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THE BRITISH FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN IN WARTIME.

A Message to Members.

After nearly six months of war and the upheavals in the University world that have sent University women here, there and everywhere, members of the British Federation may be asking: What is the Federation doing? By the question they probably do not mean so much what are the Local Associations doing, including their own, as: What is being done at Headquarters in the Federation's name, and what really useful policy is the Federation pursuing that calls for the support and co-operation of all members?

WHAT IS THE FEDERATION DOING ?

The answer is that the Federation, with a shrunken Headquarter's secretariat and problematical funds, is trying to maintain as many of its pre-war activities as possible, and as a matter of high policy is striving to carry out in especial two of the aims laid down long ago, both at this moment charged with deep significance for the present and the future.

The one is international, to promote goodwill and friendly relations between the nations. The other is academic—the preservation of the ideal of scholarship and the promotion of learning, lest it be lost in an era of blood and iron.

THE FEDERATION'S INTERNATIONAL WORK.

The National Federations and War Victims.

The international effort is placed first, as its appeal is immediate, and the value of the international bond never greater. The British Federation is giving—and must continue to give—support and succour to academic women who are victims of persecution. Now it must go further and aid the victims of war as well, and of more war and persecution to follow. Other national associations within the International Federation of University Women are doing this, devoting themselves especially—though not exclusively—to University women among the sufferers. "Neutral" Federations serve the cause in many ways. Some at this moment are seeking the lost in Central Europe and elsewhere, and trying to restore contact between parent and child, friend and friend. They, too, have their own ever-growing problems of refugees and relief, while over them—nearly all—hangs the shadow of war. Federations, "neutral" and "belligerent," have sent greetings to one another since the outbreak of war, and in the interchange of sympathetic and friendly messages, and in the doing of friendly actions, the international bond grows closer.

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The French Association and the War.

The French Association has organised striking war relief schemes. Academic and practical at once, it provides courses in French and English rudiments and conversation for the refugees in France, notably those from Poland and Czechoslovakia. These are conducted by members voluntarily. Now the Association finds that additional courses of various kinds must be arranged as soon as possible. Academic refugees (like those in the care of the British Federation), stranded in France, some awaiting passage overseas, others still without a niche in a strange country, are looked after and, in urgent cases, helped through the Association with grants from the small but growing I.F.U.W. Central Refugee Fund. For the "adoption" of young Polish or Czech women students, doubly unhappy in the disappearance of their country and their means of support, the French Association, co-operating with student organisations and clubs to reduce expense to a minimum, appeals successfully to its members. Again, special medical relief to meet the needs of University women is being planned in collaboration with the Association of French Medical Women. A scheme is also in force to help French evacuees from the frontier districts. Various gifts for this object have come in to the French Association from other national Federations or from individual foreign members. The Belgian Federation, for example, sends a supply of women's clothing every fortnight and once (a pretty touch!) "cent couvertures de berceau pour les nouveau-nés alsaciens et lorrains." The British Federation in its turn, greatly admiring the energy and initiative of its "allied" sister Federation, is sending a gift from its own Refugee Fund to help the French Association's work for University women among the Polish refugees now flocking into France, a burden that lies meanwhile more heavily on France than on Britain.

The I.F.U.W. Central Fund for Refugees.

The International Federation of University Women has issued an appeal to its constituent members to keep the International machinery going by paying dues in full, to raise national refugee funds and to pass a contribution to the I.F.U.W. Central Refugee Fund for use in any country where need is most dire. The letter making the appeal is signed by the International Officers with one tragic exception—the signature of the International Federation's Polish President, Dr. Adamowicz. As a loyal member of the International Federation the British Federation must make its answer to the appeal a part of its international work.

Work for Refugees and Strangers in Britain.

At home the international work of the British Federation must be continued and extended. The German, Austrian and Czech academic women still on its approved refugee list have to be maintained. As in France the war keeps some here who had planned to go overseas. It is estimated that the Refugee Fund can carry these until spring, when to the list new refugees will probably be added. The British Federation must have plans and resources to meet the strain. It might also add

a new direction to its international work. In our midst there are many foreign University women more cut off from their past than ever, trying to make new homes in a strange land and perhaps eke out a living in unaccustomed ways. The British Federation's Hospitality Committee has attempted to give such strangers a friendly hand (and the Local Associations have been quick to do their part in their own districts) but the work at Headquarters, though continuing, is greatly restricted meanwhile, by the closing in London of Crosby Hall, by lack of means, and the dispersion of members of committee and their helpers. Adjusted organisation, however, might set going new ameliorative ventures. Among these the British Federation, at Headquarters and throughout Britain might try to do something to restore the *intellectual* morale of strangers and refugees. These and other schemes of international work the British Federation plans to carry out, not only because of the immediate result in relieving misery, but because, looking to the future, they may help to prepare the way of peace.

THE FEDERATION AND THE PRESERVATION OF LEARNING.

The British Federation also endeavours to carry out its academic aim. In these days over Europe the light of learning in the Universities is going out: extinguished by barbarian hands in Germany, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Poland. Even in our own country war has broken in roughly on our Universities and Colleges, and with it a danger menaces learning unless it is anticipated and countered. The British Federation's resolve still to encourage women scholars is its effort, as far as in it lies, to keep scholarship itself alive. The Federation continues to appoint, and share in the appointment, to scholarships and fellowships where the fulfilment of their conditions is possible. The Academic Subcommittee goes on with its work though it has naturally shrunk in bulk. Of the Federation's own scholarships it is hoped to offer the Junior British Scholarship for 1940-41. The material accessible in Britain for junior scholars to work upon is ample, in spite of war conditions: but the means to provide what may well be called this "token" scholarship have still to be found.

THE FEDERATION AND ITS PUBLIC RELATIONS.

Women's Part in the War and in the State.

The work of the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of the B.F.U.W. still goes on. This deals with the interests of University women and their place in public affairs. While University women as citizens have in these days only one wish—to help the national war effort to the best of their powers—this must not be made the moment for depressing the value of these powers and degrading women, University women among them, into merely subsidiary persons in the state instead of partners. Vigilance in this direction is essential. The deputation of Women Members of Parliament to the Treasury on the 14th February is evidence of a present deep disquiet. The British Federation has had to share in the work of bringing to light the loss to the national effort entailed by neglecting the services of highly

qualified and experienced University women fit for responsible posts. The Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee has to keep an unceasing watch on all such developments, and on other problems affecting and interesting University women that continue to arise as in normal times.

The British Federation, then, is attempting to carry on as many of its pre-war activities as possible, and at the same time to meet the problems of the time by some programme of action adapted to the urgent needs that arise.

THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER AND THE FEDERATION.

To whom can the British Federation turn to make it strong to play its part, but to its members everywhere in Local Associations, or, by war, separated from them? The members alone can keep the central machinery going, without which every radiating activity will slow down and stop. Will the members co-operate as fully as possible, and bear a part themselves in the enterprises initiated either at Headquarters or locally? Even to attend Local Association meetings in numbers aids in stimulating ideas. To retain one's membership is a generous help to the whole Federation; to recruit new members is to neutralise the wastage in membership that may occur. In short, will the members of the Federation ally themselves together for the sake of the future, rather than to receive anything for themselves in the immediate present? One cannot do better than quote the words of the President of the French Association of University Women, addressed to its members: the same ideas underlie the work in war-time of the British Federation:—

“Victory and Peace, when they come, must find us numerous, strong and united, to face the work of liberation and the immense social and international re-construction that will be the task of to-morrow, if culture and civilisation are to survive.”

FRANCES H. MELVILLE,

February, 1940.

President.