by the situation in Manchester, and showed how the proposed additional subsidy given by the Government Bill of 1s. 6d. a week spread over the whole number of the tenants is not going to achieve very much ; but that if the money could be given where the need is greatest to families of three, four, and five children, it would represent a substantial gain for the next generation. Mr. Wheatley gave no reason for opposing the amendment, except that its adoption would involve such an amount of investigation for the local authorities—an objection which, in our opinion, has no validity at all, as was shown by a member of his own party Mr. Scrymgeour. We ourselves much regret the summary way in which this amendment was dealt with, and still more the fact that the official members of both Labour and Conservative parties were prepared to turn it down on a minor issue, with no apparent appreciation of the present evil which the new Bill does so little to remedy.

#### Peeresses in the House of Lords.

The Second Reading of Lord Astor's Bill to render peeresses in their own right eligible to sit in the House of Lords was preceded by a discussion as to whether it was constitutionally in order to introduce such a Bill at all. This point having been allowed, Lord Astor, in a most admirable speech, argued the case in favour of the representation of women in the Second Chamber. After referring to the work of the Queens of England, and to the fact that every party now has its representatives in the House of Commons, he said : "We find in another place to-day that there is a woman occupant of the Ministerial Front Bench. In this House we deal with all subjects except the question of finance. It seems impossible and ridiculous to argue that a woman can discuss finance in another place but is not competent and qualified to come to your Lordships' House and assist us in our deliberations and in our legislation on questions of morality and child welfare and questions affecting the employment and position of women generally." Lord Banbury, in opposing the Bill, gave as his opinion : "I do not know about the Labour Party, but I never met anyone else who did not regret that we had women in the House of Commons. Over and over again Honourable







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**ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**LONDON SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE**, 35 Marsham Street, Westminster. Secretary, Miss P. Strachey. Information Bureau. Interviews, 10 to 1, except Saturdays. Members' Centre open daily. Restaurant open to 7.30 (not Saturdays).

**THE PIONEER CLUB** has reopened at 12 Cavendish Place. Town Members £55s.; Country and Professional Members £4 4s. Entrance fee in abeyance (*pro tem.*).

**FELLOWSHIP SERVICES**, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 27th July, 6.30, Rev. James I. Vance, of Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A.

**THE HOUSE ASSISTANTS' CENTRE, 510 King's Road, Chelsea, S.W. 10,**

is now definitely **CLOSED**, as Ann Pope has, by medical advice, had to discontinue all active participation in social work. An article on the work of the Centre (which is being carried on as a fresh undertaking at Ealing) will appear shortly in the *WOMAN'S LEADER*.

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