

THE
CATHOLIC CITIZEN

VOLUME XXXI, 1945



ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE
55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1

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THE
Catholic Citizen

*Organ of St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (formerly Catholic Women's Suffrage Society),
55, Berners Street, London, W.1.*

Signed Articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

Vol. XXXI. No. 1.

JANUARY, 1945.

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.

Welfare Work Among the Women of Sierra Leone*

The second of a series of pamphlets on mass education recently issued by the Education Department of Sierra Leone deals with a subject of very high importance to the whole of the Protectorate—Welfare Work Among Women.

The idea of utilising indigenous societies as a channel for imparting some form of mass education is not by any means new,† but the difficulties in the way of putting it into operation are not easy to overcome as will easily be understood by anyone with a knowledge of the natural persistence of long-established African customs.

Credit must be given to the initiative and interest of the Medical Officer for Bonthe, a man of Mende-Sherbro extraction, who had, for some time, been giving courses of training in midwifery. It is not surprising therefore that Mende-land was chosen for the scene of the first experiments. The Lady Education Officer was responsible for bringing the need for such work to the attention of the education and medical authorities.

The promotion of the scheme was made immediately possible by the donation of a considerable sum of money by the Works Development Committee. Although the scheme would in any case have been financed through official channels, this gift enabled operations to be put in hand at least a year earlier than might otherwise have been possible.

Bundu societies for girls approaching womanhood have existed for countless years all over the Protectorate of Sierra Leone. They are essentially secret societies in that the ceremonies of initiation and the course of preparation for womanhood are tribal and exclusive. They involve a period of segregation for the girls lasting for some months during the dry period of the year.

At the end of 1942, the Lady Education Officer approached Paramount Chief Julius Gulama, of Gandima Chiefdom (Moyamba), with the suggestion that vacation courses for Protectorate women should be started. The scheme was discussed at a conference of chiefs of the whole of the Moyamba district, and a resolution passed assuring approval and support. The first step was the provision of an intensive course of training to two women, one of whom was Miss Ella Gulama, daughter of P. C.

* We are indebted for this interesting article to the Colonial Office, which obtained it from the Public Relations Office, The Secretariat, Freetown.

† This method has long been practised by Catholic and some other missionaries. We would mention Mother Kevin's training of midwives in Uganda.—Editor.

Julius Gulama and already serving as a trained teacher at Harford school, who was married to the Temne Paramount Chief Bai Kobolo, of Lunsar (Marampa Chiefdom) last April. Before the course was completed, it was found advisable to add a third trained instructress as the response to the publicity given to the scheme was greater than had been anticipated. It was later decided to give similar courses to three other Protectorate women. The subjects in which they were to instruct the Bundu initiates were sex hygiene, infant welfare, feeding and clothing; they required some knowledge of pre-natal care, dietetics, and cookery on lines that harmonised with native customs and made use only of foods and materials available to local people.

Between them, these six women pioneers gave instruction to some 600 girls at the Bundu centres of ten different chiefdoms. The Medical Officer supervised the general arrangements, and the Lady Education Officer herself paid a visit to the class at Tihun in the Sogbini Chiefdom—an unusual tribal concession.

The Bundu ceremonies were conducted as usual in the different villages and, at an appointed time, the initiates were gathered at a central camp built under the supervision of the Sanitary Inspector to ensure adequate sanitary facilities. The first three preliminary lectures were given by the Medical Officer and the rest of the course left to the trained instructresses. Apart from the infant welfare and domestic science side of the camp course, the girls were taught personal hygiene and communal sanitation, particularly the use and siting of latrines and how to dispose of refuse.

As was only to be expected, some of the Bundu head women were at first inclined to scepticism, but from the moment the classes were started they were struck by the orderly way in which the instruction was imparted and the strict observance of traditional forms and ceremonies. Most of these critics have now been converted into enthusiastic advocates.

To the young initiates, the camps have been a real holiday. They have enjoyed the community singing and dancing round the big bonfires at nights. What is better still, they have made the acquaintance of girls of their own age from other parts of the chiefdom; the breaking up of the classes has often been the scene of tears from those who parted from newly-made friends.

This fine start made it obvious that steps would have to be taken to cope with a great extension of the scheme for the next season. During February and March

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Notes and Comments

With pride and much pleasure we learnt that our ex-chairman, Mrs. Laughton Mathews, Director of the W.R.N.S., has been made a D.B.E. (Military Division)—the first Catholic Dame. None of the New Year honours has been better deserved. Our warmest congratulations to her! We also congratulate Miss Ellen Wilkinson and Miss Florence Horsburgh on becoming members of the Privy Council. But could not Lady Astor have been added to that august body? Congratulations to Dr. Mary Blacklocke, a member of the West Indies Royal Commission in 1937-38, now a member of the Colonial Advisory Committee of the Committees for the Training of Nurses in the Colonies and for the Welfare of Colonial Peoples, and of the Council of Liverpool University, on her C.B.E.!

We learn from the *Newsletter* of the National Association of Women Civil Servants that while British women are not forbidden to be war correspondents, their activities as such are impeded and discouraged in every possible way. When Miss Deakin, secretary of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, applied for leave to go to the continent as a newspaper correspondent, after the liberation of Paris, she was asked to sign a declaration which relieved the War Office of all responsibility for her, and was warned that the British government would provide her neither with lodging nor with means of transport. She and a colleague were indebted to American hospitality for accommodation and for a jeep in which they travelled, with the result that they visited the American line but were debarred from reporting on the activities of the British Army. Further, she was denied the quickest means of conveying her news to London, so that invariably it arrived stale.

Miss Annie Dacie has described in the *Daily Telegraph* her experiences as "the first woman to work as welfare officer with military personnel in a transit camp for displaced persons in Europe." "Before my arrival at Bari the military had had to supervise the bathing of the women and children—a proceeding which disgusted the troops and reduced the women to a state of hysteria. Women volunteers, it seemed, had been reluctant to take on the work owing to their lack of protective overalls, hair clippers and other essential equipment, and their own fear of contagion. By procuring the necessary equipment I was able to get women helpers, and we managed eventually to organise effective disinfection methods which cured the hysteria and freed the troops from responsibility in the matter . . . women welfare officers should be appointed in readiness for work in future camps."

The Governing Body of the International Labour Office will, at its meeting in London this month, consider the implementation of the resolution passed at its recent conference in Philadelphia, which asked that a Committee on Social Policy in Dependent Territories should be established to advise the I.L.O. on guiding principles to be observed in dealing with social problems special to these territories. We hope that women will be adequately represented on this committee, and are suggesting both to the Governing Body and to the British Government the names of women whom it might with advantage include.

Readers will remember the protest of the Alexandria Council of Churches against "controlled houses" for the use of British personnel which we published in the *Catholic Citizen* last October. As we go to press, St. Joan's Alliance has received a very welcome letter from the First Lord of the Admiralty to say that "the two houses in question have been put out of bounds."

International Notes

British Colonies and Dependencies. We welcome the following statement in the King's speech at the opening of parliament: "There will be presented to you legislation making further provision for assistance towards the development of the Colonial Empire, both by prolonging the period covered by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 and by substantially increasing the provision of funds authorised to be made under the Act."

We congratulate Miss M. A. Evans and Miss Helen Burness who are the first women to be assistant colonial secretaries. They are appointed to the government of Gambia in West Africa.

Missionary Sisters. How modern is the work of Catholic missionary sisters is hardly realized. We learn from *Missions and Missionaries* that about the year 1800 the diminished number of Catholic missionaries—some three hundred of them—were, save for a sister here and there in the French colonies, all priests and brothers. The sisters now subject to the Propaganda Fidei congregation number by themselves 53,979—the native women slightly outnumbering the foreigners—and at least half as many are computed to belong to other congregations. In the missionary field the sisters are now far more numerous than the priests and brothers. Disregarding hardship and danger, they perform countless works of mercy; they are doctors, nurses, infirmarians, pharmacists, laboratory technicians; they are teachers; they are evangelists. The foreign sisters inspire and have trained the inestimably valuable body of the native sisters.

British Cameroons. Post-war plans, designed to improve education, health services and farming, will affect African women even more than men. The most laborious operations of primitive farming, such as pounding grain and fetching water, as well as all the cooking and other household tasks and the care of children, fall on women; often the girls are too useful to be sent to school. It is good news that a grant of £3,100 has been made to enable an anthropologist, Dr. Phyllis Kaberry, to make an intensive study of the social and economic position of women in the Cameroons.

India. We congratulate Chandralekha Pandit on being the first holder of the Mayling Soong scholarship, founded in Wellesley College in honour of its very distinguished graduate, Madame Chiang Kai-shek. She is the niece of the Nationalist leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the daughter of Mrs. Pandit, at one time Minister of Health for the United Provinces, who is one of the three Indian delegates at the conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, held this month at Hot Springs in Virginia. We hope Mrs. Pandit will return to India by way of this country.

Poland. We congratulate Miss Marek on her appointment as attaché to the Polish Embassy in London.

South Africa. In this Dominion the training of African women as nurses is more advanced than elsewhere in Africa, and until 1937 it was imparted almost exclusively in mission hospitals. At present there are within the Union 37 mission hospitals—eight of them Catholic—as well as eight public and three mining hospitals, and there are ten hospitals in Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia: in all these about a thousand African women are being trained as nurses and midwives. It has, Father B. Hess, C.M.M., states in the *Southern Cross*, been "proved conclusively" that "young African women can and do make dependable nurses."

Retrospect on an Interrupted Campaign*

The pioneer Abolitionists were two Quakers, George Gillett and Alfred Dyer, who in 1879, with the help of Alexis Springard, an advocate of Brussels, investigated the traffic in British girls, frequently sold or even kidnapped to be prostitutes in continental cities, especially Brussels. The appalling facts these men discovered were communicated to Josephine Butler, who not only gave them publicity but also defeated a determined effort to impugn their veracity.

Public opinion was stirred. The London Committee for Suppressing the Traffic in British Girls for Purposes of Continental Prostitution was formed, and in 1881 a Select Committee of the House of Lords was set up to examine the infamous trade. Then the organization of the movement acquired the international character necessary to it. In 1889 the International Abolitionist Federation in Geneva, represented in this country by the A.M.S.H., resolved that there should be international treaties for the suppression, in any country, of the White Slave Traffic, and for the repatriation of expatriated girls who were minors and had given themselves up to "habitual debauchery," and that any person who prostituted others for profit should be guilty of a penal offence.

At this point there was a split in the ranks of the campaigners. One party among them held that the traffic could be abolished even if state-regulated prostitution persisted. In 1899, at an International Congress, this party formed the International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, which obtained the adoption of international conventions on the subject in 1904 and in 1910. But where there was regulated prostitution they were ineffective. In 1921 the work of the Bureau was taken over by the League of Nations, which in that year adopted a stronger Convention in the same sense. In 1923 the League undertook a world-wide investigation into the traffic, and the resultant Report stated that "while

* "The Shield Supplement," October 1944. (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, 2d.).

France

The new Papal-Nuncio in Paris is Mgr. Roncalli, the former Apostolic Delegate to Turkey. Members will recall that Archbishop Roncalli received the Catholic delegates to the Twelfth Congress of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship held in Istanbul in 1935. On Easter Monday His Grace offered Mass in the Church of St. Antonio for the Catholic delegates. Mrs. Corbett Ashby, President of the Congress, Mme. Malaterre Sellier of Paris and many members of St. Joan's Alliance were present. In a short sermon the Archbishop said: "It is a great and lovely work you are doing—a work of charity and redemption—a work for civilisation and internationalism—a work which leads to justice and right understanding. Do not be afraid. Go forward with courage."

We are indebted to the *Universe* for information about the grant of votes to Frenchwomen, announced by General de Gaulle to be part of the democratic liberty restored to his country. Frenchwomen will use the municipal vote when, in a few weeks' or a few months' time, the municipal bodies are re-elected, the national vote when, after the war and the return of the prisoners, a general election is held. On that occasion thirteen million women will be added to the ten million men of the electorate. French cardinals and bishops have welcomed this acquisition by women of the power to influence public life decisively. In modern France it is an innovation, but Bishop Rastouil of Limoges recalls that in the Middle Ages women had and exercised the right to vote in the communes, the parish and the borough councils, the regional assemblies and the

the cause of the traffic is the male demand, the facilities (or markets for carrying on the trade) are provided by all those governments or municipalities which license or tolerate brothels, or vice areas, or which allow the system of state regulation of prostitution, which labels a registered woman as an article of commerce."

In other words, an extensive, intensive and expert enquiry had disproved the contention, upheld for more than half a century, that abolition and state regulation are consistent. It had proved the contrary opinion, unswervingly held by the party of Josephine Butler and her followers, namely, that to suppress the trade it is "essential to strike first at the system of state-regulated prostitution."

The immediate sequel was highly unsatisfactory. A League of Nations Convention, intended to obtain the punishment by all signatory states of traffic in women, whatever their age, was signed in 1933, but in its final form excluded the necessity to punish national traffic in women of full age "out of consideration for the countries in which the system of licensed houses still existed."

Subsequently, however, the Advisory Committee of the League decided on a draft convention which protected "persons of full age and of either sex against procurement for profit," with or without their consent and either in their own or in other countries, and "against any other form of exploitation of the prostitution." The League Assembly in 1938 recommended that a Diplomatic Conference be convened for 1940 to include this convention.

The war has interrupted the campaign. The International Abolitionist Federation, the International Council of Women, the International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and other women's organisations have however proposed that the international convention on this subject hitherto concluded, and that contemplated in 1938, be incorporated in the Peace Treaty. Meanwhile it behoves the Allied Governments immediately to take steps to prevent the exploitation of women in liberated countries

H.D.I.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, March 17th. Nominations for Committee and resolutions for the Agenda must reach the Secretary not later than February 12th.

We remind members that nominations must be duly proposed and seconded and the consent of the candidate obtained.

Equal Pay

The annual conference of Trade Union Women, called by the **T.U.C.** and held at Leicester in October, is reported by the *Labour Woman*. A speaker estimated that about eight million women are now in national service of one kind or another, and that some five million women will be looking for jobs in industry after the war. The conference realized how important to the solution of the resultant problem is the principle of the rate for the job. Miss Florence Hancock, from the chair, reported some progress towards its observance: the I.L.O. conference in Philadelphia has professed adherence to it; agreements equating the pay of men and women have been recorded, but are valid only for wartime and affect only manual workers; the Women's Advisory Committee is represented on the commission which is enquiring into the matter. Miss Godwin emphasized that many men, and many women too, have still to be converted to this just principle.

Examples of departures from it are indeed still current. For instance, the minimum wage, additional to allowances for cost of living, which has been fixed, as from 5th January, for about half the pottery workers in the country, is 51s. for men and 31s. 6d. for women, and the higher rates established vary proportionately for the sexes.

We are faced with the **Wages Councils Bill**, which changes the machinery for fixing wages, substituting Works Councils for the Trade Boards which, under the Act of 1918, could raise rates of wages in industries deemed by the Ministry of Labour to underpay their workers. The Works Councils, to be set up in the absence of adequate voluntary machinery for negotiating wages, would have power to regulate them by voluntary agreements, binding for five years and enforced by the Ministry of Labour, and their competence would extend to industries outside the scope of the Trade Boards. Let us hope that, if the Bill becomes law, the Councils will apply the principle of the rate for the jobs.

Views of the Medical Women's Federation on Certain Aspects of Social Medicine. This reprint from *The Medical Women's Federation Quarterly Review* for October 1944 summarises the conclusions women doctors have drawn from their experiences during two wars and the inter-war years. They have noted lowered standards of honour and of consideration for others, an increase of juvenile and other delinquency, increased alcoholism among the young, the loosening of family ties, sexual incontinence and promiscuity and the consequent spread of venereal disease, a lowered standard for reading matter and public entertainment. They recommend stabilization of family life; religious, intellectual and physical training for the young and for adults; provision for the disabled and the irresponsible.

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of this year, a similar course of training has been given to twenty women undergoing a six months' course of midwifery at Bonthe.

These women, who are trained in courses at regular intervals by the Medical Officer, are chosen by the women of the various chiefdoms, so that when they return they are regarded as "big women," and have a great deal of influence. For this reason it is felt that their additional training in welfare work is of especial benefit.

Thus, from an experiment started in Mende-land only a little over a year ago, a system of welfare training for young women spreading over the whole of the Protectorate promises to develop.

HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

Subscriptions to the Alliance and to the "Catholic Citizen" are now due. We beg all our friends to send their subscriptions without delay, and thus save extra work and expense (not to speak of paper) at the Office. The subscription to the "Catholic Citizen" is 3s., and the minimum annual subscription to the Alliance is 1s. At the same time we remind members that 1s. does not cover even the expense of sending notices, especially nowadays, and we suggest to them that they should make 5s. the minimum subscription to include the "Catholic Citizen."

Thanks to our very generous friends, the proceeds of our Christmas sale have reached the magnificent sum of £63 16s. 7d., of which the £45 made at the sale itself has cleared the *Catholic Citizen* of debt, while the remainder has gone to the general fund.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

From the "Catholic Citizen" of January 15th, 1920.

"Let us not imitate the 'Reformers' in proclaiming matrimony as the likeliest career for girls to-day. To be a wife and mother may be more heroic; to be a religious is more sublime. It is likewise misleading to say that maternity is the crown of womanhood. As Catholics we know better. The nun before the altar is nearer to Christ.

"We know that the married are 'busy with the cares of this life' and 'seek to please their partners.' The unmarried, on the other hand, may freely tend upward, ignore the turmoil of earth, and attain the joys of a supernatural world. Why does human respect hinder this from being emphasised? Marriage is natural and human nature may be fine; but the control of human nature is finer."

The Higher Life, by Elizabeth Christitch.

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We ask for prayers for the soul of our very old member, Miss Mary McCann, who originally belonged to our Liverpool branch and who died recently in London.—R.I.P.