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# British Commonwealth League.

## ANNUAL REPORT.

JUNE, 1927, to MAY 31st, 1928.

**Conference.** Our most important activity of the year was the Conference of June 30th and July 1st, held in the Royal Society of Arts. The subject of discussion was "The Social and Industrial Condition of Women of other than British Race governed under the British Flag," and "Problems of Government." This aroused great interest, and further discussion at a future date was suggested. Forty-three Societies were represented at the Conference, and Speakers from Australia, Barbados, Bermuda, China, India, New Guinea, South Africa, Tanganyika took part in the discussion. Opportunities for social intercourse were provided and included a Reception at the Lyceum to the Women Members of Parliament, at which Dr. Luders, of the German Reichstag, and Dr. Spohr, of the Prussian Diet, were present: a Luncheon at the Criterion where Lady Galway, Mrs. Warren Kerr, and Miss Wilkinson were the guests: and a Garden Party at the home of Mrs. Ibbotson Hutt, where the visitors enjoyed an exhibition of Folk Dancing. The report of the Conference was drawn up and circulated and proved so popular that all copies have now been sold.

**Council Meeting.** At the Council Meeting held on July 2nd it was decided that Affiliated Societies should be asked to increase their fees where possible. That the minimum membership fee should be increased from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per annum. Also that the words "to promote mutual understanding between the units" should be added to the "Objects". It was further agreed that with regard to the admission of other groups a Committee on Commission consisting of the President and two other Members be appointed to the Standing Committee and that their decision be final.

**Miss Royden's Tour.** Miss Collisson went overseas at the end of November to organise Miss Royden's tour, undertaken under the auspices of the British Commonwealth League. Various reports have been received from the Dominions as to the success of the tour, and it should be productive of a wide expansion of the League's interests.

**Office Work.** The office work has increased a great deal owing to the development of our activities, but it is essential there should be more regular help from our members. Individual Membership continues to increase, but not as quickly as we should like.

**Affiliation.** We have affiliated two new Societies, viz.: The Feminist Club, Sydney, and The Barbados Women's Fran-

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**PAMPHLET**

chise League. We regret, however, to have to record the resignation of the Federation of Women Civil Servants owing to pressure being brought to bear upon them by the Registrar of Friendly Societies: and the League of The Church Militant which we hope will only be temporary.

**General Work.** We ourselves have become affiliated to the Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations and have appointed Miss Solomon as representative with Mrs. Stedman as alternative. Mrs. Turner was appointed to the Equal Franchise Rights Committee. We are co-operating with the Empire Circle of the Women's Liberal Federation and took an active part in the Josephine Butler Centenary celebrations. In March, Members of the League attended the Historic Queen's Hall Meeting on the Equal Franchise Bill when the Prime Minister was the chief speaker.

Two representatives were sent to the Medical Conference in May held by the N.U.S.E.C., our Delegates being Dr. Grace Boelke and Dr. Una Fielding.

**Indian Commission.** A letter was sent to Sir John Simon with regard to the appointment of Women Technical Advisers to the Indian Commission, and Mrs. Corbett Ashby saw him personally on the matter.

**Interchange Scheme of Dominion Teachers.** The League has been able to get in touch with Teachers from Overseas who have come to England under the interchange system. Hospitality has been arranged for them in the League offices and amongst members.

**Club Room.** For long we have felt the need of larger premises where our Members can meet one another and where informal gatherings can be held. The opportunity arose of renting another large room on the same floor as our present offices and this we have taken as a Club Room which will very shortly be ready for use. It has been decided that the Membership fee for the use of the Club Room shall be 10s. 6d. per annum, and we hope soon to enrol a large number of members. Gifts of money for the furnishing and decorating are still urgently needed. Mrs. Menken has kindly undertaken to act as Secretary to the Club. We have a small office, off the Club Room, which we hope to let, and the rents from the other small office rented by Mrs. Turner will help to meet our heavy rent.

Several changes have taken place amongst the officers of the League. Owing to pressure of work, our President, Mrs. Corbett Ashby, is often prevented from attending our Committee meetings, and Mrs. Sharpe has kindly consented to act as Chairman of Committee and was duly appointed.

Miss Clegg having retired from the Treasuryship, Mrs. Stedman was appointed in her place, with Mrs. de Righi as

Assistant Treasurer. Miss Collisson, on going Overseas, was made Honorary Organiser, and Miss Solomon, Honorary Secretary. Miss E. M. Duncan is acting as Assistant Secretary.

**Social Gatherings.** Thanks to our energetic Luncheon Committee the office luncheons have been a great success and aroused great interest. The following have been the guests and have spoken on a variety of subjects: Mrs. Ibbotson Hutt prior to her visit to S. Africa; Mrs. Moss on Australia; Mrs. S. C. Sen on "Mother India"; Miss Solomon on her S. African experiences; Miss Allen on "Psychology"; Miss Florence MacDowell on Russia during the Retreat; from an Australian hospital sister's point of view; Miss Newcomb on Education with special reference to Dr. Rudolf Steiner's work; Mrs. Corbett Ashby on "Her electioneering experiences"; Lady Ryrrie also said a few words; Mrs. Marshall-Hole on "Rhodesia"; Mrs. Florence Ayscough on "Women in China"; Dame Millicent Fawcett on "Women in Palestine"; Miss Ruby Rich on "The Women's Movement in Australia". A special Luncheon was held at the Lyceum Club on the eve of Miss Maude Royden's Overseas Tour. Mrs. Corbett Ashby presided. Miss Royden outlined her programme of work overseas.

**Meetings and Lectures and Money Raising Functions.** A public meeting was held to discuss the book, "Mother India," in November, and caused much interest. The debate was long and keen; the speakers were Dr. Paranjpye, Mr. Karindikar and Mrs. S. C. Sen.

Mr. A. C. Powys, A.R.I.B.A., an authority on "Old Adelphi," gave a most interesting lecture on the subject, illustrated by beautiful lantern slides.

Mrs. Patrick Ness, F.R.G.S., the explorer, showed her interest in the League in a very practical manner by giving a delightful illustrated lecture on her tramp from "The Nile to the Zambesi." The Hon. Mrs. Franklin was kind enough to put her house at the disposal of the League for this Lecture. Some of our members enjoyed a Xmas party held at the office to which each brought a toy and a rhyme of their own composition which were later sent to the Xmas Tree at Australia House. The success of this party was largely due to Mrs. Menken who is always so ready to help on these occasions.

By the kind invitation of Mrs. Sharpe, a most successful Bridge Party was held at the Cowdray Club, where owing to the enthusiasm of Mrs. Guy Innes and other members, nearly 100 guests were present.

Another attraction of the afternoon was the clever Fortune-Telling of one of our members to whom our thanks are due.

Two dances were held at the Lyceum Club, at which St. Dunstan's Band supplied excellent music. The League had a stall at the Women's Freedom League Green, White and Gold Fair, to which many members sent many attractive gifts. Miss

Hoe kindly organised a Jumble Sale for the League which had a satisfactory financial result. All these social activities besides helping to make the League more widely known also considerably augmented our finances.

A Farewell Reception in honour of Miss Clegg, retiring Treasurer, and of Miss Collisson, prior to her tour overseas, was given in November. Expressions of thanks were tendered to Miss Clegg for her generous support of the League and a presentation was made to Miss Collisson in recognition of her splendid work.

**Weekly Office At Homes** have been inaugurated at which members of the Committee act as Hostesses and provide tea. These informal gatherings have been successful and have proved a pleasant meeting ground for members and visitors. They have helped to extend the knowledge of the work of our League.

Special thanks are due to Mrs. Stedman, our hard working Treasurer; to Mrs. Guy Innes, the indefatigable Chairman of our Hospitality Committee; to the Luncheon Committee—Mrs. Menken, Mrs. Nuttall and Mrs. Stedman—for their untiring efforts; to Mrs. Sharpe, The Hon Mrs. Franklin, Mrs. Sadd Brown for kindly arranging "At Homes," Miss Hoe for her successful Organisation of the Jumble Sale, and to all those who have spared no effort in the past twelve months to further the work of our League.

#### ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT.

1st May, 1927, to 30th April, 1928.

As you know, it was at this time last year that Miss Collisson placed the very serious financial difficulties of the League before you. These difficulties have for the moment been overcome, but it is still a struggle to carry on, as our bigger work is constantly in need of our having to hold money-making functions in order to keep going, and it seems such a pity that we are hampered by these questions of money or the need of money. Last year we were greatly helped by our past Treasurer's promised donation of £100. This sum enabled us to pay off our outstanding debts, viz.: £50 for the rent and Miss Collisson the money we owed her. We were very glad to be able to do this, as without her big sacrifice last summer the League would not have continued.

When I became Treasurer in October, we were able to start with a balance of £25 and no liabilities. Since then we have been managing satisfactorily to pay our obligations as they come, and still maintaining a sufficient balance in the bank. It has been possible to do this because of an arrangement made with Mrs. Turner before Miss Collisson left. Mrs. Turner has taken the small room off the office to run as an Information and Travel Bureau, in return for which the League receives £61 per annum.

We are indebted to some of our Affiliated Societies for their generous help. The Montreal Women's Franchise Club and the Bermuda Woman Suffrage Society doubled their Affiliation Fees, and the South Australian Women's Non-Party Association doubled their Affiliation Fee and in addition sent a donation of £10.

During the last six months of the financial year the Functions organised by the League have realised £70. This I think is a very satisfactory figure. The expenses for the year were £536. The balance in hand at the beginning of May, 1928, was £40—being £12 more than in May, 1927. In order to obtain this result we found it necessary to reduce our staff to only one person in the office and also to exercise the strictest economy wherever possible.

## BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

*Receipts and Expenditure Account for the Year ending 30th April, 1928.*

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Balance, 1st May, 1927:—						
At Bank	28	11	7			
In Hand	1	10	0			
			30	1	7	
Subscriptions	116	9	0			
Donations	153	9	3			
Subscriptions and Donations to New Club:—						
Subscriptions	1	11	6			
Donations	10	2	6			
			11	14	0	
Affiliation Fees	17	14	0			
Reports	11	14	3			
Delegates Fees, Conference and Functions	203	8	1			
Donations for Miss Collisson's Present	15	18	0			
Miscellaneous Receipts	16	5	9			
			£576	13	11	
			£576	13	11	
Rent	90	0	0			
Lawyer's Fees	9	5	0			
Postage	28	6	3			
Printing and Stationery	44	12	11			
Lighting, Cleaning and Fuel	29	15	7½			
Salary and National Insurance	163	0	6			
Telephone	13	15	0			
Functions	104	1	4			
Conference	14	5	6			
Literature and other Societies	2	9	4			
Transfer to New Club Account	11	14	0			
Presentation to Miss Collisson	15	18	0			
Sundry Expenses	8	9	0			
			£536	2	5½	
Balance, 30th April, 1928:—						
At Bank and in Hand	40	11	5½			
			£576	13	11	
			£576	13	11	

We have examined the above Statement with the Books and Vouchers of the British Commonwealth League and find it to be in accordance therewith.

106, St. Clement's House,  
Clement's Lane, E.C.4.  
7th May, 1928.

HOMERSHAM & Co.,  
Incorporated Accountants.