

THE VOTE,
MARCH 7, 1924.
ONE PENNY.

OUR SCANDALOUS LUNACY SYSTEM.

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 1924

OBJECT: To secure for Women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the powers already obtained to elect women in Parliament, and upon other public bodies, for the purpose of establishing equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

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FRANCHISE BILL.

WHAT MEMBERS SAID!

MR. W. M. ADAMSON (Cannock), in moving the Second Reading of the Representation of the People Act (1918) Amendment Bill, on February 29th, said that the first and most important point was the conferring of the franchise on women at 21 years of age. The second was the basing of the qualification of the franchise solely upon residence, except in the case of the University franchise. The third was the assimilation of the Local Government and the Parliamentary franchise (which question he subsequently said he would leave to the general sense of the House, with a decision by Committee, should the Second Reading be agreed upon). Clause 4 would abolish the registration fee in connection with the University franchise, and Clause 7 would remove certain disqualifications that applied to Local Guardians and District Councils. He appealed to the Government not merely to give the Bill its blessing, but to give them an opportunity for facilities in the event of the Second Reading going through, and to say in a practical form that they stood by their Election manifesto—that Labour stands for equality between men and women, equal political and legal rights—and that they would give those facilities that can carry a measure through its various stages.

In seconding the Motion, Miss JEWSON (Norwich) said that in an electorate of 26,000,000, if women received the vote on the same qualification as men, there would be only about 500,000 more women on the register than men, and that half-million would, of course, be spread over many constituencies. She appealed to the Government, who had long been pledged to this principle of equal franchise, and asked them to realise that the women looked to them to carry out their promises. Miss Jewson said that great disappointment was felt by women at the reply of the Prime Minister recently, when he said that the Government had not time to consider this important question. That reply came definitely as a shock and disappointment to many women. She asked the Government to give full facilities for this Bill to become a Government measure, and to go through all its stages in the House without delay.

THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL (Kinross and Perth) moved an amendment that, "in view of the fact that the previous extension of the franchise was founded upon recommendations made by a conference of all Parties, this House is of opinion that a similar conference should be called before deciding what further alteration of the franchise is desirable." She complained that the Bill was not merely, or even mainly, a Bill for equal suffrage for women; that it would give the Parliamentary franchise to people who travel about in caravans, hawkers, and tinkers; and that the woman tinker would be enfranchised. She recognised that women had grievances under the present system, but she felt that to propose a great extension of this kind looked like taking advantage of the heroic sacrifices of the 740,000 men who fell in the Great War.

SIR SYDNEY RUSSELL-WELLS (London University) seconded this Amendment. He described the Bill as "a sort of omnibus Bill," and it seemed to him that, behind the skirts of the women voters, the promoters were sheltering a large number of drastic proposals which would never be considered by the House, were they not hitched on to a women's Bill. It was not a woman's enfranchisement Bill; it was a man's disfranchisement Bill. He wished to deal with the women's question alone.

MRS. WINTRINGHAM (Louth) said that the measure was not only expedient, it was one of common justice, which was long overdue. If it was passed, and allowed to go to Committee, the men would have an opportunity of standing up for their rights, for they were bound to be in a majority, and the Bill would return to the House showing that men were not disfranchised. The country needed the young women to-day, and the professional women. It had been, and would be, the better for the women's vote. Since women had the vote, more humane legislation had been introduced. There had been more consideration for the home and for the children, and more for the old people. The time had passed for academic discussion. There was a genuine demand for the Bill. The Government was pledged to the principle; Liberals were pledged to it;

and it had many strong advocates among the ranks of the Unionists.

MR. RHYS DAVIES (Westhoughton), speaking for the Government, said it was in favour of the Second Reading of the Bill, but he could not give any indication at the moment as to what the attitude of the Government would be if it was sent to a Committee upstairs. When asked if the Government would keep their promise and give all the facilities possible, Mr. Davies said, "Every Member realises that the Government is in a minority, and it will be a question for the House itself as to the exigencies of Parliamentary time. I hope Members will pardon me if I say no more on that subject."

MR. AMERY (Sparkbrook) was in favour of the Duchess's Amendment, but wanted to know more about the Government's intention in regard to the Bill.

MR. FOOT (Bodmin) reminded the House that only a week or two ago the Movable Dwellings Bill was introduced, which would deal with the living conditions and the livelihood of the tinker or hawker class. Should they have no voice in this matter? Quoting John Stuart Mill, he said that "the difference of sex is as entirely irrelevant to political rights as is difference in height, or in the colour of the hair"; and he emphasised the fact that this reform was inevitable.

SIR WILLIAM BULL (Hammersmith) declared there was an arrangement made at the last Speaker's Conference, that the franchise should not be again altered for another ten years. Mr. Hemmerde (Crewe), who was a Member of the House at that time, and Mr. Ellis Davies (Denbigh), who was a member of the Conference, promptly and emphatically denied this.

MR. MCENTEE (Walthamstow, W.) reminded the Duchess of Atholl of the tinker's curse. He hoped the attitude of the Government would be reviewed, and that they would give the same unqualified support to this Bill when they were a Government as they did when they were not a Government.

MR. DODDS (Wirral) reminded the House of all the things women might do and become between the ages of 21 and 30, and yet they could not exercise a vote!

MR. SEXTON (St. Helens) did not think a majority of those sitting on the Back Benches on the Government side endorsed the attitude of the Cabinet on this question. They belonged to a Party which for 30 years had nailed not only equality of franchise to the mast, but adult suffrage as well.

SIR MARTIN CONWAY (English Universities) and others wanted the franchise to be 25 years of age for both sexes.

SIR BURTON CHADWICK (Wallasey) and MR. GEOFFREY HOWARD (Luton) supported the Bill.

MR. CLYNES (Platting), speaking for the Government, reminded the House that it was usually towards the later period of a Parliament when work of this kind was taken in hand. The Government could not now pledge absolutely the time of the House. He could only say that if upstairs the treatment of the Bill was as friendly and as genuine as the treatment it had received that afternoon, the Government would be happy to try to provide time for its passage.

SIR THOMAS INSKIP (Bristol, Central) supported the Bill, but pointed out that, if the Bill went upstairs overloaded, and if the Bill was lost because the Government were not able to give time, the responsibility would not be on private Members, but upon the Government, who were not able to give a clear indication of how they regard the principal object of the Bill.

LORD HUGH CECIL (Oxford University) opposed it; but he was followed by LADY ASTOR (Plymouth), who said that he represented nobody except people who were dwelling in the Middle Ages. She herself represented the great body of the Unionist Party that was winning. They were not asking for any revolution. Had women since they got the vote ever pressed for anything that had not been for the good of the country, and had not in every way added to the purity of the national life?

Two women acted as Tellers in the Division—Miss Jewson for the Ayes, and the Duchess of Atholl for the Noes—the figures being: Ayes, 288; Noes, 72.

VISCOUNT WOOLMER then moved: "That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the Whole House." This was defeated by 247 votes to 77, Miss Jewson again being one of the Tellers. The Bill was then committed to a Standing Committee.

WOMEN AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Women and the Empire Exhibition.

The Hospitality Committee of the League of Nations Union, in co-operation with the Women's Section of the British Empire Exhibition, is making arrangements for the entertainment of Dominion and foreign visitors to Wembley. The Women's Auxiliary Council of the League of Nations Union is co-operating with the International Council of Women in the arrangements they are making for a Conference on the Prevention of the Causes of War, to be held in one of the Conference Halls at Wembley during May.

Cuban Women's Progress.

Mrs. Chapman Catt, who has recently returned from a visit to Cuba in the interests of women's organisations, reports that Cuban women's clubs are in splendid condition, and that Cuban women will send a delegate to the next Pan-American Congress. Mrs. Catt is now devoting most of her time to the study of Spanish, so as to be able to speak with the women of Cuba, Central and South America.

Indian Women and Reform.

The Indian National Conference, which held its 35th session in Poona recently, had an unusually large attendance of women. Among the resolutions was one affirming that the rights and privileges of women in regard to property should be enlarged and placed on a fair and equitable basis, and another urging the removal of women's disabilities by the extension of the franchise, better provision for infant welfare, rural improvements, etc.

Woman Mine Owner.

In Montana, U.S.A., a woman, Miss Ruth Johnsen, not only owns but helps to work her diamond and gold mines. The work of cutting the gems is under Miss Johnsen's constant supervision, and the popularity of her white sapphires, worked into intricate designs, and gleaming like diamonds, has earned Miss Johnsen the title of "Diamond Queen of Montana."

Miss Bondfield, M.P.

Miss Margaret Bondfield, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, was the first woman guest of the London Commercial Club, at a luncheon at the Trocadero, last week, when she was reminded by the Chairman that she had "to talk to capitalists!"

Women Actuaries.

Since the Institute of Actuaries opened its doors to women in 1919, two have qualified as Fellows, and five as Associates, while several are in training. Actuaries are chiefly concerned with the intricate calculations of insurance companies, and the actuary of a life office is the most important person in it.

Women's Service House.

A centre, to be known as Women's Service House, situated near the House of Commons, is to be established by the London Society for Women's Service.

Woman Relieving Officer Appointed.

The Worcester Board of Guardians has appointed a woman, Miss Davis, of Manchester, as a relieving officer.

THE SIX POINT GROUP.

A MASS MEETING at the QUEEN'S HALL,

On TUESDAY, MARCH 18th, at 8 p.m.,

on
Widows' Pensions, Equal Guardianship of Infants, and
The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act.

Speakers:—Professor Winifred Cullis, O.B.E., D.Sc., Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P.,
Miss Ada Moore, Mr. Henry Snell, M.P., and Dame May Whitty, D.B.E.

Chair: The Viscountess Rhondda.

Tickets 5/-, 2/6, 1/-, and a limited number of free tickets to be had from The Six
Point Group, 92, Victoria Street. Tel. Vic. 7175.

OUR SPRING SALE.

The Spring Sale at 25, Wimpole Street (by kind permission of Dr. Lewin), on Friday of last week, was a great success. Councillor Mrs. Schofield Coates, J.P., presided, and pointed out that the Spring Sale, like the Autumn Fair, was now an annual fixture. She referred to the exciting debate then proceeding, in the House of Commons, over Mr. Adamson's Bill for Equal Enfranchisement, and mentioned an incident in her own part of the world, where a town clerk objected to a woman being on the register, even though over 30 years of age, because she was living in furnished rooms. This sort of thing would go on until the principle of equal enfranchisement was established by law.

Lady Rhondda, who formally opened the Sale, stressed the fact that women were now living in particularly interesting times. She had been particularly struck with a recent remark in the House from Captain Wedgwood-Benn, to the effect that "This Government is called a minority Government, but on women's questions it is a majority Government." The Government's wisest course, therefore, was to press forward the women's questions, when they would gain the support of all Parties. This would also please the country, because most of the things for which suffragists were asking were equally desired by the men and women of the country. The Government could not be expected to do everything, but four pieces of legislation were urgently demanded: (1) Equal Franchise, (2) Widows' Pensions, (3) rectification of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, and (4) Equal Guardianship of Children. Widows' Pensions was enormously popular throughout the country, and Equal Franchise was also very popular with most people. Equal Guardianship was greatly desired in many quarters, whilst rectification of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act would mean equality in the Civil Service, and other measures of equality between the sexes.

Admission of women to the House of Lords, Lady Rhondda continued, was not only the business of the Peeresses, but also the business of the whole country. The House of Lords was an hereditary Chamber in theory, but no longer so in fact. The majority of the present Peers were there either because they had paid cash down for the honour, or were elder statesmen who could not any longer stand the racket of the Lower House, and some were there because they had rendered distinguished service to their country. The mother spirit, however, was needed in the House of Lords equally as much as in the House of Commons, and women's organisations should press not so much for the admission of Peeresses in their own right, as for the creation of new Peeresses who would have equal rights. The best among the elder women of the country should be given the chance to enter the House of Lords. We could not go on maintaining an Upper House from which the most distinguished women of the country were excluded.

A hearty vote of thanks to Lady Rhondda, Councillor Mrs. Schofield Coates, and Dr. Lewin for so kindly lending her house for the Sale, was then proposed by Dr. Knight, and seconded by Mrs. Whetton.

Dr. Lewin, speaking later on the necessity for Nasal Hygiene, referred to the recent Harnett case. Mr. Harnett was a well-to-do farmer who got nasal catarrh so badly that he thought he was in consumption. He consulted a doctor, who said this was not the case; but he got worse, and then went to a quack, who tried to cure him by injections. These made him seriously ill with a temperature of 105° and acutely delirious, which resulted in his being taken to an asylum, where he remained for eight or nine years. It took three more years to get his rights vindicated. Dr. Lewin deplored the recent decision of the L.C.C.—that it could not insist on the children who came to school having pocket handkerchiefs! When mothers sent their children to school, they ought to be able to feel that these children were as safe from infection at school as they were at home. She urged that everything should be done to

teach all children the proper use of a handkerchief, which should always be fastened to a breast-pocket. The vast majority of diseases in the country were air-borne, and the nose, if kept clean, destroyed the germs.

At the close of this lecture, Miss Munro gave an admirable survey of the Debate in the House on Mr. Adamson's Bill that afternoon, and referred with special pleasure to Miss Jewson's speech in moving the Second Reading.

The Stalls at the Sale presented a very enticing array of goods. The Underclothing Stall showed a charming silk-knitted child's frock, embroidered evening camisoles, and children's frocks and overalls. The Welsh Produce Stall, with its cakes, eggs, marmalade, jam, lemon curd, butter, and sweets, looked particularly appetising; Montgomery Boroughs also had a General Stall, which displayed lavender bags, delightful little Continental alarm clocks, aprons, and other fancy articles. Dr. Lewin's two stalls, one containing Cornish pottery, and the other a fascinating assortment of fancy pincushions and Canadian moccasins of fur and suede, were surrounded by buyers, as was also Mrs. Whetton's useful Household Stall, crammed with the necessities for spring-cleaning. The "Woollies" Stall, with its knitted children's garments, and warm gloves, looked specially appropriate at this prolonged wintry season, and children were attracted by the French dolls and toys on the Toy Stall.

During the afternoon, an excellent musical programme was ably organised by Miss Berry, to whom we are indebted for all the arrangements of the Sale. We also thank Mrs. Legge, Mrs. Cunningham, and Mr. Eric Richmond for songs, and Mrs. Ruck for piano solos. Miss de Pass and Mrs. Spon were kept very busy with inquiries into the numerology and character reading at which each are experts.

We offer our heartiest thanks to the following stallholders, and to all those who kindly arranged and helped with the very excellent tea:—

Mrs. M. M. Abbott and Mrs. Trafford Williams, Underclothing; Mrs. Waller, Pound Stall; Mrs. Whetton, Household; Mrs. Pierotti, the Misses Underwood, and Mrs. Clifford Jones, Fancy Articles and Toys; Dr. Lewin, Miss Welstead, and friends, Pottery; Miss Alix Clark, the Misses Codd, and Miss Alix Gwynne-Vaughan, Welsh Produce, Cakes, and Sweets; Mrs. Armev, Woollies; Miss Lyndon, Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Shore, Mrs. Beville, Miss James, Miss C. Reeves, Miss Black, Miss Grant, and Mrs. Bell, Teas; Miss Olive James and Miss Mary Knight, Posters.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN M.P.'s BILL.

Mrs. Cowan, M.P. (West Perth), Australia's only woman Member of Parliament, is making a gallant effort, in the Western Australian Parliament, to accord the women of her country a fuller public status than they have hitherto enjoyed. She has recently promoted a very comprehensive measure, which has passed its Second Reading, and gone into Committee. Among other reforms, the Bill sets out that a person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to, or holding, any civil or judicial office or post. It further provides that women shall be entitled to appear as practitioners in the Courts of Law, and carry on any other civil profession or undertaking. In South Australia, women enjoy these rights.

The Bahai Message of World Brotherhood.

A SERIES OF PUBLIC LECTURES by

DR. J. E. ESSELMONT

(Author of "Baha'u'llah and the New Era")

At LINDSAY HALL, THE MALL, NOTTING HILL GATE, W.,

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March 12. The way of World Peace.

" 19. Solution of Economic Problems.

" 26. Story of the Bahai Movement.

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THE VOTE.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 7TH, 1924.

THE BILL—AND AFTER?

Last Friday, Mr. Adamson's Bill, the principal object of which was to confer the franchise on women on the same terms as men, secured a majority of 216 for its Second Reading. The Government's attitude towards it was very curious. For 30 years equal franchise and adult suffrage have figured on the Labour Party's programme, but was not its first item, as Mr. Clynes pointed out. Are we to understand that only first items on Party programmes are to be proceeded with, when the Party responsible for the programme assumes office? For the Government spokesman to plead that it is a minority Government is entirely beside the mark. On this question of the further enfranchisement of women, the Government is sure of a clear majority in the House, and the Government knows it. If the Government disapproves of other clauses in the Bill, why did it not promise to bring in its own Equal Franchise measure? The Government has no need to make the feeble excuse that "it is usually towards the later period of a Parliament when work of that kind is taken in hand." Mr. Baldwin promised to consider the matter "in the last Session of Parliament." We asked, then, how was Mr. Baldwin to know which would be the last Session of his Parliament? We now ask Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Clynes the same question. The Government knows as well as we do that their term of office is uncertain, and that, therefore, it is all the more necessary, if they really want an Equal Franchise measure passed into law, and women really voting at the next General Election at the same age and on the same terms as men, to get a Bill through quickly. All delay is dangerous in this matter; and if the Government refuses to take this present opportunity to carry out its pledge to grant equal voting rights to men and women, it must take the whole responsibility if women have to vote at the next General Election on unequal terms with men. We cannot imagine that the Labour Party will, in those circumstances, expect much enthusiastic support from the women of the country. The Government knows perfectly well also that it can, if it chooses, insert a clause in the Bill to the effect that the proposed extension of the franchise shall not take effect before the next General Election.

With regard to the opposition to this measure, so far as it was revealed last Friday afternoon, it is interesting to note that the old cry of the anti-suffragists for a Referendum has now given place to one for another Speaker's Conference. The Duchess of Atholl was always an anti-suffragist, and we therefore understand her desire for such a Conference. Many men, of course, who were elected to Parliament have spoken and voted against an extension of the franchise to men, so we must not be too surprised if some women do likewise. But those men resemble Canute, who was powerless to keep the waves back. The Duchess, too, will find that the progress of women towards free and full equality with men in the political as well as in other spheres of life cannot be indefinitely postponed. Some of the Members who supported her Amendment, or proposed other changes, prefaced their remarks with a solemn declaration that they had voted for, worked for, or believed in, woman suffrage. May we point out to these gentlemen that we are not in the least interested in their past records on this subject? The only thing that matters to us is their present attitude. Past records and pious resolutions are absolutely useless to us. Only by their votes and their action on the measure before the House shall we judge any of them.

OUR SCANDALOUS LUNACY SYSTEM.

We rejoice to see that at last public opinion is awake to the necessity for taking immediate steps to begin the cleansing of this Augean stable. Now and again, ever since Charles Reade described the horrors in the asylums of his day, attention has been focussed by the story of some particular instance upon these evils.

The entire Press of the country is joining in the present outcry. This is a commercial age, and it is not so much the fact that a responsible man has been judged to have spent eight of the best years of his life, a sane person, shut up among mental patients, as that twelve good men and true have awarded him £25,000 compensation for those eight years wrested from him, which has struck our imagination and caused the determination to overhaul the whole system under which this was able to happen.

Up and down our land we have had brought to our notice, within the last few years many cases of sane persons confined in mental hospitals for long periods of years, often with no remaining friends to remove them, often supported by the ratepayers, and, in one case, even lost sight of altogether by the local authority which was making the payments.

Each one of us is responsible for these poor creatures wrongfully deprived of their rightful liberty, and we must each determine now upon action. We do not suggest that reform is easy; this is the most difficult of all questions, but also one of the most pressing.

The Lunacy System comprises the Lunacy Laws and their administration. Both require close and detailed study. Full investigation by an impartial competent body into the whole question of the treatment and care of the mentally sick is the only thing that will satisfy the public. This body must be independent, and composed of men and women in equal numbers, if it is to command public confidence. It must be a Royal Commission. A few months ago, a Departmental Inquiry was carried out into charges of abuses in certain mental hospitals, brought by Dr. Lomax, but this, being an official, not an independent, investigation, satisfied nobody. Let there be no time lost in appointing the Royal Commission for which we call. Its field of study will be wide, and its work difficult. The time required will be months or years, but it will, we are confident, result in untold benefit to our people, young and old, rich and poor, distinguished or obscure.

This is for the not, we hope, far distant future; what of the present? We do not wish for new laws, which, in the present chaotic stage of our knowledge, may do more harm than good, but it is possible, by a few administrative reforms, to effect immediate improvements. We have long asked for medical women to be appointed to the Board of Control. Of the present Commissioners, three are unpaid and seven paid, and only one woman appears in each class, whilst the work of these two women is confined chiefly to mental defections. When a scandal arises in connection with some mental hospital, and a Departmental Inquiry is ordered, the Commissioner sent down to hold it is either a lawyer or a doctor, but, no legal or medical women being Commissioners, such an inquiry has always to be conducted by a man, though often, when matters relating to women patients are in question, a woman Commissioner would do far more valuable and effective work, and more easily get to the bottom of the business. In Scotland, always ahead of us in mental treatment, we are glad to say one medical woman holds the post of Deputy Commissioner. Again, Inspectors under the Board should be both men and women. At present, two medical men hold the posts. The Board is, however, now advertising for two Inspectors, one at a salary of £500-£800 (a man or a medical woman), one at £400-£650 (a woman).

Mental hospitals are under the care of the Medical Superintendent, who is invariably a man, but responsibility for the women patients should rest in the hands of a woman Medical Superintendent. The Visiting Committees of all mental hospitals should include women. Let us put them on the local Councils.

IN PARLIAMENT.

British Emigrants' Suicides in Canada.

MR. HARDIE (Springburn) asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Overseas Trade Department if he had the case of the children emigrated under the national scheme, who recently committed suicide in Canada, investigated; and could he give any further information as to the circumstances in which the children were living? MR. LUNN replied that his hon. Friend would realise that any investigations which might be necessary were primarily the concern of the Canadian Government. He understood from the Canadian Superintendent of Emigration in London, who was consulted as soon as the news of the suicides was received, that the Canadian Government were making full inquiries into the circumstances of each case. He arranged, a few days ago, with his right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for a telegram to be sent to the Governor-General, asking if information could be furnished at an early date, and he would be glad to place at the disposal of the House any particulars that he received.

Capital Punishment.

MR. J. O'NEILL asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department if any decision had been taken by the Cabinet on the question of capital punishment; and, if not, if the Government would grant facilities for the introduction of a Bill for the abolition of capital punishment? MR. DAVIES replied that, with regard to the first part of the Question, the Government had come to no decision. With regard to the second part, the decision as to the granting of facilities for Private Members' Bills must be guided largely by the general feeling in the House of Commons.

Juvenile Courts.

MR. TURNER-SAMUELS (Barnard Castle) asked if the Home Secretary was prepared to introduce a reform into the present character of the Courts dealing with offences by children, whereby the hearing of such cases might be held elsewhere than in a police-court, and so that the presence of uniformed officers might be dispensed with? MR. DAVIES replied that the Children Act, 1908, directed that a Court of Summary Jurisdiction when hearing charges against young persons under 16 (unless the young persons were charged jointly with adults) should sit in a different building or room from that in which the ordinary sittings of the Court were held, or on different days or at different times from those at which the ordinary sittings were held. In many cases the Juvenile Courts were held in separate buildings, but he did not think it would be practicable or desirable to make such a requirement compulsory. In London, under the special provisions of the Juvenile Courts (Metropolis) Act, 1920, most of the Juvenile Courts were held elsewhere than in the police-court; but where a suitable building was not available, the Juvenile Court was held in a separate room at the police-court. A great advance had been made in recent years in the methods of dealing with juvenile offenders, and he believed that, generally speaking, magistrates endeavoured to make the proceedings as little like those of a police-court as possible.

Temporary Women Clerks (Discharges).

THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL (Kinross and West Perth) asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury if he was aware that about 700 women clerks at present employed in the Taxes Branch of the Board of Inland Revenue had been warned that their appointments would cease as from March 31st next; and if, in view of the prevalence of unemployment, especially in regard to clerical posts, the Government would continue the suspension of the entrance examination for the corresponding grades of the Civil Service, in order that those women and Civil servants in other Departments who were under similar notice of dismissal might, on approved service, be absorbed into other Departments as vacancies arose? MR. GRAHAM replied that the number of

women clerks whose temporary employment it was necessary to discontinue was substantially less than the figure cited. Those women had in general had special opportunities of entering the permanent service of the State by examinations designed to meet the position of the temporary staff. He regretted he was unable to make any statement as to future recruitment of the permanent Civil Service, pending the Report of Lord Southborough's Committee on the employment of ex-Service men.

Post Office Employees' Wages.

DR. SPERO (Stoke Newington) asked the Postmaster-General what was the minimum wage paid to adults, male and female, respectively, in his Department; and if any difference of pay was made between ex-Service men with pensions and those without? MR. HARTSHORN replied that the minimum pay for full-time Post Office employees 21 years of age ranged from 36s. 9d. to 52s. 6d. in the case of men, and from 31s. 6d. to 52s. 6d. in the case of women. The rates varied according to class and locality of employment. No account was taken of the pensions of ex-Service men. The pay would be subject to readjustment as from March 1st, under the sliding scale, which was applicable to Civil servants in general.

Unfit Horses (Export).

LADY TERRINGTON (Wycombe) asked the Minister of Agriculture if he was aware of the traffic in worn-out horses; how many had been exported from this country during the last six months; and what steps he was taking to prevent this traffic? MR. BUXTON replied that there was no traffic in worn-out horses, because the Ministry insisted on a very high standard of fitness in all horses for export, and no horse was passed for shipment unless it was in every sense fit to travel and to work. He intended to do everything in his power to maintain in full vigour the stringent regulations which had been in force during the past three years, and had effectively removed any undesirable features from this trade. Ten thousand, nine hundred and eighteen horses were shipped from Great Britain to the Continent during the six months from August, 1923, to January, 1924. A considerable number of the animals were of high value, but, owing to the high price of other meat on the Continent, horse-fleshers were able to pay high prices for quite good-class horses to be slaughtered for human food. He had no power to prevent butchers purchasing such horses after their arrival on the Continent, but, so far as he could ascertain, many of those horses were slaughtered in public abattoirs by humane methods. The last part of the question did not therefore arise.

Prisons (Observation Cases).

MR. STRANGER (Newbury) asked if the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department was aware that there were in prisons many inmates mentally and medically unfit confined in observation cells, but in charge only of the ordinary disciplinary officer; and if, in future, he would arrange to have those men placed in charge of a medical orderly, instead of a disciplinary officer? MR. DAVIES replied that the number of hospital officers at present available did not admit of that being done in every case, but the Prison Commissioners were making the best arrangements possible within the resources at their disposal, and those resources were being steadily improved. MR. STRANGER further inquired if the hon. Gentleman was aware that in one of the London prisons at the present time there were 27 of these observation cases in charge of a man who had to walk over 20 miles in the course of the night? *No reply was given.* F. A. U.

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