

*Federation of Women
Civil Servants*

REPORT

*for the year ending March 31st
1921*



Office :

56, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

OBJECTS

1. To protect and promote the common interests of Women in the Civil Service.
2. To remove the artificial restrictions placed on their employment.
3. To secure that their remuneration for services rendered shall not be differentiated by reason of sex.
4. To secure the free and unfettered admission of women to all appointments in the Service.
5. To secure the removal of the civil and political disabilities of women.

Federation of Women Civil Servants.

REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING, MARCH 31st, 1921.

The Turn of the Tide.

THE year 1920-21 has been one of unusual importance to the Civil Service, and more especially to the women in the Service. The fickle Press has for the most part changed its note from one of commendation to one of veiled hostility to the employment of women at all. And, although the permanent women cannot, of course, be disposed of in any summary fashion, they can, in the official view, be over-worked and economised on, docked of their promotions to higher posts and in wholesome fashion de-graded on the general reclassification.

Equality Procession, April, 1920.

The Federation has watched—and worked. Hardly was our last Report presented before our Equality Campaign was inaugurated by the big procession of April, 1920, when we were supported by the Society of Civil Servants, the Union of Post Office Workers, the Employment Exchange Officers, the Association of Civil Service Sorting Assistants, the Association of Writing Assistants, the Federation of Temporary Staffs Associations, the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, the London Society for Women's Service, the Women's Freedom League, the Women's Industrial League, the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, and in great strength by the National Union of Women Teachers.

100,000 Shillings Equality Fund.

At the same time, the 100,000 Shillings Equality Fund was started, and this received a notable addition from the proceeds of the Federation stall at the W.F.L. Fair at the Caxton Hall in December.

Deputations and Conversations.

All the while, from April to August, deputations from the Federation to Heads of Departments and "conversations" with the Treasury representatives were taking place on the Reorganization Report, and the authorities had thus first-hand experience of the views of the women affected.

Resolution of May, 1920.

In May came the famous resolution in the House—"That it is expedient that women should have equal opportunity of employment with men in all branches of the Civil Service within the United Kingdom and under all local authorities, providing that the claims of ex-Service men are first of all considered, and should also receive equal pay." An urgent whip from the Federation for attendance and support by the friendly M.P.'s preceded this debate, and some really admirable speeches were made—not the least valuable, by the by, being that by Mr. Hilton Young, now Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury.

Order in Council, August, 1920.

But pious resolutions are one thing and actions another. In August came the long-awaited Order in Council providing for Regulations for the admission of women to the Civil Service—a skeleton Order giving power to make Regulations, but discreetly silent as to their terms. Naturally this led to vigorous Press work by the Federation, and later to a Parliamentary campaign to secure the signatures of M.P.'s to a petition asking the Government for time to debate the matter. Over 200 signatures were secured for this petition, and incidentally much good work was done for the equality cause by our indefatigable Federation members in the lobby. As a result, a promise was obtained in November from the Leader of the House that no Regulations under the Order should be made without Parliament having first an opportunity of debating and amending them. The first Regulations appeared in January and were of so limited a scope that the Watching Committee (formed in the spring by the London Society for Women's Service, and composed of certain Members of Parliament and representatives of Women Civil Servants and other women interested in this branch of women's employment) decided that special leave must be obtained for a debate really covering the whole subject. This was done, and the debate is expected as we write.

Bye-Election, September, 1920.

Meanwhile the bye-election in Ilford had given us, in September, an opportunity of bringing together the three candidates on one platform and securing a public statement of their views on the question of equality of opportunity and pay in the Service as between men and women: very useful propaganda on similar lines to those pursued by us in March at the Camberwell bye-election.

Assimilation.

The so-called Assimilation "Agreement" was ratified in September, our representative dissenting and not signing. Our members know only too well the injustices that have been done upon them in the name of this iniquitous instrument. Throughout the assimilation proceedings thereafter carried out in all the departments, the Federation has protested against specific breaches of this "Agreement," where even such advantages as it did contain were being withheld from our members.

The Treasury Game.

Negotiations with the Treasury on the subject of Assimilation anomalies and injustices came to a deadlock in January of this year, when, after submitting two memoranda and verbally stating our case to Miss Lawrence (who was then but newly appointed to her Treasury post) we found most of our points turned down and one or two completely ignored, our arguments being in no case fairly met.

Resort to C.S.A.Bd.

Being denied an interview with the Controller of Establishments and invited to furnish yet another memoranda, we declined such futile trifling, and betook ourselves for redress to the Civil Service Arbitration Board, negotiations with whom are now pending.

Mass Meeting.

In February we held a largely attended mass meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster, with Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon in the chair, and on this occasion some vigorous speeches were made by Major Hills, M.P., and Mr. Hurst, K.C., M.P., as well as by Mrs. Strachey and others.

Questions in the House.

Following the advice of our Parliamentary friends, another method of

procedure was adopted about the same time for redress of grievances, the women's champions in the House bringing forward our specific grievances as to hours, pay, grading, etc., in a number of damaging questions, which elicited official replies in a wide range of evasion and suppression. Nevertheless, some practical success has attended this method of campaigning, and we have noted with interest Mr. Fisher's admission that "Parliamentary questions largely modify the policy of this country."

The Six-Point Group.

In February, Lady Rhondda inaugurated the Six-Point Group, one of whose "points" is equality of pay and conditions in the Civil Service, and asked the Federation to advise them on all service matters. This we have agreed to do.

Lady Astor's "At Homes."

In March, Lady Astor convened a conference of representative women to consider how best to promote women's interests without avoidable overlapping, and, as a result of a suggestion then made, instituted a series of evening "At Homes" to enable women to meet not only one another, but also Members of Parliament with a view to useful interchange of ideas and experience. Four Federation members attended the first of these, and one of us will be at the all-day conference to be held in April.

Request for Special Committee of N.W.C.

As we go to press our request for a special committee of the N.W.C. (under section 24 of the report on the application of the National Whitley Council to the Civil Service), to consider and express the women's view on all matters dealt with by the Council, is under consideration by that body, the Joint Standing Committee of Higher Women Civil Servants joining us in this application.

So much for the political side of our activities. Of less public interest are several other events which we have to chronicle.

Change of Office.

In June we moved our office from Buckingham Street to our present very pleasant and convenient quarters in Victoria Street.

Garden Fete, July, 1920, and "At Home," December, 1920.

In July we held a very enjoyable Garden Fête at The Grange, Highgate, and in December a highly successful "At Home" at the Central Hall.

Secretaryship.

In October we lost Miss Dorothy Evans, who had been our Organizing and Parliamentary Secretary since March, and had done admirable work for us by press and platform and in connection with the Equality Procession. Mrs. E. M. White, formerly Conybeare Scholar of Somerville College, Oxford, and subsequently Assistant Secretary to the Association of University Women Teachers, Organizing Secretary to the Guild of Education as National Service, and Administrative Assistant in the Welfare Section of the Ministry of Munitions, was appointed General Secretary in her place.

Withdrawal from Alliance and consequent loss of N.W.C. Representation.

Our withdrawal from the Civil Service Alliance became operative in September, when *ipso facto* we lost representation on the N.W.C. (The Federation endeavoured to retain a seat, but requests to the Alliance and to the Staff Side in this sense proved unavailing.) Equality is a plank of the Civil Service Alliance, but more in the nature of a fitting than a fixture.

At the critical period of the Reorganization Report and the Assimilation Agreement it proved unequal to the stress, and failed us. Till that principle is secured we are in a stronger position as women alone than in entangling association, where the inevitable disabilities of a minority must be our lot.

Overtures for Amalgamation in other C.S. Bodies.

Overtures for amalgamation have been made to us by the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, the Society of Civil Servants, the Clerical Officers' Association and the National Federation of Professional, Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Workers; but we have felt that our strength lay rather in maintaining, for the present, our complete independence.

Temporary Women Civil Servants.

We have, however, decided to admit Temporary Women Civil Servants as Associate Members during the period covered by the Treasury's Draft Regulations.

Relations with the N.U.W.T., the L.N.U., the N.U.S.E.C., the L.S. for W.S.

The Federation is in close touch with other bodies working on progressive lines. In November we sent a contingent to join the Equal Pay Procession of the National Union of Women Teachers. A Federation representative attends the meetings of the Women's Advisory Committee of the League of Nations Union, and the General Secretary has been appointed a member of the Suffrage Committee of the N.U.S.E.C. And, as always, we are very greatly indebted to the London Society for Women's Service for their devoted activities on behalf of the Women Civil Servants.

"Opportunity."

Our new monthly paper, OPPORTUNITY, started in January, and now seems disinclined to confine itself within the limits of 8 pp. It has met with kindly notices from some of its contemporaries, and, with continued (and more widely diffused) support from our members, should maintain itself successfully.

TREASURER'S NOTE.

Finance.

It is with pleasure that we are able to report a very satisfactory working balance for the end of the financial year.

Branch treasurers and members generally, will please note that the 100,000 Shillings Fund is still open, and, with a General Election due rather sooner than later, the money will disappear faster than it was collected. By far the most notable contribution of last year was the proceeds of the stall at the Caxton Hall Bazaar in December, which augmented the fund by £118 10s., a splendid result on which we heartily congratulate the organizers. Thanks to the fund, we have been able to launch out into propaganda and political work in a manner undreamed of in the first year of the Federation.

The increase in the affiliation fee was made none too soon. The enforced move in June to necessarily more expensive premises, and the tremendous growth of office work consequent on the increasing importance of the Federation, which has necessitated the employment of two paid secretaries, could not have been done on the old basis.

If we may say a word on the subject of OPPORTUNITY, we would beg all Branch Secretaries to tighten up their organizations and push the sales vigorously. It would be gratifying to make money out of the paper instead of just letting it pay its way.

