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SOCIETY FOR THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

(INTERDENOMINATIONAL)

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President : Miss A. MAUDE ROYDEN, C.H.

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REV. HENRY GOW, D.D.
REV. W. RUSSELL MALTBY, D.D.
REV. CONSTANCE COLTMAN, M.A., B.D.
REV. A. H. GRAY, M.A., D.D.
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Hon. Treasurer :

Miss GOTCH,
7 Waldemar Avenue,
S.W.6

Hon. Registrar :

Miss E. H. POFFLEY,
24 Dollis Hill Avenue,
N.W.2

Hon. Secretary :

Miss IVY L. PRYKE,
1 Catherine Street,
S.W.1

Hon. Secretary's Report to Annual General Meeting, May 23rd, 1930.

In presenting the first Annual Report of the Society, it seems well to record the history of the events which led to the formation of the Society. In 1928, The League of the Church Militant (the Anglican Society for pressing for the admission of women to the ministry), which was formerly the Church League for Women's Suffrage, had come to an end, its members having decided that the movement within the Anglican Church "had reached such a phase that the "education of Church people along these lines could now be carried "on more satisfactorily through other channels than those of a society "whose activities had been directed along political lines in the past." In September of the same year, several members of the L.C.M. and members of various Free Churches got together to consider the possibility of forming an Interdenominational Society to press for the Ministry of Women, and eventually drafted a Constitution, which was submitted on May 3rd, 1929, to a larger Conference of about a hundred people who had been specially invited to meet at the Central Hall, Westminster, to consider the draft. The Conference was presided over by Miss Maude Royden. In her opening remarks Miss Royden reminded the Conference that the question of the admission of women to the ministry was one which affected the entire Christian Church. It was not a matter, as some maintained, which could be settled by each Church for itself—it was decided already by Christ. The question was one of principle, and this was the chief difficulty—to convince people that a question of principle

Pamphlet

was involved. Mrs. J. Binns, M.A., who presented the Draft Constitution to the Conference, said:—

“When this idea of an Interdenominational Society was started I was up against problems and difficulties of such a positive character that I could not see how such a society could prove beneficial to members of different denominations. But it became clear that behind our difficulties lies a common problem. We have proved beyond doubt the value of people of different denominations coming together who are enthusiastic on this question, and we feel the benefit and the light which have come to us who have met together on this problem.

“It is not only a question of women's rights (though there are, of course, those who are suffering from frustrated vocation), but of *the right*.”

The Draft Constitution was then discussed and approved with slight amendment, and the Society for the Ministry of Women (Interdenominational) was formed with its aim and conditions of membership defined as follows:—

AIM.—To attain the ideal that in the ministry of the Church of Christ no distinction should be made between men and women.

With this object to work for—

- (1) Equal opportunity in training and service for women ministers in those Churches in which the principle of equality is already recognised.
- (2) The full ordination of women in those Churches which do not at present grant it: or, in the case of those Churches which do not use the word “ordination,” its exact equivalent.

MEMBERSHIP.—All persons of 18 years of age and upwards calling themselves Christians, who are in agreement with the above object and who pay an annual subscription of 1s. or more, are eligible for membership of the Society.

The same evening a Public Meeting to launch the new Society was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, when the Chair was taken by Mrs. Parker Crane, M.A., of the London Missionary Society, and the speakers were Rev. Canon C. E. Raven, D.D., Rev. Dorothy Wilson, B.Litt., and Rev. James Binns, M.A. At the end of the meeting Miss Royden reported the result of the Conference, and also spoke on the question. Those present were then given an opportunity of joining the Society at once, and a good proportion responded to the invitation.

The first meeting of your Executive Committee was held on May 22nd, 1929. It was agreed that the first necessity was to get the Society known, and, accordingly, 360 circulars, offering to send speakers on the Ministry of Women, were sent out at once to Branches of the National Council of Women, Women Citizens Associations, Women's Co-operative Guilds, Adult Schools, Educational Settlements, &c. Letters were also sent to those Societies who had been invited to send delegates to the Public Meeting on May 3rd. We received the utmost consideration and help from the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Women's Freedom League, and the National Union of Women Teachers. The N.U.W.T. not only circularised their Branches, but put a notice in “The Women Teacher,” and invited the Society to send a speaker to their London District Joint Committee, consisting of

delegates from all the extra-metropolitan and London Boroughs. The Women's Freedom League advised the representatives of their London Branches to fix up a meeting on the Ministry of Women, and also put a notice of our offer to send speakers in “The Vote.” The N.U.S.E.C. followed up our letter to Societies affiliated to them by a letter from themselves.

“The Women's Leader” for January 3rd, 1930, a special number giving the Retrospect for the year, contained articles by the Rev. Constance Coltman, M.A., B.D., and Mrs. Beatrice Powell on the Position of Women in the Free Churches and in the Anglican Church respectively—both articles calling attention to the Society for the Ministry of Women.

Later on, we sent circulars to Wardens of Women's Halls of Universities and to Branches of the British Women's Temperance Association, offering to send speakers. Letters were sent to the women members of the Church Assembly, enclosing membership forms, and to other people. In addition, of course, personal letters have been written to everyone whose names occurred to us as even remotely likely to be interested. Lists of names of people who might be approached reach the office from time to time from our members, and are dealt with.

The result of all this is that our membership grows slowly but steadily and the Society is becoming known. The Society has been appealed to for literature and information by people preparing addresses or papers or desiring material for a debate. It is, however, true that the net has to be cast very wide for a proportionately small result.

The following meetings have been addressed by our speakers:—

Branches of the National Council of Women—

Birmingham (Public Meeting); Glasgow; Greenock; Hornsey; Hull; North Ayrshire.

Branches of the Women Citizens Association—

Aigburth (Liverpool); Glasgow; Heswall (Cheshire); Purley.

Women's Co-operative Guilds—

Cann Hall; East Hill (Wandsworth); Friern Barnet and New Southgate; Hampton Hill; Higham's Park; Highgate; Ilford; Leyton; Stratford New Town; Sudbury; Westminster; Woodford.

National Union of Women Teachers—

Essex County (at Ilford); Lincoln (Public Meeting).

Women's Freedom League, Head Office (2 meetings); Adult Schools at Battersea and Eltham; Young People's Society, Dalston Baptist Church; Six Point Group (Office Meeting); London Fields Fellowship; Women's

League, Congregational Union; Plashet Park Congregational Church; Churchgate Street Chapel, Bury St. Edmunds; Cockfosters, Barnet (Drawing-room Meeting); S. Hackney Labour Party; St. George's (Bloomsbury) Women's Fellowship; Kew Men's and Women's Fellowship.

The following future meetings have been booked—

Coventry N.C.W.; Nottingham University (Student Christian Movement); Acton W.C.A.; Battersea Branch of British Women's Temperance Association.

The Society's panel of speakers includes speakers in various parts of the country. Some of these have not yet been called upon, as no invitations so far have been received from districts easily accessible to them. The speakers who have already addressed meetings on behalf of the Society are:—Mrs. Arnold, Rev. James Binns, M.A., Rev. Constance Coltman, M.A., B.D., Rev. Vera Findlay, M.A., B.D., Miss M. Gordon, Miss D. M. Gotch, Rev. Edith Pickles, B.A., Mrs. Joyce Pollard, Rev. Canon C. E. Raven, D.D., Mrs. Ursula Roberts, Rev. A. E. N. Simms, M.A., B.D., Dr. Sybil Pratt, Miss Elsie Vellonoweth, Miss Monica Whately. We owe a debt of gratitude to our speakers for their ready and willing help in this direction.

Owing to Miss Royden having been ordered, in January, 1930, to take a year's complete rest, three Public Meetings which she had promised to address and which had been definitely fixed have had to be cancelled. They were arranged by the Birmingham National Council of Women, the Haslemere National Council of Women, and the Redhill and Reigate Women Citizens Association respectively. The Birmingham N.C.W., however, fixed another date, and Miss Monica Whately very kindly went to Birmingham to speak for the Society.

One of our members had also approached the Society on the question of arranging a Public Meeting in Bournemouth to be addressed by Miss Royden, and Miss Royden was hoping to be able to go there.

The Society has members not only in England and Wales, but in Scotland, Ireland, and China (including Chinese Christians), besides individual members living abroad, in Italy, Switzerland, Canada, &c.

On November 30th, 1929, members were called together in Conference at the City Women's Club on the subject of Women's Service in the Church. The objects of the Conference were:—

- (1) To discover—
 - (a) The opportunities for service already open to women;
 - (b) The offices to which women are either not admitted or not expected to fill.

(2) To discuss the best means of influencing women to take advantage of the opportunities for service now open to them, and to fit themselves for the work.

(3) To consider how to influence the Churches to make more extensive use of the services of laywomen.

The Chair was taken by the President, Miss Maude Royden, and the subjects for discussion were introduced by Miss E. Picton-Turbervill, M.P., for the Anglican Church, and Miss Dorothy M. Gotch (Secretary, Women's League, National Council of Free Churches) for the Free Churches.

The very interesting discussion which took place after tea might well have been prolonged. The following Recommendations were made to the Executive Committee:—

(1) That a letter should be sent to the Headquarters of each of the Free Church denominations asking—

- (a) That, where there is a Children's Church, girls should have equal opportunities of service with the boys;
- (b) That, where women have positions on the diaconate, they should be expected to fulfil all the functions of deacons, including serving at Holy Communion;
- (c) That, when a woman takes a service preceding the Holy Communion, she should be allowed to preside at the Holy Communion;
- (d) That deaconesses should *ex officio* sit on Executive Councils.

(2) That a letter should be sent to Diocesan Conferences asking them to invite a speaker from the Society, with a view to the Conference bringing its pressure to bear on the Bishop of the Diocese at the Lambeth Conference.

(3) That a letter be sent to Convocation at Oxford University urging that women should be allowed to take the D.D. degree.

The Executive Committee on December 6th considered these recommendations. Those affecting the Free Churches are being dealt with by a Sub-Committee. A letter has been duly sent to Diocesan Conferences, from the majority of which courteous replies have been received, but no promises to invite speakers or to consider the question of the Ministry of Women. Recommendation (3) is in the hands of Mrs. Coltman.

One fact which was brought out very clearly in the course of the discussion at the Conference was the really valuable help which can be rendered by our members in their own districts. There are opportunities which can be seized by them; and work can be done which cannot be carried out by Headquarters.

In view of the Lambeth Conference, which will take place in July this year, your Executive Committee felt they owed it to their large body of Anglican members to try to secure a hearing. A letter was therefore sent to the Secretary of the Lambeth Conference (Rev. Mervyn Haigh), asking whether, in view of the fact that a substantial proportion of the Society's members were Anglicans, the Society might be allowed to send in a memorandum or present a petition in person on their behalf. In a very kind reply Mr. Haigh said he would be very grateful to receive any

memorandum the Society would like to submit. In the course of further correspondence Mr. Haigh pointed out that the last papers would be circulated to the Bishops within a month. Your Committee therefore got to work at once. A Memorandum was drafted by Anglicans, and, after being circulated to the Executive Committee, was considered by them on January 8th. It was agreed to forward the Memorandum at once to the Archbishop. The covering letter stated that the Memorandum was sent on behalf of the Anglican members of the Society and through the Anglican members of the Committee. The Memorandum bore the signatures of all the Anglican members of the Executive Committee (eleven), including the President and Canon Raven. No one else signed the Memorandum.

Your Committee has received an assurance from the Archbishop that the Memorandum shall be placed before the Lambeth Conference.

In concluding this Report, we desire to record our appreciation of the help which the Society has received from the various Societies already mentioned, from our members, from Mrs. Carter Bell, Miss Catherine Shore, and others for their valuable help in addressing envelopes, a dull and constantly recurring piece of work; to Dr. Sybil Pratt for the loan of a typewriter; and to Miss Carol Morrison for so kindly placing her office at the disposal of the Executive Committee for their meetings.

We believe we may congratulate ourselves on the result of the first year's work. The first year is always the most difficult, but the response has been sufficient to send us on our way with hope and enthusiasm, keeping in our minds that the Society is not in the narrow sense of the word "feminist." The Society stands for a fundamental principle, for the recognition of spiritual values, and believes that the present position in the Church is contrary to the mind of Christ. Through all its work this has been emphasised, both in correspondence and in a printed Statement issued by the Society.

Your Executive Committee, composed of members of different denominations, holding different views on many points, has nevertheless experienced the inspiration of a common ideal. We have, as was the case in the meetings preliminary to the formation of the Society, "proved beyond doubt the value of people of different denominations coming together who are enthusiastic on this question, and we feel the benefit and the light which have come to us who have met together on this problem."

We feel sure that our members, particularly those who met together on November 30th, 1929, would endorse this statement, and we look forward to continued fellowship and work in the great cause in which we have gathered together.

**THE SOCIETY FOR THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN
(INTERDENOMINATIONAL).**

Receipts and Payments Account from May 1st, 1929, to December 31st, 1929.

RECEIPTS.				PAYMENTS.					
		£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
To Donations and Subscriptions:					By Stationery	...	5	17	3
Received by Registrar	...	42	11	6	Printing	...	7	7	0
" " Treasurer	...	6	6	6	Postage	...	9	11	5
		48 18 0			Hire of Rooms and cost of Tea for Con-				
Sale of Pamphlets	...			5 7	ference	...	2	3	0
Receipts at Conference Tea	...			3 5 9	Cheque Book	...			5 0
					Cash at Bank	...	20	11	6
					Cash in Hand—				
					Treasurer	...			7 6
					Secretary	...			3 4 0
					Registrar	...			3 2 8
				£52 9 4					£52 9 4

Examined with Books and Vouchers, and found correct.

Monkridge,
Sidecup.

KENNETH HEPBURN,
Accountant.

FAWCETT LIBRARY
27, WILFRED STREET,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

Ministry of Women (interdenominational)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE :

(a) PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENTS, AND OFFICERS.

(b) DENOMINATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

(Representing members of the Society who are members of the respective denominations.)

Anglican :

Mrs. Beatrice Powell. Miss Margaret Taylor.

Baptist :

Miss Jessie March. Miss Mary Phillips.

Congregational :

Mrs. J. Binns, M.A. Rev. Dorothy Wilson, B.Litt.

Methodist :

Miss Dorothy Browning. Rev. Dr. Ryder Smith.

Presbyterian :

Miss Marjory Grant. Miss Phyllis Prestige.

Unitarian :

Rev. Joyce Daplyn. Rev. Barbara Thomas.

(c) ELECTED MEMBERS.

Miss Cecil Barker, M.A.

Rev. James Binns, M.A.

Miss Lucy Hammick.

Miss Carol Morrison.

Dr. Eva Morton.

Mrs. Joyce Pollard.

Dr. Sybil Pratt.

Miss Monica Whately.

Miss Muriel Wray.

(d) CO-OPTED MEMBER.

Mrs. Lucy Johnson.