

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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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 in Russia

By V. M. CRAWFORD

Amid the ever bitter controversy that continues to surge round the U.S.S.R. and all its activities, no subject, after that of religion, has excited more discussion than that of the position of women within the Soviet Republics. For all interested in feminist problems it is only fair to the U.S.S.R. to ascertain at least what it is aiming at where women are concerned and how far it is putting its principles into practice. It is from this point of view that a quite recent book by G. N. Serebrennikov* is of real interest to feminists. It may, and probably will be argued, that the book is sheer Bolshevik propaganda; yet it is so based on statistics and on recent scientific and industrial investigations, that even allowing for exaggeration as to actual achievements, the results in many directions are too remarkable to be ignored.

In point of fact the Russians are exceedingly proud of what they have accomplished on behalf of their women-folk.

"The U.S.S.R.," writes Serebrennikov, "is the only country in the world where full equality for women has not only been proclaimed, but is also being made an actuality. Soviet woman is participating in all forms of public work . . . She has established herself in industry and agriculture, in science and technical research, in directing production and in State administration. In a country in which but twenty years ago the overwhelming majority of the female population was illiterate, there are at present almost no illiterate women. In all schools, women study side by side with men. The whole mode of life of the Soviet woman is being changed."

All Soviet legislation tends towards this ideal. Mothers have been given equal rights with the fathers over their children; men have been rendered responsible for their illegitimate

offspring; the nonpayment of alimony is severely punished and divorce conditions, however much we may deplore their existence, are equal for the two sexes. Politically, of course, there is complete equality, women as well as men becoming voters to, and eligible for, the soviets at the age of 18.

Yet it is the entry of women into industry that constitutes the most startling innovation in Russian popular life. To appreciate what has been accomplished one has to remember the deplorably low level of civilisation at which the peasant women had to live under the Empire, and that even for the middle classes it was only the elect few who achieved higher education and some degree of social freedom. The few women in industry were paid as a rule less than half the wages paid to men and were wholly unprotected by factory legislation.

A primary need was the education of women to fit them for more skilled work. In 1921, out of 2000 pupils in State factory schools, only 13.3% were women, but by 1928 out of 178,000 pupils, 27.6% were women. Moreover the rapid mechanisation of the most physically burdensome processes in heavy industry opened up many new positions for women workers without detriment to health, with the result that "the number of women workers and employees has increased by 4,500,000 in the last six years," and the ranks of women workers have grown more rapidly than those of men. A corresponding increase is to be found in co-operative industry especially in all handicrafts—knitting, weaving, etc.—traditional to women.

A noteworthy point is the enthusiasm with which, in recent years, the younger women

* *The Position of Women in the U.S.S.R.*, by G. N. Serebrennikov (Gollancz, 7s. 6d.).

have availed themselves of the courses of instruction provided for by the training of skilled workers in all branches of industry. To-day 50% of all places in factory and agricultural schools must be reserved for women, and girls are shewing a surprising aptitude for all forms of engineering and electrical work. Vast numbers of women voluntarily attend the supplementary classes held in the evening for specially skilled workers. By scientific tests it has been proved that in certain processes the output of women is definitely higher than that of men, and that in very few is it appreciably lower, while in a general way the female factory worker has been proved to be more accurate and disciplined, more careful of her tools, more economical of her material and less liable to go "on the spree."

The change in the position in agriculture is no less remarkable. No doubt in those transitional years when the old scattered peasant holdings with their antiquated methods were being forcibly converted into central collectivised farms, peasant women must have suffered acutely. But to-day the younger generation at least is enthusiastically entering into the new communal life with its wider interests and opportunities, and is learning to drive tractors, to supervise dairies, to manage herds of cattle and so forth. Already a surprising number of the higher administrative posts connected with agriculture are successfully filled by women, who have shewn far more organising talent than people had anticipated. Similar progress is reported in professional careers and in the Government service where sex is no bar, but it must suffice to record here that to-day, in the U.S.S.R. there are over 46,000 women doctors, being 71.2% of the whole, while the number of women enjoying university education rose from 74,800 in 1928 to 177,300 in 1935.

It is more important for us to know what is being done for the children of these busy emancipated women, and here we read of crèches, clinics and nursery schools being developed by the thousand—over 5 million children of pre-school age thus provided for—as well as a whole net-work of communal restaurants and laundries which relieve women of all heavy domestic labour. Factory legislation enforces two months absence with pay for pregnant women and various privileges for nursing mothers, while happily under the new Family Code adopted last year, abortion has been rendered illegal and is severely punished, its evil effects having been widely recognised. For this same reason maternity and rest homes

are now being developed all over the country so that, it is asserted, the health of the woman worker compares favourably with that of women in Western Europe while the birth-rate is still rising and infant mortality notably decreasing.

Undoubtedly the author's statistics are in close accord with the official figures published by the U.S.S.R. for 1935 with which I have been able to compare them. Prof. B. W. Maxwell (U.S.A.) in his very solid summary, "The Soviet State" (1935) has a painfully revealing chapter on prostitution in Tsarist Russia with a full account of the various enlightened measures that the U.S.S.R. has taken to minimise this terrible evil and states that there are no "street-walkers" to be seen in Russian towns to-day. This is emphatically to the good. As regards the care of children he reports that "incalculable" progress has been made, but is of opinion that "child vagrancy still presents a tremendous task." A close student of Russian life, Frau Halle, in her stout volume, "Die Frau in Sovjetrussland" (1935), expresses a doubt whether Russian women are really happier under these changed circumstances, but admits that a final judgment is not yet possible. What one gathers from various sources is that women's cultural development has progressed much faster than that of men and this obviously must produce a certain strain in social and matrimonial relations.

As regards divorce it is important to recognise the marked alteration in the Soviet attitude towards marriage as revealed by the changes in the marriage laws included in the new Family Code already referred to. Admittedly the extreme facility with which in the past marriages have been both contracted and dissolved, has had lamentable results, especially where children were concerned, and the State now wishes to instil a more responsible view both of marriage and parenthood. Hence the new Code makes divorce both more difficult and more expensive to obtain and enforces stricter regulations concerning alimony. However little this reform may have been inspired by Christian motives, it is satisfactory that this partial return to Christian moral practice should have been realised as essential to the moral welfare of the nation. The Soviet Republics are in a constant state of flux and their ultimate form is impossible for outsiders to predict. All the more should feminists study with an open mind social and economic developments still in progress which affect the daily lives of millions of Slav women.

Notes and Comments

We offer our respectful homage to His Majesty King George VI and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of their Coronation, and we pray that their Majesties may have a long and prosperous reign. At the solemn Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving for the Coronation of the King and Queen at Westminster Cathedral on May 13th, the Alliance was represented by Miss Jeffery, Mrs. Laughton Mathews, Miss Spender and Miss Carroll of Melbourne.

* * * *

We are delighted to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Lyons and their daughter Sheila. Mrs. Lyons was met at Victoria by the officers and several members of the Alliance including Miss Carroll of Melbourne. She was presented with a posy in our colours by David Laughton Mathews, the small son of our Chairman.

We feel sure that no member who can possibly be present will miss our Coronation Dinner on May 31st at the Criterion Restaurant. Those who have not already bought their tickets (7/6), should do so without delay. Members are invited to bring their friends.

* * * *

We offer our congratulations to two of our members: to the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Canon Bickford on his appointment as Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Westminster; and to Father William Ruhman on his appointment as Chaplain to the Port of London. Father Ruhman's new "parish" is sixty-two miles of river. Under the auspices of the Apostleship of the Sea he has opened a Club for Catholic seamen near Tower Bridge, and the premises were blessed by the Archbishop of Westminster on May 7th. Father Ruhman will also look after the spiritual welfare of any Catholic women who may be working in the big passenger steamers which come into the river.

* * * *

We had expected better things from the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* than the notes on "The Place of Women" which appeared in the March and April issues. Statements such as: "Women are practically incapable of unbiased judgment. This means they are capable of being a menace in public life," are accompanied by an admiration for "semi-oriental methods of Southern countries where a woman's place is quite firmly defined as being in her home," and by flippant remarks concern-

ing "female logic" and "woman's creative ability."

To-day when we look at a world racked by jealousy, suspicion and fear, we cannot but feel that never before has it been in greater need of woman's help. Believing as we do that logic like other qualities is not peculiar to either sex and that creative ability needs not only the seed but the space in which to grow, we regret that the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* has allowed itself to express such thoughtless generalisations.

* * * *

Two hundred and fifty-seven Freemen of Coventry are up in arms in the defence of Freedom! The Mayor has decided to admit to the Freedom of the City a woman—Miss Lily Stevenson—a qualified chemist, who has served a five year's apprenticeship in accordance with the requirements for qualification as a Freeman. Her fellow Freemen will spare no expense in trying to combat any repetition of this decision. Now we know why being "sent to Coventry" is considered a painful thing. The dreadful secret is out.

* * * *

The "*Bulletin of the Indian Women's Movement*" appears in a new and improved format, and may now be obtained from: 62 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey (2/6 per year). The April issue gives news of the recent elections in India. A large proportion of qualified women voted, in some cases in greater proportions than the men. In the North West Frontier Province where women had no reserved seats (the position of women here being thought too "backward," over 71% of the women eligible to vote went to the polls. The Indian women's organisations have always protested on principle against the system of reserved seats for women and rightly so. Their attitude is certainly vindicated by the results for they were successful in being elected in several general constituencies in opposition to men candidates. India has now the highest number of women members of Parliament in the world—51 Indian women having been elected.

* * * *

MALE SERVANTS TAX TO BE REPEALED
(With apologies to Thomas Hood)

One more absurdity
Gone to its death!
Comments superfluous.
Save we our breath.

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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Spinsters Pensions

The National Insurance Scheme has much to commend it as a means of provision for sickness and old age, on the part of those persons who "between the ages of 16 and 65 are employed under a contract of service," providing that they are not in receipt of remuneration in excess of £250 a year unless engaged in manual labour. If the working of the scheme were as comprehensive and simple as its literal statement, there would be no reason to qualify the commendations we have suggested might be given to it, but it is necessary to point to serious defects in the working, which have led to the dangers embodied in the apparently desirable and helpful suggestion that insured unmarried women should become pensionable at 55.

Just as the picturesque archaism of Spinsterhood is an anomaly in the mechanised industrialism of the 20th Century, so is the suggestion which embodies even a well-founded and well-deserved sympathy as a substitute for Justice.

The National Insurance Scheme does not do Justice to Women.

Besides leaving out large numbers of both sexes who work on their own responsibility it leaves out a very large group of women doing work for the family or carrying out domestic duties in the homes of relatives.

Then though the Law is not against Equal Pay for men and women doing the same work, neither is it against Unequal Pay, nor against the scandalously low rates of Women's Pay; it even allows Trade Boards to fix legal minimum wage rates for women at little more than half the minimum fixed for men. The State continues to pay its own women employees less than it pays men doing the same work though

Britain signed the Equal Pay Clause of the Versailles Treaty nearly twenty years ago.

Because women are paid less than men, they contribute less, receive lower insurance benefits when they are sick and lower unemployment benefits: both State and Employers pay less towards these benefits for a woman than they do for a man. The following tables will make clear the variation of rates:

WEEKLY RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

	Agriculture	Other Employment
Boy aged 16	4/-	6/-
Girl aged 16	3/6	5/-
Boy aged 17	6/-	9/-
Girl aged 17	5/-	7/6
Young man (18-21) ..	10/6	14/-
Young woman (18-21) ..	9/6	12/-
Man aged 21	14/-	17/-
Woman aged 21	12/6	15/-

WEEKLY CONTRIBUTIONS, HEALTH AND PENSIONS

		Health		Pensions	
Man ..	Employer	4½d.	5½d.	10d.	
	Employee	4½d.	5½d.		
	Total	9d.	11d.		= 1/8
Woman ..	Employer	4½d.	2½d.	7d.	
	Employee	4d.	3d.		
	Total	8½d.	5½d.		= 1/2

Women do not necessarily become old sooner than men but the injustices stated above, the consequent depression of standards and the inevitable monotonous Poverty which accompanies the woman worker throughout her struggle to live an adult life, these do wear down energy and power of resistance and often make women "unemployable units" years before their time.

What is the remedy?

As Unequal Pay, low wage rates, limited and lower Insurance Benefits for sickness and unemployment are undoubtedly injurious causes they should in Justice be removed, and Justice should come first, before specialised grouping and specialised treatment is suggested.

But Justice is difficult to achieve; it is a thousand times more difficult to get a popular backing for a simple measure of Justice than it is to enlist sympathy for an amelioration which though having a semblance of good may be a dangerous usurper of right intention effectively directed. That is why the Spinsters' Pension Scheme is dangerous.

If women workers were to become pensionable at 55, there would be a definitely plausible excuse for removing them from the labour market earlier than other workers and the shorter period of employability would create a sequence of real disabilities. Women with posts of responsibility would be the first to go, and there would be then a sound argument against the training of women for such posts.

The small pension below subsistence level would create a large number of cheap workers, since the pension would act as a subsidy to wages; women would undercut and further lower wage rates.

Where women were forced to live on their pensions, these would need to be brought up to subsistence level by relatives or Public Assistance Committees.

Nothing could prove more seriously disintegrating to industrial communal life, for while the pensioned spinster would come to be looked upon as the dangerous favourite by one section of women, she would become a partial charge on other sections of the community and thus limit seriously, if not lose altogether, the independence she would have maintained as a woman worker.

Injustice cannot be cured by further injustice. It is the rightful business of women workers who number about 5,000,000 in an employable population of 11,000,000 to unite in demanding decent conditions for all workers, equal pay and equal opportunities with men and a truly National Insurance which will secure fairness as a Right to all and will not need the supplement of dangerous favours.

And it is the rightful business of other women to help to the achievement of these ends, more especially those "other" women whose advantages may lift them to a viewpoint of the direction where: "Yonder the wide horizon lies."

HILDA R. WALMESLEY.

Nationality of Married Women

A circular has been issued to registration officers by the Home Office in connection with the preparation of the register of electors in the present year.

An accompanying memorandum explains that a British woman who marries an alien, or whose husband, being a British subject, becomes naturalized in a foreign country, loses British nationality, except in the following cases:

United States of America.—If the marriage or naturalization took place after September 22nd, 1922, she retains her British nationality.

France.—A British woman who marries a Frenchman after November 17th, 1933, retains British nationality, unless before the marriage she makes a formal declaration that she desires to acquire French nationality. A British woman whose husband is naturalized in France after August 10th, 1927, retains British nationality.

Honduras Republic.—A British woman who marries a Hondurian on or after April 15th, 1936, retains British nationality.

Portugal.—A British woman married to a Portuguese subject outside Portugal remains British until the marriage is registered in Portugal.

Russia.—A British woman married to a Russian retains British nationality if the marriage (whether to a Soviet citizen or a "White" Russian) took place after November 7th, 1917, or the marriage took place before November 7th, 1917, without a religious ceremony, or her husband is naturalized in Russia after November 7th, 1917.

Spain.—British women who marry Spaniards after December 9th, 1931, retain British nationality, in the absence of option for Spanish nationality.

Sweden.—A British woman whose husband is naturalized in Sweden may thereby acquire Swedish nationality and lose British nationality. It depends upon the decision of the Swedish authorities in each individual case.

Armenia.—Armenians may be of either Russian or Turkish nationality. In the case of Russian Armenians, the position is as set out under "Russia." In the case of Turkish Armenians, Turkish nationality is lost only by special decree of the Turkish authorities, so that a British woman who marries a Turkish Armenian is deemed to have retained British nationality only if her husband can produce evidence of the issue of such a decree at a date before the marriage.

A British woman who marries a national of any of the following countries, no matter at what date, retains British nationality: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Morocco, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay. A British woman whose husband is naturalized, no matter at what date, in any of the following countries retains British nationality: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.

* * * *

Our Chairman, Mrs. Laughton Mathews, was one of the speakers on the Deputation received by the Secretary of State for the Dominions on April 16th urging the Government to introduce, and pass into law, a Bill giving a married woman an independent right to her own nationality. The Deputation also asked that this subject should be placed on the Agenda of the Imperial Conference with a view to similar legislation being passed in the Dominions.

Reviews

The Book of Margery Kempe, 1436. A Modern Version. By W. Butler-Bowdon. (Jonathan Cape, 10/6.)

In his introduction to this remarkable book Professor Chambers says:

The discovery of *The Book of Margery Kempe* is of the very greatest importance for the history of English Literature. The book is a biography, or autobiography, written when kings of the House of Lancaster were on the throne, and we shall find nothing with which we can compare it, even remotely, till, some four generations later, we reach the middle of the Tudor period.

It is difficult in a short review to give any adequate idea of the book or of the character who inspired it. The reader must draw his own conclusions about Margery Kempe. Was she a very holy person or was she merely hysterical? At any rate her religious experiences would often seem to approximate to those of the great mystics and she seems to have combined much commonsense with much that was erratic. The many and "boisterous weepings" which afflicted her in churches and on pilgrimage must have been a great trial to her fellow citizens and pilgrims. Even though pilgrimages were fairly common in her time she made a record number of them, and she seems to have been fond of travel. She went on pilgrimage, often without her husband, sometimes without "fellowship," but with whatever chaperonage she could pick up, which fact, showing as it did a great independence of spirit, gained her censure in many quarters. She certainly often provoked a censorious attitude. Some thought she was a hypocrite and a nuisance, others were attracted to her, believing her to be a very holy person.

Her book will no doubt arouse precisely the same controversy to-day. C. S.

The Ark

Mrs. Dixon Davies, Hon Secretary of the Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare sends us the first number of their extremely interesting and instructive little monthly journal **The Ark** (unfortunately the price is not given) in which their aims are stated as follows:

"To explore, bring to light and express in popular language all that may be gleaned from Scripture, Tradition and Practice in the Catholic Church which may be of value in encouraging animal lovers to work for animal welfare and the prevention of wanton cruelty, and incidentally for the development of the nobler qualities of human nature of which these things are the expression."

Mrs. Dixon Davies is a member of St. Joan's Alliance.

Joan the Saint. By Stanislas Fumet. Translated by F. J. Sheed. (Sheed & Ward, 2/6.)

As it is in the sanctity of Joan of Arc that the solution of the problems her character and career offer to the psychologist and to the historian is to be sought, it is strange how few of her numerous biographers have made researches into its nature. The importance of the bare fact that Joan was a saint appears to have entirely escaped both Mr. Milton Waldman and Miss V. Sackville-West, who devote hundreds of pages in their scholarly and interesting biographies to interpreting Joan's words and actions without this master key to their significance. The chief value of Stanislas Fumet's little book is that it emphasises the truth that sanctity was not only a fact about Joan, but *the* fact, not simply a condition of her being, but the very purpose of it. She had no object in life but to let God do His work in her.

"She never took action, whether in the making of wars, or in the answering of her judges," M. Fumet writes, "without having direction from above."

From the moment she was persuaded—she was a prudent sensible girl not given to easy credulity—that she had seen and heard messengers from God, she believed what they told her, obeyed them, and set out on her mission. The nature of the mission has perhaps never been fully comprehended. M. Fumet has some interesting and original theories about it, claiming that Joan was sent to inaugurate the doctrine of Christ the King, "whereby human sovereignty is absorbed in the sovereignty of God." Hence her anxiety about the anointing and coronation of Charles at Reims. They meant to her not the legalization of his earthly titles, but the divinization of his Kingship. She had a special lesson to give the world (which was never needed more than in our own time) about the limitations of earthly rule. The earth belongs to no man, but only to the King of Heaven, and it must be held for Him by His stewards. Naturally in so brief a study as M. Fumet's, running only to 70 pages of large type, the chronicle of Joan's military achievements, and of the days of her imprisonment and trial has had to be condensed to a summary of the most important incidents. But many illuminating things are said in the course of the summary. As an example let me quote this:

"Joan's trial reproduces so mysteriously the trial of God by the Sanhedrin that it is not to be recalled without a quickening of shame."

Yet some biographers of Joan recall it with satisfaction as quite fair!

CHRISTOPHER ST. JOHN.

Pensions Bill Protest

Under the auspices of the London and National Society for Women's Service an enthusiastic meeting was held at the Millicent Fawcett Hall, on May 3rd, to protest against the unjust discrimination against women in the Government's new Contributory Pensions Bill. The Meeting was supported by twenty organisations, including St. Joan's Alliance, the speakers being Viscountess Astor, M.P., Mrs. Tate, M.P., and Miss Vanderpant (Secretary of the Women's Farm and Garden Association).

The following resolution was carried unanimously:

That this Public Meeting summoned to support the action of women Members of Parliament in standing out for an equal income limit for men and women in old age pensions, records the conviction that in so standing out they have truly represented the women voters of this country and calls on the Government to do justice to the heavily burdened women workers by removing the proposal to lay down different income levels for men and women in the Contributory Pensions Bill now before Parliament.

The Bill should come before the House of Lords on May 25th. We trust the Government will bow to the wishes of the women's organisations and withdraw the differential income limit between men and women.

International Notes

His Eminence Cardinal Verdier is one of the Patrons of the Congress of the International Abolitionist Federation for combating State Regulation of Prostitution, which will be held from May 20th to 22nd in the Musée Social, 5 rue Las Cases, Paris. Among the speakers will be Professor Paul Gemehling and Miss Alison Neilans. St. Joan's Alliance will be represented by Mlle M. Delavel.

* * * *

The French Senate has passed the Renoult Bill designed to abolish the Civil Incapacity of Married Women. Unfortunately, in spite of opposition from the feminist societies, including l'Alliance Ste Jeanne d'Arc, the Senate has accepted amendments which greatly weaken the Bill, but these clauses will have to be examined again by the Chamber of Deputies.

HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

May I courteously remind members that subscriptions are due and are needed by the Alliance to carry on its work. May I also suggest that all those who can possibly do so, will follow the footsteps of that member who at the Annual Meeting expressed the wish that the minimum subscription be raised, and herself gave 6/-.

C. J. GARRARD.

The Liverpool note and list of subscribers has unavoidably been held over.



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JUNE 18th to 20th

Monseigneur de la Serre will receive the Party on the afternoon of June 23rd and show them the Institut Catholique and the Jardin des Carmes.

Particulars from Miss Helen Colt, Hon. Organizer L'Entente Horticole Franco-Britannique, The Garden Club, 9 Chesterfield Gardens, London, W.1.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE.

NON-PARTY

Office—55, Berners St., Oxford St., London, W.1.

Patron: Saint Joan of Arc. Colours: Blue, White & Gold

Organ—"The Catholic Citizen," 2d. monthly.

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.

MEMBERSHIP.

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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