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NATIONAL WOMEN CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS.

CHAIRMAN :

PRESIDENT :

Telephone : Victoria 624.

~~LADY NOTT-BOWER~~
M^{rs} Ogilvie Gordon
HONORARY TREASURER :
Councillor Miss BRIGHT ASHFORD, B.A.

LADY NOTT-BOWER.

92, VICTORIA STREET,
S.W.1.

ORGANISING SECRETARY :

~~M^{rs} Lister~~
Miss Lister

VICE-PRESIDENTS :
The Countess of Selborne, J.P.
Dame Margaret Lloyd George, D.B.E., J.P.
Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon, J.P., D.Sc.

A.M. P.M.
OFFICE HOURS : 10.0 - 4.30
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY.

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34 Abbey Road
London N.W.8
12th Jan 1926

Dear Miss Lees,

It is quite a long time since I saw your handwriting & in every word of your letter to the N.W.C.A. of 4th Jan. date I seemed again to hear you & see you - so much so that when the Secretary had finished reading the letter to the Committee I found myself saying "I should like to reply to Miss Lees" & added as they looked at me "I used to meet Miss Lees & her mother Dame Sarah in connection with the National Council".

May I explain that I stepped again into the Chair of the N.W.C.A. Central Committee because I wished to help it in view of what I regard as the very useful & preparatory work that particular body is able to accomplish. The Constitution leaves the local Associations entirely free; it does not set before them a definite programme & policy like the Constitution of

most Societies, & in this respect it resembles the N.C.W. & is indeed most akin to that body in its methods. As you will remember the N.W.C.A. was originated by the action of the N.C.W. while I was President.

In Oldham you were already far ahead in women's organisation owing to the pioneer work of yourself & others. But the good that the N.W.C.A. as an organisation has done & is still doing is to stir the women in many quiet little towns to hold meetings & take community action for their own localities, while the Central Office keeps them in touch with leading subjects of national & international public interest & helps with speakers or recommendation of literature. Both in the smaller & the larger towns my experience has been that the N.W.C.A. reaches a class of women who are kept busy at work in their own homes & do not come into personal contact socially with the more leisured groups of women who join the N.C.W. Branches. This actual fact of experience is very important, & is the reason why I give any help I can & support to the organisation. Independently of any ^{party-}political

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bias it conveys new thoughts & information to many women who had little opportunity in their youth & who would not think of joining the N.W.C.A. Branches, or of taking up the more definitely feminist programme of the N.W.C.A. — I mean not as a first step. Later many do, & that is as it should be. We find that the work in the N.W.C.A. groups prepares the members to find out their own bent & carry their new-found convictions into the larger bodies, thereby augmenting their strength; while their ^{own} example lights up desire in their immediate surroundings, & other women join up with the N.W.C.A. under their own leaders from among their midst. — And so on, ^{it goes} with this really valuable educative & constructive work run on the most modest lines possible, both centrally & locally.

In most places certain joint meetings are held by the women's societies, & in this way the members of the N.W.C.A. are brought into touch with the more leisured or more advanced groups of women in their town. But without the previous existence

of the W.C.A. in the ~~place~~ ^{town}, this would not take place. It all helps to break down class barriers & bring home to the women the importance of united action for causes whose success would bring improvements in which all must share. You know far better than most people how arduous is the labour to concentrate the minds of people in different spheres of life on a common object & get them to pull together for its attainment. And although by your splendid example & leadership & with the help of a fine group of women round you, you have travelled far towards community of thought & purpose in Oldham, most of the smaller English towns especially those where no great industry has existed, are half a century behind & need a lot of drawing out.

It is the case that in several places the NWCA has amalgamated with the N.C.W. - Sometimes the result has been a success, but in some places that has not been so. ~~The~~ If the N.C.W. is very strong the NWCA women at once feel outnumbered & outclassed & begin to drop away - that is at present happening with alarming rapidity in Worthing. I keep on encouraging them to have patience as I can all for unity, but not being on the spot I can do very little.

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There is no doubt in my mind that it is advantageous for the element that is weaker financially & in point of intellectual training, first to find their own feet by working up a local W.C.A. ^{mostly} dealing with questions close to them, & feeling the necessity of understanding them & helping in the Association, before joining the larger & more important bodies who deal much more with questions outside the local matters, & not readily grasped by every one. This kind of preparatory work is really necessary if we are to win all classes of women to an appreciation of their political power & responsibility, & the reaction of the big questions upon the small. There must also be some sort of central body to give guidance to these associations where it is wanted, & we are now most fortunate in the new Secretary we got last summer - Miss Lister. She is a lady, quiet in manner, very keen to take her part in public effort, & already devoting herself heart & soul to the N. W. C. A.

I do sincerely hope, Miss Lees, that

the ^{WCA &} Oldham Branch of the NCU will continue to give this useful & struggling organisation the support & encouragement of its adhesion. It would be a thousand pities if the stronger Associations parted company with the weaker, as the Central Committee could not then hope to carry on the very useful work of starting new associations & making beginnings in fresh ground which it undertakes all the time.

With apologies for this too long letter
 Believe me
 Yours very affectly
 May Agilvie Gordon