

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
HOMES AND SCHOOLS	339
NOTES FROM WESTMINSTER. By Cross-Bench	339
EMMA CONS. By Frank Briant, J.P.	340
QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT	341
THE OPIUM CONFERENCE. By E. M. Alcock	341
"NO DISABILITY ON WOMEN!" By Bertha Mason	342

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NOTES AND NEWS.

The Unemployment Insurance Bill.

On Thursday of last week the Minister of Labour was subjected to a real personal ordeal in the committee stage of her Unemployment Bill. To oppose and smash a hostile amendment with which one heartily disagrees, however hot the pace and however long the odds, is a straightforward fighting job which must leave behind it a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. To oppose and smash an amendment with which one heartily sympathizes, with which all persons of sound sense and goodwill must necessarily sympathize, on the ground of immediate expediency, is a deadly job and one which can leave behind it only a sense of unsatisfied regret. Such a job fell to Miss Bondfield last week when external circumstances, the deficiencies of local authorities, and the difficult exigencies of public finance, forced her to secure the rejection of a Liberal amendment designed to secure the compulsory training at educational centres of young persons in receipt of unemployment benefits. Such a victory must have been the more bitter to her, since it was she who was, in a large measure, responsible for impressing the necessity for such educational provision on the Blanesburgh Committee on Unemployment Insurance. We join with her in hoping that the present measure is of a temporary nature, and that a year or so of constructive social reform may produce a system which makes more adequate and reasoned provision for the needs of the most spoilable and malleable section of the unemployed: the young people.

An Attempted Maternity Service.

On 6th December the Midwifery, Maternity, and Child Welfare Bill is to be introduced, as second on the order paper, by Mr. Alpass. The scope of the Bill is enormous. It attempts to provide for a general maternity service for all women whose incomes are below a certain figure, to be charged on a graduated scale, the maximum inclusive charge for the normal service being £2. It also proposes to enable a general domiciliary service by medical practitioners in connection with maternity and child welfare schemes. It incorporates the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on the Training and Employment of Midwives with respect to the constitution of the Advisory Committee, and the reconstitution of the Central Midwives Board. The employment of women for six weeks after or before childbirth is prohibited, and the provisions of the National Health Insurance Act, 1924, are extended in favour of such mothers, or expectant mothers. Inquests are to be held in all cases of women dying in or after childbirth. There appears no chance whatever of a private Member's Bill on so large a subject being allowed a second reading, but discussion of some of the more controversial issues will be of interest.

School Maintenance Grants.

On Saturday of last week the afternoon session of the Lancashire County Association of the National Union of Teachers' representative assembly was devoted to a discussion of the type of maintenance allowances to be given under the forthcoming Education Bill. The discussion took the form of a debate on the pros and cons of imposing a means test for the recipients of maintenance allowances, the case for such a test being upheld by Mrs. E. D. Simon, deputy chairman of the Manchester Education Committee, and opposed by Mrs. J. L. Stocks, who deputized for Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P. Subsequent speeches from the hall revealed a strong cleavage of opinion among representative teachers, and in the end no vote was taken. We suggest that in staging this public discussion the Lancashire Association of the N.U.T. has taken a step which might well be imitated by kindred bodies of teachers, and by social workers. Until Sir Charles Trevelyan makes his promised statement regarding the precise terms of the Education Bill and its financial commitments, it may be assumed that the policy of the Government on the matter of whether maintenance allowances shall be paid in respect of all children subjected to an extra year of compulsory education, or whether they shall be paid only in response to claims made on the plea of inadequate family means, is in a fluid state, and can be affected by expressions of popular opinion. The case for a means test has been lucidly argued by Mrs. E. D. Simon in a paper read this year at the Liberal Summer School. It has been forcibly answered by Miss Rathbone in a speech made in the House of Commons on the occasion of Sir Charles Trevelyan's recent statement of the Government's intentions.

Boys and Girls in Industry.

The Home Secretary made a welcome statement on the occasion of the discussion on the private Member's Bill introduced by Mr. Sorensen last Friday, the main object of which was to give legislative protection in the form of shorter working hours to young people employed as messengers, porters, page boys in hotels, etc. It proposed also to prohibit altogether the employment of boys under 16 in sea-going ships and from the use of lead paint. Street trading was to be forbidden for boys under 16 and girls under 18. No children under the age of 13 were to be employed at all. Mr. Clynes, while pointing out that it was impracticable to include all the reforms demanded by Mr. Sorensen in one measure, and that some of the points would be dealt with in the Government's proposed factory legislation, promised that certain classes of workers not covered by any of the Government's Bills as at present proposed, would be dealt with in subsequent legislation.

A Deputation on Women Police.

Both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland were obviously impressed with the arguments in favour of a large increase in the employment of Women Police put before them by the deputation, organized by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship and the National Council of Women and representatives of a large number of organizations, which they received on Monday, 2nd December. The evidence put before them indicated how great is the public support behind this demand, and how frequently of recent years, when this matter has been seriously considered, have recommendations in favour of the employment of Women Police been made. The chief request put forward was that the Police Acts should be applied universally to women, and that regulations should be made clearly defining the duties of Police Women, and that conditions of the recruitment and training should be standardized by regulations to be submitted to the Police Council. After all this was simply asking that what was found essential in the

middle of the last century for men, should now be applied to women. It is therefore hoped that it may not be long before the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to meet at any rate some of the claims put forward. We hope to print some of the speeches on this occasion as articles in subsequent issues.

An Ex-Lord Mayor and Women Police.

Miss Margaret Beavan, ex-Lord Mayor of Liverpool and a member of the Royal Police Commission, is now fortunately a member of the Liverpool Watch Committee, and she has thrown her influence on the right side in supporting a proposal in favour of the appointment of women police which after a long debate was defeated by three votes only. This, in Liverpool, is something of a moral victory and brings the desired end nearer. We understand that there are women on this committee for the first time. This no doubt is the result. Meanwhile the Corporation will continue its substantial grant towards the women police patrols provided by a voluntary society which have done such admirable work since the war. But before long we predict that women will form part of its police force.

Women Jurors.

The question of the challenging of women jurors until none are left on a jury was raised by Sir Kingsley Wood in Parliament last week (see Questions in Parliament, page 341), when he asked the Government whether they proposed to make any changes in the law. The unsatisfactory reply on the part of the Home Office representative, that the Government did not feel justified in proposing legislation, necessitates further work on the part of those interested to bring about a change in the present law, so that any juror challenged shall be replaced by one of the same sex. The National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship is considering the best form of a Bill on the subject. This will not be easy, as unless and until the number of women liable for jury service is increased by extending that liability to the wives of householders, there can be no guarantee that a sufficient number of women will be called on any given occasion to take the place of those challenged. The increase in the number of women jurors proposed by the National Union is not likely, when first put forward, to meet with general support. The matter is going to be raised again shortly in the House. Some doubt has been shown as to the number of cases in which a challenge obviously on the grounds of sex actually takes place. We should be glad to hear from our readers of any case that may have come to their knowledge.

The Recruitment of the Municipal Services.

The Royal Commission on Local Government has now produced its final report. Meanwhile an upheaval has been going on in the traditional methods of Local Government and the structure of the new Local Government at present in making is very unlike that which the Commission was originally called upon to investigate. One very important point has, however, been raised by the Commission, and that is the method of recruitment of officials. A Departmental Committee to inquire into this matter is recommended. "It is open to question," the report suggests, "whether the present methods are calculated to ensure that local authorities shall have at their disposal officers of the type needed to assist them in the discharge of the increasing responsibilities which Parliament is year by year laying upon them." This is a very pertinent recommendation, and we trust that it will be acted upon. As our readers know, the recruitment of the Civil Service is part of the wide reference of the Civil Service Commission. The same principles should apply to all the public services, and it is highly desirable that they should be considered as a whole.

Shoreditch and Birth Control.¹

The Shoreditch Borough Council on 19th November adopted a resolution *without a dissentient voice* calling on the Ministry of Health to allow municipalities to provide for married women to obtain information on birth control. The resolution pointed out that the question of family limitation is one to be settled by the individuals concerned, that a demand exists among working class married women for reliable information, and expressed the opinion that such married women should not be prevented by lack of means from obtaining the help they desire. Shoreditch is further considering putting its principles

¹ Since the above was written we see a report in the Press to the effect that the Willenden Council has asked the Ministry of Health to approve the establishment of a "Birth Control Information Bureau."

into practice in an ingenious manner by setting up a Birth Control Clinic under the management of its Public Health Committee, but supported entirely by voluntary funds. This experiment will be watched with great interest and, if successful, as we anticipate, should go a long way to convince other local authorities of the desirability of providing the information required.

Plain Speaking in Birmingham.

The conference organized last week in Birmingham by the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement on "The Church in Civic Life" appears to have tackled its problem without flinching, and without that self-protective recoil from difficult realities which sometimes characterizes such deliberations. On the second day Professor Macbride precipitated it into a maelstrom of prickly current controversy by his reference to the enormous dangers attending the evolution of a population, stationary perhaps, but recruited in an increasing proportion by "doled, thriftless people." The Bishop of Birmingham rose boldly to his challenge. The nation, he said, which put before itself the ideal of increasing its population, was already a bad partner in the commonwealth of nations, and the church which refused to face such things was already a reactionary force on world progress. According to a tentative measure of agreement to Professor Macbride's position, he asked, in effect, for more scientific research on the subject of heredity, mental deficiency, the movement and control of population, and allied subjects, and a readiness to base conclusions upon accurate scientific knowledge. Whatever may be Dr. Barnes's own conclusions on such matters, or the views of our readers with regard to them, we feel that the spirit in which he met the strictures of Professor Macbride, is the spirit in which such questions will have to be discussed if organized religion is to play a determining part in their solution. We would add that the selection of Miss Picton-Turbervill, M.P., as preacher at the luncheon-hour service in St. Martin's Church on 28th November, was symptomatic of another aspect of the conference's readiness to face the implications of twentieth century life.

Co-option versus Election.

The invidious position of the co-opted member was emphasized by Miss Stephenson, Chairman of the Public Health Committee of Wiltshire County Council, when addressing a meeting of the Devon Council of Women. Before her election to the Wiltshire Council, Miss Stephenson served on the Committees for Education and for the Care of the Mentally Defective. She had constantly found that points carried in committee were *invariably* lost when considered by the Council, or by the Finance Committee. We quite concur with the view expressed by Miss Stephenson, but unless women serve in the capacity of co-opted members, their co-operation in the administration of relief at all will become a thing of the past. In Kent, where only two women are serving on the County Council, the Public Assistance Committee is to consist only of councillors. We understand that very few of the existing women guardians are being elected to the local guardians' committees, and the loss of their experience and work must make a difference to the administration.

Other Scottish Women County Councillors.

Three women have been elected without a contest to County Councils in Scotland, and it is confidently expected that other women will be returned at the elections this week. No women have previously served on the Moray and Roxburgh Councils, where Miss A. S. Murray, B.A., and Mrs. Bell Irving have been returned at Elgin and Kelso respectively.

Mrs. Rackham, J.P.

Our readers will learn with pleasure that Mrs. Rackham, J.P., has recently been returned to the Cambridge Town Council. Mrs. Rackham formerly served on the Cambridge Council, and she is also a member of the Cambridgeshire County Council, to which body she was returned last May.

POLICY.—The sole policy of THE WOMAN'S LEADER is to advocate a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women. So far as space permits, however, it will offer an impartial platform for topics not directly included in the objects of the woman's movement but of special interest to women. Articles on these subjects will always be signed, at least by initials or a pseudonym, and for the opinions expressed in them the Editor accepts no responsibility.

HOMES AND SCHOOLS.¹

No one can fully appreciate the sociological value of the yearly report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, who is not familiar with at least the more noteworthy of the remarkable series of reports which began with the inauguration of the School Medical Service twenty-one years ago. Of these perhaps the most outstanding are the reports of 1908, 1918, and the report issued last week for 1928. The first of this remarkable sequence appearing at the time of a remarkable awakening of interest in social problems gives that background of contemporary social development indispensable for the student of child welfare. The 1918 report describes the effects of four years of war conditions and the current report carries us to a period which ought to be characterized by social recovery. It is, however, disturbing to find that after twenty years of medical inspection the proportion of children found to be suffering from definite defects has remained almost stationary in the last five years. The figure for 1928 is 20.7, exclusive of children suffering from dental disease. This percentage only accounts for the physical defect in children actually inspected by school medical officers, and does not, of course, cover ill-health in children unable to attend school.

Year after year Sir George Newman has urged the importance of the pre-school child. In England and Wales there are three million children under five years of age of whom approximately two million are over two. The provision for these is preposterously inadequate; it consists of thirteen nursery schools and nineteen day nurseries under local education authorities. These are fortunately supplemented by voluntary effort, but the total is pitiful when the need is considered. The chapter in the 1928 report entitled "The Pre-school Child" should be studied by every woman voter who is interested in the work of health and education in her locality.

Controversy is at present raging around the age at the other end of the period of childhood, and it is interesting to find that official opinion favours the proposal for the compulsory extension of the school attendance period. Sir George asks what an

THE WEEK IN PARLIAMENT.

The greater part of Government time has again this week been devoted to the Unemployment Insurance Bill. Yet down to the time of writing we have only reached on Committee stage some of the amendments on Clause 2, which concerns the rates of benefit for young persons. The chief interest of the debate has centred round the question of training facilities. As to this several good speeches have been made, notably those of Mr. Percy Harris and the Duchess of Atholl. The Minister has been moved by the discussion to the point of promising to consider the introduction on the Report stage of a clause insuring that attendance at an occupation centre or class shall normally be a condition for the young person of receiving benefit. The difficulty obviously arises from two factors: that presented by the need for co-operation between the Education Authority and the Ministry of Labour, and secondly, that presented by the case of areas where the number of unemployed juveniles is small. As to the first, the House wants assurances that, in Mr. Harris's words, the children shall not suffer "while these two authorities are quarrelling, while they are at a tangent", and that if they disagree, the Ministry of Labour will step in and do the work for them. As to the small centre, Miss Bondfield explained that "centres are now set up wherever there are fifty children unemployed in a particular area and where there is an average attendance of forty." But while promising to endeavour to provide for even smaller groups she did not give us any assurance that in the larger centres, the number of classes provided was commensurate with every group of fifty or forty unemployed juveniles.

In spite of threats of all-night sittings, which have more than once been withdrawn at the last moment by a decision to adjourn in the very early hours of the morning, the progress made has been slow and many of the speeches—not only from the Opposition side—have been so long as to savour of deliberate obstruction. The left wing Labour Group is thoroughly out of temper with the Minister and makes no effort to disguise it. Yet it is obvious that, from their point of view, the real offender is not Miss

¹ The Health of the School Child. Annual report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, 1928, price 1s. net.

additional year of school would do for a child, and he has his answer ready. It would reduce the hiatus in medical supervision; it would facilitate the entry of a child into the kind of occupation for which he or she is best fitted. It would be a step towards the attainment of the ultimate purpose of the school medical service . . . "to produce a child in health and physical capacity, able to work and able to play with a full measure of strength, continuance, and enjoyment."

Between these two periods at the beginning and end of childhood there are nine important years when the child is growing mentally and physically, and the school has rightly become a centre of active medical supervision. But after all the school, however admirable and well-equipped, cannot replace the home. Is it possible for a really effective school service to be built up without the solid foundation of decent home life? We referred in a recent issue to extracts from annual reports of Medical Officers of Health for the same year as that covered by Sir George Newman's report, contained in a memorandum upon the present housing situation in England and Wales prepared for discussion at a housing conference last week; it is hardly irrelevant to quote some of these in this connection.

"The most complete schemes of infant welfare, maternity, and school medical work . . . will avail us little in the case of those who live in overcrowded and insanitary houses"; "It is impossible in such conditions to rear children who will be strong and healthy"; "Ten years after the war the question of slum clearance has barely been touched"; "A considerable section of the community must be living under conditions prejudicial to good health and incompatible with common decency"; "One medical officer quotes from applications for houses: "We live in one room; the baby is always ailing." "I see my little girl of 11 failing in health gradually."

These are only a few selections from the reports of those who know the facts. Sir George Newman and his colleagues are ploughing the sands so far as the section of the community which most needs their help is concerned until we can create a civilization which can ensure that every child has a decent home environment.

Bondfield but Mr. Snowden. The amount of money he is willing to provide is so relatively small that it can at best go a very short way to meet the expectations raised by pre-Election Labour pledges. Whether, however, Miss Bondfield has made the best use of the funds at her disposal by expending so much of them on the juveniles, is open to question. The uneasiness felt by the House as to the possible results in lessening the incentive to find work among these is obviously not merely tactical, although there are some on the Conservative benches who delight in this as in every other excuse for embarrassing the Government.

The welfare of young people was again the theme of Friday's debate on the Bill brought forward for the protection of children and young persons in the conditions of their employment. This was finally withdrawn without a division by its promoters, in view of the Home Secretary's plea that most of the ground it covered "has already been covered by Bills introduced by the Government or by Bills which we intend to introduce" and that its proposals were too comprehensive and affected too many Government Departments to be dealt with in a single measure. But the introducer, Mr. Sorensen, elicited the admission that the legislation promised did not in fact cover van-boys, messenger-boys, theatrical performers, street-traders or boys in mines, although some of the most effective points he had made related to these particular groups. He had himself begun life at 14 as a "tail-end boy" (i.e. a van-boy) and believed himself to be still suffering in health from the long hours and exposed conditions in which he had had to work, for which this Bill was his "sweet revenge". Mr. Clynes, whose sincerity and simplicity of manner always favourably affects the House, reminded us that he had himself begun work in a textile factory at the tender age of 10 and left us in no doubt that his sympathy with the aims of the Bill and his sense of the legislative and administrative difficulties it presented were equally real and well-founded. Effective support from the Conservative side was offered by Colonel Fremantle, speaking from his experience as a Medical Officer of Health.

Another matter which aroused keen interest was the appointment of the promised Committee on Electoral Reform. Mr. Baldwin raised a difficulty which illustrates the unsatisfactory

side of Party Government. It had been generally understood that the promised Committee was to be non-party in spirit and approach, following the precedent of the previous Speaker's Conference on the same subject which led to the first great instalment of women's suffrage. But the nominations to the Committee had been made, according to agreement, by the three political parties in proportion to their strength. On the ground of this origin, Mr. Baldwin objected to the inclusion of the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Hewart), one of the Liberal nominations. Mr. Lloyd George made the surely reasonable defence that he and his party had regarded the method of selection as a merely incidental consequence of the party system, not intended to prejudice the non-party character of the inquiry and had therefore thought themselves justified in proposing a great constitutional lawyer as a suitable member of an inquiry into "a very vital constitutional question". Lord Hewart himself had taken the same view in consenting to the nomination. Both were now agreed that it must be withdrawn, since it had been contested. It is an unfortunate result of this incident that by emphasizing the party origin of the Committee, it is likely to prejudice its authority as a body lifted above political partizanship.

CROSS-BENCH.

EMMA CONS.

By FRANK BRIANT.

The present generation is becoming quite accustomed to woman taking her place in civic and industrial life. In the days, however, in which Miss Emma Cons commenced her activities, the very idea of a woman occupying anything like a public position almost caused a thrill of horror to run through the community. In judging her life one has to bear in mind that many of the efforts which she made for the improvement of housing and recreation are little recognized, simply because the success she attained has familiarized us with the reforms in which in many cases she was the initiator or, at least, the most active spirit.

She had great artistic talents, and commenced training as an artist. She was a skilful painter on glass, a watch engraver, and designer of stained glass windows. Indeed, some of her early work can be seen in the windows of Merton College, Oxford. When, however, she began social work in Drury Lane, which was at the time one of the blackest spots in London, the general conditions of the people were such that she decided to abandon an artistic career and devote herself entirely to the welfare of the least favoured of her fellows. It is somewhat strange that it was John Ruskin, of whom she was a favourite pupil, who first persuaded her to visit some part of Marylebone and which led to her abandoning the career which he had hoped for her. She was eminently of a practical turn of mind, and though visionary in the sense that she had great ideals, she was never content until she had applied them to the realities of life. This made her start a Coffee Tavern when such places were unknown, a Temperance Club for men, and a Working Girls' Home. Then she applied herself to the housing problem, and helped to form a company for "Raising Model Houses for Working Folk," of which she was managing director. The Company acquired some old property at the corner of Lambeth Road and what is now known as Surrey Lodge was built on the site.

Since her day, of course, there have been enormous developments in the application of modern ideas to housing, but it should be remembered that she was in this, as in so many other matters, eminently a pioneer and made the road clear for others. She resided in the dwellings, and combined the position of mentor, rent collector, and general friend and adviser. Her ever active mind led her to see how important was the bias of the available facilities for recreation on the minds of the people. She discovered that the Victoria Tavern in the Waterloo Road exercised a degrading influence on the people in the neighbourhood, and with the assistance of a great many generous friends, the money was raised for its purchase. She transformed it from an exceedingly low-class music hall, of a kind which, indeed, does not, and could not exist in these days, to a place of entertainment which provided variety shows with all vicious elements eliminated and also a series of scientific and other lectures, together with much temperance propaganda.

It is most interesting to those who followed her work to see the gradual evolution from a variety show to a ballad concert and the introduction of high-class music. Then came operas, and the same public which originally demanded a variety show experienced such an alteration of taste that in the end they wanted neither this nor a ballad concert, but demanded opera.

Subsequent developments are better known, and though Miss Cons did not live to see the "Vic" as the permanent

home of Shakespearian drama, this was but the natural sequence of her early efforts. Now, of course, it remains the only theatre in England which has continuous performances throughout the year of opera and Shakespearian drama.

It is a significant commentary on the assumed incapacity of women for business that before Miss Cons took over the personal management two men were tried as managers, and in each case failed. It was only when Miss Cons herself became responsible that success was realized. Everyone is now familiar with the debt of gratitude which is owed to Miss Lilian Baylis, her niece, who succeeded Miss Cons as manager, and who has done so much for the popularising of high-class music and drama.

She was an extremely keen politician, and if I may strike a personal note, add that it was largely due to her persistent pressure that I made up my mind to enter public life. She was, of course, an ardent believer in the removal of all disabilities of women. Of these, she had a peculiarly striking example, for on the first London County Council in 1899 she was elected as the only woman Alderman, but by a judgment of the Court it was held that women were ineligible to sit on the Council, and she accordingly lost her seat.

She was a member of the executive of the Women's Local Government Society, and was able to see before she died the removal of, at least, some of the restraints on women's activities which had hitherto been in force.

She possessed a quality which is extremely rare in my experience of having complete confidence in her powers, and yet allied with this an absence of all self-assertion and the possession of innate modesty as regards her own ability. No one who was intimately in touch with her could fail to be struck by the courage and pertinacity with which she approached any of her tasks. When she wanted her way as regards anything in connection with the "Vic," I have seen her frequently tackle the members of the County Council, and the most robust member would quail before her strenuous exhortations. She had in her nature the unusual combination of "A dreamer of dreams" and the acute business woman. She left instructions that after her death her ashes were to be scattered in a beautiful spot in Hever, where occasionally she used to obtain a much-needed rest and where, indeed, she died.

The inspiration of her self-forgetting life has been dispersed far beyond even the London she loved, and has left its mark on the lives of many who had the honour to be associated with her.

A PRACTICAL CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

We have been asked to make an appeal to our readers for gifts of warm clothes, any kind of boots, or money for extra nourishment for sick people for Abertillery, Monmouth, in the distressed area. Our appeals last year yielded a generous response, and we are confident that this will have the same result. Those who respond may rest assured that those who distribute help do so in full knowledge of circumstances and in collaboration with local relief committees. Parcels or letters should be addressed to Mrs. Dolman, Dunmore House, Abertillery.

ERRATA.

A correspondent has drawn our attention to the fact that Miss C. M. Eve, J.P., was the second woman to be elected Mayor of a London Borough. Miss Eve was Mayor of Stoke Newington from 1924-5. We regret that Miss Eve's name was omitted in the paragraph relating to Women Mayors in the issue of 15th November.

MEDICAL STUDENTS.

We hear that the entry of students to the London School of Medicine for Women is 67—a number higher than at any time since the War years. This increase of new recruits is obviously due to the great successes which have been attained by medical women recently. Last year, the demand for the services for women doctors was steadily growing. It is sad that the London School has limited entries in University Colleges, and that other Medical Schools are now closed.

A MARRIAGE EDUCATION CENTRE

has been opened at

141 BOW ROAD, BOW, E. 3

to give advice to women on:—

The Sex-Education of Children.
Family Limitation.
Personal and
Marital Hygiene.

Mrs. Chance will be glad to open a discussion of this work (without fee) at any meetings of women interested. Funds are not required for this work.

QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT.

25th November, 1929.

WOMEN JURORS.

Sir K. Wood asked the Attorney General whether his attention had been called to recent judicial utterances concerning the Sex Disqualification Removal Act, and to the fact that opportunity is being taken under an ancient right of challenge to object to women jurors as such; and whether the Government propose to make any proposals for amendment of the law with a view to carrying out the intentions of Parliament.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Short): I have been asked to reply. An accused, whether a man or a woman, has certain rights of challenge and my right hon. Friend would not feel justified in proposing legislation interfering with those rights.

28th November.

PRISONS (WOMEN OFFICERS).

Mr. Lovat Fraser asked the Home Secretary whether there are any women medical officers in women's prisons or sections of prisons; and if not, whether he will consider the desirability of appointing them.

Mr. Clynes: There are two women medical officers at Holloway Prison and there is a woman medical officer at Aylesbury Borstal Institution. At other prisons where the women form only a small proportion of the prisoners, the difficulty hitherto has been that the appointment of a woman medical officer would mean adding to the staff, and paying two officers to do work which can only be done by one.

Mr. Lovat Fraser asked the Home Secretary if, in view of the fact that Holloway Prison is used exclusively for women and that the daily average of women prisoners in that prison throughout the year 1927 was 318, he will consider the desirability of appointing a woman governor.

Mr. Clynes: When a vacancy next occurs in the Governorship of Holloway Prison, there will be various questions requiring consideration, and I cannot pledge myself at this date as to the action to be taken; but the hon. Member may be sure that full weight will be given to the considerations he mentions.

STREET TRADING.

Mr. Ede asked the Home Secretary how many local authorities having by-laws regulating or prohibiting street trading by young persons and children make no distinctions with regard to the sex of the juvenile street traders; and how many have by-laws in which the stringency of the by-laws varies with the sex of the juvenile street trader.

Mr. Clynes: All the local authorities who have made by-laws on the subject of street trading distinguish between boys and girls as regards the age of prohibition. The usual practice is to prohibit street trading by girls under 16 and to require that boys between 14 and 16 shall not be so employed without the issue of a licence.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.

Sir W. Edge asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury if the Government still adheres to the Resolutions of the House of Commons of 5th August, 1921, with regard to equal pay in the Civil Service.

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence: I would remind the hon. Member that the existing differentiation between the rates and scales of remuneration payable respectively to men and women civil servants is one of the questions to which the attention of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service is specifically directed by their terms of reference.

CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF OPIUM AND DANGEROUS DRUGS.¹

The British Section of the Women's International League held a very successful Conference on the control of Opium and other Dangerous Drugs on 13th November. Dr. Hilda Clark, Chairman of the Anti-Opium Committee of the British Section of the League, who presided at the first session, said that this was the first of several Conferences to be held in different countries, and that later an International Conference would be held by the League at Geneva.

In her opening address Dr. Clark struck a note that was echoed by every other speaker. She pointed out that the Opium question had greatly changed within recent years. The discovery of the various derivatives of opium had made the illicit traffic both more easy and more profitable. While Great Britain is not considered to be greatly guilty of smuggling, all manufacturing countries share the responsibility for the excess of drugs which makes this smuggling possible. The only way, she said, to put a stop to this evil is to insist that the manufacture of the derivatives of opium should be internationally limited to the amount needed for the medical requirements of the world.

Mr. Robertson, who spoke of the position in Egypt, and Professor Noel Baker, Delegate to the Assembly of the League of Nations, 1929, who gave an account of what had been done at Geneva, both emphasized the international aspect of the illicit trade. It is considered that the whole of this traffic is in the hands of an international gang with stupendous capital behind it. As long as there is in the world a surplus of these drugs so long will that surplus find its way into the hands of these smugglers.

Mr. Lyall, President of the Permanent Central Opium Board, League of Nations, in his account of the question in China and the Far East, brought out the same point. No British-grown opium is legally imported into China, and very little smuggled. China is doing her best to cope with the evil within her own borders, but her present great danger is not from native-grown opium but from drugs such as cocaine and heroin which come into the country from outside. Great Britain plays a very small part in this illicit trade, but our record is not so good in regard to opium smoking and eating in India and the Crown Colonies. In speaking of India both Mr. Singha and the Rev. Herbert Anderson were of opinion that while considerable reduction in the consumption of opium had been achieved the fact that the Government derived a considerable revenue from opium retarded as rapid a reduction as was possible.

Mr. Singha gave a disquieting account of the increase in the consumption of opium in the growing industrial areas, although the consumption over India as a whole has been considerably reduced. One of the worst features in such areas is that 98 per cent of the babies are doped with opium while their mothers work in the mills.

The question of Revenue also affects the opium traffic in the Crown Colonies. In the Malay States one-third of the Revenue comes from opium. Mr. Lyall said that the disturbing point in the position there was that so many of the opium smokers had learned the habit in the Colonies, only a few of the Chinese labourers being addicts before leaving China. Mr. Sze gave a very interesting account of the way the Chinese themselves are combatting this evil and are educating public opinion by means of posters, Anti-Opium Weeks, etc.

Professor A. J. Clark made out a very strong case for putting on the Schedule of Dangerous Drugs all the derivatives of opium. Professor Clark pointed out that in regard to new derivatives of opium the harm was done before they were known to be drugs of addiction and also that such a drug as codeine, not in itself habit-forming, could be manufactured into drugs of addiction. Codeine could be exported in any quantity without a licence and there was no guarantee that the codeine thus exported was not being manufactured into other drugs. Lady Gladstone, who was in the chair at the second session, read a letter from Lord Cecil in which he stated that he considered the only way out of the difficulty was to make the manufacture of such drugs a Government monopoly.

At the close Miss Pye proposed the following resolution, which was carried:—

This Conference expresses the belief that opium and dangerous drugs should be removed from the sphere of private profit, and, on account of the need of limitation of output, urges that the control of the manufacture of these drugs (to be used only for medical and scientific purposes) should be taken over by the Governments concerned.

E. M. ALCOCK.

¹ Contributed on behalf of the Women's International League.**THE PROFESSIONAL WOMAN'S HAIRDRESSER****MADAME EDYTHE,**

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PERSONAL ATTENTION. MODERATE CHARGES.

COMING EVENTS.

B.B.C.

Wednesday, 11th December. 10.45 a.m., Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P.: "The Week in Parliament."

Wednesday, 11th December. 3.30-3.45 p.m., "How we Manage our Affairs." Mrs. Rackham, J.P.: "How the Money is raised and spent."

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

12th December. 1 p.m. Luncheon, 17 Buckingham Street, W.C. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence: "Peace as it affects the British Commonwealth of Nations."

GUILD OF GIRL CITIZENS.

7th December. 7 p.m. Minerva Club, Hunter Street, W.C. Miss Chave Collisson: "The effect of Economic Changes upon Women of less forward races under the British Flag: their need and our responsibility." Chair: Miss E. Gunter.

GUILDHOUSE W.C.S.

9th December. 3 p.m. Miss Helen Ward: "Dame Millicent Fawcett."

HOWARD LEAGUE FOR PENAL REFORM.

13th December. 1 p.m. Luncheon. Pinoli's, Wardour Street, W. 1. Speaker: Mrs. Rackham, J.P.: "Public Opinion and the Treatment of Crime."

LONDON AND NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE.

10th December. Opening of Women's Service Hall (46 Tufton Street, S.W. 1) by Annie, Viscountess Cowdray. Dinner 8 p.m. Reception 9.30 p.m.

MORLEY COLLEGE FOR WORKING MEN AND WOMEN.

61 Westminster Bridge Road, S.E.
6th December. 8 p.m. Sir Arnold Wilson: "The Middle East." Chair: Major H. F. Chettle, O.B.E.

13th December. 8 p.m. W. McG. Eager, Esq.: "Youthful Rights and Crusted Wrongs."

NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

Edinburgh W.C.A.—11th December. 8 p.m. Gartshore Hall, 116 George Street. J. P. Kinloch, M.D.: "Maternity Service in Scotland and other lands." Chair: Dr. Joan Rose.

Kingston, Malden, Surbiton and District W.C.A.—10th December. 8 p.m. Mrs. Gray: "Conditions of Women in India."

St. Pancras S.E.C.—11th December. 8 p.m. 27 Grove Terrace, Highgate Road, N.W. 5. Miss Nina Boyle: "The Slavery Convention of Women." Chair: Miss W. Holtby.

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE.

9th December. 6 p.m. St. Patrick's Clubroom, Soho Square. Rev. C. Martindale, S.J.: "Birth Prevention—the Catholic Point of View." Miss Laughton Mathews, M.B.E.: "The Feminist Point of View." Chair: Miss C. Gordon.

WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE.

12th December. 4.30 p.m. Minerva Club, Brunswick Square. Miss Morgan Gibbon: "My Election Experiences." Chair: Miss Flowers.

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