

Catholic Citizen

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

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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.

Fines v. Imprisonment

By V. M. CRAWFORD

The appointment last year of a departmental committee of the Home Office to review the law relating to the enforcement of fines imposed by Courts of Summary Jurisdiction—in other words police-courts and benches of magistrates—had for its object the lessening, where possible, of the number of offenders committed to prison for the non-payment of fines imposed.

Thus it is only incidentally that two matters of special interest to women—the enforcement of maintenance and of affiliation orders—are dealt with as part of the general subject, and as a consequence the student who hopes to find these problems studied in any degree from the woman's point of view will be disappointed. Indeed, in so far as the separated wife and the deserted girl-mother are not infrequently the direct cause of a man finding himself in jail, it became, in a sense, the business of the committee to determine how best he could be protected from the worst effects of his neglected responsibilities. Nevertheless the findings of the committee, which included, by the way, two women members, Miss E. H. Kelly, J.P., and Miss A. Loughlin, have considerable practical value, and are well worth studying before Parliament makes them the basis of fresh legislation.

On the general question of imprisonment in default of fines we must all applaud the committee for emphasising that where a fine, and especially a small fine, has been deemed in the first instance a sufficient penalty for the offence committed, it is a distinct hardship that imprisonment should follow except through the wilful and deliberate default of the offender. Yet in 1932 the number of persons imprisoned for failure to pay fines within the time allotted, was 11,244, nearly all, we may assume, of the

poorer classes. This, it is true, represents only 2.6 per cent of the total number fined and marks an immense decrease in the figures of twenty years ago, but the fact that the percentage varies greatly in different districts, from as high as 9 per cent to as low as 1 per cent, indicates that a good deal depends on the practice of the various courts. Briefly, it is proposed that more time should normally be allotted, that payment by instalment should be permitted on request, that no first offenders should be committed to prison for default without their case being brought up once more before the convicting magistrate, and finally, that for quite small sums, not paid, "detention" in a police cell, for not more than 48 hours and preferably at a week-end, should replace a term of imprisonment which cannot be for less than five days and often results in loss of employment.

It is admitted by the committee that these alterations will necessitate the services of an investigating officer and more work for collecting officers, but if justice is to be rendered more efficient and imprisonment imposed less frequently, it rightly considers that the extra cost should be incurred. This is especially true where young people are concerned—it is lamentable to learn that 659 boys and 27 girls between the ages of 16 and 21, were sent to prison last year for the non-payment of fines, cases which could surely have been met by placing them under some form of temporary supervision.

When we turn from ordinary fines to wife maintenance and affiliation orders we find that the practical difficulty as regards collection lies in the length of time that these have to run, indefinitely in the first instance and for sixteen

years in the second. Inevitably changes of work, residence, circumstance combine to make the regular enforcement of prolonged payments so difficult as often to amount to an impossibility. The Report states that some 200,000 maintenance orders for wives have been made during the last twenty years, but that there is no evidence to show how many are in operation at any given time. We venture to think that the figure would be surprisingly small and still more so as regards affiliation orders which, difficult to obtain in the first instance, are often scarcely worth more than the paper they are written on, so easy are the means of evasion unless the putative father happens to be a married man with a permanent business or profession. It is not uncommon for men to throw up even lucrative posts and disappear rather than contribute 5/- or 10/- a week towards the child for whom they have been legally proved to be responsible. Hence it is not surprising to learn that there are 50 per cent more imprisonments for failure to comply with maintenance than with affiliation orders. When it is remembered that in both cases a term of imprisonment extinguishes the debt, and that no arrears can accrue during imprisonment, it becomes obvious that the defrauded wife or mother has singularly little to gain financially by bringing the defaulter into court, often at great inconvenience to herself.

One point full of interest is brought out in this Report. In Scotland, with its separate legal system, the number of imprisonments in both categories of cases is insignificant and this is attributed in the main to two circumstances: first, that imprisonment for arrears does *not* extinguish the debt and the man therefore has no inducement to prefer prison to payment out of sheer vindictiveness, a not uncommon occurrence in England, while, further, his wages may be attached at the source up to the amount needed; secondly, that a man is only sent to prison when he wilfully neglects to pay and is granted further time if he can prove genuine inability. Undoubtedly the Scotch system produces better results than our own. The committee does recommend that under certain circumstances the Court should have power to attach the needful sum from a man's wages or salary, but we note that in the sole reservation to the Report, Miss Loughlin expresses her "complete dissent" from the recommendation unless the defendant voluntarily agrees to it. There seems much to be said on both sides.

We are at one with the Report when it

suggests that matrimonial cases might with advantage be taken in private before a separation order is granted, especially in the case of very young couples, and also that orders that have to run over many years do need periodical revision to keep them in harmony with the man's earning capacity. But we note with regret a tendency on the part of the committee to shift the financial responsibility unduly upon the woman if her "age and capacity" make it possible for her to earn. We take it that there is a definite moral obligation on the part of a man, whether husband or putative father, to contribute according to his means to the support of either wife or child independently of the earning capacity of the deserted wife or mother, and this surely has been the practice hitherto in determining the appropriate amount. In any case £1 a week is the maximum sum which can be ordered—a maximum very rarely imposed—and the assumption has been that the woman, whether wife or girl-mother, must do the best she can to supplement her fair share of the man's earnings. It would, for instance, be grossly unfair if, say, a girl-mother on having her wages raised risked seeing her allowance cut down; nor should a man's responsibility for his child be less because the girl he has injured, being educated and talented, is able to fill a lucrative post. On the other hand we agree with the committee that 14 days is too short a period in which to allow a man to appeal against an affiliation order and that this might well be increased to six months.

A considerable portion of this important Report deals with the question of rates, but space prevents any adequate treatment here of this very intricate subject.

NOTES AND COMMENTS—Continued

From recent issues of the "Star" and "Sunday Dispatch" the Women's Freedom League Bulletin quotes extracts concerning the sale of women in Cyprus. It appears that there was "a sort of auction of brides." Arabs having come over from Palestine to obtain brides, Turkish families sold their daughters to the highest bidder. One girl went for £20 and others for as much as £100. On being asked by the Women's Freedom League what steps were being taken in the matter the Colonial Office stated that an enquiry has been addressed to the Governor of Cyprus and that a further statement would be sent when a reply had been received from the Governor. The Alliance also enquired at the Colonial Office and with the W.F.L. anxiously awaits further news.

Notes and Comments

In connection with the golden jubilee celebrations of the Catholic Truth Society, we may recall that Mr. Britten who founded the Society and built up its work on the literary side, was one of the earliest associates of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and a firm supporter of woman suffrage in its most unpopular days.

During the fifty years in which the Catholic Truth Society has worked to produce good and cheap books in order to help Catholics to a better knowledge of their religion and a deeper love of God and to provide non-Catholics with simple explanations of Catholic doctrine, over thirty-seven million pamphlets have been distributed. It may interest readers to know that the beautiful Mass of St. Joan, printed in leaflet form for insertion in missals, is one of the C.T.S. publications and may be obtained from our Office, price 1d. We review on another page two C.T.S. pamphlets on topical subjects, which can be thoroughly recommended.

In the first number of "The Cross and the Plough," organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales, Miss Margaret Pratt contributes a preliminary article to a series discussing "Women and the Land." We welcome this recognition of the importance of women on the land. As Miss Pratt points out it is of no use to train men for the land if there are not also women who are trained to the life, for how otherwise can land colonies be started? But besides recognising the necessity of training farmers' wives, Miss Pratt recognises the fact "that a woman might run a farm single-handed, employing men to do the heavier field work." A training course entitled "The Training of Women Farmers" is suggested. Such a training scheme run on sound lines would be excellent, but for this purpose it seems necessary to have women representatives on the Committees of the Land Associations. We hope this is already an accomplished fact, but we note with regret that there were no women delegates present at the Annual Conference of the Catholic Land Associations held at Oscott College last August.

At the recent North Lambeth by-election our questionnaire was sent to all four candidates. We were able to give help by press publicity and canvassing to the Liberal candidate Mr. Simpson, whose replies were the most satisfactory.

One more example of the widespread attack on married women's right to earn is given by the decision of the Westminster City Council that all future appointments of women officers shall be terminated by marriage, and that married women shall only be engaged if their circumstances require them to seek employment for the maintenance of themselves and their dependants.

A member has requested us to ask readers to support the Steel Traps Bill which it is hoped Mr. Linton Thorp, K.C., LL.B., M.P., will sponsor in the House of Commons in the near future. The Bill is "to make provision for the prohibition and penalisation of the manufacture, purchase, sale, possession or custody of the common steel trap, or any other mechanical device calculated to catch rabbits or other animals or birds in such a manner as to inflict pain by gripping a limb or limbs; and for other purposes connected therewith."

The bill could be enforced without the requirement of any access to private land.

Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson is the first woman to win the premier gold medal at the International Exhibition of Inventions. The Prince of Wales paid a surprise visit to the Exhibition and Mrs. Richardson demonstrated to him her four inventions for finding radio stations. "It is a very good idea," commented the Prince, on congratulating her. "Although so easy to understand, it must have taken an immense amount of thought."

We congratulate our member Miss Mary Hanlon, former head teacher of the boys' department of the Sacred Heart School, Holloway, who, on the occasion of her retirement, has recently had bestowed upon her by the Holy Father the Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* in recognition of her services to Catholic education, during forty-two years.

It was Miss Hanlon's "old boys" who officiated at the Solemn High Mass and at the Evening Service on the Sunday when the decoration was presented to her, and "old boys" also acted as servers.

We offer our best wishes and congratulations to our member, Mrs. Cheux, on the birth of her daughter Jane.

(Continued on previous page)

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.*

The Nation's Housekeeping*

The development of local government during the last century is a matter of absorbing interest. From babyhood till old age the citizen is cared for and all his needs considered, and this is mostly done through the machinery of the Local Councils. If all is not yet as perfect as it should be, the remedy lies in our own hands at our Parliamentary and Municipal elections and in stirring up public opinion to press for improvements. All rate-payers have a voice in the election of local councillors and can make their complaints or suggestions to their representatives and, as there is much elasticity in the administration of every locality, many of our wants can be supplied without alteration of existing parliamentary laws.

However there is need for many more women as members of local councils. "Women are so closely concerned with much . . . of the work of local councils that it really cannot properly be done without their help." When one realises that it is the city or county councils who appoint Maternity and Child Welfare Committees and Education Committees for each district, that local councils are responsible for the water supply, drainage, the removal of refuse, food inspection, proper housing and even sometimes for housing schemes, one can easily see that women should not only say their say in the electing of representatives, but should also themselves sit on local councils.

Mrs. Fisher's little book explains very fully how our rates and taxes are spent and how we may best make use of the services supplied. It is so easy to sit down and grumble when things go wrong or are not exactly as we want, yet we can probably get them altered or improved. Supposing, for instance, refuse removal seems unsatisfactory to us, we may apply to the sanitary department of our local council

* *The Housewife and the Town Hall.* By Mrs. H. A. L. Fisher. (Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 2s. 6d.)

and it will be the business of the sanitary inspector to get things put right. Or supposing it is felt that a Nursery School is needed in the district, the right course of action is for as many people as possible to make representations to the local council.

How many people make full use of the services supplied by the local councils? A case in point is the ante-natal clinic usually attached to Infant Welfare Centres. Mrs. Fisher says that—"if every expectant mother attended a properly organised ante-natal clinic there can be no doubt that the number of deaths in child-birth would be very much fewer, possibly halved." In view of the fact that the maternal mortality rate remains as high as ever, this is an important statement. Mrs. Fisher points out that if the organisation of a welfare centre is imperfect, not only can the woman who feels the imperfection press for improvement, but she can "get the Women's Institute, Club or Guild to press for the improvements that she thinks ought to be made." This is a very good example of the part that a Woman's Organisation can play in the citizenship of the country.

Every one who has only a vague idea of the work of our local councils and of the public services supplied by them, should get this interesting book. After reading it they will have no excuse not to vote or to vote for the wrong candidates at the next Local Government elections, and they will know the possibilities that exist for pressing their own point of view, if they are willing to work hard and rouse public opinion. England is still a land of democracy, but unless we each of us do a little hard thinking and working, we cannot really say that this is a country governed by the people. And is it not "disheartening and discouraging for our representatives to work for us if we take no interest in what they do"?

CHRISTINE SPENDER.

International Notes

Through Mrs. Lankester, the Liaison officer appointed by St. Joan's Alliance and other feminist organisations in this country and the organised women of India, we have received the news that the Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Conference have issued a manifesto and questionnaire to all candidates seeking election to the Central Legislature during the forthcoming elections.

In the manifesto the Conference declares that, believing that no real progress is possible without educational and social reform, its members "will give their votes and active support in the coming elections to those candidates who are willing to devote particular attention to all questions that specially affect the welfare of women and children." The Conference further demands "the removal of all such customs and legal, educational and social disabilities which deny to women or to any particular class or community equal opportunities and facilities for free and unfettered service and moral, material and physical advancement."

In the questionnaire candidates are asked in detail whether they are willing to support women in their demands for reform.

The Social Section of the Conference has issued a leaflet declaring that, since Hindu law has been codified in such a way as to ignore women's rights in inheritance and marriage, there should be a "wholesale revision of the legal code in matters affecting women, not only in their own interest but in the interests of the nation as a whole . . ."

* * * *

From "*Women's Sphere*" (Montreal) we learn with pleasure that the Federal Government of Canada has recently repealed that part of the Bank Act which prohibited a married woman in the Province of Quebec from depositing more than \$2,000 in a bank without her husband's consent. This victory is largely due to the Canadian Alliance for Women's Votes in Quebec, whose president, Miss Idola St. Jean, gave evidence before the Royal Commission of Enquiry on Banking and Currency in Canada of which Lord Macmillan was chairman. At the instigation of the Alliance, the Banking Commission included in its report to the Federal Government a recommendation that the section be repealed. Married women in the Province of Quebec now enjoy the same rights as women of other provinces and also have equality of status with men as regards the Bank Act.

We welcome our monthly contemporary "*The Catholic Worker*" (New York) the editors of which recently requested exchange of our paper with theirs. "*The Catholic Worker*" was started by two young women, Dorothy Day and Dorothy Weston, the present editors, aided by Peter Maurin, founder of the Catholic Workers' School and now one of the chief contributors. These three, having the same idea, came together and put it into practice. They wished to combat atheistic communism by putting before the workers in practical form the Catholic ideal of social reconstruction. Thus they tell us that "*The Catholic Worker*" is dedicated to the promulgation to the "man in the street" of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ—for since Christ is the Head and we the members all idea of class war is precluded. The paper was started without capital and relies on individual subscriptions and donations to pay its way, though an immense amount of propaganda is done by the distribution of free copies. The editors practise what they preach, finding time to carry on many corporal works of mercy. One of these is a shelter for unemployed women.

It is interesting to know that the idea of the movement was first conceived by Miss Day on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (1932), for it was on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (1910) that the idea of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society first came to our founder.

We send the "*Catholic Worker*" our very best wishes for success in its objects.

* * * *

The Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia have submitted to the Royal Commission various recommendations on the condition of the aborigines of their State. For the first time leading women, both white and coloured, gave evidence, among them being Mrs. Bennett who has spoken on this subject at the annual Conference of the British Commonwealth League. They asked for the adoption of a native policy which should abolish every form of domestic slavery and for the abolition of customs which deny to women human rights and which degrade children, causing them needless suffering.

* * * *

The Federal President of Austria has recently conferred the Gold Medal of Honour upon Madame Jeritza, the famous opera singer, in recognition of services rendered to the Federal State, both during her many years membership of the Vienna Opera and in the course of artistic activities all over the world.

Women and National Insurance

An important conference on Women and National Insurance, convened by the Women's Freedom League, was held on October 26th at the Y.W.C.A. Central Club, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence presiding. Thirty-five women's organisations were represented including St. Joan's Alliance.

Among the speakers was Mrs. Rackham, J.P., who gave a very comprehensive survey of the history of national insurance in this country and showed how before 1911 when sickness and unemployment insurance were included in one system there was very scanty provision for either—there was only the poor law and charity—and although a certain number of men and women were organised in the Friendly Societies it was often a mystery how many of them existed. She declared that women got much less out of the Unemployment Fund than did men, and pointed out how in the three years prior to 1931 men paid into the fund three and a half times as much as women and drew out six times as much as women. She also revealed that since the Anomalies Regulations came into force in 1931 a quarter of a million married women had been disallowed benefit.

Miss Mary Carlin of the Transport and General Workers' Union, related in a moving speech some of her experiences at the Courts of Referees where she had seen many women denied benefit because they had been so "in-discreet" as to marry. Employers often dismissed women, she said, on marriage, and although they were legally bound to make this fact known when seeking unemployment benefit, at the same time, she said, there was no law that compelled them not to conceal the fact of their marriage from the employers. She also related how many women who came before the Courts dwelt on the absolute necessity of their having to work in order to provide for the children, owing to the inadequacy of their husbands' earnings. She emphatically urged the need for more help for women in the Courts in order to avoid the pitfalls that awaited them.

Another able speaker was Miss Godwin of the Women Clerks and Secretaries who showed the difficulties pregnant women had in securing benefit, when, not being certified as sick they were unable to draw sickness benefit, while being debarred also from unemployment benefit as they were held to be "incapable of work" as far as the Ministry of Labour is concerned. They were unable to secure any return for con-

tributions they had paid in for years, just at the moment when they most needed it.

Resolutions passed included one moved by the Women's Freedom League urging that our national insurance schemes should provide for equal benefits and equal contributions as between men and women, and as between boys and girls; while another protested against the separating of finance of men's and women's shares in National Health Insurance where claims arise largely from women and the surplus from men, whereas in Unemployment Insurance where there was no separation of finance, the claims arise more from the men and the surplus from the women's contributions.

A strongly worded resolution moved by the Open Door Council demanded the freeing of married women from the unjust provisions of the Anomalies Regulations under which 255,000 married women have been denied benefit for which they have paid contributions that would have qualified them for benefit if they had been men or single women. The resolution also demanded that the powers of the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee be so restricted that it cannot recommend any inequalities for women, nor any discrimination against the married woman.

The discussions indicated that the Conference was determined to uproot the idea that women require less to live on than men; and that a system of unequal contributions and unequal benefits in insurance schemes resulted in disastrous economic consequences for women throughout industry, by maintaining the unjust system of unequal pay.

E. BUTLER-BOWDON.

HALLOWE'EN PARTY

A most enjoyable Hallowe'en Party was kindly given by Miss Butler-Bowdon at her flat, when Miss Agatha Harrison gave an illuminating account of the position of Indian women. She said that the woman's movement was one of the most hopeful things in present-day India since it transcended all parties, castes, creeds and races. Miss Harrison described the splendid work done by Indian women in connection with the forthcoming elections, a work to which reference is made elsewhere in this paper.

Miss Mary Wall added greatly to the gaiety of the party by her Hallowe'en Kantellums. This with Hallowe'en Surprises realised £1 12s. 3d, for the Alliance,

Reviews

The Case against Sterilisation. By Dr. Letitia Fairfield. (London: C.T.S., price 2d.)

Mental Deficiency, its Causes, Prevention, Treatment. By Mildred Macgown, M.B., Ch.B. (London: C.T.S., price 2d.)

Public opinion, at first tentatively, later clamorously, sometimes emotionally, has expressed its bias in favour of sterilisation.

The demand for sterilisation of the unfit goes forth from conferences, social, humanitarian, eugenic; from legal and medical societies. It does not come from those who are able to give a balanced opinion on the prevention of the incidence of mental deficiency and on the protection of the feeble minded and of the community. It is not based on ascertained biological facts and lacks both scientific support and true humanitarian, and of course Christian, background. Yet the demand is incessant and may well lead to proposed legislation in the immediate future.

Anyone wishing to acquaint himself with the facts will do well to study these new C.T.S. publications. Both are written by specialists in this subject. They give the Catholic viewpoint and they give documented evidence which proves that sterilisation is not likely to achieve what is claimed for it. "Sterilisation does not make the feeble-minded less feeble-minded, the criminal less criminal, the insane less insane." "It does not serve as a substitute for the provision of institutional accommodation." "It could not to any appreciable extent diminish the incidence of feeble-minded persons in the community."

There is ample evidence given by both authors to show that "there is sufficient support on common-sense grounds of the Church's attitude on moral grounds to convince any thinking person that there is no need to include sterilisation in any programme for the prevention of mental deficiency."

There is a misprint in the figures quoted on p. 13 of the first publication which should be corrected in a future edition. F. M. S.

MONSIGNOR T. J. WALSHE

We offer our affectionate congratulations to Mgr. T. J. Walshe on the celebration of his Golden Jubilee. We shall always remember with gratitude his courageous championship of our cause in the early days of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society.

CHRISTMAS SALE

The Annual Christmas Sale is drawing near and we remind readers that we rely on this Sale to balance our books before the end of the year. We therefore beg them to ensure a record result by sending gifts, either in money or kind, and also by visiting the Stall and doing their Christmas shopping there. Those sending gifts for sale will further assist by pricing them.

Our Stall will be as usual at the Green, White and Gold Fair organised by the Women's Freedom League, which will this year be held at the Y.W.C.A. Central Building, Great Russell Street (one minute from Tottenham Court Road Station), on Friday and Saturday, November 23rd and 24th, from 3 to 9 p.m.

OBITUARY

We ask the prayers of our readers for the repose of the soul of Mrs. A. St. G. Huggett who died in Leeds on Oct. 13th. Mrs. Huggett came into St. Joan's Alliance through her mother-in-law, Mrs. Huggett of Wimbledon, one of the pioneers of the Suffrage movement, who spoke at our last Annual Meeting. But she needed no teaching to be a feminist and while she lived in London her enthusiasm was well known to St. Joan's members. She was a regular worker at the office and a member of our Finance Committee. We offer our deep sympathy to her husband Dr. Huggett of Leeds University, and also to her mother Mrs. Head and her sister Mrs. Price, both members of our Alliance.—R.I.P.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Hon. Sec.: Mrs. A. Stewart Mason, B.A., "Brinsworth," Grosvenor Road, Birkenhead.

A meeting was held at 146 Upper Parliament Street on October 8th by kind invitation of the Chairman. Mrs. Rattray of the Economic League gave a very instructive talk on "Russia To-day" and a brisk discussion followed.

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OBJECT.

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women, and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

MEMBERSHIP.

All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of 1s. Men are invited to join as Associates, on the same conditions, with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive.

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Sacrament, Etc.

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