

# Catholic Citizen

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

Vol. XXI, No 2.

15th FEBRUARY, 1935.

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.

## Indian Women's Franchise\*

Whereas the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report on the White Paper, as a whole, and in particular, where its recommendations concern the Status of Women in the new Constitution falls far short of our demands we do hereby state in unequivocal language our strong disapproval of and inability to accept the same. We give reasons for our dissatisfaction in the appended statement.

We feel that the Joint Parliamentary Committee was animated by a genuine desire to bring women in greater numbers on the electoral roll and give them a definite place in the Legislatures of the new Constitution. For this spirit of sympathy with us, as also for their unqualified recognition of the part that women must play in the public life of the country we place on record our sincere appreciation. At the same time, however, we feel constrained to express in no uncertain terms our inability to accept the recommendations as they stand, for the following reasons:

1. We claim that there should be a Declaration of Rights in which the removal of sex disabilities should be clearly stated. We draw attention to the fact that the word "sex" has been omitted from the "Eligibility for holding public office, etc," (vide para 367, Vol. I, Part I of the Report). While feeling keenly this omission as a grave injustice to us in spite of our repeated demands in this connection, we hope that the same may even now be rectified.

2. The greater number of women enfranchised under the recommendations are going to be the wives and widows of property holders and to this number have also been added the wives of men with the military qualification of the vote and the pensioned widows and mothers of military officials and soldiers. Our reasons for our strong objections to this method of enfranchisement have been stated in clear language

on more than one occasion. They still hold good and we regret that, in spite of our protests, a qualification wholly unacceptable to us is being sought to be imposed on us. We reiterate our belief in equitable methods of election and attach equal importance to the quality as well as the quantity of the women's vote. We object strongly to the doubling of the vote for any vested interests as being against all canons of justice for the poor who constitute India's main population and against all democratic principles. We again urge the acceptance of our proposals for the introduction to begin with of adult franchise in Urban areas (vide Report of the Indian Franchise Committee, page 43, para. 95, for definition of urban areas) for the purpose of increasing our electoral numbers.

3. In our opinion far too much weight has, from the outset, been laid on administrative difficulties where women are concerned. This opinion is practically strengthened by the numbers of "purdah" women who went to the polls in the recent Legislative Assembly Elections. We protest strongly against the invidious differentiations that have been made between the Provinces in regard to literacy and property qualifications, "application" conditions and other details including the omission of the wives and widows of those holding the educational qualification if the "wifehood" qualification is unreasonably persisted in.

\* Resolution and statement passed at the All-India Women's Conference at Karachi and unanimously endorsed by the Women's Indian Association and the National Council of Women in India at a joint meeting of representatives of the three organisations held at Delhi on January 8th, 1935.

4. We have not swerved from our conviction that we do not, on principle, approve of reservation of seats in Legislatures for ourselves or for any particular interest. Nevertheless, seeing that this expedient may unfortunately be imposed on us during the transition period we deplore the entire omission of women from the Assemblies of several Provinces and the total exclusion for whatever reason, of women of the North-West Frontier Province from general citizenship rights. We feel very strongly that in the case of these Provinces where women may be said to be less vocal, the exclusion of their representatives from the Legislatures constitutes a grave omission and neglect of the very causes for which we stand. We also claim that no disabilities should attach to women in any Province that may be newly created.

5. If certain selected Provinces are definitely to be burdened with Second Chambers we see no reason whatsoever why women should not be accorded a definite place in all these as well as in the Council of State. We regard such as our inherent right and must, therefore, protest against this omission.

6. With Lord Lothian, we are "unrepentant believers in a system of direct election," and we therefore object with all possible emphasis to indirect election at any time and for any one. We refuse, likewise, to accept nomination for the Legislatures.

7. We urge that "disqualification for candidature should not follow on conviction of a criminal offence involving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding one year" where such offence involves no moral turpitude (vide page 77, para 138, part I of the Report).

CONCLUSION.—While mentioning the above details we wish to make it quite clear that, even if we had secured, or secure for ourselves all that we had wished or wish to secure and if, at the same time, we felt that the recommendations, as a whole, were not in the true interests of India, we would, as women, the natural guardians of future generations, feel it our bounden duty to deny all special privileges for ourselves for the sake of the common good. In the light of general criticism of the Report we know that the recommendations are unacceptable to all shades of representative opinion in the country. We, therefore, join in this widespread protest and still hope against hope that a new Constitution may eventually be created as will meet with general approbation.

## International Notes

In "*Jus Suffragii*" we read that Director Henriette Siess and Dr. Margarete Rada have been nominated to the Federal Council of Culture in **Austria**. This shows that the new régime will not exclude women from public affairs; although as yet no women have been nominated to other Councils.

We congratulate Mrs. Agnes Fuchs on her appointment as the first woman Consul in Vienna where she is in charge of the Chilean Legation.

"*The Advocate*" (Melbourne) reports that Miss Anna Brennan, a member of St. Joan's Alliance, when speaking at the "Catholic Action for Women" meeting in connection with the recent Eucharistic Congress, suggested that Catholic secondary schools should have classes on social questions for senior girls, and that instead of being kept ignorant of the evils of the world, girls be trained how to meet them.

"*Vida Social Feminina*" (Barcelona) reports on two progressive laws which the little Parliament of **Catalonia** voted in 1934 and which have come into force at the New Year.

The first of these establishes the principle of absolute equality of the sexes in civil law. Husband and wife have equal right to individual property; and each may exercise any profession, trade or calling which does not interfere with their respective duties to their family. Either may enter into legal contracts without permission from the other. Certain "privileges" hitherto accorded to women are abolished.

The International Congress on Social Morality held in Budapest last October, under the auspices of convinced abolitionists, with a comprehensive agenda dealing with the causes and remedies for prostitution, must have shaken the faith of **Hungary** and the Balkan countries in the necessity for regulation, a faith to which they have so far pledged their allegiance.

In **Portugal** a woman may now vote at Parliamentary elections if she can show a secondary or pre-university school education, and at municipal elections if she is the head of a household.

At the elections in December three women deputies were elected for the first time.

(Continued on page 13)

## Notes and Comments

We remind members that the 24th Annual Meeting of St. Joan's Alliance will be held on Saturday, March 16th, at 3 p.m., at St. Patrick's Clubroom, Soho Square. We hope that all members in or near London will make a point of coming, and that those farther afield may avail themselves of excursion trains for the occasion. The Annual Meeting provides a unique occasion for the exchange of ideas between members and the Committee. Among the speakers will be: Miss Monica O'Connor, Miss Nancy Stewart Parnell, B.A., Miss H. R. Walmesley, M.A.

In view of the proposed revision of the Unemployment Assistance Rates, a letter was sent to every member of the House of Commons signed by many women's organisations, including St. Joan's Alliance, asking them "to demand that the weekly rate for women shall be the same as for men."

In connection with the statement of the All-India Women's Conference published on our front page, we feel sure members will wish to hear Mrs. Corbett Ashby and Dr. Maude Royden report on the all-important Conference which they attended by special invitation of the Indian Women's Organisations. St. Joan's Alliance is responsible with the other societies affiliated to the British Commonwealth League for a meeting at which Mrs. Corbett Ashby and Dr. Royden will give their report. This meeting will be held at Friend's House, Euston Road, on Thursday, February 28th, at 8 p.m., Lord Allen of Hurtwood presiding. We urge all our members to do their utmost to attend and to bring their friends to hear the views of the Indian women. Please apply at once to Miss Barry at the office for tickets, 2s. 6d., 1s. and 6d.

From the *Political Quarterly*, "Opportunity" reprints in supplement form an admirable survey of the 1931 Census in relation to the occupations of women, by Mrs. Ray Strachey. After dealing with the most important points, Mrs. Strachey points out that there are some bad omissions. Thus all those occupied in voluntary domestic work for the family's good are returned as unoccupied. Moreover only those married women who take in more lodgers than they have members of their own family are entered as lodging-house keepers though there must be innumerable women who take in

a few lodgers to add to the family income. Nor is there any mention of the enormous seasonal industry of summer boarders, an industry mainly undertaken by women. Mrs. Strachey goes on to say:

"The truth of the matter is that our existing civilisation, and all our trades and industries, are built up on the foundation of hot meals, and that the preparation of these meals, with all the washing and cleaning which accompany them, is, in the main, contributed as a voluntary service by the so-called 'unoccupied' women of the community, who, in addition, undertake the care of the very young and the very old."

With reference to our article on Maternal Mortality in the December "Catholic Citizen," a member of ours, Mrs. Walsh, tells of Maternity Dining Rooms which are recognised as part of the Child Welfare Scheme of the City of Dublin. Mrs. Walsh serves actively on the St. John's Ambulance Brigade Committee which runs these Dining Rooms in co-operation with the Joint Red Cross Committee. An average of 200 destitute expectant or nursing mothers receive a daily dinner, free, and are given milk, parcels of food and baby-clothing at the birth of the child. Each woman who applies for help is required to attend the Pre-Natal Clinic of one of the Maternity Hospitals and, after the birth of the baby, the Baby Club for the district where the family live.

From "*Le Féminisme Chrétien*" (Brussels) we learn of yet another attack on women's right to earn. Two ordinances were promulgated in Belgium in December last, both couched in precisely similar terms. One aimed at reducing the number of aliens in industry, the other the number of women. The ordinance applying to women authorises the Minister of Labour to decide the proportion of women to be employed in different industrial enterprises, either in the whole country or in particular districts.

A joint meeting of the Women's Organisations of Belgium was held in Brussels on December 21st to protest against this unjust attempt to deprive women of their human right to earn. Among organisations represented were our co-religionists of "*Le Féminisme Chrétien*." This organisation had already sent a strongly worded resolution calling upon the Government to withdraw the obnoxious ordinance.

We hope that Belgian women may succeed in averting this threat to their liberty.

## ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE,

AND

Editorial Office of "Catholic Citizen":

55 BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1. Tel. Museum 4181

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

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MISS CHRISTINE SPENDER, *Hon. Editor.*

## Winifred Holtby's "Women"\*

This book jerks one awake in many unexpected and stimulating ways to see how often in the past women have been considered as something less than human beings and how "equality of status" will never be attained until this attitude is uprooted once and for all. Light is thrown into dark places so that by the end, the issue stands out clear cut and well-defined.

But, and it is a big but, we find Miss Holtby regarding as part of feminism, birth prevention and abortion. Moreover she does not hesitate to welcome these issues wholeheartedly, with all their implications. This is admirable honesty but it is necessary to declare here that birth prevention and abortion have nothing whatever to do with equality and never will have. It is also necessary to assert that there are no rights without corresponding obligations, and that the liberty for which we fight has nothing whatever to do with license. Miss Holtby does not lack respect for spiritual and intellectual values—indeed she points out that: "Only when physical needs, feelings, actions and preoccupations become less important and significant than intellectual and spiritual life, does the individual really escape from the 'body of this death' which is mortality." But in spite of this at times she strangely ignores the Christian ethic and seems to regard personal experience as the touch-stone of human behaviour. Again, though she realises the ethical change of outlook involved in the fight for an equal moral standard, yet she asserts that the organisations conducting the campaign for "birth-control" are "consciously or unconsciously, fighting the battle of the equal moral standard." Strange contradictions, impossible to reconcile!

On purely natural grounds it seems fantastic to assume so obstinately and persistently that the use of contraceptives would enable a woman to plan her life exactly as she would have it. We none of us can do this, neither male nor female, for the "accidental insecurities of life" are unending and we are all far more subject to "dependence on circumstance" or the "unpredictable orderings of an omnipotent Providence" than Miss Holtby would have us believe. My readers are familiar enough with the moral arguments against birth prevention and abortion for it to be unnecessary for me to repeat them here. But it must be insisted that to say the birth prevention campaign is a continuation of the fight for an equal moral standard is a gross travesty. The cry of the first abolitionists was "self-control is possible" and to insinuate the compromise of "birth-control" in place of this ideal is to betray them. If self-control is to be stigmatised as an "unnatural strain" women will merely have cast aside one set of chains to be enslaved in other chains, which may not be so apparent but are none the less real.

Miss Holtby's misrepresentation of Catholicism and her attack on the Encyclical "Casti Connubii" and on the 1934 Lent Pastoral of Cardinal Bourne cannot go unrefuted. She asserts that the Church opposes contraceptive methods mainly on the ground that at all costs the world must be populated by Catholics: "Its present policy of encouraging large families and discountenancing birth-control propaganda is unquestionable." In spite of a reference to the "superb metaphysic of (Catholic) theological philosophy" and though at the beginning of

\* *Women*, by Winifred Holtby, (Bodley Head, 2/6).

the book we have read of her respect for the conventual ideal, Miss Holtby omits to mention that the Church considers the highest state of life to be that dedicated to perpetual virginity. The Church does *not* teach that a married woman must have an avalanche of children. But it is impossible to argue the point with one who seems to have so little conception of Christian Matrimony. One is sometimes led to believe that Miss Holtby thinks that to "escape from the body of this death" means to satisfy physical instincts to satiation instead of to control them and redirect the energy thus liberated as the Church would have us do. As to her attack on "Casti Connubii" if Miss Holtby in contradistinction to the Holy Father prefers "false liberty and unnatural equality" to real liberty and equality there is no more to be said on the matter. The Holy Father is warning us that license means that the woman "will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery (if not in appearance, certainly in reality) and become as amongst the pagans the mere instrument of man."

Miss Holtby states that Cardinal Bourne in his Pastoral "expressed himself as chiefly concerned about the extravagances of women's dress" to the exclusion of other questions of world-wide importance. On opening the Pastoral I read the following:

"... In the international field the present precarious position of the League of Nations must cause anxiety to all those who are convinced that some such organisation is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the peace of the world. . . . Certainly it is the duty of Catholics, by word and action, to give all the support they can to the League of Nations and to endeavour so to improve it as to make it a real and permanent instrument for the preservation of the peace of the world."

Catholic Action and financial corruption in public life are also dealt with in this Pastoral and the reference to women's dress is part of an attack on the "demand for extended facilities for divorce, for birth prevention, and the like" ending with a plea for self-control:

"... For the self-control which Christianity has always taught, . . . the right to self-gratification is substituted. If it cannot be obtained within the limits of the law of Christ that law must be set aside! If natural reason forbids it, then that reason must be hushed and put to sleep! Analyse all the motives that are set forth by earnest, well-meaning, and—I would fain believe—conscientious men; the hard cases which they so pathetically quote, with a view to the extension of the facilities for divorce. They all come to the same thing—the cry of instinct for self-gratification, and the proclaiming of the impossibility of self-control."

One feels inclined to advise Miss Holtby to read Encyclicals and Pastorals more carefully in the future.

It is sad to be forced to find so much at which to carp in such a vivid, provocative and often illuminating book, which moreover covers an extremely wide range and is very well written. To criticise more generally, Miss Holtby's most striking arguments often contain obvious fallacies—but perhaps she would rather arouse the spirit of contradiction than let us fall asleep while pondering important questions. But that Miss Holtby should fail to let her ideals win the upper hand is more serious and a disappointment hard to accept.

CHRISTINE SPENDER

## INTERNATIONAL NOTES - Continued from p. 10

The "New York Sun" of October, reports that the Convention which is preparing the draft constitution for an independent Philippines have rejected women's suffrage by a large majority. Only last year the Philippines Legislature itself gave women the vote—to be exercised however, only in 1937! So that the right to vote may be taken from the women before they have had one chance to use it. The "progressives" of the Philippines, having observed the result of the women's voting in Spain, fear the Catholic influence of their women in public life and prefer to keep them in subjection. But, judging from the strides which female education is making in the Islands, and from the fact that women are to be found in all professions; it is probable that the Philippine men will soon have to move from their bigoted position. \* \* \* \*

From the I.C.W. *Bulletin* we note that the N.C.W. of Yugoslavia has taken up the study of the position of the housewife. A speaker, representing the Slovene Housewives Association, when addressing the Annual Meeting of the Yugoslavian N.C.W., asked that the housewife's work in the home should be considered as her personal contribution to the expenses of the common household, and that consequently part of the payments effected by her husband in connection with social insurance schemes should be credited to her, thus enabling her to enjoy the benefit of personal insurance in case of illness or old age. I. M. D.

## ISTANBUL CONGRESS

We ask any members or friends of the Alliance who wish to go with the delegation to the Istanbul Congress, April 18th to 25th, to let Miss Barry know at the Office at once. All particulars as to the cost of the journey may be had on application to the Wayfarers Travel Agency whose advertisement appears in this issue.

## Position of African Women

We rejoice that during the Twenty-sixth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission so much attention was given to the position of women in mandated territories, and we are most grateful to Miss Dannevig, the only woman member of the Commission who, by her continued enquiries, not only kept this matter well to the fore but elicited valuable information and promises of further investigation. We are indebted to Lord Lugard for his enquiries as to whether there was a trade in wives or anything akin to traffic in women for immoral purposes existing in the Cameroons, and again to Miss Dannevig for drawing attention to the Decree regulating prostitution in the French Cameroons.

In its report to the Council of the League of Nations on the work of the Session, the Commission noted with satisfaction that "the Administrations of the territories under British Mandate whose reports have been examined at the present session are devoting special attention to the important problem of the condition of women," and it also expressed the hope that "the observations and recommendations made by the religious missions with regard to the condition of women will receive the careful consideration of the mandatory Power."

In the Minutes of the Session just published we note that the accredited representative of the British Cameroons, Mr. Hunt, C.M.G., C.B.E., said in his General Statement that his attention had been drawn to the two numbers of the CATHOLIC CITIZEN, May 15th and October 15th, 1934, containing "the reflections of Archbishop Le Roy on the replies of the accredited representative at last year's session and the memorandum on the status of women sent by various societies of the Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organisations to the Chairman of the Mandates Commission." More than half of Mr. Hunt's Statement is devoted to the position of women in the British Cameroons as far as Christian marriage and the custom of dowry is concerned. Mr. Hunt said that in practice a woman who is married to a pagan, whether polygamous or monogamous, and on conversion to Christianity wishes to leave him, is able to do so. "The native courts are not invoked to compel her to return, nor would they have the power to do so if they were. The position is the same in the case of a woman who is betrothed and does

not wish to fulfil the marriage contract which her parents have entered into on her behalf." In these circumstances the dowry always has to be repaid but it is the Christian husband or fiancé who shoulders the burden and the transaction is nearly always private. If owing to any difficulty the case comes before a native court these courts are "generally reasonable in this matter and give time to pay" and, if not, appeal can be made to the Administrative Officer who may reduce "the amount awarded or extend the period of payment."

Mr. Hunt considers from observation of the dowry system that "in particular it stands for the good treatment of the wife." He has "little faith in the artificial limitation of dowry as a means of effecting any real reform" and in his view the custom "will survive so long as the patriarchal system survives." He quoted the resolution passed at the meeting of the Government and mission authorities held at Buea in April 1934, that "the scale of dowries should be reduced gradually, but their abolition should be left to the effects of Christianity, education and time." "Further than that," he said, "it does not seem practicable to go at present, but I should not like to leave the Commission with the impression that the mandatory Power is apathetic in regard either to this particular question of dowry or to the general question of raising the status of women."

We are glad to note that Mr. Hunt *does* envisage a time when the custom of dowry will no longer hold.

In connection with the question of the position of women in the French Cameroons the section of the "Revue de l'Alliance Ste. Jeanne d'Arc" (Paris) devoted to the "Société d'Etudes Africaines" publishes the full text of the Arrêté on native marriages circulated by M. Bonnecarrère in May 1934. We have already given details of the clause in this Arrêté which enables natives to register Christian marriages as such. (CATHOLIC CITIZEN, October 1934). There are three other distinct advances to note:

1. No marriage contract can be made for any girl or boy under the ages of 14 and 16 respectively.
2. No marriage contract can be made without the consent of the future spouses.
3. Marriage can take place legally without payment of dowry.

CHRISTINE SPENDER

## Reviews

**Whither Biology?** By Ethel Poulton, D.és Sc., M.Sc. Reprinted from "The Sower."

Dr. Ethel Poulton is lecturer in General Biology to the Education Department of Birmingham University. She is therefore well qualified to criticize the attitude taken by some educationalists towards the teaching of Biology in schools. Dr. Poulton is naturally in favour of such teaching being given, but deprecates the tendency to make Biology subservient to the desire of introducing sex-teaching into the curriculum. She holds, as most Catholic educationalists do, that sex-teaching should not be given "en masse" to a class composed of children of varying degrees of development and that it should be the duty of the parents or of the teachers (in loco parentis) to give the necessary instruction. The need for some measure of instruction is generally recognised, but the child is not likely to seek enlightenment on this question even from the most understanding and co-operating parent. The parent will probably have to choose both the most opportune moment and the best form for imparting this instruction. Both factors present obvious difficulties. It would be a boon to many parents and teachers if a Catholic biologist and educationalist could suggest a suitable form and simple terminology least likely to offend the child's sensibilities.

F. M. S.

**Beasts and Saints.** (Peter Davies, 5s.)

Everyone will find something to please and touch them in this delightful book. The illustrations are charming and besides her excellent translations and grouping of stories, Miss Waddell contributes a clever and interesting preface. She has drawn from many and varied sources.

## CATHOLIC CITIZEN

Last year many friends of the "Catholic Citizen" subscribed for the paper to be sent to bishops, priests—missionary or otherwise—convents, clubs, libraries, etc. These subscriptions now fall due and besides this we have an ever-growing list of new people to whom we should like the paper to go. Would anyone care to send extra subscriptions as a New Year gift to the "Catholic Citizen"? This would be a doubly good work since they would not only be helping the paper financially but be doing excellent propaganda. Please send some extra half-crowns and tell us to which category you would like us to apply your gift.

In response to the verse in our January issue a member in South Africa has already sent three extra subscriptions for the paper to go to a priest, a nun and a friend in Italy.

## HON. TREASURER'S NOTE

We are very grateful to those who have sent in their annual subscriptions for this year. It is a very great help to the Office when these are sent in promptly so would those members who have not yet paid assist us by doing so as soon as possible.

P. M. BRANDT.

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## LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT BRANCH

Hon. Sec., Mrs. A. Stewart Mason, B.A.,  
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On January 7th the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Branch was held at 146 Upper Parliament Street by kind invitation of Miss Wylie. We were delighted to welcome Miss Barry and Miss Spender once again. Miss Barry spoke to us of the work of the Alliance during the past year and Miss Spender appealed for support of the "Catholic Citizen."

The following members were elected to the Committee: Miss Wylie, Chairman; Mrs. McCann, Vice-Chairman; Mrs. Maxfield, Hon. Treas.; Mrs. Mason, Hon. Sec.; the Misses Bowden, Johnstone, Gregson, Fox Taylor and O'Brien.

Our annual party will be held on Monday, February 18th, at 22, Fern Grove, Sefton Park, Liverpool, by kind invitation of Miss Bowden. Tickets are 1s. 6d. each and we hope for a good attendance of members and friends.

# ISTANBUL

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