

# All-India Women's Conference

Eighteenth session Hyderabad

(Sind)

28 December 1945 to 1 January 1946

AIML

1946



# THE ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

EIGHTEENTH SESSION



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**HYDERABAD (SIND)**

**DECEMBER 28, 1945 TO JANUARY 1, 1946**

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THE  
ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE





Shrimati Hansa Mehta, President, All-India Women's Conference,  
Hyderabad (Sind) 1945.

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(ix)

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## THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE ALL INDIA- WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The Eighteenth Session of the All-India Women's Conference took place at a time which marked the close of an era and the beginning of a new age, an age of atomic energy which would revolutionise all previous conceptions of life from the very beginning of human history. India was also hoping to participate in the great changes and in spite of the release of the National Leaders, the abortive Simla Conference served only to frustrate still more the expectations of her hopeful millions. The end of the war climaxing in the perpetration of the most evil destruction ever committed by man, had come just after the middle of 1945. The beginnings of a groping for reconstruction had just been made and were to advance in the New Year that followed—the Conference was poised in time-space between carnage and construction. Its proceedings reflected some of the currents flowing round it.

The Eighteenth Session was unique in its history, considering that Hyderabad (Sind) is not only in the remotest corner of India but also in one of its most backward provinces. It drew to its fold a large number of delegates and visitors from every corner of India and also from Sukkur, Karachi and the neighbouring areas of Hyderabad (Sind). This Session was also an occasion for reunion with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the friend and guide of the Conference, who had been released from internment and had just returned from the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Conference in England. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu and Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru were with us and free to take part in the deliberations. Last time their lips had been sealed by the Government of India. Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's presence had been looked forward to eagerly but unfortunately she was unable to return to India in time to participate in the deliberations. We also keenly felt the absence of Mrs. Margaret Cousins, Mrs. Rustomji Farodooji, Begum Hamid Ali, Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade and many others—the vanguards of the Conference.

This was also the first time that a large and representative foreign delegation was able to participate in the Conference, which prompted the Indian Press to call it the 'All-India Women's International Conference'. Their pre-

sence stimulated and advanced the trends of the Conference in a way both striking and satisfying. Miss Agatha Harrison, an old friend of the Conference, the distinguished Dr. Hanna Rydh, and extra-ordinarily able and clever Mrs. Jessie Street represented England, Sweden and Australia respectively—the latter two through the International Alliance of Women. The invigorating personality of Dame Vera Laughton Mathews brought a fresh inspiration to the proceedings. From Egypt came Madame Amina El Said, whose striking and passionate patriotism evoked warm sympathy from the large assemblage. Dr. Mary Ratnam and Miss Elsie Solomons represented Ceylon. Miss Mae Gordon of America and Miss Venutai Chitale from the India League, London, were also present. The four delegates from Lebanon and Syria were Mrs. E. Bastoris, Mrs. Gazawy, Mrs. W. Selam and Mrs. E. Foris Ibrahim. The presence of all these international figures lent depth of friendly understanding which was highly valued by all those who had the privilege of coming into contact with them. The presence of observers from various women's organisations added to the interest and animation of the proceedings.

The atmosphere of Sind itself was a noteworthy factor—the clear, cold, healthy desert air, the charming domestic architecture of the city with its ancient, colourful traditions. The Reception Committee arrangements were proof of organising ability not always met with everywhere in India, especially with regard to the spacious comfort of the grand pandal and the very appetising meals provided in the Delegates' Camp. But most noticeable were the young women of Hyderabad and other parts of Sind. Their smart appearance was perhaps a little unexpected to many of the delegates. But their eager interest in the women's movement as such, their desire to learn and discover the full potentialities of womanhood in nation-building services were obvious. Such an attitude was particularly welcome in view of the real problems which confront the women of Sind. The dowry system, for instance, is particularly pernicious and needs drastic handling. The holding of a session of the A.I.W.C. in that province cannot but have had the effect of arousing the awareness of its women and also let it be said of its men.

In the plenary sessions, many of the resolutions passed embodied old and unfulfilled dreams. Education, health, and other such needs still cry out for effective handling in this country. Housing, clothing, and food problems have assumed a new and urgent importance in reconstruction plans. National freedom is more than ever before the *sine qua non* of progress, not only in India but in all subject countries. The new stand in favour of the rights of Palestine Arabs against an European infiltration and annexation of their country is a significant expansion in interational interest.

The Standing Committee had long and strenuous sittings. One of the interesting items of work laid down for the coming year was the drafting of a

Charter of Women's Rights as proposed by the President herself, to serve not only as a constitutional basis but also as basis for future legislation in Political, social and economic matters. A Memorandum is to be presented to the National Governments embodying the concrete proposals based on the Charter of Women's Rights.

Owing to the fact that no capable and efficient stenographers were available, many of the speeches—vitaly interesting ones—were either incorrectly reported or not reported at all. It is a matter of regret that one of the best speeches of the Conference, that of Miss Leilamani Naidu on the Sargent Scheme is missing from the stenographer's report.

The interest and enthusiasm of the Branches was evident when in response to the President's appeal for funds a spontaneous collection of Rs. 5,000/- was made on the spot, including generous contributions from the local public.

The Civic Reception, the Variety Entertainment and the Exhibition have become the customary features of every session and they were in keeping with the general scheme of things. A novel feature of the excellent Rotary Dinner was the naming of the Menu after our women leaders.

Our sincere thanks are due to the people of Hyderabad (Sind) and particularly to Dr. Miss Devi Valliram and Miss A. Khemchand, the Chairwoman and the Secretary of the Reception Committee and to the members of the Committee itself for the general success of the Conference.

## PROCEEDINGS

The eighteenth session of the All-India Women's Conference commenced on Friday the 28th December 1945 at 4-30 p.m. in a large pandal in the grounds of the N. A. Academy in Hyderabad, Sind. The proceedings began with a welcome song, after which *Shrimati Kamaladevi* the retiring President, rose to propose SHRIMATI HANSA MEHTA to the Chair. In a few, well-chosen words, she expressed her pleasure and satisfaction at the duty she was performing, and was sure the Conference would have a year of successful activity under the able guidance of the new President.

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR, seconding the proposal in Hindustani, said: "It gives me great pleasure to second the resolution which has proposed Shri Hansabehn Mehta to the Presidential Chair. I have had the privilege of Hansabehn's friendship for many years. In addition, I have had the joy of having her as a co-worker in this Conference when the organisation was young and struggling. I am, therefore, well aware of her qualities of both head and

heart. She is a hard worker, a true fighter for women's rights, one who has proved by her own services in many fields that rights follow duties, an able writer and a woman with plenty of sound common sense. I have no doubt that the Conference has done wisely in selecting her to be our President, an honour well-deserved, and I am sure we shall make good progress under her wise and capable leadership."

DR. DEVI VALIRAM, Chairwoman, Reception Committee, garlanded Mrs. HANSA MEHTA. Mrs. Hansa Mehta then occupied the Chair.

Speaking from the Chair MRS. HANSA MEHTA announced that Gandhiji had sent a message to the Conference verbally through Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and called upon the latter to deliver it.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said: The message that GANDHIJI has sent is that "*Women should join in the Constructive Programme, the main activity of which is the Spinning Wheel.*"

MRS. KULSUM SAYANI, the Hon.-General Secretary, then read messages wishing the Conference success from the following:—

#### MESSAGES

H. H. Dowagar Maharani Chimnabai Gaekwar of Baroda.	Miss Vera Brittain.
Mrs. Margaret Cousins.	Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi.
Lady Pethick-Lawrence of Peaslake.	Lady Abdul Qadir.
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.	Lady Premlila Thackersey
Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit.	The Women's Advisory Council on Indian Affairs, London.
H. H. Maharani Scindia Saheba of Gwalior.	The Indian Women's Magazine (Jayalakshmi Doraiswamy).
H. H. The Maharani Setu Parvathy Bayi of Travancore.	The Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee.
Maharani Lalita Kumari Devi of Vizianagaram.	Begum Hamid Ali.
H. H. Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj.	Mrs. Vera Chang Wang of China.
Madame Charaouie Pasha of Egypt.	Sadhu T. L. Vaswani.
Sir S. Radhakrishnan.	The Rani Lakshmidivi of Phalton.
Lady Vidyagauri Nilkanth.	Mrs. Muriel Nichol, M.P.
The Liaison Group in England.	Mrs. Sharadaben Mehta.
Rani Lakshmi Bai Rajwade.	H. H. The Rani Saheba of Sangli.
Mrs. Corbett Ashby.	Mrs. Hosain Ali Khan.
The Women's International League.	Col. Shumsher Singh.
	Shrimati Ammu Swaminadhan.



## TWO IMPORTANT MESSAGES

1. *Lady Pethick Lawrence.*

“To the Delegates of the All-India Women’s Conference I send my warmest greetings and good wishes. I only wish that it could be possible for me to be with you all in person.

“I want you to know that as a fighter for freedom, and as one who has been through six imprisonments and the experience of the hunger strike, (met by the Government of that day more than thirty years ago by forcible feeding), I have the very fullest sympathy with all that you are feeling at the present time. I rejoice that many of you have such a great leader in Mahatma Gandhi. Personally I am convinced that though, in his principle of non-violence he may be centuries ahead of his time, eventually we shall all have to come back to him, because the hope of the world lies in our conversion to the great truth that he has proclaimed by his life. Every person or group who can carry out in life his teaching and that of the great ones who went before him, is hastening the day when all people will understand and follow.

“I realize the great record of gentleness and non-violence that the women of India have given as their contribution to world history. I am convinced that upon women as mothers of all living human beings, rests the mission of reconciliation. Hence I always have held the belief that every woman in a very special sense, has two loyalties, one to her kindred and nation, and one to the whole human family; and that regardless of race and religion, we as women are united in a solidarity of aim and function in which ultimate peace is rested.

“May I plead with you to put aside, as far as possible, the very natural distrust that you are bound to feel with regard to the British Government. Let me remind you that it is an entirely new Government but that it inherits as we all inherit that *Karma* of past mistakes which calls for great patience and faith. Let me assure you that having been a colleague for over forty years of my husband who has been with me through the difficulties of imprisonment, I know that it is true when he assures me that he and the Cabinet are doing their very utmost to bring about the results that you and I so ardently desire, but the tide of events is flowing very strongly against all who are working for justice, unity and peace not only in Asia but throughout the whole world. They and you are battling against this tide and the need is great for understanding and mutual trust and sympathy.

“In conclusion will you accept a book entitled “Prisons and Prisoners” written by one of my very dearest friends, Lady Constance Lytton the daughter of a former Viceroy of India? She was my colleague in the Suffrage campaign and literally gave her life for the cause of freedom as you will see

if you follow the story. Of all people that I have personally known, she was the most perfect exemplar of that wisdom and love of which Mahatma Gandhi is the great exponent.

“With warmest feelings of friendship and good wishes,

I am sincerely yours,

(Sd.) Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence.”

2. *Madame Charaouie Pasha of Egypt.*

“Madame the President of the Conference, my dear Sisters, Women of India, I would have loved to be present at your Conference, and give this message personally to express love and friendship which exists between our two countries although there is a great distance between the two lands. Owing to a very strenuous journey which I had to undergo recently, it is impossible for me to come to India to speak to you on the hopes and aspirations of Egyptian women as well as the whole Arabic world. I am sorry that I cannot have the pleasure of meeting you now, but I hope that a great number of Indian women will represent your country at the International Conference which is going to be held in Cairo in January 1947. I am looking forward to seeing many of you during that Conference.

“Now let me present to you our delegate to your Conference, Mme Amina El Said. She is the Secretary-general of the Arab Union for Women, and is representing Egypt and Palestine. I also present Mme. Bastoris, Mme. S. Gazawi, Mrs. W. Selam and Mme. E. Faris Ibrahim, who represent Lebanon and Syria.

“Owing to difficult circumstances it has been impossible for the representatives of the other countries of the Arab world to be present at the All-India Women's Conference. I hope our representatives who are visiting your country now will be successful in their mission, and in conveying our message of love and friendship, and in bringing close our two nations, so that we could form a strong bloc to work in unity for the good and betterment of the oriental world and realise peace, plenty and justice for all of us. I conclude my message by conveying to you the greeting of all the Arab women, their hopes and good wishes for the success of your conference.”

(Sd.) Madame Charaouie Pasha.

Cairo, Egypt.

## WELCOME ADDRESS

*Dr. Devibai Valiram*, Chairwoman of the Reception Committee, welcoming the President and the Delegates, said:

It gives me great pleasure and I deem it a proud privilege to offer you, on behalf of the Reception Committee, a hearty welcome to our ancient town, once the Capital of Sind. I offer you in advance my apologies for the shortcomings that you are bound to notice in our arrangements for your comfort. I count on your indulgence to overlook our errors. I shall feel grateful if you accept my assurances that every hand that has laboured and every brain that has directed that labour belongs to a warm heart, anxious to be hospitable and serviceable. The town of Hyderabad has its limitations and what we have failed to do is not for want of a will to do, but in most cases because of our natural handicaps.

Shrimati Hansa Mehta, the town of Hyderabad feels proud to have you to preside over this Session of the Conference. We are conversant with your multifarious activities and are admirers of your solid work and unassuming nature. Permit me to welcome you to our province on behalf of the women of Sind.

Shrimati Kamladevi, I add my feeble voice to the welcome that you have already received by my Province. Every young heart feels warm towards you and the Age feels awed into admiration of your remarkable organising ability.

Shrimati Amrit Kaur, we feel exceptionally happy at your timely return from England where you went to attend as a member of the Indian Delegation to the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Conference. You have, once, presided over the Women's Conference and with your latest contact with women of other countries, I am sure, you will inspire us to take wise decisions of far reaching consequences.

I miss, today, and I know that every man and woman in Sind shall miss the great Woman Ambassador to the United States of America, Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit. We all looked up to the pleasure of meeting her on this occasion. We naturally feel disappointed.

We miss one other most fascinating personality. I refer to Rani Lakshmbai Rajwade. Sind shares with her the grief at her bereavement, and I am sure you will have conveyed to her our heart-felt condolences when we meet in Conference.

And you, our revered leader, *Bulbul-i-Hind*, how shall I greet and welcome you. If I were a poet I would sing a sonnet to you. As it is, I shall have re-

course to the language of silence and offer you a very warm welcome. We are all proud of you as the first woman to have presided over the Indian National Congress. You are an international figure and shall be a great inspiration to us all.

I extend to our special visitors a special welcome Dr. Hanna Rydh, Madame Amina-El-Said, Mrs. Jessie Street, Miss Venu Chitale and Miss Agatha Harrison, you are welcome and thrice welcome to our country and our ancient town. We count on you to carry to the West the message of the women of the East, particularly of India. The cause of women all over the world is identical. We have much to receive from the women of your country but have also much to give—that what is calculated to establish mental peace in a physically tortured world. I welcome you both and through you offer greetings to the women of your country.

Mrs. Kulsum Sayani, I cannot forget you. As a consequence of close association for the last fortnight, you have made a home in my heart, and I am not exaggerating when I say that you have already fascinated all such members of the Reception Committee with whom you have had contact so far. I bow in reverence to your work for the upliftment of the women of our beloved Motherland, and I offer you a hearty welcome on behalf of the members of the Reception Committee.

While you are in Hyderabad you shall naturally be desirous to know something about this historical town. I presume you are already familiar with the wind catchers of this town, a unique device that has fascinated every visitor. You shall, during your stay, see the little of the ancient that still remains and miss the much that has been destroyed.

You find, today, palaces of the merchant princes of Hyderabad, reputed all over the world as Sind work merchants, in an area where existed, in ancient times, palaces of the ruling princes of the province. A great part of the fort wall, that surrounded those palaces, has now been demolished—there is no trace of the imposing gate to the fortress or the mote that surrounded it.

The modern town of Hyderabad occupies the central length of a riverine islet formed by the Indus flowing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west and by one of its multitudinous branches, the Phulleli, a mile and a quarter eastward. The site of the town is a ridge of limestone some 13 miles long and extending parallel with the river north and south; you see the middle length at the Parsi Tower of Silence and the northern end at the tombs of the Kalhora Kings.

Hyderabad was built by Ghulam Shah Kalhora in 1768 A.D. and it fell into the hands of the British immediately after the historic battle of Miani on 17th February 1943. On this site once existed a town called Nerun Kot. It



**Dr. Miss Devi Valram, Chairwoman, Recept'on Committee, Hyderabad (Sind).**



was the capital town of a Hindu Prince. It was called after the name of the pretty princess Nerun who is believed to have been a brave warrior, fond of riding a lion, domesticated by her.

I do not desire to persuade you to believe the story. I myself have my doubts about its correctness; but since I have mentioned Nerun Kot, let me relate to you an interesting story. Princess Nerun announced her intention to marry only such person who could ride a lion. One day rode into the palace grounds on a lion's back a stalwart young Muslim. The Hindu Princess felt fascinated and offered to marry him. The angry father confined Nerun in an empty well and had the well covered by a huge cauldron. It is said that the Muslim young man sought the aid of his spiritual head who kicked the cauldron into the air and rescued the pretty princess for his disciple. Mir Gulam Shah Kalohra named the capital town that he built on the site of Nerunkot after the spiritual head, Syed Hyderali Shah who worked this miracle.

I shall not bore you with further details of the history of this town. Suffice it to say that the modern Hyderabad is the intellectual centre of the Province. Girls' Education in Hyderabad has been traced back to 1873 when a missionary lady, by name Miss Shirt, started a school in which first only Gurumukhi was taught. That institution came to be known as Rambha school because Rambha was the female peon, who fetched children from their houses to the school. That school has grown into what is known today as Miss Piggot Girls School. In 1885 Dewan Nawalrai got the Hyderabad Municipality to start the first Municipal Girls' School. The school was known as the Chandamal Showkiram Girls' School. The medium of instruction in this institution continue to be Gurumukhi. In 1888 was founded the Hindu Social Reform Association and under its auspices a number of schools were started. Systematic English education was imparted only when in 1904 the Kundanmal Girls' School was started. Today there are seven girls' high schools and several primary and middle schools in the town.

I urge you not to be carried away by the figures I have given you of the educational progress of the town of Hyderabad. Literacy among the female population of the province, according to the census figures of 1941, stands at only 4.4 per cent. Purdah still persists in a large section of the Muslim women of the Province. Very much is still required to be done in the direction of educating the women of Sind.

We have our own problems—some very acute, which have so far baffled the best intellects of the province. One such problem is that of the Dowry system. Legislation has not solved the problem. We can only count on growing consciousness among educated women of the sheer degradation associated with this vicious system. I also trust that public opinion all over the country will go to substantially reduce the evil, wherever it exists.

Medical aid in rural areas is one other major problem. I entertain a hope that the Sind Government will direct special attention to this need and make it possible to have a hospital, a maternity home and a child welfare centre in every village of Sind. We, the women of Sind, associated with the Conference would be glad to spread into all the villages to do the needful service. The problem that faces us is that of security. It is not found safe for women workers to work in villages and this difficulty again can only be solved by the Government making safety and security possible.

I shall not anticipate your decisions and cover the whole field of reforms that we need. You, sister delegates, shall take necessary decisions in the Conference and it shall be a privilege for every educated Sindhi woman to implement those decisions.

I cannot but take this opportunity to convey to you the feelings of the women of Sind over the trial of the Azad Hind Fauz. We consider them as patriots and desire to wholeheartedly join in demanding their release. This army has proved that Hindus, Muslims and others can obliterate their communal differences and unite as Indians for the independence of their country.

I thank you for your patience. You will bear with me a little longer. I must convey my grateful acknowledgement of the services rendered by several people and institutions in making arrangements for this Conference. I am grateful to the Ministers of Education, Health and Industries for their co-operation in the Exhibition that we have organised. I am grateful to the President and members of the Hyderabad Municipality and its officers, particularly the Health Officer who has spared no pains to help us provide adequate sanitary conveniences. I am grateful to the Collector of Hyderabad for exempting us from entertainment tax. I am particularly grateful to the heads of educational institutions who have given us all possible co-operation and placed their premises at our disposal. Our thanks are due to the C.J. Nari Sabha and other allied institutions of the town. We feel much indebted to Shree Sharda Mandir, three members of the staff of which, at great inconvenience, have come down from Karachi to help us in the Exhibition.

It would be difficult for me to mention every one who has helped us. Omission to mention any names does not mean my disregard for their services. I am grateful to all of them. It would be an impossible task to mention them individually because they are so many. Friends, I have done. I thank you for your patience.

*Mrs. Kulsum Sayani*, Hon. General Secretary, then read the Report of the Conference for the period under review.

## REPORT 1944-1945

The last Session of the All India Women's Conference was held in April 1944 at Bombay and hence the period covered by this Report is a little more than a year and a half. In these eighteen months, in spite of the effects of War and the exceedingly difficult conditions arising from the political deadlock the Conference has not only carried on its routine activities but by initiating some new ventures has grown in strength and gained far greater recognition from the Public than before its membership has risen from about 10,000 to about 25,000. Five additional Branches and twenty-eight (28) Constituent Branches have been given recognition to during the period. Altogether there are 41 Branches divided into 180 Constituent Branches.

During the period under review the Standing Committee met three times, namely, at Bombay, Delhi and Surat. The draft of a revised constitution of the A.I.W.C. was prepared by the Constitution member—Lady Rama Rau—and circulated and will be placed before the Committee during this Session. A Model Branch Constitution was also circulated. Four issues of the Conference publication 'Roshni' have come out during the period under review. The number of subscribers to this organ has been doubled.

The main features of the work undertaken during the period covered by this Report are:—

- (1) The submitting of a Memorandum to and the tendering of evidence before the Hindu Law Committee.
- (2) The establishment of a Central Office.
- (3) The initiation of the All-India Milk Campaign.
- (4) The agitation for re-imposing the ban on the employment of women underground in Mines.
- (5) The collection of money for the Kasturba National Memorial Fund.

A country-wide propaganda was carried on in favour of the codification of the whole of Hindu Law. The draft Memorandum prepared by Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rau was approved of by the Standing Committee and was submitted to the Hindu Law Committee. Subsequently, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, Mrs. Renuka Ray and Mrs. Chandrakala Sahai—all three members of the Standing Committee gave evidence before the Hindu Law Committee. Mrs. Renuka Ray, our representative in the Central Legislative Assembly, has continued to press our views in the debates of the Assembly.

A Central Office has been established in Bombay, (with a paid staff) for statistical, Research and Employment Bureau and a Reference Library on all

questions pertaining to the conditions of women and children and literature on the schemes for the betterment thereof. The publication of books on cultural exposition has also been undertaken. The following seven Tracts have already been published:—

- (1) *Food and Milk*—Smt. Kamaladevi.
- (2) *Women in Mines*—Mrs. Renuka Ray.
- (3) *Draft Hindu Code*—Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rau.
- (4) *Civil Liberties*—Mrs. Hansa Mehta.
- (5) *Our Nursing Services*—Dr. H. M. Lazarus.
- (6) *Towards a National Theatre*—Smt. Kamaladevi.
- (7) *Book on Karnatak Embroidery*—Mrs. Kamala Dongerkery.

An All-India Milk Campaign was initiated by all our Branches and Constituencies. The importance of milk as part of the diet of expectant mothers and children and the need of a priority for them was stressed by means of lectures, and Cinema slides, etc. Public opinion was roused and representations were made to the authorities concerned as a result of which various Municipalities and the Governments of Bombay and Madras opened centres for the distribution of milk either free or at cheap rates to children and expectant mothers. The majority of our Branches went a step further and opened centres subsidised from private collections for the free distribution of milk to the needy.

Another burning question of the day which engaged the attention of all Constituencies was that of the employment of women underground in Mines. Mrs. Renuka Ray, our representative in the Central Legislative Assembly, successfully carried a cut motion censuring the Government of India for having waived the International Convention. Representations were also made to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India. On the conclusion of the War the Government of India have decided to re-impose the ban on the employment of women underground in mines.

Large sums of money have been collected by the Branches of the A.I.W.C. for the Kasturba National Memorial Fund.

The All-India Save the Children Committee which was given a separate identity at the last Session of the A.I.W.C. in Bombay has been diligently serving the cause of the famine orphans in Bengal and Malabar and Orissa.

There are five permanent homes in Bengal with about 326 children, five in Orissa with 200 children, ten homes in Malabar with 238 children both boys and girls.



**Mrs. Kulsum Sayani, Hon. General Secretary, All-India Women's Conference,  
1944-1945.**

The Lady Irwin College continues to function successfully under the guidance of Mrs. Hannah Sen. The number of students has increased to 200 and the College has been given an unconditional grant of Rs. 10,000/- by the Government.

Our Conference agitated and made representations to the authorities concerned in connection with the molestation of Bai Kashibai of Pangire village in Kolhapur State and for the commutation of death sentences on the Chimur and Ashti prisoners. Action was also taken to bring to the notice of the civil and military authorities the serious situation arising from the molestation of women by the members of the fighting forces. A questionnaire was received from Dr. V. K. R. V. Rau, the Planning Adviser to the Government of India, regarding the present diet of nursing and pregnant mothers. The questionnaire was circulated among all the Branches and Constituent Branches of the A.I.W.C. and it is understood that quite an appreciable members have offered their full co-operation to Dr. Rau. New Constituent Branches were organized in Bengal with the specific object of devising and implementing ways and means for relieving the distress of the famine stricken in that unfortunate Province. They collected funds and opened several Community Kitchens and Milk Centres where both food and milk were distributed irrespective of caste and creed. Industrial centres were also opened where destitute women were taught handicrafts like spinning, weaving, needle-work, toy making etc., where they not only could earn a livelihood but also regain their self-respect and create a morale wherewith to face life again.

Many Branches and their Constituents have been strenuously carrying on their varied activities according to their own needs and to suit their own circumstances. The work undertaken by them includes the construction of a Model village, opening of Libraries and Schools, Fair Price Grain Shops, Social Welfare Centres, Co-operative Stores and the establishment of Vocational Centres, Nurseries and Physical Training Classes, Educational Conference, First Aid Classes, Adult Educational Centres, Tailoring and Needle-work classes and so on.

The tabulated reports of our Branches and their Constituents have been attached hereto as an Appendix and will be read out tomorrow.

We are grateful to the Railway Board and the principal Railway companies in India for granting concession to our delegates and Standing Committee members.

In spite of difficulties the results achieved in these 18 months have been very gratifying. The political upheaval of 1942, the difficult condition as



regards food and other essential commodities created by the war, the tragedies of the Bengal famine, the imprisonment of our national leaders and of the President and Secretary and prominent personalities of the Executive of our Conference had all resulted in producing such a sense of frustration that constructive work had become difficult. This was the mood that had to be contended with. Extensive tours were undertaken by both the President and the General Secretary. These personal contacts have greatly stimulated work in the areas visited. I am glad to say that today we are trying to live up to the ideals of an All-India Women's Conference in that we work together irrespective of caste, creed or party politics primarily for the benefit of India and the women and children of India.

All our Constituencies today are full of enthusiasm and fervour for work which augur well for the future. This amazing awakening among the general mass of women offers a fruitful field of social service to the All-India Women's Conference.

28-12-'45.

Mrs. Kulsum Sayani.  
All-India Women's Conference.  
Hon. General Secretary,

*Mrs. Hansa Mehta* thereafter delivered her Presidential Address.

#### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY MRS. HANSA MEHTA

Friends,

I am deeply sensible of the honour you have done me in electing me to preside over this conference. I hope I shall prove worthy of the confidence you have reposed in me and with your full co-operation be able to guide the conference in its onward march towards the goal we all desire it should reach.

At the outset I wish to offer our deep sympathy to Rani Laxmibai Rajwade, one of the ex-Presidents, an active and honoured member of our conference, on her sad bereavement. May God grant her strength to bear her great loss.

I extend a hearty welcome to Rajkumari Amritkaur on her release from her long internment. She is the friend, philosopher and guide of the conference and we have missed her much during her enforced absence. She has just returned from England where she had gone to attend the United Nations Educational and Cultural conference. I hope she has impressed upon that body the great handicap from which this country suffers, viz., that 98 per cent of its women are illiterate.

I extend a hearty welcome to Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit on her safe return after a stay of nearly a year in the United States of America. While there she kept herself busy working for the cause of this country, for which we are grateful to her.

I also extend a hearty welcome to our distinguished visitors from outside and inside India, who, inspite of the hardships of travelling in these days, have responded to our invitation and have come to grace the conference. It is a long time since we had visitors from abroad, our pleasure is therefore, the greater.

The last but not the least I welcome the delegates who have come in such large numbers from all over the country. Such enthusiasm augurs well for the conference and for the great work of construction that lies ahead of us now that the war has ceased.

The war has at last come to an end after years of terrible devastation and distress. The whole world breathes a sigh of relief. But the longed for peace has not descended on earth. The war has let loose such forces of evil that one wonders if real peace will ever come. The barbarous instincts of man have been responsible for untold suffering and sorrow and have culminated in the use of the atom bomb. One wonders what will happen next. Dr. Ravindranath Tagore spoke the truth when he said on the occasion of his 80th birthday, a few months before he died that, "the demon of barbarity has given up all pretence and has emerged with unconcealed fangs and teeth ready to tear up the world and spread devastation. From one end to another, the poisonous fumes of hatred defile the atmosphere. This plague of persecution which lay dormant in the civilization of the west has at last roused itself to create havoc and desecrate the spirit of man." The war has ceased but the atmosphere is not yet clear. The poisonous fumes of hatred are still in the air. The declared objectives for which the war was fought and for which so many noble lives have been sacrificed are completely hidden by the clouds raised by this poisonous vapour. There is once more a scramble for power and soon there will be a mad race to out atom bomb the atom bomb. If science whose mission should be to serve mankind is to be harnessed for the destruction of man, there will be nothing left on earth. It is time something was done to rescue the world and its civilisation, which it has taken so many thousands of years to build, from being wiped out. Women are the greatest sufferers in war. They are the custodians of peace and social stability which means civilisation. It is, therefore upto them to come forward and organise to fight this perpetual menace against the security of the world and all that it stands for. Our conference has always stood for non-violence and peace. We can assure the women all over the world that we shall join hands with them in their efforts to realise these ideals. Let

us women of the world unite on this great issue to establish real peace whose foundations rest on freedom for all, tolerance, justice and quality.

Those friends who are here from the west, I would like to tell them that we are not happy over the happenings in the East and the Far East. We do not like our troops being used against the Indonesians who are fighting for their freedom, and strongly protest against this abuse of power. We do not like the officers of the Indian National Army being tried on the charge of treason. Treason against whom? If the desire to see one's country free, means treason then, every one in India is a traitor. We are not happy over the fact that a number of our countrymen are still rotting in jails without trial. They are not yet released though the war has ceased and the cause for their detention no longer exists. You cannot reap a harvest of goodwill by sowing seeds of bitterness. I hope you will impress this fact on your politicians whose short-sighted policy is responsible for the delay in establishing real peace.

The war has left many problems in its wake, but chiefly those of rehabilitation and relief. The United Nations have organised a Rehabilitation and Relief Association to bring help to the hungry and the sick in the war stricken lands. India, in spite of her poverty, in spite of her hunger, has contributed a sum of about 8 crores of rupees besides two million dollars in goods supplied, which she could ill-spare from her limited resources. She is entitled to help from the Association in the shape of relief for her people who too have suffered the pangs of war. So far she has received nothing because we are told, the Government of India have not asked for help! We do not know whether they intend to do so. It is at times like this that we are poignantly reminded that we do not have a government we can call our own. India needs the help as much as the hunger stricken Europe and should get it.

Among the problems created by the war, those which immediately concern us as women are one or two to which I shall draw your attention. A number of women were employed in the various departments created during the war by the Central and Provincial Governments. These women will be out of employment when the departments are closed as they will have to be. What will happen to them? Will they be absorbed by the Governments concerned, in other services? They have been paid well for their work which has enabled them to raise their standard of life. They have enjoyed their economic freedom and it will indeed be a great hardship to them if they are left stranded without any prospects of future employment.

But the problem that makes one feel most anxious is that of the members of the Women's Auxiliary Corps in India known as the W.A.C.(I)s. What is the future in store for them? Those who have been trained as nurses can easily find work in hospitals or private practice as there is a great demand for trained nurses all over the country. But what will happen to those who are trained

for secretarial or other jobs? We do not know how many women joined the Corps. I dare say the salary attached to the service must have attracted a large number of women. The stories one hears about the kind of work they were required to do are not very reassuring. We would like to know more about them, more especially as the Government of India intend to continue this women's section of the war department for at least another year. We hear stories that some of them have born illegitimate children; and that one in every five has been infected with foul disease. I dare say these tales are exaggerated but at the same time I feel there must be some grain of truth in them. If there is, then we would like to know what steps are taken to help the unfortunate victims of war who have suffered and are suffering. We would like to know if those who are suffering from disease are taken care of by the Government, and are receiving proper treatment. If they are allowed to go as they are, they will spread the infection and become a menace to the social health of the country. The Conference should appoint a special committee to investigate into these questions and find ways and means to help those women who require our help. If we can utilise the training and experience of the W.A.C.(I)s for the educational and social work in rural areas, they will be an asset to the nation. But with their expensive habits of life it is doubtful if they can now settle down in villages where their help is required most.

The women whose services may be useful are the members of the Indian National army. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment as they are called. I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Lakshmi and her colleagues on the great courage they have shown in face of real danger. I hope they will return to India soon. I cannot understand the recent arrest of Dr. Lakshmi and strongly protest against it. She should be allowed to return to India without delay. The training and discipline of these women, their patriotic zeal will be of immense help in the work of national reconstruction that await post-war India.

With us post-war reconstruction will mean not mere adjustments here and there but reconstruction of our entire national life. We are on the eve of vast changes. What shall be the place of woman politically, socially and economically, in the new order to be evolved, is a question that should concern us most and we should give a serious thought to it. Let us, therefore, reiterate our demands made from time to time with regard to the position of woman and crystallise them in the form of a women's charter of rights. This charter will define the position of woman, her rights as well as her responsibilities. It is not possible for me in this short time to go into details of the charter. I shall briefly outline its salient features and would like the Standing Committee to prepare a complete draft if they approve of this idea.

Firstly then we stand for the freedom of woman and her equality with man. Equality, however, is not to mean identity but equality of opportunity.

A woman is as much a human being as man is. If freedom and equality are the basis of human development, woman must be entitled to share them with man. There should be no disability attached to her sex. Men and women are to society what the two wheels are to a chariot. Both are of equal importance. There should be, therefore, no domination of one sex over the other, nor any exploitation of one by the other. This idea should form the basis of the charter. It is gratifying to note that the preamble of the charter signed at San Francisco by the United Nations which includes India, accepts this position of equality between man and woman. It says, "To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human form, in the equal rights of men and women etc." Again in article I, the charter says "To achieve international co-operation in solving inter-national problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, etc."

The Indian National Congress passed a resolution on the fundamental rights as long ago as 1931. It runs as follows:—

"All citizens are equal before the law irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex. No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex in regard to public employment, office or power or honour and in the exercise of trade or calling."

The National Planning Committee also passed a resolution in their meeting held on 30th August 1940 that:

- (a) In a planned society, woman's place shall be equal to that of man. Equal status, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities shall be the guiding principles to regulate the status of woman whatever the basis of society in the plan:
- (b) Woman shall not be excluded from any sphere of work merely on the ground of her sex;
- (c) Marriage shall not be a condition precedent to the enjoyment of full and equal civic status and economic rights by woman.

It is on this accepted basis of equality between man and woman that the charter is to be prepared which will define the rights and responsibilities of woman as an individual and as a member of society.

As an individual, woman shall enjoy all the rights of, and shall be required to perform all the duties of a citizen, whether these rights are political, civic or economic. The State shall recognise individual as the unit of society and not family. Woman, therefore, shall be enfranchised in her own right and not as in relation to man. The present basis of franchise which gives the woman the

right to vote as a wife of a man with a certain income, violates this principle and, therefore, cannot be accepted by us. We must reaffirm our demand for adult suffrage as the only way to enfranchise a larger number of women than we have today which is one woman to four men when the population ratio is almost fifty-fifty.

Women should be associated more and more with the administration of the country if they are competent to do so. Since the new elections to the various legislatures of the country are soon to take place, I would like to take this opportunity to remind those in charge of selecting the candidates to choose women who are really competent. They should not have any excuse later to say that they could not find women from among the elected members to take up any position of responsibility. I would also urge that besides putting up women candidates for the seats reserved for them some women should be selected to stand from the general constituencies.

Without education it is not possible for any one to understand his or her responsibility. We must, therefore, lay great emphasis on the right of every woman to be educated and we must demand the removal of such obstacles as for example, child marriage, child labour or purdah which come in the way of her education. The question as to what kind of education it is to be, will have to be carefully considered. The present educational system will not be a helpful guide in deciding the nature of our future education except in a negative way. It is evident that the present system is not very popular from the progress it has made. The Sargent scheme has recognised the necessity of overhauling the entire system and we must endorse that plea. There are one or two things, however, we must make clear with regard to women's education. It will have to be education that helps the fullest development of woman's personality and will train her to be a useful member of society. There shall be no basic difference between the education of man and woman since their duties as citizens do not differ. The differences, however, will arise when it will be a question of training for a vocation since that will differ from man to man or woman to woman or man to woman.

Woman shall have facilities for training for any profession or occupation that she may choose to follow. At present such facilities are not always available. Take for instance the training for Home science. Our conference has been a pioneer in this field of education. But we cannot be satisfied with only one college of the type of the Lady Irwin College for the whole country. I would like one such institution for every linguistic area where the instruction can be given through the mother tongue and I would like Lady Irwin College to supply teachers to these institutions.

The question of co-education is also agitating the minds of the educationists. Whatever its pros and cons, we must remember that ours is a poor

country and we cannot afford the luxury of two separate institutions where one can serve the purpose.

After education, the most vital need is health. Every woman shall have facilities to maintain and protect her health. That a woman should have a right to health seems a very self-evident proposition and ordinarily would require no comment. But such self-evident propositions are not very evident in this country. Considering that the longevity in India is only twenty-seven years and thousands of men and women die of all kinds of diseases, it is clear that much requires to be done with regard to the improvement of public health. For women, there is an additional cause of danger. The figures of maternal mortality in India are simply appalling. Dr. Miss Lazarus has shown in her pamphlet on our "Nursing Services" tract No. 5 published by our Conference, that more women die due to child bearing which is a normal physiological function than the number of men and women who die of plague, small-pox or cholera. One reason for this is a lack of proper and adequate health services. The other reasons are lack of education, existence of social evils like child marriage and purdah; and lack of sanitary housing. Women ought to protest against the bad, insanitary housing conditions they have to put up with. These homes lack comfort and are not built on any labour saving or hygienic principle. Bad housing is thus responsible for many evils. It has impaired public health and specially the health of woman. Woman should have a right to better homes and better health services in order to save her from a life of toil and misery and an untimely death.

In this mammon made world the worth of a person is reckoned on his or her economic status. It is in the economic sphere that woman will have to fight hard to establish her position. We must demand the right for every woman to work. Let no disability be attached to her on the ground of her sex in regard to public employment, office of power or in the exercise of trade or calling, and woman must receive the same payment as man for the same amount of work she does. There are services from which married women are debarred. If a married woman accepts and abides by the conditions of service there is no reason why she should be excluded. There can be, however, exceptions to this rule. We would not like for instance women and specially pregnant women to be employed in heavy industries or in underground work in mines which would affect their health. The Conference had protested when the Government of India broke the international convention and ordered women to work in the coal mines in Bihar. It is gratifying to note that the order has been recently withdrawn. Shrimati Renuka Ray had put up a valiant fight in the Central Assembly to get the order rescinded. She deserves our congratulations.

While we believe there should be no bar against woman from taking to any profession or calling, it is desirable for the Conference to guide women in their



choice. National planning will require planning work for men and women from a national point of view. Women will be required to take up such work as will help the country. Under the Sargent scheme of education a large number of women teachers are required; and Dr. Miss Lazarus tells us that we shall require one million nurses in thirty years if at all we wish to carry through our programme of health. If women are not prepared to take up this work of their own accord they may have to face a conscription when a national government comes into power as I hope it will come soon. Let us, therefore, prepare women from now for the great task of nation building that lies ahead of us.

Woman shall not only have a right to work but work under the right conditions i.e., in relation to place of work, hours of work, pay, holidays, sickness allowance, maternity benefit, etc. The labour conditions in this country are far from satisfactory. The Conference has been urging for the necessary reforms, all these years. We have advocated insurance against sickness and asked for maternity benefits. Time has come for a comprehensive scheme of social insurance which will include maternity benefit as part of the scheme. Such a scheme should not apply to workers in factories only but also workers in other fields like teachers and nurses.

There is one type of work which has not been recognised so far to which I would like to draw your attention. It is the work of the housewife. She works from early morning till late at night. An average housewife hardly enjoys rest or holiday. And yet this work is not considered of value in that it is not productive and brings no return in the shape of rupees, annas or pies. It is one of the reasons why there is a growing dislike among the educated and more awakened women for this kind of work; and they prefer to seek careers outside the home. It is time that the importance of this work was recognised and conditions of work improved. The work of the housewife has recently been recognised in England as the Beveridge report includes it for the benefits under the Social Insurance scheme. If such a scheme is undertaken by the Government in this country we should see that the housewife's work gets recognition. Besides this the housewife should have a right to a part of her husband's income; she should have no feeling of dependence on man but realise that she can claim a portion of the income as hers by right; and as a corollary the husband should have no right to dispose of his entire income without the consent of his wife.

Every woman shall have a right to leisure. With the exception of a very few women who belong to the upper rich in this country, the Indian woman does not enjoy much leisure. Her life is that of one long drudgery. What with cooking, washing, grinding corn, drawing water and looking after the children, she has hardly time to spare for other things. This is neither good for her health nor for her development as she hardly finds time to improve her mind.

She has no time for cultural pursuits with the result that her life becomes drab and the home of which she is the centre is without joy. A person without leisure is virtually a slave. We must find ways and means to free the Indian woman from her life of slavery. It is by regulating the home life, providing amenities of life and providing labour saving devices that we can solve this problem to a large extent. Organising creches and infant schools is also a way to help the woman in looking after her children. The Kasturba Memorial Fund will do the greatest national service if they can evolve means to take off the heavy load of work which tends almost to crush the life out of the woman.

These are some of the important rights a woman should enjoy as an individual. As for her social rights we have to consider them in relation to the three social institutions, viz., property, marriage and family.

With regard to property we must claim that every woman shall have the same rights as man to hold, acquire, inherit and dispose of property. Our laws as they are at present are defective as they do not come up to this ideal. In this respect the Hindu law is the most unsatisfactory. It recognises widow's limited estate and does not consider daughter as an heir to her father's property along with a son. The draft Hindu code prepared by the Hindu Law Committee is a great advance on the present position in that it gives woman an absolute right over her property and a share in that of her father's. It however falls short of the ideal in that it still discriminates between sons and daughters. The draft Code does not extend its application to the joint family property to which woman as daughter has no right, and as wife only a limited interest.

This chapter on intestate succession in the draft Hindu Code has raised a great storm among the orthodox Hindus. There is a fear that if a daughter is given a share with the son in the father's property, it might disrupt the family business if property is entirely invested in business. The fear, to my mind, is misplaced. In such cases provision can always be made in the Act to buy off the daughter's share or give her a dividend on her share whichever is agreed upon.

The Mohammedan law and the Parsi law give absolute right to woman over her property but they too discriminate between sons and daughters. The Indian Succession Act comes nearest to our ideal since it gives equal shares to sons and daughters.

The more important, however, is the woman's position in relation to marriage. Marriage is an institution which is much maligned and very much abused and yet its foundations are so firm that like a rock it has stood the storm of ages. Whether we call it a sacrament or a civil contract, marriage is a union between man and woman legalised by the State. And, therefore, as far

as the State is concerned it is a contract. We should however not worry about the forms of marriage—for forms of marriage let fools contest—what is essential are the conditions under which two persons are allowed to unite in a holy wedlock. These conditions so far as the Hindu law and the Mohamedan law are concerned are not very satisfactory and have made the social life of many a woman in this country, a hell on earth. It is, therefore necessary to define these conditions safeguarding the interests of the woman who desires to marry.

These conditions shall be:—

- (1) That neither party must have a husband or a wife living at the time of marriage. The Hindu as well as the Muslim law allows polygamy and in recent years it is the educated men and women who have taken advantage of this provision in the Hindu law, which to say the least is a great shame. The draft Hindu Code has advocated monogamy which is indeed a much needed reform.
- (2) That the consent of both the parties concerned shall be necessary before their marriage;
- (3) That no marriage shall take place if either the girl is below the age of 16 or the boy is below the age of 21. The present Child Marriage Prevention Act has not been much of a success. Drastic changes in the Act are essential to realise its objective. It is necessary to lay down the age of marriage in the Marriage Law itself so that any marriage below the prescribed limit would be illegal.
- (4) That there shall be no restriction to marriage on the grounds of caste or community. The Hindu law as at present stands, forbids intercaste Pratiloma marriages. The draft Hindu Code has however, recommended the removal of this restriction, which is to the good. There is no Act however, which allows members of two different communities to marry without renouncing their community, i.e., their religion since the Indian communities are divided on the basis of religion. We must have one common Code working side by side with the communal laws which will serve those who believe in inter-communal life. The Special Marriage Act of 1873 if amended by deletion of the Clause which requires religion to be renounced before two persons can enter into an inter-communal marriage, can become a part of the Common Code. I hope the new Central Assembly will take up this question and take early steps to remove this lacuna from the Act. And finally,
- (5) That either party can dissolve the marriage under certain conditions which will include cruelty, desertion, suffering from incurable disease and impotency. This requires no comment. Even the Hindu Law Reforms Committee has realised the need for this provision and has included it in the Draft Code.

Lastly we come to the woman's position in relation to family. By family, I do not mean the joint family which has outlived its utility and is an anachronism today. Whatever advantages it had in the past it will have no place in the new order to come. By family I therefore mean family consisting of husband and wife and children. The present notion is that man is the head of the family. He looks upon his wife and children as his property to do what he likes with them. This conception is based on the old idea of the patriarchal family, and is reflected in the laws of the country which give woman an inferior position. Take the Guardianship Act in British India. It presumes father to be the natural guardian of the child. On the death of the father the mother is considered the natural guardian of the minor children unless the father has by will appointed another person. Thus the man has a right to deprive the woman of her natural right, while the woman has no such corresponding right however bad and unworthy the man may be in charge of his minor children. Family must be regarded as a co-operative concern where all the members are of equal importance. Father and mother should both be regarded as the natural guardian of their minor children. If a necessity arise it would be for the court to decide as to who should have the custody of the child or children bearing in mind the character, ability to support, etc., of the parties concerned.

Woman shall have a right to limit her family. It is the woman who has to suffer bearing children, looking after them and bringing them up in a civilised way. The right to decide the size of the family should therefore belong to her. Woman should be conscious of this right which she must learn to exercise for her own good, for the good of the family and for the good of the country. India is over-populated and its population is going up and up while her resources are limited. Unless something is done to check this upward curve of the population, poverty, starvation and all the evils that follow in their train will be our lot. We must realise this danger and try to overcome it by all the means within our power.

It is not enough to ask for our rights; we must also understand our responsibilities. Woman is an individual as well as a member of society. She can no longer lead the life of a parasite, but must contribute her mite to the common good of society. We may soon be called upon to help in the work of national reconstruction, specially in the fields of Education and Health. I would like our branches to prepare lists of women in their own area who would be willing to work as teachers, nurses or health visitors in villages. Their work will not be entirely free but it will have to be remunerated on a modest scale that the country can afford. Where possible I would like the branches to undertake the training of rural workers. Nursing is a profession which has not been looked upon with favour by woman. We must realise that there is a terrible dearth of nurses in this country. The number of nurses in this country as

given by Dr. J. B. Grant in his pamphlet on "Health in India" is only forty-five hundred. The number may have slightly increased or even doubled during the last few years on account of war; but in no way does it come near the number actually required which is according to Dr. Lazarus one Million. It is upto the conference to see that this profession is popularised among women and more and more women are induced to take it.

I have tried to give you as briefly as possible an idea of the charter. I would like every woman who becomes a member of this Conference to study it, understand its implications and work for its realisation. It is not enough to swell the number of our membership by enlisting those who pay four annas and then forget about the Conference and what it stands for. Every woman who joins must understand the charter and work for its realisation. That is the programme of our work. I know some of the branches are doing excellent work and I congratulate them for what they are doing. But I do not wish them to forget the fundamentals as embodied in the charter. Let the charter be the measuring rod of their achievements. It is true there are immediate problems which may require our attention. But whatever we do we must not forget our goal which is the emancipation of woman and through woman that of the country. I have a firm belief that it is through the emancipation of woman that we shall help in the regeneration and the liberation of our beloved land. I would, therefore, like every woman in this country—whether a Maharani or a Majdoor—to realise this fact and join hands for this our common cause. Let us work together for the achievement of this goal irrespective of our class, creed, community or politics.

Friends! I have kept you long for which I ask your forgiveness. I am deeply interested in the future of this country and I know that woman has an important part to play in its construction. Those who ignore the fact or believe that national life can be rebuilt without the aid of woman do not know what national reconstruction means. My great desire is that the conference should understand the part woman has to play and prepare her for the role.

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After delivering her Address, *the President* said: "Today we are most fortunate in having in our midst distinguished women from other countries who have specially journeyed to be with us during the Conference. I extend to them all, on behalf of the Delegates and myself, a most hearty welcome to our shores, and I hope that they will carry away friendly impressions of our deliberations. I will ask each of them to say a few words, and first of all will call upon an old friend of the Conference, Miss Agatha Harrison. Miss Harrison does not need any introduction, for her interest in and contacts with India extend over some years. She comes to us from the London Liaison Group which publishes news about the Conference activities in England for the information of British women's organisations."

*Miss Agatha Harrison* said: It is difficult to find adequate words to describe my feelings as I meet with you again. Seven years have passed since we had the privilege of sending a delegate to your Conference; war years, in which we have seen death and destruction on a vast scale; years that have meant so much suffering for you and for us.

First of all, I bring you a message of love and greeting from our Liaison Group that co-operates with your Conference; it is a joy to bring this personally. Many other organisations and individuals asked me to convey their messages of friendship too. So I stand before you, not as a person, but as a symbol of the links that bind the women of our countries together—in spite of grave political tension.

We have sorely missed the close contact that was possible before the war. There has been no coming and going; letters took weeks, sometimes months, to arrive, and sometimes never reached us. The news that did come saddened and troubled us beyond words. We have carried on intensive efforts the whole time to end the deadlock; you have been ever in our hearts and minds. But now our links can be reforged. We have always treasured these links and feel they have a significance in the days that lie ahead.

When *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur* was in London recently, she spoke of the "ocean of misunderstanding" that separates India and Britain. I recalled her words as I flew over material oceans and deserts to attend this Conference, we bridged these in an incredibly short time. If science and invention can do this—surely it is not beyond the power of men and women to do the same in the realm of human relationships. I believe it *can* be done. This presents a very special challenge and responsibility to us women as we face the most critical time in indo-British history in which understanding and faith in each other are urgently needed.

I wish this Conference great success and am deeply grateful for the privilege of being with you again after all these years.

*The President*: Our next speaker is a Vice-President of the International Alliance of Women Voters to which the All-India Women's Conference is affiliated. She is a distinguished woman from Sweden, who has worked for women's rights in her own country. I refer to *Dr. Hanna Rydh* and will now request her to address the Conference.

*Dr. Hanna Rydh* said: My first words must be of gratitude for your kind invitation to the International Alliance of Women for Equal Citizenship to be represented at your Conference. I very deeply regret that our President *Mrs. Corbett Ashby* has not been able to come to your meeting this year as she has done once before. It is to the greatest extent due to her husband's serious illness which has prevented her from leaving England. When passing through

London I had the opportunity once of seeing Mrs. Corbett Ashby. It was in a meeting of the Liaison Group for India. That will give you a little glimpse of her warm interest for the Indian Women's cause.

As many of you will know the International Alliance was founded in 1907 as the first Women's International Organisation not for welfare work, but for political, though non-party aims. The Alliance is proud to think that it is the first such international body to have had an Indian woman elected to its Executive, Lady Rama Rau in 1929, and we are glad to have now Lady Maharaj Singh on our Board. The Alliance's first aim is to seek the political, economic, legal and social equality of men and women. Even if in all countries we are only at the beginning of women's political participation, we dare say the Alliance has played a real part in this very difficult way.

Further the Alliance has as its aim to work for a high moral standard, equal between men and women, to study the position of women of the colonial lands in order to be able to work practically for their improved status; to work for a just and lasting peace because it is the basis on which alone any stable reforms can be carried out.

Mrs. Corbett Ashby has charged me to present to the Conference a message which I am glad now to read:

"The International Alliance of Women through its Vice-President, Dr. Hanna Rydh, President of the Frederika Bremer Society of Sweden affiliated to the Alliance, offers its most sincere and friendly greetings to your great Congress.

"The Alliance and its national associations, so many of which have suffered bitter persecution during the war years, look to the future with renewed hope and especially to the women of the East for their fullest co-operation.

"We hope that you, the women of India, will very shortly gain those conditions of freedom which we know you feel are essential before you can give your full contribution to international work.

"We wish you a most successful conference, fruitful in results for the well-being and the future work of women."

Coming from the very far away Sweden in the north of Europe, I will not leave this privileged place without having expressed the warm feelings of the women in my country towards you and your work. Our problems may, to a certain extent, be different, we have still, as women, a great main interest; to do our utmost to facilitate for the women's constructive forces to get as important an outlet for the benefit of humanity in our time as they have had since thousands of years, when women have been the builders of and centres in the homes. Women will still have the great task of being mothers, but their

care of the children as well as many other things earlier belonging exclusively to their home interest are and will to a still greater extent be taken over by society, and, in a certain way, be handled politically. Therefore, politics must be a women's interest. Through the technical means of our time people all over the world are brought in a much closer contact to each other than at any other time. Nobody can be left outside of events. Since the women also have to suffer from the failures of men's politics, they ought to be the co-operators in political and social work and share the efforts as well as the responsibilities.

I am myself the President of the oldest Swedish organisation for women's rights. It is called by the name of our great pioneer Frederika Bremer, who was a great authoress and the first to work for women's participation in social and political life in my country. During the Crimean War, about a hundred years ago, she wrote a flaming protest against the war asking the women all over the world to join as sisters working for peace and humanity. She got her articles printed in the English "Times" but at the same time she was made an object of joke: "Imagine women contributing to the saving of the world."

But let us think if she could have reached the women all over the world with her message and that they had all understood the deep meaning in her words, how strong could not women have been now! Perhaps this last destruction would not have been necessary. *There* is our great responsibility, we are not responsible for events because of our failure in handling things, but we are responsible and to a great extent responsible, because of our passivity in politics.

We cannot work all at an international field, and we should not. The work of each one of us has to be done in our own small place by speaking to our friends about women's responsibility. But by contacting each other's work through our organisations, we can link a chain of great strength. That is the message of the Swedish women to you: let us each in our place be strong links in the chain of women, co-operating with men for peace, freedom and prosperity for humanity.

*The President:* Next I will ask Madame Amina El-Said to address the Conference. Madame Said is the Secretary-General of the Arab Union of Women which is a federation of organisations representing women in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan. She is also a writer of note. I am sure we shall all listen to what she has to say with great interest.

*Madame Amina El Said* said: It is a great pleasure to me to come on behalf of my association, the Egyptian Union for Women, to attend your Conference, and speak to you on our efforts to help our Egyptian sisters. I will tell you, too, all about our aims and aspirations, our point of view in dealing with things, and how far time will possibly fulfil our demands.



But I prefer to begin with a short history of the Egyptian woman, and explain the ups and downs of her career in Egypt, the ups that raised her to glory and greatness sometimes, and the downs that brought her ignorance and social poverty. The attempt of the Egyptian women today to take their proper place in society is not new to the history of our country. They did, in the past, take their full responsibility in public life, they contributed to the building up of Egypt's greatness in its glorious days, and helped to revive it in its less happy periods.

In Pharaonic times—and that was five thousand years ago—women ascended the throne, occupied the highest positions of priesthood, and took their full share in the social, religious and political life of our country. When Islamic religion came, the Egyptian woman enjoyed the great, generous rights that this religion gave to her such as economic independence, the right to education, work and commerce. History records in the Egypt of that time, women as eminent poets, authors and writers on law and astrology.

This state of things continued to the middle of the "Fatimite Rule" 600 years ago, when an eccentric king called "Al Hakem" ordered the total seclusion of women in their homes on penalty of death. To ensure strict execution of his order he prevented shoe-makers from making or selling shoes for women. It was said that for seven long years not a single woman was seen in the streets of Cairo. But knowing that this same ruler forbade the eating of honey and ordered shops to close all day and open all night, we no longer doubt his madness. Whatever the cause might be, the fact remains that his reign marks the beginning of social deterioration and the status of women in Egypt went from bad to worse until they sank into complete obscurity.

The year 1919 would be a most suitable landmark in the history of our Egyptian women's renaissance. A political revolution directed against the English broke out in Egypt that year. The movement was not merely political. It was indeed national in the broad sense of the word. The desire that the Egyptians should govern their own country was accompanied by an equally keen desire that they should become worthy of their aspirations by trying to raise the standard of living, to educate women and give them a chance of becoming useful citizens. During the revolution the women of Egypt, under the leadership of our President Madame Charaouie, took their full share, fought side by side with men, made sacrifices and accepted the sad results bravely and courageously. The news of what our sisters did reached Europe through the press, and the whole world became aware of their existence. The Egyptian woman was invited, for the first time, to attend the International Congress held in Rome in 1923. When Madame Charaouie returned from Rome, the first thing she did was to discard the "Purdah". Our Egyptian women followed

her and did the same, so that "Purdah" disappeared from Egypt, and a serious obstacle was removed from our way of advance.

Then Madame Charaouie formed in our country "The Egyptian Union of Women" which I represent today. The first thing my association did was to work hard in raising both the educational and social standard of women, so that they would be fit for the equality we hoped for. We, therefore, demanded from our Government the following things:—

- (1) New laws restricting the minimum age of marriage to 16 for the girl and 18 for the boy.
- (2) New laws raising the age at which a father could get custody of a child in case of divorce to 9 for the boy and 11 for the girl.
- (3) Giving the right to woman to divorce her husband in special cases.
- (4) Permitting married women teachers to carry on their teaching work.
- (5) Opening all departments of education for girls.
- (6) Abolishing extra-territorial rights in Egypt.
- (7) Starting free compulsory education all over the country.
- (8) Equal pay for men and women.

After a hard, short, struggle, all these demands were granted by our Government. I am glad to say that we have now in Egypt women lawyers, barristers and doctors, practising successfully. We have teachers and professors on the staff of the Universities, government officials in nearly all the ministries, pilots piloting planes on regular air service. Outside the government we have journalists, writers, thinkers, painters, artists etc.

Uptil the last year two faculties only out of all the different colleges we have in Egypt refused to admit any girl students, namely, the College of Agriculture and the College of Engineering. My association was very concerned about that matter and kept on asking and pressing until we succeeded this year, and girls were admitted to both. I am again glad to say that in a few years we will be having in Egypt women as engineers and agricultural specialists.

From the moral standpoint we demanded that the government should control the hours for public sale of liquors, and should abolish regulation of prostitution by withdrawing all the licences and preparing special rescue homes for these unfortunate women. At last our demand was granted, but the project was again neglected because of the war.

On the economic side, our association did its best to encourage local industry. So we founded a big school of industry where the Egyptian young women learn to weave, make carpets, and all sorts of pottery work. We also run two other schools: one for primary education and the other for domestic studies. In these three schools hundreds of poor girls get free education and free meals too.

I have mentioned before that we were granted many of the rights we claimed. But it does not mean that we were granted everything. We still have much to fight for, and because of that we formed an Arab Union for Women representing Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Transjordan. That Arab Union was formed for two just causes: the cause of women, and the cause of Palestine. Both were cases of natural and just rights which had been taken away and should be restored at once. For the case of women we are fighting hard for:—

1. New laws restricting polygamy and divorce.
2. New laws raising the age at which a father could get custody over his child in case of divorce to 16 for the boy and 18 for the girl.
3. Allowing women to become judges.
4. Giving women the right to vote and go into Parliament.

Our demands concerning polygamy and divorce will not meet with any strong objection for everyone in Egypt now suffers under the present laws, and the public mind is prepared for the change. The proof is that polygamy in my country is dying out. In statistics of 1940 we find that the number of men married to more than one wife is 20,000 only out of 16,000,000. Only 200 men in the whole of Egypt have four wives.

I am very glad to say that our Government is very sympathetic to us in that point of view. The Minister of Social Affairs has already introduced a bill restricting polygamy and divorce, and that bill will pass into the Parliament in the next sessions. Our demand concerning the right to vote will not also meet with any obstacle, because we are asking for a right, not a favour. Islamic religion gave us the right to vote for the Caliphs who were both religious as well as political leaders.

Dear friends, a few minutes ago I said that the Arab Union for Women was formed for two just causes. The first I have already explained. The second is Palestine.

Palestine too, is a case of confiscated rights which should be restored at once. Palestine is an Arab country. The Arabs have lived in it for centuries. Therefore, it is their own country and the European Jews have no right to usurp it. If some of the Europeans are so cruel as to persecute their Jewish countrymen for no reason, it is not our fault, and we should not bear the blame for others. We should not give our beloved home to those who have no right to it. Great countries like America and England that pride themselves over all others as builders of democracy, should never ignore the first principles of democracy in small countries like ours. For, we too have the right to enjoy it. And though our countries are small, we are as much human beings as the people

of the big countries. We expect to be treated thus, and we do not like them to be generous at our expense.

The Arabs in Palestine are losing their land, property and homes. They are being kicked out for European Jews to take their place. Therefore, I appeal to all the people of India to stand beside the Palestinians and to defend them against their usurpers.

Before I finish, I would like to deliver to you all the love and respect of your Egyptian sisters. I also deliver to you their great hope of you and us working together in an Oriental Federation that would work for the great cause all over the East.

*The President.* Now we come nearer home, for I will ask Dr. Mary Rutnam, one of our visitors from Ceylon, to speak. Dr. Rutnam is one of the foremost workers in Ceylon, and is a Vice-President of the All-Ceylon Women's Conference, and also of the Lanka Mahila Samiti.

*Dr. Mary H. Rutnam* said: I consider it a very great privilege to be present with you this afternoon at the opening session of your Conference in Hyderabad. I am happy also to be the bearer of sisterly greetings from the All-Ceylon Women's Conference. We trust your session may be not only interesting but also very successful in finding solutions to many of India's present urgent problems.

I and my co-delegate—Miss Solomons, of the Ceylon Education Department, are thrilled at the sight of this vast assembly of Indian Women, of many communities and creeds, met together for no selfish reason, but for the high purpose of service to others. I am sure, we will carry back to Ceylon inspiration for our own work; for, after all, India's and Ceylon's problems are very similar, and the personal contacts, exchange of ideas and experiences, gained from such conferences as this, are bound to be mutually helpful. I am, therefore, not only the bearer of greetings from Ceylon, but the bearer also of a cordial invitation from the All-Ceylon Women's Conference to the A.I.W.C. to attend our next Conference to be held in Colombo on March 15, 16 & 17 next. While any Indian friends who can make the journey will be welcomed, we trust the A.I.W.C. will be able to send a special representative to take part in our deliberations. Miss Solomons and I are looking forward to an interesting and profitable sojourn in Hyderabad, and I am sure Ceylon will do its best to reciprocate your kindness should you visit us.

*The President:* I now have pleasure in calling upon a distinguished Englishwoman, Dame Vera Laughton-Mathews, to address the Conference. Dame Vera is the head of the Women's Royal Naval Services (the WRENS) in England, and is in India at present on an inspection visit. She is also an old worker in the women's cause, right from the days of the Suffragettes.

*Dame Vera Laughton-Mathews*, Director W.R.N.S: First I want to say how overjoyed I am to be present at this wonderful meeting which holds so much of hope for the future. All my life the thing which I have cared about most is raising the status of women. And it is the thing which the world needs more than anything else at the present time.

At International Congresses in the past I have been privileged to meet some of the Indian feminist leaders. And I may say that at any Congress the Indian Delegates always stand out as women of exceptional personality and gifts.

I have followed your work with the greatest interest. But I don't think I ever dreamed or even hoped that the day would come when I should be able to be present at the All-India Women's Conference. I am glad to be here because I have been on an official visit to members of my Service, the Women's Royal Naval Service, known as 'WRENS', who are serving in India and Ceylon.

I have been asked to tell you a little about my Service and I hope you will be interested in it as a chapter in the history of women's achievement.

I was appointed Director to start the organisation of a Women's Service in the Royal Navy a few months before war broke out and I have been fortunate enough to remain as Head of the Service throughout the whole of the war—to have seen it grow from one to nearly one hundred thousand, to have seen it win through teething troubles and all the problems of a new and almost revolutionary organisation, to guide it through all the terrific events of the war years, to have seen it gradually gain the admiration and absolute confidence of that magnificent but extremely conservative body, the Royal Navy. A Senior Naval Officer said to me the other day "The Wrens have the highest sense of duty of anyone I have ever met". And now we have the task of reducing and helping in resettlement in civil life. One prime reason for the success of our Service is the splendid Senior Officers, women of the highest principle and integrity, and with a high standard of value.

Throughout, all recruiting, drafting, promotions, appointments of Officers have been kept entirely in the hands of women. We also insisted on a proper standard of accommodation and unless we were satisfied with the conditions, they didn't get Wrens. We found that was a very good way of making them get a move on. When the Wrens started, no one in the Admiralty, or in the Navy, had the slightest conception of the size or scope that the Service would assume.

At the beginning of the war there were five categories of work for the Wrens, all duties which were already by custom labelled "Women's Work",—mostly various kinds of office work, domestic duties and motor driving. At the height of the war there were over one hundred categories of work on which

Wrens were employed many of them jobs which women had never tackled before, and the official policy of the Admiralty was to employ Wrens in all jobs on shore in which women could replace men (and I ask you what does that exclude).

Let me give you a few pictures. First the Officers, not those who look after the girls but women who have replaced Naval Officers on technical or operational work. We have W.R.N.S. Signal Officers in entire charge of all outgoing and incoming communications at Ports including, of course, all signal traffic to ships. Sometimes they have a large mixed staff of men and women ratings, and there has never been any trouble or resentment on the part of the men, which is enough to tell you that the women know their jobs. These Signal Officers have gone through the proper Signal Course with Naval Officers and I may tell you in confidence that the W.R.N.S. Officer very nearly always comes out top.

One very interesting aspect of communications work is the officers and ratings who have been employed at sea. They have not been employed in warships but in Armed Liners, that is, the peace-time passenger ships which were converted for war work, such as carrying troops and supplies. Some of these girls have been at sea as long as seven months on end and have earned the highest praise for their work and conduct. And you will realise that work at sea in war time has its exciting moments.

They have been employed as Duty Officer of the Watch at Operational Bases in Britain at the height of the war. I remember going into an Operations Room on the East Coast of England in the middle of an 'E' boat flap, that is a coastal attack by German Motor Boats. The Officer on watch was a pretty young girl (who looked just the kind that one would be pleased to meet at a dance in normal times). She was shouting down the telephone to a Senior Naval Officer of another Establishment "I have no time to attend to you now." The Admiral who was with me said, "I have told them that they speak for me and they live up to it."

Then we have W.R.N.S. Officers in entire charge of the Merchant Shipping at large ports. They issue all the instructions in regard to routes and sailing orders to the Masters of shipping vessels, go on board in all weathers up a swinging rope ladder, and over the side. Here again we have never heard of the Skippers objecting to receiving their instructions from a woman officer.

Now for the W.R.N.S. ratings. One of the most glamorous and spectacular jobs, and certainly the most popular, is what are called Boats Crews. These are the girls who run the boats in harbours and even outside the harbours motorboats of all sizes and descriptions. They are extraordinarily competent, calm and courageous, and handle the boats with the efficiency of an old sailor.

They run them day and night, and night during war time was a very black night. In summer and winter, and winter in England is very different from winter in India, they have been out in the harbours during bombing attacks from the enemy and have stood by and picked up from the water men from ships that have sunk. They go out in all weathers, storms and gales, and thoroughly enjoy it.

I have seen a number of letters written by these girls to their parents. I saw one the other day in which the girl said that they had been out in a storm, that their boat had sprung a leak and finally sank, and that they had had a great time rescuing a naval officer and a seaman who were unable to swim. She added a P.S. "Don't worry Daddy we have been issued with lifebelts." We have had a number of girls employed on various jobs of engineering work, in particular, electricity. I have seen them on board repairing the electric wiring. (What useful people to have in the home!) A big category has been the radio mechanics who keep the radio sets in order. They have a nine months training in mechanics. We have also had a large number of wireless telegraphists. It is rather thrilling to see a girl with earphones on her head and a morse buzzer under her hand tapping out messages to ships at sea. They work side by side with expert men telegraphists, and I am told that they are as one hundred per cent efficient. These are only a very few of the different kinds of work undertaken by our women, both officers and ratings. They have had their chance and they have proved themselves.

Some people express fears for the future. Believe me there is no need for fear. What is right and natural in women is not going to be altered. I dare say some that is artificial may be swept away, and a very good thing too. But I know these girls. They are looking forward to having homes of their own and families just like any normal young woman. I hope too that they are going to take their Service spirit into civilian life with them.

I am afraid this has been a very short sketch of a big subject. For myself I want to say again that I count it the greatest privilege and honour to be here. I shall remember this scene all my life, the inspiration on the faces of those who lead a great crusade, the courage on the faces of the young—it is lovely to see so many young, that gives life and hope.

I am very sorry that my official duties call me away before the end of the Conference, but in all that concerns the raising of the Status of Women, my heart is eternally with you.

*The President:* Mrs. Jessie Street is an important leader of the women's movement in Australia. She was Chairman of the Conference which drafted a Women's Charter there. She also went to the San Francisco Conference as Australian Delegate, and we are happy to have her here today, on her way



back to Australia. I will now request Mrs. Jessie Street to address the Conference.

*Mrs. Jessie Street* said: I am very pleased to be here and to bring you a message of greetings and good wishes from the men as well as the women of Australia. We in Australia have great sympathy and admiration for the good work which the women of India are doing. From the excellent report to which we have been listening one fact stands out clearly, and that is that women's problems are basically the same the world over. We women in Australia too have felt as you do on various questions, and in fact, we have already prepared a Women's Charter on lines very similar to those laid down in the Presidential Address.

We in Australia do not look upon sex as a barrier for doing or not doing a certain type of work. We work equally with men, and those who have the best ability and the deepest insight become the leaders in a community, whether they be men or women. We have fought—and are still fighting in some directions—for the complete elimination of sex discrimination, and for the realisation of the principle of equal status, rights and opportunities for men and women. We do not maintain an attitude of superiority, or jealousy of the status of men, but we do take our stand on the fundamental principle that men and women should work together, hand in hand, for the common good of humanity as a whole.

May I thank you, Madame President, for having given me this opportunity of speaking and of expressing my best wishes to you for a successful Conference. Thank you very much.

*The President*: We are glad to have with us four visitors from the Lebanon, who have come specially to attend our conference. I will ask one of them Mrs. E. Bastoris, a worker and writer in her own country in the cause of women, to say a few words.

*Mrs. E. Bastoris* said: May I express on behalf of myself and my fellow-visitors from Lebanon how happy and proud we are to be with you today, and to take part in this great gathering of Indian women. I will not say very much on this occasion, but will just say how earnestly we feel the necessity today for men and women of all nations to work together to bring about real justice and peace in the world, justice not only between the sexes but amongst the nations.

*The President*: Now we come to the Province of Sind and to one of its distinguished daughters, Miss Jethi Sipahimalani. We congratulate her on her recent success in being elected unopposed to the Sind Legislative Assembly.

*Miss Jethi Sipahimalani* said: It is the good fortune of the women of

Sind that the Conference has been held in this old town of Hyderabad this year. It is a matter of inspiration to us to come into contact with our sisters from all over India and to take part in their deliberations. The Conference has grown from strength to strength ever since it was first founded more than eighteen years ago. It has passed its adolescent stage now, and has attained maturity. It must now concentrate with ever-increasing intensity on problems of the welfare of women and children in this country; but even before that, I would say that it must keep itself in the vanguard of our country's fight for freedom, without which everything else can but remain a matter of theory.

Thank you, Madam President, for giving me this privilege of saying a few words, and for the kind words you have said. I hope that you and the delegates will have happy time in our Province of Sind, and I wish the Conference great success.

*The President:* I will now call upon one who although she has come from England to this Conference, is one of India's daughters. I am sure that what she has to say will be very interesting as the experience of an Indian abroad. I now request Miss Venu Chitale to say a few words.

*Miss Venu Chitale* said: I have come from a great distance—a journey of over 5,000 miles—to attend a women's conference in my own country! I have been an Indian abroad, and in my own way have represented India to the people of the West. I may as well tell you straightaway that there is very little interest in Indian affairs in England. The English are definitely not interested in India, and if they have some knowledge about things Indian, they always ask us, what about the Hindu-Muslim problem. The English press is in the same position, and hardly any news about India is printed in the English papers.

I went along with Mrs. J. K. Handoo, who was sent as a representative of the All-India Women's Conference, to the Board Meeting of the International Alliance of Women Voters in Geneva. Now Switzerland is a very interesting country. Although it is so small, it has several communities and languages, and yet the people all call themselves Swiss and are united. They do not consider the language problem as a barrier to their unity. For example, I met the lift-boy every day in the hotel lift. He was always reading a book whenever he had a few minutes to spare. I asked him what it was that he was reading. He pointed it out—it was an English grammar book. "How many languages can you speak?" I asked him. "I can speak French and German" he said, "And I am learning English. I would like to learn an Indian language also. Do you think I can learn Urdu?" Such is the way in which languages are dealt with in Switzerland. If Indians could have that spirit where language and community differences are concerned, India would be a long way

ahead of all other countries. It is the duty of Indian women to bring about unity and freedom in the country. But in the first place, the women themselves have to be free. In these days reading and writing has become absolutely essential in daily life and I would plead with my sisters to do everything in their power to increase the percentage of literacy in this country. Indian women must be free and strong in themselves to bring these blessings to the country. They must be economically independent, for, without that, they could never have real independence and equality.

I wish this Conference great success. Thank you.

*The President:* And now, last, but not least, we are to have the pleasure of hearing a representative of the opposite sex. Dr. Daud Pota, the Director of Public Instruction in Sind, has kindly consented to address this gathering, and I now call upon him to say a few words:

*Dr. Daud Pota* said: Being the only man who has been allowed to speak at this big gathering, I feel extremely nervous and diffident on this platform. After all the eloquent speeches that we have heard, it is difficult for me to say anything, but this I must express, and that is the great admiration I feel for the way in which the women of our country have been forging ahead. I would say that their demand for equality with men is not only justified, but that women are the superiors of men in the field of loving service. There are still many disabilities and handicaps to weigh down the women of this country. In my own province of Sind there are many such disabilities which hinder women's progress. There is the bad custom of the dowry system for example. There is also the problem of education for women. The purdah system has hindered women a great deal. The Qoran itself has not sanctioned purdah, and therefore every effort should be made to do away with it. Well, I will not say more than to thank you, Madam President, for the honour you have done me by asking me to speak here today.

*The President:* Mrs. Sarojini Naidu will propose a vote of thanks.

*Mrs. Sarojini Naidu:* I have listened so very carefully to the many eloquent speeches today that I have lost my voice. I do not propose to enter into competition with any of the International orators or with any of the local orators. I have got a very pleasant task to perform—surely a nice kind of duty to perform—and that is to give thanks to the deserved and the undeserved and I have no desire to discriminate in such matters.

I was thinking, as at times I do think, while the need of a Charter of Women's Rights was being proclaimed here, how sad was the feeling of men, who were hearing of it, how well-known (from their faces) was their anxiety to see that their interests were properly guarded and how pathetic was the role of Mr.

Daud Pota, who pleaded the cause of women (Laughter). About this Charter, I formed an impression after its sympathetic consideration that it was merely a motherly charter intended to protect the immemorial rights men had not deprived of women. Take the instance of a small family consisting of a husband and wife and a few children. I am not going to give you a list of rights and privileges of a husband or a wife, but I think, it is one of the pleasant rights especially of the wife to have her dinner with her husband sitting and chatting by her side. This simple and harmless right or privilege as some may call it, is denied to a wife whose husband is in the habit of spending his nights in clubs. I am not going to tell you here the romantic tales of College boys and girls. Looking around, and seeing so many young faces, I become furious why I was born so many years ago, especially against my will. Mine was the solitary voice in those days. Now I speak through the plentiful voices of these my heirs, of whom I am justly proud—very proud, the old granny that I am. I am very proud of Hansa Mehta. She has in a timely manner brought a very important issue before you, which is destined to change not only the whole of Indian History but the history of the whole World.

Today, you have heard through one of the distinguished women of India, the voice of India herself. She has in a straight-forward manner cut the shape of a garment for the future womanhood of India. She has cut it with precision and it is so perfect in its fabric that it hardly needs to be called a Charter, and it is being placed before you not for the rights of women but for the opportunities it offers to serve with men. That has always been the ancient ideal on which Indian civilization is based. It has been the ideal and the dream of women (even deities) that they should be treated as comrades in arms, sit side by side, work hand in hand and should not be treated as chattels. That is the ideal for Indian men and women and it is an ideal for the world also.

Today, we have heard of the position that is held by the Arab women. We have heard through Mrs. Street, who attended the San Francisco Conference what the women of Australia look for. We have heard about the marvellous deeds of the WRENS. We have heard our youthful little Miss Venu Chitale, who has been to Paris and Geneva telling us nicely and kindly how we should get on. Hearing all these speeches, I do believe in the principle which has been amply demonstrated that 'why kill with the sword when you can bruise with the lily'.

I have given my attention to the speeches of Miss Agatha Harrison and others from far off countries. She shares our dreams and our hopes. I want to give her and to them all a message for the greetings they have brought, for the good wishes they have expressed on behalf of the organizations they represent—to speakers from Australia and Sweden, who have said that the problems of women in India and their countries are singularly one and there is no differ-

ence fundamentally: the problem of women is one and indivisible. But in the solution of this problem, you have gone further, as there was a desire and an opportunity given to you. Coupled with the desire, it is the opportunity that makes an achievement possible and the nations here have not got equal opportunities even for men to achieve their goal, much less for women. I want to assure you that we are always ready to co-operate with the women of every country, large or small, for womanhood everywhere is indivisible. It is on this basic ideal of womanhood that we hate war—we loathe war, and we condemn it with every fibre of our being. We condemn the cruelty of the barbarous West—of Civilised Nations—which for the sake of altering the frontiers of countries revel in destruction.

To the women of exploited countries, we send our promise of co-operation and hope that they will rise to their strength soon.

We are disinherited in our own country; our rights have been confiscated; our properties have been confiscated; but let me warn you that we have not lost our spiritual liberty, which is the basis of Political liberty. We shall no longer remain slaves. If the older generation has no strength to attain Political liberty, the younger generation has the power, the strength, the desire and the unity—the spiritual unity—which is the precursor of Political unity. The day of deliverance is approaching near—deliverance from every bondage that binds us all. The spirit in us is not dead.

Today, we have gathered here in this ancient City of Hyderabad where we have among us women of more progressive and freer countries. To them I give this message “the freedom you have got is not real, so long as a single woman remains in bondage, and so long as that freedom contains inequality and a chance of one country being exploited at the cost of another.” Therefore, my message of goodwill to you women is, ‘Set up your house in order, break the chains that bind you, stand up and attain the full stature of womanhood and bring Peace, which is the real mission of womanhood.’

One word of gratitude to my hosts and friends on the Reception Committee on behalf of myself and the A.I.W. Conference. I know there will be votes of thanks for them, both by incoming and outgoing Presidents—for the warm welcome, the warm hospitality, and the sumptuous food they have given us so much so that we are nearly dead! We shall revive tomorrow with a little fasting. Thank you all the same.

*The President:* Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru will second the vote of thanks.

*Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru* speaking in Hindustani, translated the substance of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's speech and seconded the vote of thanks proposed by her.

*The President* then announced adjournment of the Conference till 10 a.m. next day.

# ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

## Proceedings of Second Day—29th December 1945

10 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 2-30 P.M. to 5-30 P.M.

The Conference resumed at 10 a.m. on the 29th December.

Before beginning the programme of business *Mrs. Kulsum Sayani*, Hon. General Secretary, spoke in Hindustani, giving a gist of the proceedings of the previous evening's Opening Session.

*Shrimati Hansabehn Mehta*, President, announced that the resolutions and speeches in English would be translated in Hindustani for the convenience of the Delegates. She also requested Miss Mae Gordon, a distinguished visitor from U.S.A., to address the gathering for a few minutes.

*Miss Mae Gordon* (U.S.A.), while bringing the blessings and best wishes and warm thanks from the women of America for the invitation extended to them, regretted that more American women could not attend the Conference, as they were engaged in educational and other missions in their own country. She herself had been in India for about eight months for Famine Relief work in Bengal, being deputed through the International Alliance.

The speech was translated in Hindustani by Lady Rama Rau.

*The President* then asked the Sectional Secretaries and the Branch Representatives to present their reports for the period from May 1944 to December 1945. The following reports were presented:

### REPORT ON SOCIAL SECTION

Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rao, Member-in-Charge.

This report covers the period from May 1944 to December 1945. It is the first consolidated annual report of the work of the "Social Section" with the following sub-sections:

- (1) Social Legislation including Health Insurance (in charge of Mrs. J. R. Doctor)

- (2) Harijan Welfare (in charge of Mrs. M. S. H. Jhabwala)
- (3) Traffic in Women and Children (in charge of Mrs. Renu Chakravarti)
- (4) Legal Disabilities (in charge of Mrs. K. Shiva Rao).

No report has been received from the member in charge of Social Legislation since she has had no material sent to her from the branches. I suggest that the member in charge of this subject should appoint corresponding members in the different branches and especially in those branches which are in the capitals of provinces. The latter will help themselves in touch with social legislation in the provincial Assemblies and inform the member in charge.

The member in charge of Harijan Welfare (Mrs. Jhabwala) sent two reports on her work describing the uphill task she has had to face in initiating Harijan work in branches and the guidance she gave for organizing work first by issuing circulars and then by personal visits to branches. In the course of the year she visited several branches in and near Bombay, such as Baroda, Broach, Surat and some centres in Gujarat and organized the work by correspondence in other centres such as Ahmedabad, Kolhapur, Jubbulpore, Krishnagar, Nadia (Bengal) and in the Maharashtra. Wherever centres of the Harijan Sewa Sangh exist, the branches were asked to co-operate with them in order to avoid duplication and save expense. The work has varied from branch to branch, but it generally includes literacy classes, maternity work, distribution of clothes and milk and the improvement of hygienic conditions.

In her half-yearly report the member-in-charge said that some of the branches had begun to do splendid work after having overcome certain initial difficulties, and she hoped that other branches as well would take up this work in earnest. According to her latest report, however, it seems that branches have not made more progress in the work, and she concludes with the remark that unless the barriers between Harijans and other communities are removed, no progress will be possible since their disabilities are as much social as they are economic. I fully agree with this observation and should like to go further and invite the Conference to consider whether the use of the term "Harijan" does not constitute an unhealthy distinction between one class and another. What we really want to work for is an equal status for all communities in regard to amenities such as wells and roads, and social services such as schools, hospitals etc. maintained out of public funds.

A very interesting report has come from the member in charge of Traffic in Women and Children, Mrs. Renu Chakravarti. She points out that traffic in women and children has not only increased during the last year or two but has taken on a new aspect altogether, on account of the extreme economic distress in India, especially in the famine areas. She maintains that traffic in



women and children in the past was mostly confined to a few agencies or to some perverted and incorrigible individuals; but now it has spread at least in some parts of India to considerable sections of society.

The reasons given are (1) that the extreme economic stress and food shortage in some parts of the country have affected the entire peasantry, as well as the middle classes, and in order to alleviate some of the hardships husbands have been found to sell their wives with the children, and women have sold themselves to ensure a bare existence; (2) the second reason given is that the famine affected a much larger percentage of men than women, and therefore unprotected women in great economic stress fell easy victims to traffickers; (3) a large percentage of the peasantry sold their lands and the poorest classes sold their implements of production, such as fishing nets, handlooms etc., in order to buy food, and were therefore left without any means or equipment for earning their livelihood. In October 1943, the Registrar's Office in Bankura shows, according to the report, that 2,500 to 3,000 bighas of land changed hands almost daily. In Chittagong three times the number of transfers of land were reported to have been registered during 1943-44 compared with those in 1942-43. In some of the affected Bengal districts 85 to 90 per cent of the population was on the verge of starvation, and it is small wonder if girls were sold. (4) The presence of a large army always tends to encourage immoral traffic.

The member in charge has given many instances to demonstrate these factors at work which, however, I cannot reproduce here for lack of space. The effect of this large-scale spread of traffic in women and children has been to uproot family life in many districts of Bengal, and it is a very great problem in what way these women can be rehabilitated. The number of brothels has also increased, and according to the figures in the report of the Director of Social Hygiene, Government of Bengal, the number of prostitutes in Calcutta was estimated at 25,000 in 1938, as against 40,000 at present. This raises an allied question, which is that of V.D. rampant in almost all the big cities in India.

Our branches have done very little so far in tackling the question of immoral traffic in women and children. More than anywhere else, Bengal has taken up some work in this direction, because the need was felt to be absolutely imperative. So far as the rest of India is concerned, information is meagre, being limited to a report received from the Maharashtra branch which reports the prevalence of the Devadesi system in a place called Jejuri.

Government also has not tackled the problem seriously. From the report of the member in charge, it appears that the Bengal Government, in response to public agitation, admitted in the Bengal Assembly in April 1944 that immoral traffic had been on the increase, and it proposed measures to check this evil by establishing watches at railway stations, mouths of rivers etc. and keeping an eye on traffickers. It was, further suggested that relief homes be set

up for women in places where there are many women destitutes and the staffs of these homes be so chosen as to give complete safety to the women. Semi-official committees with women members were to be appointed to look after these homes and Government was to give subsidies to such institutions. Some homes were, in fact, started, but the treatment of the women there was reported to be very unsatisfactory; and when unofficial visitors tried to get at the real facts, the women were unwilling to answer questions about the management of the homes because they feared they would be ill-treated as a result. Fifteen women were reported to have been thrown out after our member in charge had visited one home in Tapakhola, Faridpur, barely two hours after she had left the place. The home was badly run, without a single woman on the staff and no organised work being done. There was no proper arrangements made for training women to earn an honest living through cottage industries or crafts.

The report records a sharp drop in numbers in such Government-sponsored homes, in contrast with other rehabilitation centres run by non-official public organisations which could not cope with the number of applicants. The police also were not very helpful in the battle against immoral traffic and therefore most of the measures proposed remained ineffective. Finally, the Bengal Legislature passed an amendment to the present Immoral Traffic Act to enable commercialised prostitution to be prosecuted and punished. The measure falls short of what the situation demands, but it is a step in the right direction and it is to be hoped that Government will follow it up with energetic action.

Individual effort and organisations have done more to fight this evil than Government. Several women's organizations, including the A.I.W.C., have set up homes and are running them with great success. The Calcutta, Krishnagar and Barisal branches are running several centres to rehabilitate women and teaching them a means of livelihood. The Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti, the Brahmo Samaj Relief Mission and other organizations have done extremely good work. Our member in charge has made special mention of the good work done by the Nari Sewa Sangh, a co-ordinated body of 17 organizations which is running 20 homes. Individuals also have been known to fight against immoral trafficking wherever they have come across it in villages and towns, even at some peril to themselves.

The member in charge also refers to the small numbers of Rescue Homes for women and the malpractices prevalent in many of them and urges branches to take an interest in these homes and improve their management. She further suggests that women's organizations, or at least individual women, should be on the managing committees of these homes. Reports show that wherever women have been connected with the running of such Homes, they are better organised and do more efficient work.

Other suggestions of planning for the future are: (1) Centres be started where various cottage industries may be taught, so that women can begin to earn their livelihood in an honest way. For those who have lost their looms or fishing nets, funds be raised to replace their implements. (2) Women and women's organisations should start collecting information of malpractices in Rescue Homes so that suitable action can be taken. (3) A strong demand be made for the enactment of a law by which traffickers can be promptly and heavily punished.

It is hoped that branches, especially in the distressed areas, will take up this work seriously. Workers will have to be trained in adequate numbers for the purpose.

There now only remains the report of the Member in charge of Legal Disabilities on the progress of the Hindu Law Bills. In July 1944, the Hindu Law Committee published a draft Hindu Code on all topics of Hindu Law on which the Central Government can legislate, such as Intestate and Testamentary Succession, Maintenance, Marriage and Divorce, Minority and Guardianship and Adoption. Succession to agricultural property was not included, since that can only be dealt with by the Provincial Legislatures. The Succession and Marriage Bills published previously have been included in this draft with certain changes suggested by the Legislature and by public opinion. Explanatory notes are attached to all clauses requiring clarification or explanation. An additional chapter was added to the Marriage Bill containing Divorce provisions which the Conference and large numbers of progressive men and women had been demanding for many years past. In the circular of August 31, 1944, the Member in charge analysed the various provisions of the Bill so that members could easily understand the changes of the Law in the new Code. Members were asked to study the Code very carefully and send in their opinions and the opinions of their branches by October 1944 so that a memorandum could be drawn up to be presented to the Hindu Law Committee representing the views of the Conference as a whole. After the opinions were received, a memorandum was drawn up and circularised to the Members of the Standing Committee and branch representative again in order to prepare them to give their final views on it at the Standing Committee meeting in November 1944 in Delhi. The Delhi meeting then considered the memorandum and made a few additions and changes and the approved memorandum was then submitted to the Hindu Law Committee. The Standing Committee also decided to give evidence as an organisation before the Hindu Law Committee and requested several members to appear as witnesses before the Hindu Law Committee. The names suggested were: Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Mrs. Renuka Ray, Mrs. Saudamani Mehta, Mrs. Chandrakala Sahai and Mrs. Indirabai Deodhar. Evidence was given in Delhi on February 10, 1945 by Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, Mrs.

Renuka Ray and Mrs. Chandrakala Sahai. The other members unfortunately could not come to Delhi. The report of the evidence was sent to all the members of the Standing Committee and branch representatives as well as to the press for publication and is attached as an appendix to this report.

The member in charge has had an opportunity of listening to some of the evidence given before the Hindu Law Committee in Bombay, Delhi and Madras and realised the volume of opposition to the Draft Hindu Code from the orthodox section of society. Support to the Code came from the highly educated classes, both men and women, while the opposition mostly came from religious organisations. There was a great deal of opposition in Bengal. In fact, a women's organisation was formed in order to oppose the Code. In Lahore too there appears to have been a demonstration of hundreds of women against the Code and the Committee. On further enquiries it was found that many of these women were asked to come for a function at some purdah park and then taken in lorries to demonstrate in the building where the Hindu Law Committee was holding its sittings.

The Hindu Law Committee have drafted their Code in the light of the evidence collected and it is hoped that the revised Draft will be published shortly.

Our member in the Assembly Mrs. Renuka Ray did very good work during the Assembly sessions and kept the issue alive on every possible occasion. She has now ceased to be a member since the Assembly has been dissolved. We should like to assure her that the Conference and the public have greatly appreciated her work.

The Succession and Marriage Bills already introduced have lapsed with the dissolution of the Assembly. We now hope that the newly elected Assembly will introduce and pass the entire Draft Hindu Code and add to, rather than deduct from, those provisions which mark a definite measure of progress.

The Conference has published a small pamphlet on the Draft Hindu Code written by the Member in charge, which seeks to state the provisions of the Code in simple language and to make it easier to popularise its contents. It has been translated and published in Hindustani as well.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the work of any member in charge of a subject can only become effective if the Standing Committee members and the branches co-operate in supplying the required information or opinion to the best of their ability. In all-India matters it is the branches who have to voice their opinions and help the Member to evolve a uniform and co-ordinated policy. Without their co-operation her work at best can only be an isolated effort. I hope those members who have in the past sent in their opinions and contributions will continue to do so; but I also hope that the others will begin to realise that the voice of the Conference will only be effective if it reflects the views of branches all over the country.

## EVIDENCE BEFORE THE HINDU LAW COMMITTEE

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, Mrs. Renuka Ray and Mrs. Chandrakala Sahai gave evidence before the Hindu Law Committee on February 10, 1945 on the Memorandum submitted by the All-India Women's Conference. They stated that the Conference had 37 main branches and a membership of about 15,000 women. At meetings convened by the different branches hundreds of women who were not members also gave support to the underlying principles of the Hindu Code. On being questioned as to the opposition particularly in Bengal as coming from women, they emphasised the fact that this opposition came from an element among the so-called aristocratic classes who were not in touch with their poorer sisters to any extent and did not realise their genuine hardships. They did not represent women's organisations who had a long record of social service in the country.

Faithfully representing the view-point of all their branches, they gave full support to the main principles of the Code. They, however, laid stress on the need for complete legal equality between the sexes and suggested that the son and the daughter be given equal share in simultaneous succession. All other classes of heirs should also be guided by the principle of complete equality. They fully supported the "Absolute Estate" for women and were of opinion that wherever women administered property today they showed that they were well-qualified to do so and better qualified than men in many cases. In a country where education was so limited the large majority of men who held property were uneducated. They contested the charge that women were likely to be duped by others and stated that even if a few women were duped they would not be in any greater number than so many young reckless men who squandered their property on drink and evil living.

On being asked what they thought of the contention that there would be fragmentation of property, they replied that in recent times Hindu property was already being disintegrated at a rapid pace. Legislation to prevent alienation of agricultural property in particular was the only method of preventing further fragmentation; but this is a problem which would arise even if succession was confined to the sons of the family and has nothing to do with the daughter's share in property. They supported the monogamy clauses with no exceptions and pointed out that second marriages in cases where the wife was barren was not a necessity since there was a law of adoption in existence. If such marriages were allowed even with the consent of the first wife it would lead to consent being obtained by undue pressure and to great hardship.

They stated that the overwhelming majority of women were in favour of monogamy and rights of dissolution of marriages as a permissive measure. They

suggested that alimony should be clearly included for the wife in cases of dissolution and made certain recommendations in regard to the provisions for dissolution as included in the Code. They said that dissolution of marriage was provided for in some of the ancient tribes, allowed among some classes of Hindus even today and had become increasingly necessary as permissible to meet genuine grievances. They pointed out recent cases where a woman had left the Hindu-fold to obtain herself relief when conditions became intolerable and dissolution was effected by conversion. This was not a commendable method and would lead to the gradual breaking up of the Hindu fold. The Memorandum supported inter-caste and *sagothra* marriage as a permissive measure. It was also suggested that registration should be made compulsory for all marriages.

#### REPORT OF ECONOMIC SECTION (1944-45)

Mrs. Renuka Ray, Member-in-Charge.

At the last Session of the Conference in April, 1944, the Standing Committee appointed the Economic Section to co-ordinate the activities of the Sub-Sections of Food, Indigenous Industries, Labour and Mines. The Sub-Sectional heads will give the details of the work done under their charge. During the year and a half under review the work has progressed satisfactorily particularly in certain directions. Acute distress in the country and the famine and its aftermath has resulted in an influx of a large number of women social workers both young and old. It has meant that the work of alleviating distress and of rehabilitating women undertaken by our Branches in distressed areas has shown great progress. Both in regard to the problem of Food and the setting up of industrial centres for women quite a few Branches have been very active. But in spite of this it cannot be said that we have progressed with the rapidity that we desire.

*Food*:—Some of our Branches, particularly those situated in distressed areas, have been busy implementing that portion of the Food Resolution passed at our last annual session which lies within the capacity of a voluntary organisation such as ours to carry out. The Calcutta Branch collected data and sent a memorandum to the Famine Inquiry Commission and four representatives of this Branch gave evidence before the commission when it visited Calcutta. The dire need for milk even for children and nursing mothers led to the formulation by the President, Kamaladevi of a detailed scheme of work in this direction. Her Scheme was placed before the Branches for work. As a result, milk campaign weeks were held in the majority of our Branches with considerable success. Free milk centres for children set up by our Branches in Bengal during the days of famine continued to function with success. Other areas too started such milk centres. Some Branches, specially Gujarat including Surat, Ahmeda-

bad and Broach and also Bombay have done such propaganda amongst women to avoid wastage of food and for the introduction of a balanced diet in homes. The North Industrial Centre of the Calcutta Branch provides free midday meals to 350 women and their children employed in this centre. This is an example worth following by other centres.

The A.I.W.C. undertook to answer a questionnaire supplied by Dr. V.K.R. V. Rao, Food Planning Adviser, Government of India, in regard to pregnant women and nursing mothers. Let us hope that the result of this enquiry will actually help towards bringing about some substantial benefit. A few Branches have set up food committees which are functioning. It is essential that strong Food Committees should function in all our Branches. A demand for a National Milk Scheme under which milk for children and nursing mothers is subsidised on a countrywide scale has to be continually stressed. We cannot rest content until a long range food policy directed towards raising the subsistence level and providing a minimum standard of food for our people is inaugurated.

The setting up of co-operatives to supply unadulterated foodstuffs by our Branches, direct or in conjunction with Municipalities or other organizations, is another way in which Branch Food Committees could be active.

*Indigenous Industry*:—There has been a great increase in the number of industrial centres run by our Branches. This has come about due to the urgent need for the rehabilitation of women. Cottage industries such as spinning, weaving, dyeing, paper-making, tailoring, needle work are taught to the poor and destitute women at these centres and daily wages paid to them. The Mangalore and Belgaum Sub-Branche under Karnatak are running successful industrial centres. The Bengal Branches particularly Calcutta, Krishnagore, Bankura and Dacca have quite a number of industrial centres. I would like again to make special mention of the North Industrial Centre of the Calcutta Branch which has shown remarkable success. In addition to all the other activities it caters for meals for schools and other institutions. This helps such institutions to obtain unadulterated and nourishing foodstuffs while providing an income for the women at the industrial centre. This centre has also a small nursery school attached where instruction is given free to the children of all the women employed there. The Maitrayee Mandal and the Vanita Sadan of the Mysore State Branch are also successful industrial centres. The problem of marketing goods from centres started in the district and particularly in the villages has been very acute. It has been very difficult to market the products locally as the conditions of the distress has been widespread in these areas and transport difficulties are almost insurmountable. There is a great need for Branches situated in the larger cities to co-operate with the constituent branches in the districts and help to organise the marketing of products from the interior. Co-ordinated action of Branches situated in a particular area or zone is increasingly needed on this account. The time has come when a Central Market-

ing Organisation for the products of industrial centres can be established on a co-operative basis by the A.I.W.C.

*Labour*:—It must be admitted at the outset that in regard to labour in general, the work of our Branches is still very circumscribed and has not shown any particular expansion. The Member for Labour reports that she sent a circular to the Branches with a questionnaire from the all-India Labour Enquiry Committee, but that few Branches showed any enthusiasm or even replied. The Bombay Branch, however, drew up certain useful suggestions and sent them to the Regge Labour Investigation Committee in regard to Maternity Benefit Legislation. The Member-in-charge of Labour also reports that she had circulated the proposals in regard to Maternity Benefits under the Adarkar Health Insurance Scheme. This Health Insurance Scheme lays down the right lines but there are certain details which have to be considered. For instance, there is no minimum wages act in India as yet and until this is done, the workers' contribution towards this Scheme has to be considered carefully. It may be mentioned here that the Member-in-charge of Labour is a corresponding member of the international labour office.

It is essential that an organisation such as ours takes up the problem of labour and in particular women labour in earnest. It is not possible for the Branches to initiate schemes in this direction. Many of our Branches are far from Labour areas and perhaps even for the others a centrally directed plan of action will produce more fruitful results. It would be best to concentrate on one or perhaps two items in this field. After collecting data I brought up the subject of tea plantation labour in the Central Assembly last March on a cut motion on labour during the Finance Budget. Government have promised to look into the matter. But as already they have highly paid officials to look after tea plantation labour and yet nothing has really been done through all these years. I think it is important that the A.I.W.C. should investigate and focus public attention to the state of things in the plantations particularly in Assam.

*Women in Mines*:—This leads me to the sub-section of Women in Mines, which was taken up by the A.I.W.C. and centrally directed in the above manner with the result that we have been able to be more effective in our approach to this problem.

The A.I.W.C. has taken interest in mining labour over a period of years. The Investigation Committee we sent in 1934 strongly supported the imposition of a ban on women working underground in coal mines and also suggested ways and means for women to be employed on the surface of the mines. The report revealed the terrible conditions under which mining labour lived. The withdrawal of the Ban in 1943 was met by strong protest throughout the country in which the A.I.W.C. took a leading part. At its suggestion, an adjournment motion in the Central Assembly was brought and though all non-official mem-



bers supported it, the Government did not accede to the demand for the reimposition of the Ban. A cut motion during the Budget Session of 1945 was carried successfully but failed to move the Government. The President of the A.I.W.C. sent two letters to the Labour Member of the Government of India asking that an Enquiry Commission be allowed to investigate mine areas but this was refused on the ground that the time was unsuitable. Miss Shanta Bhalerao and I both individually visited the mines and found conditions no better than reported by the Investigation Committee in 1934. Agitation for restoring the ban and improvement in the conditions of mine labour was carried out by large number of our branches. In February last 'a woman out of mines' day was held by the branches of the A.I.W.C. throughout the country. Though the Government did not then concede to the demand for the reimposition of the ban, the exposure of the condition of the mines both by questions in the Central Assembly and propaganda outside led to certain improvements in the condition of mine labour. Questions in the House of Commons were also helpful. The Mines Maternity Benefit Act was passed in April, 1945. The Labour Member to the Government of India has introduced certain amenities for social security. Slight improvements in the scales of pay has also resulted. A great deal more and a far more drastic policy has to be followed before any real improvement can take place. The Government has at last promulgated an order for the restoration of the ban on women working underground in coal mines. It is expected that by February, 1946 this order will take effect.

Although the work under the Economic Section has definitely shown progress we cannot say that it has been able to tackle the problems to any appreciable degree.

It is no doubt true that far-reaching and radical changes either in regard to a nutritious and well-balanced diet nor the raising of standards of the poor or rehabilitating those in distress or any general and substantial improvement in the conditions of industrial labour are possible by the efforts of voluntary organisations, alone however enthusiastic. Only the State can inaugurate a policy which will bring widespread changes. Yet voluntary effort cannot relax on this account and must continue as best as it can until a Government willing to tackle fundamentals comes into being in India. Such efforts by voluntary agencies will not only help to ameliorate the condition of those in dire need to some extent but will be invaluable in training women towards being workers for nation building. I would appeal to our Branches to continue and expand their activities in these directions both by inaugurating practical schemes of work and by a continuous exposure of conditions as they are and a demand insistent and countrywide for a planned policy whereby minimum standard is guaranteed to all. Each individual woman in our Branches who is trained for this type of social work will be a valuable asset when under a new regime radical changes are inaugurated.

## REPORT ON FOOD

Mrs. Saudamini Mehta, Member-in-Charge.

When Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, left for America and resigned from S.C., I was appointed member-in-charge, Food, by the Standing Committee which met in Delhi, November 1944. After my appointment, I issued a circular on Food Campaign, particularly stressing the necessity of supplying milk to children, nursing mothers and expectant mothers and invalids; and also the need for starting Food Committees, as little response has been obtained from our Branches regarding starting Food Committees, I am here repeating the Functions of the Food Committees which should be started in all our constituencies:—

(1) Arrangement and priority for the supply of adequate and unadulterated milk for children, nursing mothers, expectant mothers and invalids.

(2) Arrangement should be made to open free and cheap milk canteens, with the help of municipalities and Local Boards.

(3) The Committee should demand a National Milk Scheme like that of Britain, which gets a yearly subsidy of £17 millions from the State to provide free and cheap milk to children.

(4) The Committee should demand rationing of all important foodstuffs including pulses, oils, ghee, eggs, fish, meat and milk.

(5) So long as these foodstuffs are not rationed, our Food Committees should try to organise Co-operative Stores to supply unadulterated foodstuffs at reasonable prices.

The Calcutta Branch of the A.I.W.C. has kindly accepted two of my suggestions for Food Campaign:

(1) North Calcutta Industrial Centre for Women—ably run by Miss Karuna Gupta, has introduced the scheme of giving free and nutritious midday meal to all the 350 women who work there. Along with the women their children, who attend the nursery school, attached to the Industrial Centre, also get free food. Not only this but arrangement has been made to supply clean and nourishing food to be sold at some schools and colleges at lunch interval, thus to prevent students from buying unhygienic food sold in the street.

(2) The Harijan Baby Clinic run by the Calcutta Branch of All-India Women's Conference has introduced giving multi-vitamin tablets to its inmates. "The American Friends Association" and "Friends Ambulance Unit" have helped us a great deal by supplying these tablets free of charge. We have started this experiment only four months ago and so far the results have been very encouraging.

After some correspondence with Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao—Planning Advisor, Government of India, Department of Food, we have been fortunate to get a Questionnaire to be filled in by pregnant women and nursing mothers.

As it is possible for me to do practical work for Food Campaign, only in Calcutta, I have tried my best to introduce the scheme of giving substantial and healthy food to children and women in Calcutta through our Branch.

## REPORT ON LABOUR

Mrs. Sudha Majumdar, Member-in-Charge.

Labour Welfare has become of paramount importance in the present times. Civilised countries all over the world are considering ways and means to provide and facilitate easier and better living conditions of Labour both economically and socially. It is being increasingly felt that all good Governments must further a national policy which will aim to secure to a better and wider extent their comfort and well being. The value of Labour—all those who help to foster the growth of the country's power and produce—is being increasingly realised and their welfare planned in a larger measure than had been conceived and followed in the past.

The Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation felt it desirable that the first Sessions of its Conference held after the liberation of Europe, should be mainly devoted to the full and free exchange of views dealing with urgent Labour problems emerging from post-war Europe. Welfare of Children who were attached to Labour was to be especially looked into and the need for co-ordinated measures to ensure normal and healthy conditions of life for the full and free development of their talents and aptitudes were to be particularly borne in mind. Questions relating to the welfare of children and young workers, maintenance of high levels of employment and minimum standards of social policy were to be discussed. Recommendations designed to supplement the social policy were to be submitted to the Conference. This unmistakably indicates the importance and urgency of improving the general lot of labour all the world over.

In May 1944, a Memorandum and a general questionnaire of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Government of India to collect data relating to wages and earnings, employment, housing and social conditions of labour was received. The committee was to plan a programme of social security for Labour—particularly of Industrial Labour in India. From this, those questions that would vitally affect women labour were extracted and circulated to the Standing Committee Members in August, as it was felt a statement ought to be prepared by our Conference to be placed before the Labour Investigation Committee. The circular dealt with the existing Labour Legislation and con-

tained a questionnaire regarding women's compensation act, wages and earnings, Maternity Benefits Act, employment, working conditions, housing Welfare activities and Social Security Measures.

About the middle of this year the Government of India prepared a unified draft scheme of Social Security for Industrial workers. It covered health insurance, maternity benefit and employment injury and was forwarded to all Provincial Governments for comments. On receipt of replies the question of introducing a Bill in the Assembly to carry out the scheme was to be considered.

As far as women labour are concerned the proposed scheme is likely to improve the existing Maternity Benefit Act, as it covers all perennial factories. This scheme is the outcome of the report prepared by Prof. Adarnar on Health Insurance which I referred to in my Report of 1942-43. His proposals provide for gradual progress by stages. But on the advice of experts from the International Labour Office, who visited India at the invitation of the Central Government, it is now proposed to tackle the problem as a whole, to ensure and speed up social security for workers. One of the clauses of the scheme proposes that all provincial medical services should be utilised for the purposes of the Health Insurance Scheme. In this way, it was felt the Provincial Ministries of Health will be compelled to remain intimately responsible for all health services operating within their jurisdiction, and thereby it was hoped all Provincial Governments would have a close interest in the working of the scheme. They are being asked to meet one-third of the cost of medical care by the provision of medical services. The Central Government agrees to meet two-thirds of the cost of administration as an ex-gratia payment for the first five years; and the remainder of the cost to be met by employers' and workers' contributions.

The administration of the scheme is to be controlled by a Statutory Corporation. A Central Board of Social Insurance to be set up under a Federal Act. In addition, as suggested by Prof. Adarkar, there will be regional boards and local committees and judiciary.

In this connection one may remind the Provincial Governments who now are considering this scheme, that it has to be borne in mind that the Minimum Wages Act has not yet been considered necessary to be passed in India, and so "workers contributions" towards the proposed scheme have to be very carefully considered.

The scheme undoubtedly is a step in the right direction. But at the moment it appears to be a mosaic of detail. Much wisdom and foresight will be needed to form it into a proper pattern for the actual welfare of those for whom it is meant. One cannot but feel that a very sincere interest and genuine goodwill towards those whom it aims to benefit are essential for making it a

success. It is also felt that women who have been so closely in touch with the problem of Women Labour in India must be included in the personnel of administrators, to guard the interests of Women Labourers who will be so largely affected by the proposed scheme.

In October 1944 the Standing Committee Members were circularised regarding the Coal Cess Ordinance of January 1944 for the promotion of welfare of labour in local mines. Under the provisions of this ordinance it had been made compulsory for all Colliery Owners to contribute a cess on all coal and soft coke despatched from their collieries in British India to the Fund for the purpose of promoting the welfare of Labour in the mining industry. Information was given that the Central Advisory Committee had been formed, but apart from a mining woman being included, no other woman had been taken in this Committee. It was felt, although we wholly condemn the employment of women underground, it would not be advisable to hold ourselves aloof from this Scheme which would affect women working on the surfaces of the mines. Their number is large, so their interests should be watched and safeguarded carefully, as far as it is possible for us to do so.

An amendment Bill to the Factories Act was placed before the Central Assembly last March, to make certain changes in the provision of holidays with pay for workers in factories, which includes a provision for fourteen days continuous holiday to be given to children, and ten days to adult workers every year. The Bill is to come in force in January 1946 in all provinces simultaneously. This meets to some extent a long felt want.

The main problem relating to Labour in mines in India, is the social and economic plight of the people employed in the mining areas. The existence of mining labour is sub-human. One is almost a beast of burden. At a very recent Conference of the International Labour Office Committee on Coal Mining, Mr. Rowland James, the Representative of the Australian Government very candidly was of the opinion that "Conditions of Slavery seemed to exist among miners in India."

In April 1945 the Central Assembly passed Dr. Ambedkar's Bill amending the Mines Maternity Benefit Act.

The prohibition on the employment of women underground was extended from 4 weeks to 26 weeks after confinement. Thus, including them ten weeks prohibition before confinement the total period of prohibition was 36 weeks. The Bill also provided for examination of women miners by women doctors and for an increase in the amount of benefit from Rs. 0-8-0 to Rs. 0-12-0 per day, to Rs. 6 a week for women working underground.

So far in spite of widespread agitation throughout the country and condemnation meetings held in all Branches of our Conference the Central Gov-

ernment did not re-impose the ban on the employment of women underground, which they had thought fit to lift in 1943. The mining areas of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa continued to employ women underground. In last June an interesting announcement was issued by the Labour Department, Government of India. It was stated "Every woman employed underground in mines will in future, receive on completion of her underground shift such quantities of milk as may be prescribed by the Central Government."

Recently, however, by a notification the Government of India decided to re-impose the ban on the employment of women underground in coal mines, from February 1946.

The re-employment of women in underground work was agreed to in 1943. We were told this action was taken to meet the requirements of war and the shortage of labour.

But according to Sir William Beveridge, Great Britain's wealth in peace and strength in war, are all based on coal resources, and the use made of these resources. The standard of life not only of the miners but of the entire population depends in the last resort in the degree of efficiency with which the resources are exploited. A large population, he admits, on a small island cannot have a high standard of life without large overseas trade. It has to be able to produce at competitive prices, exports either of coal itself, or based on coal. The future of the mining industry he feels, is a matter of vital interest not just to miners and mine owners, but to every man, woman and child in the country.

He states, the output of coal per man shift in Britain before the war was, that is to say the amount of coal representating the days work of a miner was, about one-fifth of the American output; it was two-thirds less, or less than two-thirds of the main European coal fields such as the Ruhr, Silesia, Holland, and Poland while producing by each day's work in the mines so much less or that on which the standards of living of the miners and of others largely depended, he said, they were claiming a higher not a lower standard of living as compared with their European neighbours. Then again, he adds, the wages of the miners during the war, were increased largely in money and substantially in terms of purchasing power. He estimated that they were on a level which could not be maintained in Post-war days unless the output doubled per man shift, making the output two tons in place of one ton as each day's work per miner. The problem of how to double in terms of coal—the produce of each miner per day he has dealt with at length. He felt it involved upto date mechanisation throughout the industry also all possible economies in transporting and distributing coal, and probably the sinking of 20 to 30 modernised pits, and the fullest co-operation of labour with a new spirit to be put in the industry as a whole. But never does he mention the need of harnessing the women of the country for a

greater output of coal. In spite of the extreme need of more production never has this been envisaged by the British Nation. Although their women have laboured unceasingly and with utmost competence in every sphere of work, they were not made to enter underground to increase their output of coal. And this is in a country whose man-power problems were so much more acute than that of India. The injurious effects of underground labour for the potential and expectant mothers of the race were no doubt too well realised by their men. And so the deplorable fact remains that what was prohibited in Britain was considered to be necessary and imperative here in India.

One can but hope that the much discussed ban will be really re-imposed in February next and we will never be compelled to tolerate the lifting of it again.

#### REPORT ON HEALTH, (1944-45)

Dr. Maitreyee Bose, Member-in-Charge.

A circular letter giving a detailed programme for popularising Nursing profession in India and also suggesting means for the uplift of the nurse was sent to all our branches in the middle of the year 1944. Suggestions were solicited from the health member of each branch as problems vary in individual cities and provinces but unfortunately this appeal met with a poor response.

Dr. Lazarus has very kindly written a Tract on Nursing profession in India. Smt. Kamala Devi had requested her to write this pamphlet and Dr. Lazarus very kindly fulfilled a long-felt want. The foreword was written by the Health Member.

Statistics about Nursing mothers regarding their buying power, diet and various other details were collected by the Health Member in response to a circular from the Food and Nutrition Enquiry Department, Government of India, New Delhi. The figures revealed the poor state of affairs in Bengal—a fact which does not need any revealing as hardly one mother in a hundred gets proper nourishment anywhere in India.

Now the Health Member is engaged in working out a scheme for bringing the opportunity of taking Nurse's Training within the scope of very poor and almost illiterate women by giving them a preliminary training by a special system of education. For this purpose a sub-committee has been formed with Dr. Nabajiban Banerji, Dr. Swadesh Basu and one educationist.

Figures are also being collected about the growth and standard of nourishment amongst Indian infants and children in response to a circular from the Food and Nutrition Enquiry Department, Government of India, New Delhi.

The Health Member has not received any report from the Member-in-Charge of Health—General.

## REPORT OF THE CULTURAL SECTION

Mrs. Kamala S. Dongerkery, Member-in-Charge.

The Cultural Section of the A.I.W.C. commenced functioning from January of this year (1945). The aim of this section being further to enrich the cultural life of the country, to bring together on a common platform the varied works of art of different provinces and areas, to preserve those arts which are on the verge of extinction and to try to reach people in all walks of life, the following programme was planned early in the year and circulated to all the branches.

Plan of work for branches:

1. Arranging a cultural week twice a year;
2. Arranging periodical exhibitions;
3. Arranging talks on literature and the fine arts;
4. Providing opportunities for artists and playwrights;
5. Repeating shows in workers' quarters and slum areas;
6. Arranging programmes in villages; and
7. Formation of literary circles.

Most of the branches were already arranging cultural programmes. The Cultural Section appears to have added to their enthusiasm and given further impetus to their work. The Nagpur Branch has produced a play "Sheila" on Hindu Law Reform written by one of the members of the Branch. Another very active branch is the Maharashtra Branch. It has to its credit the arrangement of several exhibitions of handicrafts, at Pandharpur, Dhulia, Shelapur and Poona. The work exhibited in these exhibitions included that of Bhat women from industrial settlements and others. The Poona Branch has an idea of opening a store shortly as a permanent measure for the sale of goods.

As part of my work on an all-India basis, publications on cultural subjects have been contemplated. I am happy to say that Shrimati Kamaladevi, the founder of the Cultural Section, has written a book, entitled "Towards a National Theatre" since the stage is a powerful medium for influencing public opinion. The book is written in her usual forceful style and strikes a hopeful note for the future of the stage and its place in India's national life.

A study of Indian embroidery has been undertaken by me and a monograph on "Kasuti of the Karnatak", the first of the series is in the press. It is my intention that each monograph should deal with the typical embroidery of a province or area. After the series is completed, it is proposed to bring out a comprehensive volume of the entire series. The material relating to other areas is being collected. Information on Kashmere embroidery has been obtain-



ed through the help of Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru. The publication of the books has been undertaken by the Aundh Publishing Trust and the cost is being borne by them. This arrangement has been made by Shrimati Kamaladevi for which I am thankful to her. There is much scope for our organization to bring before the public and further to enhance India's cultural wealth. The following are a few of the items with immense possibilities:

1. Collection and publication of the best nursery rhymes of the different areas;
2. Publication of illustrated juvenile literature;
3. Collection of folk-songs and historical narratives.

It is hoped that these subjects will be taken up in due course.

### REPORT OF THE ALL-INDIA SAVE THE CHILDREN COMMITTEE

Mrs. Urmila Mehta, Hon. Secretary.

The All-India Save the Children Committee was formed in 1943, to save children who were rendered homeless and destitute due to the havoc wrought by flood and famine in the provinces of Bengal, Orissa and Malabar etc.

Smt. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who was then the President of the All-India Women's Conference and I (who was then the Hon. General Secretary) visited and toured the famine stricken areas in Bengal in 1943, and saw the appalling conditions there at first hand. The situation was very grave and Smt. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit appealed for funds to provide shelter for the homeless and starving children. In response to her appeal, a sum of about 250,000 was collected. A scheme of starting homes for these children was taken in hand. The scheme was a ten-year plan; the children were to receive basic education, and each Home was to shelter at least 50 children. It was also decided to run homes in Malabar and Orissa in co-operation with the Servants of India Society. In Bengal our Branches had already started the work in this direction and so the homes for children already started by them were taken over by the A.I.S. Children Committee and a Provincial Committee was appointed. This Provincial Committee directly supervises over the homes run by us in the Province. There are five centres in this Province and 338 children are being cared for in the homes conducted by us:

Bhola	.. ..	113	Children
Bankura	.. ..	63	„
Bahala	.. ..	58	„
Brahmanbaria	.. ..	50	„
Mymensingh	.. ..	54	„

The Bengal Provincial Committee is considering the amalgamation of the homes in the last two centres. I visited these homes in the beginning of December this year. All the homes, excepting the one at Mymensingh have Basic trained teachers. Children are well cared for and are happy. The main basic crafts taught in these homes are spinning, weaving, gardening, carpentry, cane and bamboo basket making, etc. In Bhola they have acquired a plot of land and built thatched (kutchra) huts for the home. The All-India Save the Children Committee is making a monthly grant of Rs. 6,000 to the Bengal Provincial Committee for up-keep of these homes.

Here I would fail in my duty if I did not say a word of appreciation for the splendid work Dr. Maitreyi Bose, Hon. Secretary of this Provincial Committee has done and is doing for these homes.

In pursuance of the decision of the A.I.S.C. Committee to work in co-operation with the Servants of India Society, the management of the Homes in the Provinces of Orissa and Malabar has been left in the hands of the Servants of India Society, though the members of our Committee inspect these homes from time to time. I visited the home in both provinces in October 1944 and I have since made suggestions after placing the report of my tour before the A.I.S.C. Committee that these homes should be run strictly in accordance with the ideals laid down by the A.I.S.C. Committee. The Servants of India Society have their homes at the following centres:

ORISSA		MALABAR	
1. Shishu Sadan, Kumcha	30	1. Payangadi	36
2. Shishu Sadan, Cuttack	29	2. Dharmadam	17
3. Shishu Sadan, Rambha	42	3. Thekkot	20
4. Nari Sadan, Soro	34	4. Gopalpuram	28
5. Shishu Sadan, Jaipur	65	5. Erantipalam	47
	<hr/> 200		<hr/> 143

A monthly grant of Rs. 3,000/- is being made to the Servants of India Society for the up-keep of these homes in both the Provinces.

The cost of providing these 15 centres in the three provinces with necessary finances has been enormous. The All-India Save the Children Committee has so far received about Rs. 250,000/- by way of donations but after a year and a half of work the Committee finds itself with only a small sum sufficient to last about six to seven months in hand. The psychological moment when people came forward with the donations large and small has passed. The public seemed to have lost all interest in this deserving cause. The future is indeed grave. Unless the Branches of the All-India Women's Conference and its other members exert themselves fully in the collection of funds for the Committee, the

All-India Save the Children Committee will be forced in the near future to close down these homes where over 686 children have now found a home and friends and where they are receiving an education for good citizenship.

Before concluding this report I must thank Smt. Sarojini Naidu, who not only kindly consented to act as the President of the Committee in the absence of Smt. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, but also helped the Committee with her valuable suggestions and guidance.

Office-bearers of the All-India Save the Children Committee:

Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, President

Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Acting President.

Shrimati Urmila Mehta, Hon. Secretary.

Shree N. R. Sarkar, Hon. Treasurer.

## REPORT OF THE LIAISON GROUP OF BRITISH WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS CO-OPERATING WITH THE ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Mrs. Grace Lankaster, Liaison Officer.

It is with feelings of thankfulness that the Liaison Group in Great Britain co-operating with the A.I.W.C., send their report this year to the annual session. They rejoice that the contacts carried on with so much difficulty throughout the years of war can now be taken up again with renewed vigour and enthusiasm and that is possible once again for visitors from the West to accept invitations to the Conference, as far as passages are available.

The Liaison Group was delighted to know that these invitations this year had been given through an international body, the International Alliance of Women, and for us it is a particular joy that one of the visitors is Miss Agatha Harrison, who has been tied into the work of the Liaison Group from the beginning. No one could more adequately carry our greetings to the Conference and convey the sense of our deep interest in and sympathy with all its work. Our Chairman, Mrs. Corbett Ashby, deeply regretted that, owing to family anxieties, she could not accept the invitation to lead the international delegation as President of the Alliance.

The time that has elapsed since last report was sent in the spring of 1944 has been one of strain in both our countries, and it would not have been altogether surprising if, with the difficulties of communication and other factors, which seemed to exaggerate the difference between us, our links had not held. We think that the strength of these links was demonstrated by the fact that they

did hold. At the same time we recognise very clearly that our activities during this period have been limited and that there is no much to report on, but we believe that our friends in India have understood our restrictions.

The serious political situation has been a matter of deep concern to us. Members of the Committee, through the press and in meetings and by interviews at the India Office have made efforts to suggest means by which the deadlock might be ended. Early in this year a statement was drawn up by the Liaison Group, making another appeal to H. M. Government to release political prisoners, with this object in view. Over 100 prominent women signed this statement and it was well reported in the press.

Your Hon. General Secretary and Central Office Secretary have kept us closely informed of A.I.W.C. activities, for which we are very grateful. We were glad to know of the 'tracts' written by your experts on subjects of current importance, and the office managed, with some difficulty, to despatch 500 copies of these to us, which we are now selling through our organisations.

It has been a great joy to have with us in England this autumn, for an all too short visit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who came as a delegate to the first UNESCO Conference. She was elected a Vice-President of the Conference and her speech on the second day made a great impression. We do not forget that the Liaison Group owes its inception to the Rajkumari, and she herself acted as your first Liaison Officer. Soon after the Rajkumari arrived here in November she met our Committee and gave us a frank talk on the situation in India. Later the Liaison Group, together with the Women's Advisory Council on Indian Affairs, gave a reception to the Rajkumari, which was attended by representatives of women's organisations, and once again she spoke forcibly, not only of the work of the A.I.W.C., but also of the dangers of the present tension in India.

We had hoped also to welcome here Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and were very disappointed when she decided to go straight home from the U.S.A.

The Executive work of our Committee continues to be divided between Mrs. Corbett Ashby as Chairman, Miss D. S. Solomon, as Vice-Chairman and Hon. Secretary, Miss Maud Dickinson as Editor of the Bulletin and Hon. Treasurer, and Mrs. Lankester as Liaison Officer.

Miss Dickinson contributes the following paragraph with regard to the Bulletin:

'The main item of news concerning the Bulletin is that we have been able during this year to resume the quarterly issue, which was not feasible during the war years. This has been rendered possible chiefly because we now receive more or less regular reports from the A.I.W.C. Central Office through Miss

Avaibai Mehta, which is a most helpful asset, and also, of course, the greatly increased speeding up of mails enable us to give more up-to-date news. We are encouraged by the appreciative letters received and to know that readers find the Bulletin interesting. Since April 1944 we have 22 additional subscribers and a number of copies are sold at meetings. The Bulletin is also sent to all women members of Parliament, who now number 24. Thus our circle is gradually widening, and will, we trust, continue to do so. It was a great relief to the Editor when air attacks ceased at the end of March, as she happened to live in one of the most sought after areas of the flying bombs, and neither she nor Miss Harrison will easily forget the vicissitudes attending the June 1944 issue of the Bulletin. Delivery was uncertain and difficult and for no reason whatever the printer despatch three times the number ordered! Delays in printing still occur, but we hope that these will decrease as we get back to more normal times.

In conclusion the Liaison Group sends its warmest greetings and good wishes to the Conference and assures its members that we shall eagerly await news of the annual session. The coming year will see great changes in the political scene and in the national life of India, and it is our hope that Indian aspirations may be fully satisfied. We know that the women of India will be to the fore in all national activities and that the A.I.W.C. will have a great part to play in constructive work. It is our conviction that in the building up of a lasting peace, a free India will have vital responsibilities and that she will give a lead in the East to the work of International co-operation and reconstruction.

#### REPORT OF THE SECRETARY, CENTRAL OFFICE

The A.I.W.C. instituted a permanent Central Office during the period under review. The Secretary was appointed in January 1945 and instructed to carry out work under the President's programme which had been approved by the Standing Committee at its Delhi meeting in November 1944.

The purpose of establishing the Central Office has been two-fold. Firstly, as in all large organisations, to have a permanent centre with paid officers in order to ensure sustained continuity and to carry out long-range plans. In previous years, schemes have been half-accomplished only, sometimes, due to the unavoidable change of honorary office-bearers. With a permanent centre, services rendered by honorary workers are not in danger of sliding into the background but can be co-ordinated and concentrated, in order to form a solid foundation to build upon and extend, over the future.

Secondly, an entirely new venture in the history of the women's movement in India has been launched through the Central Office by the starting of a Research, Investigation and Information Bureau. It is to become a standard,

recognised centre where information and guidance regarding women's activities may be available to all persons, whether at home or abroad.

The programme covers a comprehensive field but owing to the fact that the Office was only recently organised and contains just one worker, it has not been possible to pick out more than two or three sections for this year as a start, details of which are as follows:

### PUBLICATIONS

*Tracts.* The scheme for issuing tracts on various subjects of topical importance by different authors has been carried through by the Central Office with the help of authors of the various pamphlets and has proved a marked success as far as the public are concerned, both as regards reviews and sales. Five tracts have been issued, of which three have been to the public. It is to be regretted that in the matter of sales the general response from Branches has been disappointing. Mahrathi translations have appeared of all the tracts, Hindi translations are being put through, and it is hoped, in due course all of them will have appeared in the important local languages. Uptil the end of the financial year, the Central Office has earned a profit of Rs. 113-6-0 on its cash sales; this is, of course, not counting its liability for all those tracts which have been distributed to the Branches and Standing Committee members, payment for which is still to come.

A Cultural series has also been launched through the Central Office. The President, Shrimati Kamaladevi, has written the first book in the series entitled "Towards a National Theatre". The Member-in-Charge, Cultural Section, S. Dongerkery, has been working on a sub-series in the cultural publications. Indian hand-embroideries are the theme, and she has already completed a Karnatak Embroidery Book. This sub-seris has been planned as a long-range project with several booklets to follow, in order to constitute permanent records of the artistic handicrafts still practised by men and women in various parts of the country. It is hoped that when the individual embroidery books have all been issued, they can be consolidated into one first-class publication which can command expert attention both in India and abroad.

"Women's Education in Modern India" is the title of a symposium which is at the moment in the press. Several leading workers of the A.I.W.C. and other women have contributed their ideas on education to this symposium, which was planned in the first instance by Mrs. J. M. Kumarappa who has also contributed a Note to it on "Why a Symposium", for which our best thanks are due to her.

It may be mentioned that although the Central Office has managed to see all the above MSS. through to publication this year, there have been great delays in its time-schedule owing to heavy pressure on printing presses.

The Aundh Publishing Trust are the publishers for the Central Office, and the distribution is by Padma Publications Ltd. The Office is allowed a 25 per cent discount on all sales made by it, and provided Branches wholeheartedly co-operate in the sale of the publications, this activity of the Office will prove to be a lucrative source of income, with very attractive possibilities of expansion in more than one sphere.

*Talking Points.*—The Secretary of the Central Office prepared short, simple notes giving the provisions of the draft Hindu Code at a glance. These were sanctioned for publication by the Standing Committee at its meeting in Surat. In consultation with the Member-in-Charge, Legal Disabilities, however, their issue has been postponed to a more opportune moment.

“Talking Points” on the forthcoming elections have been written and issued by the Secretary to the branches and sister organisations as a leaflet. It sets out the basic principles to be observed in casting a vote, together with information about women voters. Translations are being made and distributed by some branches according to information received.

A couple of articles on Employment of Women written by the Secretary have been published through the National Press Syndicate of which the Managing Agent is Mrs. Kusum Nair.

*Co-operation with other Organisations.*—The Secretary was invited by the Bombay Presidency Women’s Council to serve on its Committee which is organising a three-day Conference on Women in Trades, Industries and Professions in February next. She has attended its meetings and placed at its disposal whatever relevant statistics are available, as well as her Questionnaire on which the Committee has proceeded to collect information on its own, which in turn will be made available to her. The Secretary has given full co-operation in view of the aim that the Information Bureau should be at the service of all workers whether belonging to the A.I.W.C. or not.

*Information and Research Bureau.*—Head No. 2(c) of the President’s programme referred to above, viz., “Problems of Employment of Women, opportunities in services and professions, disabilities”, was selected this year in order to start the collection of data. The choice is particularly appropriate at this juncture. The actual results by way of statistics and research so far obtained have been drawn up. This line of work has had to break virgin ground as no compilation of relevant statistics has been available. Since the Secretary has been the sole member of the Office she has had to carry on without any assistance, beyond the cyclostyling of forms. The work has, therefore, proceeded at a slow pace, and has only just begun to take a recognisable shape. Inasmuch as even a Research Institute with a trained staff takes a period of years over such task, it is natural that the office has not been able to collate all the

statistics necessary in the short time and limited resources at its disposal. On the lines indicated, investigations into employment of women is likely to become a highly important and valuable service to women all over the country. For this purpose, at the end of the statistical analysis, a few concrete suggestions have been offered to members for their practical co-operation.

*Employment Bureau.*—This is being established at the Central Office, Government demobilisation is making hundreds of women jobless. This affects women in civilian employment also, through a heavy influx of men applicants. Further, the economic conditions in the country have deteriorated to an extent whereby many women are now entering the field of employment for the first time. It has long been felt that an Employment Bureau is a necessary step for the largest women's organisation to undertake. Owing to the difficulties of lack of staff or helpers, attempts to push this scheme forward have not materialised so far to any extent. It is necessary not only to have an adequate office staff, but also to have persons who will go out, interview firms and other employers, and induce them to take in our applicants in their vacancies. A few of the largest employers in Bombay were interviewed and the response has not been uniformly encouraging by any means. One or two refused to consider having women in offices on the grounds of sex, although they feel no qualms about employing hundreds of women as labour. The latest development has been a visit to the Central Office by the Assistant Manager of the Government Employment Exchange to discuss the possibilities of co-operation between the two. This, in turn, led to a visit by us to the Exchange to view its actual working and system. Mr. Pradhan, I.C.S., Regional Director, who is in charge, in the course of discussion invited our co-operation in regard to the placing of women applicants. He has suggested a close co-ordination between ourselves and the Exchange in order to avoid duplication of effort.

So far, more than 70 women have sent in their names to the Central Office for registration, and many more would have been forthcoming but for the fact that the list was closed for the time being. With regard to these applicants, we have enlisted the help of the Government Employment Exchange, for the present.

*Correspondence with Liaison Group.*—On instructions from the President, quarterly newsletters have been sent by the Central Office Secretary to Miss Maud Dickinson, Editor of the Liaison Group Bulletin. Contact has also been maintained with Mrs. Lankester, the Liaison Officer in London. The Secretary would suggest that she be given instructions to create and maintain similar contacts with women's organisations in other countries also and supply them with copies of the newsletter if they so desire. In this way, permanent international contacts can be developed on a wider scale than heretofore.



This would also help to make known the Central Office publications. The Liaison Group have been very appreciative of our tracts and have bought 100 copies of each of them, and are looking forward to our cultural series. The Central Office could very appropriately foster a strong Foreign Relations Section in this way.

*A Press-clipping Book* has been kept in the office. Since no member sent clippings, an agency has been subscribed to, and about 400 clippings obtained on matters pertaining to women appearing in the Indian newspapers.

*General.*—The Secretary has worked under the general guidance and encouragement of the President who has visited the Office daily whenever in Bombay. She has endeavoured to establish the foundations for the work that is visualised as falling within the scope of the Central Office by the President, both in the administrative sphere and along creative lines. It is hoped that a continuation along these lines with the close co-operation of the A.I.W.C. Branches and individual workers throughout India will show, in due course, that this office can become an instrument of highly practical and expert service to the cause of women in India.

### REPORTS OF THE BRANCHES

The Reports of the following Branches were presented and read by the respective Representatives:

Andhra, Bengal East, Berar, Bombay Calcutta, C.P. South, Delhi, Gujarat, Hyderabad (Dn.), Hyderabad (Sind), Indore, Karnatak, Kashmir, Kolhapur, Konkan, Madras, Maharashtra, Punjab Central, Sind, U.P. Agra, U.P. Oudh.

*The President* allowed the reports to be either translated in Hindustani or presented in Hindustani or Sindhi as the case might be. Mrs. Hajrah Begum translated most of the Branch reported tabulated by the Hon. General Secretary.

*Note.*—The tabulated reports from the Branches form an Appendix to this Volume.

### RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were then moved from the Chair:—

#### I. CONDOLENCE RESOLUTIONS

1. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference records with deep regret the sudden death of Shriman Raja Rajwade and offers its heart-felt condolences to Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade on the irreparable loss she has sustained. This Conference directs the Hon. General Secretary to convey this resolution to Rani Rajwade.

2. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference expresses its sense of grief at the death of Shrimati Satyavati Devi, the Congress worker of Delhi, and conveys its condolences to her relatives.
3. This Conference expresses its deep sense of loss at the tragic death of Miss Jyotirmayee Gangulee, an ardent worker for the cause of Indian freedom.
4. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference deeply mourns the death of Shri Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and offers its sympathy to her family.
5. This Conference expresses its grief at the untimely death of Shri Nanjamma, an indefatigable worker for the cause of women in Mysore.
6. This Conference expresses its sense of grief at the death of Shrimati Kamalavati Tejram Malla, sister of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, and offers its sympathy to the bereaved family.

Each one of these resolutions was then translated into Hindustani by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and passed unanimously, all the Delegates and visitors standing.

The following resolutions were then moved from the Chair, translated and explained by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and passed with acclamation:

#### CONGRATULATORY RESOLUTIONS

1. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Shrimati Swaminadhan who has been returned to the Central Assembly and Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru and Shrimati Jethabai Sipahimalani who have been returned unopposed to the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Sind respectively. They wish them all success in the work they will be called upon to do.
2. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on the excellent work she has been able to do during her recent visit to England and her election as a Vice-President of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Conference.
3. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference records its appreciation of the admirable work done by Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in America during the last year.
4. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Mrs. Renuka Ray on her successful campaign, as our representative in the Central Assembly, against the abolition of the ban on women working underground in mines.

5. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Mrs. Anasuyabai Kale, the President of the Capital Punishment Relief Society for the tireless efforts she made on behalf of the Chimur and Ashti prisoners, which were crowned with success.
6. This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference expresses its appreciation of the work done by Mrs. J. K. Handoo and the Indian delegates of the Board-meeting of the International Alliance of Women Voters in Geneva.

*The President:* Now, we will take up the resolution on the W.A.C.(I). It will be moved by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

The following resolution was then proposed by *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur*, which was explained by her in detail in English and Hindusthani:

#### W.A.C.(I)

“This Conference expresses its grave concern about the status and conditions of Indian (including Anglo-Indian) women in the W.A.C. (I) (Women's Auxiliary Corps of India) and demands the appointment of a non-official commission of enquiry, with a personnel commanding public confidence to investigate and report on the policy, functions, living and service conditions and the future of the organisation, with particular reference to the desirability of its maintenance on a permanent basis. Should, however, the Government refuse to accept the demand for a proper and comprehensive enquiry, this Conference urges the immediate dissolution of the W.A.C. (I), in view of the widespread disquiet caused by the almost complete absence of Indians in its higher ranks and the treatment accorded to the Indian rank and file involving in many instances loss of personal and national self-respect.”

*Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rao:* I have great pleasure in seconding this resolution because there has been such a widespread anxiety about this question. We have not taken up this resolution in this Conference because we want to raise problems because we know there are problems enough in this country. We have raised this question in this Conference because so many people have come to us and requested us to ask for an inquiry into the living and service conditions of the W.A.C.(I.) and see that justice is done. I would like to give you an idea as to how this Corps is constituted. The whole corps has a strength of about 10,000 auxiliaries i.e., those who are not of the officers' rank, and about 1,100 officers. Of the 1,100 officers, 720 are British, about 150 are Indians, 188 are Anglo-Indians and 29 are classed as 'others'. When I say, "about", you must understand that it is very difficult to get official figures because whenever official figures are asked for, they are refused, and therefore when we wanted

to look into this matter we have had to get at such figures as we could get. I believe, however, that these figures are really pretty accurate. Now, I would like you to have an idea as to the ranks of the officers they exist in this corps. There is one Senior Controller which post of course is held by a British woman. There are four Controllers with the rank of full Colonels. All the four are British. The fifth who was an Indian has resigned. There are 14 Chief Commandants with the rank of Lieut. Cols. Of them 13 are British and one Indian. There are 91 Senior Commandants of the rank of Majors. Out of these, 80 are British, four Anglo-Indians, three Indians and four 'others'. There are 539 Junior Commanders holding the rank of Captains. Out of these, 379 are British, 88 Anglo-Indians, 62 Indians and 10 'others'. Out of 438 Subalterns, 245 are British, 92 Anglo-Indians, 86 Indians and 15 others. This gives you a general idea of the composition of this corps. If you analyse the strength of the Senior Ranks, that is, the Senior Controllers' Senior Commanders and Chief Commandants, you will find that 102 of them are British and 'others' 3 are Indians and 4 are Anglo-Indians. You can well understand that a corps of such composition of its high command cannot possibly represent any Indian policy or any policy that Indians may like to follow. I do not know why even these few Indian officers have gone into this corps at all—but they probably did join this corps because they felt that so many Indian girls had joined this corps and needed some Indian officer to look after them. You will remember that out of 10,000 auxiliaries about 8,500 are Indians and Anglo-Indians and the rest are British and 'others'. But as we have seen very recently not one but a number of these officers have resigned because their voice has not been heard. They could not do anything either by way of welfare or render any other help to the rank and file and therefore they have resigned. They also have resigned because they have realised that the racial discrimination in this corps is more than they could put up with without losing their self-respect. You must have seen in the papers that there have been advertisements for the last three or four years asking Indian women—Indian educated women to join this corps; but it appears that once they did join they were not given their rightful position and were superseded by women with far inferior educational qualifications. Of the already small number of Indian officers many had no promotions even after they had served for 2 or 3 years. Few Indian women, it is argued, were coming forward to join the corps and those who were coming forward were not considered fit to be promoted. Well, if out of the 109 officers of the senior rank, 102 are British and only 7 are Indians, you cannot call it an Indian corps at all. If a sufficient number of Indian educated women fit for higher posts cannot be found, it would be better to demobilise the Corps or change its name. If it is called an Indian Corps, recruited in India and charged to the Indian Taxpayer it should be officered by Indian women. The plea that Indian Women had no training is not an argument. After all how were the British women

trained? They also did not serve in the last war. I do not know why Indian women should not have been trained in these 3 years. The fact that this was not done can only be due to a policy of not wanting to put Indians into high positions in the Corps. But it cannot be possible that out of 110 senior officers only 7 Indians were fit to be promoted to such a rank.

All the officers who have resigned have done so because of racial discriminations. You may say why did these women join at all? Well, that is perfectly true. However, since they have joined and suffered and have come to us for help, I think we should give them our support and insist on an inquiry to find out what are the conditions prevailing in this service. As I have said before, the Indian tax-payer after all has a right to know what he is taxed for. The war is over and yet even now advertisements are still appearing in the papers asking women to join the corps. What for? What are they going to do? We would like to know. What work do they do? In England it was a different matter. In England there was a shortage of man power. But even during the war here nobody can possibly say there was a shortage of man power at any time in India. But even if there had been shortage of man power during the war, surely there is no shortage of man power now. We would like to know if the members of the W.A.C.(I.) are doing social work and if so why should they remain in a military organisation? All these things should be clarified. The expenditure on this corps is tremendous. Now, I would like to stress here that I have not been able to get the official figures. They remain a secret. The war is over but they still remain a secret. But since I know what is the number of officers and of auxiliaries, I can sit on and multiply these figures and find out the figures. What I have found out is only a small part of what the real expenditure is. I do not know the expenditure on uniforms, allowances, training and establishment, travelling allowances and so many other things which we know nothing about. All I have done is to sit down and calculate the mere salaries of this Corps and the figure that I have come to is—to put it correctly—Rs. 18,000,000. This is nearly 2 crores of rupees. This is a large sum of money. You know how difficult it is to find money for education. Whenever the Sargent Scheme is being discussed, the one thing that is being mentioned is the lack of money—where is the money to come from? But here two crores of rupees are spent on the salaries alone of this corps and what is the return to the nation or benefit to the public? I have asked some of those who have resigned from this Corps why they had joined it and in what way they had benefited by it. The answer was that they had learnt and realised one thing and one thing only and that was, that they would never again join an organisation of this kind, that there can only be one kind of work they would do in future, which was to work for the freedom of the country. I think everybody will agree with this, but it need not cost the nation two crores of rupees per year. With these words I second the resolution.

*The President:* There is a suggestion that we should also ask that on the non-official commission demanded by the Conference there should be a member of our Standing Committee.

This suggestion was accepted unanimously.

*The President:* Is there anybody from you who would like to speak in connection with this resolution? Is there any member from the W.A.C.(I.) who may have resigned and would like to speak?

*Mrs. Shrinivasa, Staff Captain, G.H.Q. of the W.A.C.(I.), New Delhi, (resigned),* sought permission of the President to speak on the resolution.

She said: I know there has been anxiety in the minds of good many of you who have gathered here from all parts of India to know as much as you could about this Corps—this so-called Indian Corps. I happened to be one of the Corps officers who joined the Corps in the year 1942. I joined as the Staff Captain of G.H.Q. in New Delhi and I resigned on the 11th of October of this year. Now, from the resolution which you have moved I find that the Conference demands the appointment of a non-official commission of enquiry into the grievances and wrongs done to Indian and Anglo-Indian officers of the Corps and I am indeed delighted to find that this Conference has taken up this question. Unfortunately you must know that it was much against the wishes of Indian public that Indian women came to take up jobs in this Corps; but I may point out to you that it was purely economic stress which brought about this state of affairs, as, unfortunately, barring this military service, there were very few other vocations for Indian girls. We had very unfortunate cases in the corps. There were many Indian girls who although possessing higher qualifications suffered on account of racial arrogance and I do think that the time has come when we can get an inquiry held into the grievances of the wronged. I would strongly urge that the whole W.A.C.(I.) should be immediately disbanded and then we should form an Indian women's corps for civil social service in this country where it is so badly needed. I was looking after the welfare of families of the Indian soldiers. In the discharge of my duty I have toured from the Frontier of the Punjab to the south, east, west. I have toured about three-quarters of India and throughout the villages and I can tell you that social service is badly needed in this country and more so amongst the families of Indian soldiers at whose cost the war was won. A definite scheme should be prepared and placed before the Government and we should ask for money for its implementation as they have got plenty of money for post-war reconstruction.

The resolution was then put to vote and passed unanimously.

The following resolutions were then moved from the Chair, translated by Mrs. Hajrah Begum and passed unanimously:—

## NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

1. "This Conference feels that the question of Indian Independence cannot be delayed any longer and that the prevailing distress and chaos in the country can only be surmounted by the transfer of complete power to the Indian people and the establishment of the National Government enjoying the full confidence of all. It is also of the opinion that the constitution-making body as envisaged by the British Government cannot be a truly representative body, elected as it will be on a very restricted franchise."

## PEACE AND FREEDOM

"This Conference reiterates its belief that peace and freedom are indivisible, that the establishment of permanent peace is only possible when all the subject-people of the world have attained complete independence with full power over their own destinies. This Conference, therefore, views with great alarm and distress the fact that the close of major world hostilities have seen the opening of smaller fronts to suppress the rising tide of freedom movements in the various colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Europe by the various imperialist powers, and the ruthless assaults particularly on the people of Syria, Lebanon, Indo-China, Indonesia, etc. It expresses its strongest protest against the combination of the imperialist powers jointly to hold the subject-people in bondage.

"This Conference expresses its sympathy with and sends its greetings to all those who share with us a common struggle against imperialism and hopes that this will forge a common link of comradeship and lay the foundations of a larger brotherhood of nations."

## INDONESIA

"This Conference expresses its strong protest against the use of Indian men, ships and money to suppress the freedom movements of the people of the East and demands the immediate withdrawal of Indian Troops from Indonesia."

## I.N.A. DEMONSTRATIONS

"This Conference deplores the high-handed action of the authorities responsible for the opening of fire and lathi charges on peaceful processions of unarmed students in Calcutta, Lahore and Bombay, in connection with the I.N.A. demonstrations, and urges the immediate investigation of all reported incidents by a representative impartial tribunal of officials and non-officials."

## I. N. A.

“In view of the unique circumstances under which the I. N. A. was formed after the fall of Singapore and the spirit of patriotism which inspired its activities, the Conference joins in the Nation-wide demand for the release and repatriation of all I.N.A. personnel.”

*The President:* One of the visitors from Lebanon desires to speak. I shall now request her to say a few words.

*Miss Emila Faris Ibrahim*—Lebanon Visitor and Arabic Writer expressed her views in the following words:—

In the history of every nation, there are periods full of very important events which leave behind a great effect on the history of the nation and sometime deeply influence the future. Thus it is very important for the people of any nation during such periods to be careful in their social policy. The present period that humanity is going through is one that man has never experienced before.

Therefore, I expect that every person should be as careful as he can in his effort for the betterment of conditions in his country. The Women's question is a very important one indeed and hence it should be included as a main part of the question of all humanity. This is the only way to unite all efforts to emancipate man and make him a good citizen. Our reactionary way of thinking at the women's question and at every social question, is the main cause that puts us up against the hands of other powers with imperialist ambitions.

And now, let me, ladies, explain to you a point that may be misunderstood by many of the non-Muslim people. That point is local and it concerns the Arabic countries. Some people think that the Koran is an obstacle in the way of women's progress. It is not true because the Koran actually—if understood in the right spirit—gives Muslim women all what we are now fighting for all over the World—such as freedom of education, of work and business. It also gives her economic independence and the right of inheritance.

Before I finish, I should like to express to you our admiration for the Indian women who are on the same level as the best people in the World. The speech that was given yesterday by Mrs. Hansa Mehta was one of the best that I have ever heard. It was also a great pleasure to us to be able to see and hear the great Universal poet of whom we have heard so much in our country, Sarojini Naidu. I am sure that every Indian woman is very proud of the celebrity and fame of that great scholar. We too pay our homage to her.

*The Hon. General Secretary* then announced that Nomination Papers were to be put in the boxes provided for them, between 12-30 p.m. and 1 p.m. next day.

The Session then adjourned to 9-30 a.m. on the 30th December 1946.



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD DAY, 30TH DECEMBER 1945

9-30 A.M. to 12-30 P.M. and 2-30 P.M. to 5-30 P.M.

The All-India Women's Conference reassembled at 9-30 A.M. on Sunday, the 30th December with *Shrimati Hansabehn Mehta* in the Chair.

The following resolutions were then moved from the Chair and passed unanimously, each having been translated in Hindustani by Mrs. Hajrah Begum :—

### 1. HINDU CODE

“This Conference reiterates its demand for the removal of legal disabilities of women and hopes that the Draft Hindu Code will be introduced into the Central Legislatures at an early date. It trusts that the newly elected Assembly will support the Code and put it on the Statute Book without delay.

### 2. WOMEN'S CHARTER

“This Conference authorises the new Standing Committee to draft:—

- (a) a women's charter setting out their rights as citizens of free India.
- (b) a memorandum embodying their concrete demand to be placed before the National Government as soon as it is formed.”

### 3. RAILWAY CONCESSION

“The All-India Women's Conference is grateful to the Railway Board for giving concession to the Delegates and Standing Committee Members in travelling first and second classes over the Indian State Railways. They earnestly urge upon the Railway Board that similar facilities be extended also to those travelling Inter and Third Classes also which will enable a far larger number to travel.”

*Lady Rama Rau* then moved the following resolution :

### FRANCHISE

“This Conference reiterates its demand for universal adult franchise and deplors the existing restrictions on the right to vote with special reference to the antiquated provision for the Central Legislature under which only one per cent of the whole population is qualified to exercise the right of franchise.

“It strongly condemns the manner in which preparations have been made for the coming elections as their effect has been to exclude large numbers of qualified voters from the opportunity to exercise their right, such as not giving sufficient time for revision of Rolls, and by charging fees for applicatins to register in some cases.

“In particular, the Conference emphatically protests against the highly cumbersome procedure which has been followed for the registration of women voters, thus further reducing their limited voting strength.”

*Lady Rama Rau*: I have very great pleasure in moving this resolution today. It seems rather late in the day for us to be reiterating a demand that we have made from the inception of this conference. For years from now we have taken our stand on the demand which to us seems the only fair demand that can be allowed that we should have an adult franchise. It is not only in the case of women but in the case of men also, for this demand is being made all over India. We have, from the beginning, resented the terms under which the women are brought on to the franchise rolls—to the voters' rolls. The requisite qualifications are education, taxation, property, wedded wives of property owners and so forth. We all know that there are many injustices with regard to these qualifications. We resented this limited franchise and sent telegrams to London to protest against it. We wanted that the right of a woman to vote whether she was educated or not should be recognised. After 18 years the same question has been presented and I am sure that there will not be even a single woman from amongst you all who would not be in favour of this resolution.

*Mrs. Vidyavati Seth* (Punjab) said (in Hindustani): I am here to second the resolution. As in other countries every woman has got a right of vote, in the same way, we want that every one of our women and adult girls should be entitled to the right of vote. We cannot have the vote in the manner that we should go on requesting the Government for our right of vote and the Government should continue to refuse our demands, however reasonable they may be. The first thing is that in our country there is a great number of uneducated women. They even do not know that it is their right to be a voter. In some provinces we have got to affix a court fee stamp of Rs. 10 to an application for becoming a voter. In Punjab they have fixed it at As. 12. Thus these affixing of court fee stamp etc., were additional difficulties that we had to face in the case of women who did not want the right of vote or who were ignorant of the fact as to what the vote meant. Moreover the time given to us for this purpose was very short. The other difficulty in this respect is that we have got to take our women to the court and then have got to get the application certified by a reliable citizen and then too it is left to the goodwill of the Court to accept it or not. No man or woman would ever like such a procedure.

We want that all these difficulties that present us today in this direction should not exist at all and all of us should have a right of vote. We also demand that there should be fixed a separate day for women to vote. I have come to know that for want of proper administration, for want of proper number of polling agents and polling officers the workers had to face good many difficulties. We therefore demand from Government—a fair and reasonable demand as it is—to award to us our right of vote.

The resolution was then put to the vote and carried unanimously.

*The President* then called upon Dr. (Mrs.) Sukthankar, the Hon. Treasurer to submit her statement of accounts.

*Dr. (Mrs.) Sukthankar:* I have great pleasure in presenting the balance sheet of the Conference for two years from November 1943 to October 1945. Before presenting the balance sheet I would like to acquaint the Conference with the accurate financial position of the Conference. It is absolutely essential for the Conference to have a permanent fund without which it would be very difficult for us even to carry on our routine work. At present in the permanent fund we have only Rs. 7,000. Our Central Office which started two years ago had an expenditure of nearly Rs. 4,500 a year though the rent is very nominal i.e., Rs. 60 a year. We want to develop the Central Office and we have different projects to carry through. It is therefore absolutely essential that efforts should be made to collect funds for the Conference.

NOTE:—The Balance Sheets are printed as an Appendix.

*Mrs. M. S. H. Jhabwala* said (in Hindustani): I have pleasure in requesting you to adopt this statement of accounts. I have been asked to request you to mark the meagre amount of balance left in the fund. If you want that our voice should reach the huts and cottages of the villages then those delegates who have come here should carry the message to their branches that our central fund should consist at least of Rs. 5 lakhs.

*Mrs. Premlata Gupte* (Hyderabad—Dn.) seconded it.

The Balance Sheet was then adopted by the Conference.

The following resolution was then moved by *Shrimati Kamaladevi*.

#### PALESTINE

“Whereas this Conference stands for peace and is against the imposition by force of the will of the strong nations on the weak, it views with grave concern the situation in Palestine, for centuries the home of the Arabs where they have built up their own culture and lived at peace with people of all faiths. It, therefore, extends its wholehearted sympathy and

moral support to the demands of the Pan-Arab Association of Women for the rescinding of the Balfour Declaration which provides a national home for Jews in Palestine against the wishes of the Arab people. It calls upon the U.S.A. and Britain to set right this wrong without delay."

She said: You must have heard the name of Palestine for the last many years because for Christians and Arabs it is a religious country. It was here that Christ was sent to gallows. Mahomed, the Prophet, had lived and worked for his own religion here, and there is a big mosque here. The population of the country is 20 lakhs. The report of the Government of the country says that 8 lakhs of people are Jews and 12 lakhs Arabs. The first occupants of this country were Arabs. At present there is no space for more than 20 lakhs of people. Therefore any number of people that exceeds 20 lakhs is to be sent out by Government by force. For the last ten years when Hitler came into power there was lot of terrorism on the Jews at his hands and there were so many obstacles in their way. But now, Hitler is no more. Every European country wants to show sympathy for these Jews, and for what? They want to deprive them of their own country and then show sympathy with them. It is indeed very cruel to them. They do not send these Jews to or accommodate them in America or Britain but only in Palestine. In the last war one of the great officers of Britain had stated that all the Jews of the world should be sent to Palestine because it was their old motherland and therefore they should have their residence there. According to this policy many European Jews—about 8 lakhs upto now—have migrated to Palestine. But the Arabs have resented this movement as it is detrimental to their interest. Their lands are being purchased by the Jews because they are very rich. In fact all the people of America, Britain and other European countries are against the Jews. They do not say so in clear terms but their very actions go to indicate that. They feel that the Jews are amassing money at their cost and therefore it is their policy to get rid of these people from their country. With so much wealth at their command the Jews want to purchase lands and houses of the Arabs, and even those who are not prepared to sell their properties willingly are made to part with them by force. The Arabs are thus being terrorised. Therefore all the Arab countries have risen against this movement and have joined together and sent a challenge to the British. This has brought about a change in the policy of Britain. They have expressed their willingness to put a stop to further immigration of Jews; but they cannot now stop the immigration. The Jews, now, forcibly and even in violation of the orders, immigrate in Palestine. If so many Jews from outside immigrate into Palestine, Palestine is bound to suffer heavily. Out of 20 lakhs of Arab acres of land, 6 lakhs of acres of land have already been occupied by the Jews—and that land is a very good piece of land—with the result that Arab people have grown very poor. They feel that if they were to continue to allow the Jews to immigrate and settle down in

Palestine as they have been doing then the whole of their Arab country will be under the way of the Jews in no time. Americans and Britishers want that Palestine should be split up into two divisions—one Jews land and the other Arab land. We know in India what sort of harmful policy it is. By this resolution, therefore, we want to stress that along with the present women's movement we want to express our sympathy with Palestine and the representatives who have come from Palestine and who have impressed upon us all these things. The very difficulties that are facing Palestine are facing India also. Therefore we express our sympathies with them.

Seconding the resolution *Mrs. Lakshmi Menon* said: The Palestine question is unique; for here we have the case of a people who are asked to give up their homeland to provide a national home for the European Jews because of a promise which Britain made to them after the last war. Neither the Japanese occupation of Manchuria nor Hitler's annexation of Germany's neighbour states can be quoted as a parallel. For in the case of Palestine we have the unique case of two civilised nations professing liberal principles helping the European Jews to occupy Palestine against the wishes of the Palestinians themselves.

The Jews in Europe have survived centuries of oppression; as a race they are rich, cultured and influential. Their contribution to Western art, literature, music and philosophy and science is enviable. Yet for some unknown reason they seem to have alienated the sympathy of their governments. But that is hardly a reason why they should with the help, influence and resources of their powerful international organisation oust the Arab from his homeland.

There is another reason why we should support the struggle of our Arab neighbours. If we let this wrong go unnoticed, soon the integrity of other small states in the Middle East will be threatened by Powers who have the necessary resources to back them in their unholy ventures. So, even if we have no power to extend active help to the Palestinians let us give our Arab sisters here the assurance of our sympathy and support in their struggle to maintain the integrity of Palestine.

*The President*: I will invite *Amina-El-Said* to say a few words on this:

*Madame Amina-El-Said* (Egypt) speaking:—

Madame President and friends,

I should thank you and specially Smt. Kamaladevi very much for what they have said. You see every point is so cleverly depicted that I need not speak at all but I shall try to explain a few points to you. First of all, the question of Palestine is not a question of religion, because the Jews in Palestine have been living in that country for hundreds of years and they were happy indeed and they were getting all their rights they wanted,

all the money they wanted—in Egypt too the Jews have been living and they too were getting the best of comforts and we never tried to trouble or encroach upon their rights and we treated them as our brothers. The Europeans have some grudge against them—they hate them for their own religion. We do not. Our religion acknowledges even their Prophet as a sacred prophet and also Christ as a sacred Prophet and without that our religion could not be complete—so we are not like them. It is a different question altogether. Palestine is an Arab country. The Arabs are living in it for the last two thousand years. The Jews say that they lived there before us but we do not care what they say because there are Indians who lived in America from its very inception. We do not listen to their nonsense and it is our country and it will be our country—we shall fight for it to the last drop of our blood—in Egypt—in Palestine and anywhere in the world. We are all ready to save our Palestine because Jews in the world are 17 millions. Palestine is a poor little country. It cannot have more than two millions (20 lakhs). As the immigrants' number shows how 17 millions can come and stay in it. They will go to Syria and after Palestine they will go to Siam and they want to build an empire throughout the world. Last year it was stated that for Jews Palestine was not the only boundary. This indicates that they have got something else in their mind. We are all therefore prepared to defend our country and we do not expect of Palestine people but all the countries of the world to help us in this problem. The Jews in Palestine helped Americans with their power and money and therefore in order to please the Jews the Americans want the Jews to be accommodated in Palestine. But the Americans have no right to do that. They want to please the Jews at our expense and then they say, "we are the preachers of democracy." We are human-beings like them. We expect to be treated like human beings. If I want to give anything to a fakir in the street, then shame on me if I put my hand in somebody else's pocket to get a penny instead of putting my hand into my own pocket to get the penny for the poor man. Let Americans accommodate the Jews in their own country. Hitler is gone, Mussolini is gone, things are different now. They can go back to their country and live there. But we are too generous and still we do not say that they should go out of our country. Those of the Jews who have already settled there let them stay but we do not want more of them. We are not asking all those to quit though they are already 8 lakhs and we do not want to be kept out and give them the best of our comforts. But we do not want any more of immigration into Palestine. You see, things in Palestine are very bad indeed now. So many evil things are taking place there. When the Jews came they purchased a good number of pieces of lands in Palestine. They actually kick the Arabs out of every vocation of life and give even the meanest job to their own people and they do not like that anybody of us Arabs should earn a penny a day. Every day, you see, in Palestine hundreds of Arabs clear out of their

villages with bundles on their heads. But they have no place to go. The Jews receive every year millions and millions of pounds from people all over the world. American Jews subscribe and send 500 million pounds for National box but when we Arabs tried to subscribe and collect some money for our brothers, to help them there to start industries we are not allowed to do so. Not one single Government would allow us to send the money. They are having everything whereas we are having nothing nor can the Arabs store any money in Banks. That Belford promise which stated that Jews should have a right to establish Government in Palestine has created all these problems. It came from a European who had no right to make the promise. Belford has nothing to do with Palestine and it is for the Arabs to decide for their own country. When I was there something happened which I would like to say to you to give you an idea how things go on in Palestine. There was a Jews' cafe there and of course all the men there are Jews but he wanted one more servant but as he could not get a Jew he employed an Arab. But what punishment he suffered at the hands of his other Jews you will be surprised to hear. His whole cafe was burnt down because he was good enough to give bread and butter to one single Arab. That is all I can say to you.

*The President:* I invite Miss Shepherd (Association for Social and Moral Hygiene in India) to say a few words.

*Miss Shepherd:* Madame Amina-El-Said has spoken conscientiously and with all her heart. The Americans and English people have given to Jews for money their conscience to give Palestine to Jews. The Jews have also purchased Palestine with their money but remember Palestine belongs to the Arabs and will continue to be so. It is not to be sold for money.

*The President:* I invite a few words from Madame Ibrahim (Lebanon).

*Madame E. Faris Ibrahim:* Madame Amina-El-Said said enough about Palestine but I say that she forgot the most important point about Palestine. Palestine wants complete independence. Then only it will be possible for Palestine to solve all its difficulties. So I request you in this Conference to pass a resolution asking for the Independence of Palestine. The Great Powers including Britain in the San Francisco Conference resolved that the aim of their trusteeship will be the independence of even the small countries.

*Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru* speaking in Hindustani said: I feel an urge to tell our sisters who have come from those far off countries how deep is our sympathy with them and how happy we are that they have travelled this long distance to tell us of their problems which have become living problems. When, in connection with the Balfour declaration, Madame El Saïd pointed out that Balfour had no right to give a decision in connection with a country which did not belong to him, her words went straight to my heart as they must have

touched the others. It was so because we are familiar with that sort of thing in our own country where foreigners are accustomed to give decisions which we are expected to obey. It is because of our personal experience that our sympathy is so deep and we are so ready to raise our voice in their favour. It is said that Jews are in trouble and want a place for themselves in the map. I have every sympathy with them and their troubles; but the fact remains that they have no right on Palestine which is already over-populated. There are so many parts of the world lying vacant—in America, Canada, Australia where millions can comfortably settle down. But the Europeans would much rather keep these lands vacant than allow outsiders to make use of them. While following this 'dog in the manger' policy in their own countries they force the settlement of Jews in a small country like Palestine. But this is not the only country which is suffering. In similar ways the coloured people all over the world are being repressed by Europeans and we know too well what is happening in Indonesia, Indo-China and in the other parts of the world. But we also know that the day of Asia's redemption is near at hand and I have no doubt we shall soon achieve success in our joint struggle for freedom.

*Lady Rama Rau* speaking: I want Madam El Said to take back this message with her. After listening to the very enthusiastic and moving story that Madame El Said has put before us I would like to assure her that there is not one single heart here in this whole large audience today that does not sympathise with the Arabs in Palestine. I would like also to assure her that every one of us will take the deepest interest in the future of Palestine. I would also like her to take back the message with her that wherever it is possible every single one of us will interest ourselves in and will strive to help the interests of the Arabs of Palestine.

*The President:* I now request Mrs. Siddiqi of Karachi to speak a few words in Sindhi.

*Mrs. Siddiqi* in a short speech in Sindhi appealed specially to the Muslims of India to support the Arab cause wholeheartedly.

*The President:* Madame Ibrahim tells me to give you some information that Lebanese Parliament delegates at San Francisco signed a Charter on this condition that that they would not recognise the British Mandate in Palestine.

The resolution was then put to vote and passed unanimously.

*Mrs. Renuka Ray* then moved the following resolution:

#### CIVIL LIBERTIES

"(1) Whereas civil liberty is the inherent right of every citizen under a civilised Government, this Conference demands;



- (a) the immediate withdrawal *in toto* of the Defence of India Regulations;
- (b) the restoration of complete freedom of speech, press, association and movement;
- (c) the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, in particular those detained indefinitely without trials and those who have already served life sentences and others who have put in long years in jail;
- (d) the removal of bans on those released from prison.

This Conference emphatically protests against the ban on entry into Mysore State still imposed on Shrimati Kamala Devi by the Government of that State and demands its withdrawal forthwith."

*Mrs. Renuka Ray:* In 1940, at the Coconada Session, we took the definite stand that the fundamental right, the inherent right of civil liberties—the liberty of association of speech and of movement must be recognised in India. It is a basic right of human beings. The right of trial before imprisonment so much infringed in India should not also be violated any longer. But since that time, we are all aware of the circumstances in India. Bit by bit, we saw the violation of every right of civil liberties to a hitherto unprecedented degree. I do not intend to enter into any political implications as party politics are outside the purview of this conference. But the circumstances which faced us from August, 1942, onwards need no recapitulation. Hundreds and thousands of India's men and women including our well-beloved and trusted leaders were arrested and kept in jail without trial, not because they had infringed the common law of the land, but because of vague allegations and suspicions against them. Can the denial of civil liberties go further? Resentment against this was felt and expressed by every section of the people throughout the length and breadth of this land. But neither public agitation nor the resentment of an entire people was of any avail. When grim tragedy faced the country during the war years and when thousands upon thousands of men, women and children died in Bengal and in other parts of the country from the cruelest form of death, death by starvation, those who might have averted the disaster or at least brought more effective relief, were behind prison bars. Not only the leaders of our country but even so many of the leaders of our own women's organisation, were deprived of the liberty of serving their country in its darkest hour.

Those foreign sisters who are with us today have told us how much they have appreciated and been inspired by the words of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Some of them have said that they have never been so inspired before. Let me tell them of a singular and unique incident that took place only last year in Bombay:

when the Women's Conference had its last annual session. To express our great happiness in having Mrs. Sarojini Naidu back again amongst us to inspire and guide us, an address was presented to her by the Women's Conference and several women associations in Bombay. As Mrs. Naidu herself will tell you, she was nearly suffocated by the innumerable garlands presented to her. But on this occasion we were deprived of her inspiring words, not because she had lost her voice but because there was a ban on her right to public speech. It is only in India that such incredible things can happen. We are glad however that today things are different in as much as we have once more back in our fold not only Sarojini Naidu without whom we feel lost, but also Rajkumari Amrit Kaur whose actions have in themselves been an inspiration to us, and Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, our outgoing President Shrimati Kamaladevi and so many others whose help and guidance we could not have, when we needed it most. But unfortunately this does not mean that even today when the war is over that civil liberty has been restored in this country. The war may be over but the Defence of India Rules are still in force. Against whom is India being defended today? We may well ask. But there is no answer. Even today men and women are languishing in jails without trial.

I want to lay particular emphasis on Clause (c) of this resolution. "The immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, in particular those detained indefinitely without trials and those who have already served life sentence and others who have been many years in jail". I am sure, sister delegates, that I do not have to explain at length as you are well aware of the circumstances, and that you know that there are men and women in jails who have served their life sentences but have not yet been given their freedom. Then ban on free speech and public meetings are not completely removed so long as the Defence Rules remain. This leads me to the last part of the resolution the ban on Kamala Devi to enter into the Mysore State. During the war there was a ban against her from entering the Mysore State as well as many other parts of the country. As with the termination of the war such bans were not imposed elsewhere, she proceeded to Mysore at the invitation of our Branch but was denied the right by the Authorities from entering the State. Thereby our conference members were deprived of the privilege of her help and guidance as their President. I am sure that each and every one of you will agree that this is an action against which we must protest, and protest vigorously. India has been denied the inherent right of civil liberties and we can no longer tolerate it. I feel sure therefore that you will fully support this resolution.

#### ON CIVIL LIBERTIES

*Miss Sarala Gupta (Delhi)*: During the long and strenuous years of war, the British Government in India has unleashed severest atrocities and terror

under one safe screen—'The Defence of India Rules'. I ask the Government, whom are they defending by the D.O.I.R.? Is it we, the 400 millions by arresting our leaders and fighters for freedom, by starving us, by denying us even the barest necessities of life? If this is defence, we do not want it. We know better how to defend ourselves and against whom. Today every child in India knows that by the Defence of India Rules the British Government defends not us, but its own Capital, its own vested interests, its own Imperialist designs in a vast colony—India. Today we demand with one voice the withdrawal of the D.O.I.R. together with the immediate and unconditional release of all the political prisoners.

India has suffered as no other colony has. The brave and dear sons of our land have undergone 18, 20 and even 30 years of imprisonment and some 43 of the Life Prisoners still rot behind the prison bars, even after having served a total of 603 years of imprisonment. Patriots like Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Kali Chakravarti and a number of other Pre-Reform prisoners still rot behind the bars even after serving full terms. Politicals in 1942 were detained without even a semblance of trial. And the political prisoners who have been released meet no better fate. They are served with internment orders, externment orders, gag orders, banning freedom of movement, speech and association. A heavy censor throttles the free voice of the press.

Freedom is our birthright and we shall fight to win it but the civil liberties are the most elementary rights of any civilised nation. The British Government boasts of practising Democracy in colonies but we know how the false pretensions of even a Labour Government in England have been only too well exposed before all to need further elucidation.

The principle of the right to live has taught us that we live as free and respectable beings—not at the mercy of the Imperialists but on the strength of our own co-operation. This is what makes us fight for the attainment of our civil liberties—release of all our political prisoners, cancellation of restriction orders and the immediate withdrawal of the universally hated D.O.I.R. With these words I second the resolution.

*Mrs. Tarabai Randive, (Berar):* It is hardly necessary to make any long speech in support of the resolution demanding the immediate release of persons who have been kept rotting in jail for the simple reason that their opinion and views are not palatable and convenient to the present Imperialist Government. Since the termination of war and the coming in of the Labour Government some political leaders have been released. There are, however, hundreds of men and women who are still held in confinement under different rules, Acts or so-called laws—some are there for painfully long term. Their voice is not allowed to reach the public. In the case of some of them there are complaints

of extreme ill-treatment amounting to callousness and cruelty. Many of them have spent the best part of their lives in these jails. Some have become absolute physical wrecks. It seems inconceivable that such things were possible in the 20th century. But it is there. Not only those who were connected with 1942 incidents are involved. There are many who have been in jail since long before. There is also a large number of persons who have gone underground. This suffering, this denial of the most elementary rights is opposed to the most elementary laws of morality, ethics and conscience. It is possible only in a slave country.

If there is a genuine desire on the part of the British Government to give us a fair deal, the immediate release of these political prisoners to whatever shade of political opinion they belong is the first step towards an amicable settlement. I have therefore great pleasure in supporting this resolution.

*Mrs. Sitadevi Chhabildas* (Punjab) supported the resolution in Hindustani.

*Shrimati Pushpaben Mehta* (Gujarat) then spoke in favour of the resolution in Gujarati.

*Miss Gladys Owen* (U.P. Oudh): As a delegate to the Conference from Oudh Branch and also as a British Woman I support this resolution with all my heart. To have these brothers and sisters in jail not only makes my heart full of sorrow but also makes it heavy with shame. Shame because I belong to a country whose love of freedom is surpassed by none. A country whose people have suffered imprisonment and death through decades for religious and political freedom. Born and reared in that atmosphere I cannot help but desire liberty for all nations, and here in India, seeing your political liberty withheld from you by my own country you can imagine my feeling of shame and sorrow. Now that a Labour Government is in power in Britain we can believe that India's independence is near. The Labour Government stands for liberty. It is the common people in Britain, who have put the Labour Government in power; having done this they have a great responsibility to see that their Government carries out their wishes and I believe—I believe sincerely—that it is the desire of the British people that India should be free. I believe also that it is their desire that all our political prisoners in jail today should be released immediately and unconditionally. Sisters, I will say no more, except to repeat, that I support this resolution wholeheartedly, and in so doing I believe I am expressing the desire of the majority of my compatriots in Britain.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*Mrs. M. S. H. Jhabwala* (Bombay) then moved the following resolution:—

## REMOVAL OF CASTE BARRIERS

“This Conference maintaining that the exclusion of any individual on the basis of class or caste distinction from any institution or sphere of activities is incompatible with the ideal of democracy, urges the recognition of the right of common use of wells, schools, hospitals and other public amenities”.

She said: This resolution is very necessary for the freedom of India. Mahatma Gandhi has been stressing this very resolution. Once this question of untouchability is decided, our path for freedom will be clear and surer. In Gujarat if anybody dies, the blame falls on the poor untouchables. Sisters, the untouchables are born of the same mother and the same womb as we. If you were to see both the untouchable children and our children nude, could any of you recognise who are who. The success of the Women's Conference will only then be considered to have been achieved if all the Branch Representatives will take up this cause sincerely.

Then Mrs. Monoramabei Kharkar spoke in favour of the resolution.

In seconding the resolution, *Mrs. Manoramabei Kharkar* (Maharashtra) said: Allowing the so-called untouchables to eat or drink with all members of the community is no service to them but the real service is that the very elements which pave the way to happiness should also be provided for them. There should be no separate wells for them—no separate schools for them—the very name ‘untouchable’ should disappear.

*Mrs. Saralabai Bhave* (Bombay) spoke in Marathi in favour of the resolution.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

## UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION

*Commission on the Status of Women*

*The President*: May I invite Mrs. Jessie Street to say a few words on the San Francisco Conference that she recently attended as a representative of Australia.

*Mrs. Jessie Street*: I have been asked to submit to you the information concerning THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN in the United Nations Organisation formed at the San Francisco Conference held this year. At this Conference delegates from different countries all over the world had been invited. 1200 amendments were sent in to the draft resolutions by the various countries. So the delegates had to consider not only the various resolutions but these 1200 amendments had also to be recorded. I would in a few words give you a brief history of this Conference.

The United Nations Organisation formed at the San Francisco Conference will perform its work through bodies to be known as its principal organs and subsidiary agencies. The Charter of the United Nations Organisation has set up the Economic and Social Council as one of the principal organs of the U.N.O. The function of this Council will be to deal with all matters of social or economic importance within the member states of the U.N.O.

The Economic and Social Council is clothed with authority to make or initiate studies and reports and also to make recommendations to the full Assembly on all matters coming within the scope of its activities. It also has the authority to set up commissions to help it in the performance of its functions. Various aspects of the work of the E. & S. C. will be delegated to such commissions. The very wide powers enjoyed by the Commissions set up by the E. & S. C. not only provide great opportunities for collecting and analysing information and making recommendations on all manner of subjects, but also provide quite new and very important opportunities to the peoples of all nations for international co-operation.

Another novel feature of the U.N.O. charter is that it makes provision for consultation with non-Governmental organisations. This means that bodies such as Women's organisations can be brought into official consultation with the E. & S. councils, or any commissions set up. This provision should also assist in developing the U.N.O. into a democratic and popular instrument for international co-operation.

At the San Francisco Conference a number of recommendations were adopted for the appointment of Commissions. Among them were proposals for setting up a Commission on Human Rights and also a Commission on the Status of Women. A suggestion that the Commission on Human Rights might be able to deal with women's status as a sub-section was rejected in favour of a Commission on the Status of Women. The majority of delegation expressed opinions that as there were so many special problems in all countries which affect women alone it was necessary that a special body should be appointed to work exclusively and continuously on these urgent problems and that until women in all countries enjoyed the rights and opportunities enjoyed by men it would be necessary to have a special commission to deal with women's disabilities.

An important result of the setting up by the E. & S. council of a commission on the Status of women would be that it would provide an official channel through which women's organisations throughout the world could bring their influence to bear directly on the U.N.O. It would also provide a means for the direct co-operation of women all over the world in their efforts to obtain equality of status, rights and opportunity. A commission on the status of women would increase women's prestige in the U.N.O. and greatly expedite the achievement of

those reforms for which women all over the world have been working for the last 100 years or more.

I suggest that the All-India Women's Conference should forward a request to the first meeting of the U.N.O. which is to be held in London early in 1946 recommending that a commission on the status of women should be appointed as soon as possible to work for the elimination of sex discrimination and the realisation of the principle of equal status, rights and opportunities for men and women within the member states of the U.N.O.

#### ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL & SOCIAL HYGIENE IN INDIA

*The President:* We have one visitor Miss Milescent Shepherd who has not spoken and I would like to invite her to say just a few words.

*Miss Shepherd:* The Association for Moral & Social Hygiene in India, of which I have the privilege of being the Central Organiser, is affiliated to The International Abolitionist Federation in Geneva. As in other countries, so in India, our Association has been quietly working, at the request of Indian friends, primarily to challenge the traffic in women and children, but also to promote moral and social hygiene education on scientific lines. We are also concerned with rehabilitation of women and children who have been exploited, by trying so to train them that they can earn their livelihood in respectable occupations.

The legislative aspect of our work has had considerable success. Many States and all the Provinces have now introduced Acts which protect victims from those who would profit financially from their inexperience. Gradually, schemes for well-run rescue Homes and Children's Homes are being planned in different places.

For this work we desperately need dedicated men and women, the men to work amongst men and boys, and the women in Rescue Homes, as Probation Officers, as Hospital and Clinic Almoners, and also as administrators in Provinces and at the Centre.

Work such as Mrs. V. T. Lakshmi, J.P., does in Madras Presidency as Provincial Welfare Worker and Principal of the Training Home and Shelter, is quite invaluable. Pioneer women for work like this are badly needed. Women of culture and education, with experience of life and love for their fellow-women, can always find happy service, with great scope for initiative and development.

I believe India's social and moral welfare really rests with the women. Will not some come forward? I can give all particulars of vacancies if you will write to me at 14, Hailey Road, New Delhi.

*K. Tarabai (Sind)* then moved the following resolution:

## NURSING

"This Conference resolves that Indian women should be encouraged to qualify as midwives and nurses. It demands that a higher status, better salaries and proper housing quarters be guaranteed for nurses throughout India and more training centres for them be established."

She said: The Nursing profession is considered to be low by our Indian girls. But in every house every mother nurses her own children. In my opinion the nursing profession is the best, noblest and most philanthropic. The doctor feels the pulse of a patient, diagnoses the disease and prescribes medicine but the further care and nursing of the patient is to be done by the nurse. The need of a nurse is greater than the doctor in uprooting the disease. In other parts of the world all kinds of work, including nursing are done by girls. But Indian girls consider this work to be mean and detestable. In small villages of several parts of India, Government has tried to open dispensaries but failed for want of doctors and nurses. Last year the Bombay Medical Council called for the figures of nurses employed in all hospitals and it is most regrettable that in India the number of nurses is so low that even the Training Institutions do not have the scheduled quota of nurses. One of the essential rules and conditions of a nursing Training Institution is that for every four cots there should be one nurse; but in very few hospitals this ratio is kept up. Out of big towns around Bombay, the position of Poona, Sholapur, Satara and Karachi was enquired into recently. Karachi, I am ashamed to say, stood the lowest. For every ten and half cots in the Civil Hospital in Karachi there has been one nurse. The patients naturally complain about the improper management in the Hospitals. It is true that owing to war many of the nurses joined the Military services due to attractive salaries but this is the time for India's freedom and everybody should try to play her or his part towards the achievement and the girls of today should ask themselves as to what they could do during this period. They should help by being nurses, mid-wives and health visitors, for, that is one of the dire needs of our country today.

As regards mid-wives they are needed very badly in small villages. There is not such a large number of doctors in India who could go to small villages. Due to want of time I am unable to lay before you the statistics showing the poor number of nurses, mid-wives and health visitors in India today. I would request you to make up your mind to take to the nursing profession which is in fact a service to humanity and to our motherland. I know difficulties are there—but you must overcome them with all your determination and once for all be prepared to do service. We have been granted two years' time to train nurses and I hope that this year the Nursing Institutes will not be put to shame.

*Dr. Lakshmidēvi Mirchandani* (Sind): It is very essential that we should have efficient nurses. But leave alone efficient nurses, we haven't got suffi-



cient number of nurses even. It seems to me that just now it is easier to get a response to open a hospital than to get staff to run it. In one little village in Sind a hospital did excellent work for two years but after that it had to close down because it was not possible to get nurses. There is another hospital in a little village. We wanted a lady doctor and we advertised in the papers for a considerably long time and I have written personal letters to all my colleagues but to no effect. A few nurses that we had have been recruited in the Military Services and this is a very good opportunity for us to ask the girls to take up nursing profession because during the war many of our girls have learnt to be independent and they will soon be thrown out of employment and if you take some efforts and make this profession a little attractive all the girls will be drawn to it.

I know we have to consider the causes of the prejudices against the nursing profession. First of all I feel, the uppermost cause of prejudice is that the recruitment to this noble profession was drawn from poor orphanage. But that does not matter because even in England it was so, till Florence Nightingale joined the profession. She was a girl from a very noble family. Even her parents objected to her taking to this profession; but now in England nobody thinks it below her dignity to be a nurse. Therefore if we make this profession a little more attractive I think in India we shall have not one Nightingale but several of them coming forward. The second reason of the prejudice is that nursing course takes three years. During the course the girls are trained to attend everyday to the patients personally and do all the jobs. The girls object to this because they think it is a menial job. It was introduced by the authorities in order to stress the idea of service on the nurses. It is going to give comfort to the patient but now we have got to modify our ideals and have got to see to the practical side of the things. The nurses should be left to do the real practitioner's part—keeping records and having temperatures etc.

In order to attract better educated nurses we should start a nursing college. I believe it is so in the U.S.A. I invited a nurse from U.S.A. She was very dignified. Mostly the nurses here are employed by local bodies or local board. Employed as they are, they have to obey many masters—almost every member of the local body. Therefore we should start a provincial nursing service just as we have a provincial educational service so that the nurses should be independent of the employers. We should encourage the nurses to settle down in large towns and do private practice. Therefore if we start hostels for nurses they can stay in the hostels so that they can have no difficulty about their residence and also the general public would know where to get a private nurse, and I feel that the branches of the All India Women's Conference should run these hostels for nurses. In short, the immediate necessity is: (1) to start centres to train the nurses; (2) start degree courses for nurses and (3) to start provincial nursing centres. With these words I second the resolution.

*Dr. Krishnabai Patil (Baroda)*: Our worthy speakers before me have impressed upon you the fact that there is a great scarcity of nurses everywhere. They are not sufficient even for the cities, leave alone the villages. In Baroda State we want to open Maternity homes in the Rural areas within a radius of every five miles. For that work we want a good many nurses, but it has become very difficult to get sufficient number of trained nurses.

We are not getting them because our people think that the nursing profession is low and has no status. So our high class people who are better fitted to do this kind of work are not coming forward to take up this profession. Naturally it has now gone to the hands of the poor and needy who do it in many cases only with the idea of earning their livelihood and who do not realise their own responsibility towards their patients which is very essential. Such nurses are sometimes attracted by petty attractions and that is how people think that they are of low class. So many a time patients suffer.

Nursing as a profession is not so low as it is considered to be. It is the most honourable and pious profession. The nurse remains with her patient for twenty-four hours. She knows everything about the patient. Her report is a great help to the doctor to prescribe or change medicine. It is she who gives medicine to the patient. So one can imagine what responsibility the nurse has got towards the patient. It is upon the nurses that the welfare of the patients of the whole hospital is dependent. On such responsible posts only social minded women are required. Even a few such women in each hospital can do much to improve the condition of the nursing profession in the hospital as they can well influence the authorities concerned.

I think this is one of the great problems which needs immediate attention of the All India Women's Conference. If the educated class of members of the Conference takes to nursing or sends their daughters for nursing or help the profession by holding responsible posts as matrons, nursing sisters, Superintendents, sister tutors etc., our country will be much benefited in the medical world.

At present the scale of pay of nurses is very low in some places. The hostel arrangements are not good. The messing arrangements are not satisfactory. Sometimes the nurses have to work 10 to 12 hours in the hospitals and after that have to cook for themselves with the result that they cannot perform their duties properly. No recreation is provided for them as indoor and out-door games in the hostels. Good books are badly required to widen their general knowledge and culture.

Training centres are only found in big cities. They are not sufficient to meet the present situation. Moreover, nurses trained in the city atmosphere generally do not like to go to the rural areas. So to remedy this Training centres

in the District-towns, taluka places and villages having a population from two thousand onwards must be established.

At present the training imparted is mostly in English. But if our idea is to get more nurses the medium of instruction should be vernacular of the province.

We must speak to the patients in their local language if we want to understand them and win their confidence, which must be our first ideal. In Delhi, the Sister-tutor's course is taught in English. Baroda wanted to send one nurse to Sister-Tutors' course. Though we have many efficient nurses in the hospital we could not send them because their knowledge of English was poor. So we had to import one nurse knowing good English from Malabar and send her for training to Delhi. She came back trained but she does not know any of the local languages of Gujarat. It is very difficult for her to make herself understood either to the patient or to the nurses whom she is supposed to train. So in the interests of the patients it is better to train the nurses in the local languages. For this we lack sufficient nursing literature in vernacular. Arrangements must, therefore, be made to freely translate all the available nursing literature in all the local languages. The nursing journal which is published in English should also be published in the popular languages of the country, preferably in Hindi.

The W.A.C. (I.) girls who are trained in nursing for war purposes can be utilised as nurses in the hospitals by giving them additional nursing training.

With these words I support the resolution.

*The President:* Now the resolution is open to discussion. I have got four names. I hope the speakers will restrict their speeches to the relevant points only.

*Mrs. Shakuntala Sharda (Punjab):* I will tell you a few points of my practical experience. I am working in the Punjab village and I know that the other villages of India will be on par with our village. I know many of my poor girls—our poor villagers who are suffering from various diseases. Most of our population is putting up in villages, and, strange though it may seem, the fact remains that nobody has ever cared to take care of them. We find that there is not a single hospital within a radius of 20 miles to take care of the patients or administer timely help to them. 50 per cent of the patients go without treatment and the remaining 50 move to cities where they are not properly treated because of their being villagers. Moreover, it is very difficult to take the patients to the cities as it is very expensive. Once a boy who had fallen ill of pneumonia was being removed to the city when he died on the way.

In the first place the number of mid-wives and nurses is small but those who are available also are attracted to the cities and do not pay attention to

the villages. It is true that cities should be attended also, but the villages also should be given their quota of service. Our All-India Women's Conference has opened a centre of nurses in Punjab where I have learnt something. I have been myself administering medicines and serving my village sisters. They feel that the Women's Conference have been able to do something for them. Our educated girls feel that if they practise in villages they will have to face the difficulties of bad roads etc., and will have no facilities of the city life there, but I must inform them that most of our work lies in the villages as 80 per cent of women live in villages. At least first aid training should be given to the girls and sisters who could go and serve their village sisters. In Amritsar we have arranged with the Civil Hospital that our A.I.W.C. volunteers should note what sort of difficulties the patients of civil hospital are undergoing and try to get redress. This is how we can serve our motherland.

*Miss Prabhavati Velankar* (Berar) supported the resolution in a short speech in Marathi.

*Shrimati Pushpaben Mehta* (Gujarat) stressed that the medium of instruction in training of the nurses should be Hindustani:

*Mrs. Premlata Gupta* (Hyderabad—Dn.): The average longevity in India is estimated to be 27 years, whereas in Britain it is 60 years. I can say if the nursing system is improved and if our sisters were trained properly, we could improve this state of affairs. Ordinary *dais* are called for help because of want of trained nurses but the results of such cases are very sad. In the Bombay Plan, it has been stated that two hundred crores of rupees will be required for the welfare and health of babies alone. I would suggest that five crores at least should be spared for the nursing profession. This will tend to reduce the percentage of death of women and alleviate misery to a considerable extent. In other words, nursing is a service of our own children and sisters. The parents should therefore encourage their children to learn this profession. Our Princess in Hyderabad (Deccan) has opened a centre for this profession which is functioning very satisfactorily and I hope that other provinces and States will take similar steps to remove the scarcity of nurses. With these words I support the resolution.

*Dr. (Mrs.) Ratnamma Isaac*, (Mysore) said: In Bangalore, a special Inquiry Committee has been appointed for improving the conditions of nursing services, and they have recommended increase of pay, better nurses' quarters, shorter hours of duty and more facilities for recreation in the evenings and a large increase in the nurses staff. The nurses' profession is a very difficult and strenuous one. They have to stand on their legs generally for 12 hours and go home thoroughly exhausted. This routine of wearisome duties day after day makes them unable to do full justice to their responsible duties. Eight-hours a day duty for the nurses has been practised in my Vanivilas Hospital

(Mysore) instead of 12 hours' duty. The nurses found that this arrangement gave them the leisure they needed each day and they were happy, so were all the patients. It was found in every way a very satisfactory arrangement. I hope that this will be profitably followed in other hospitals.

I hear that in Vellore as well as in the Madras University they are starting a degree course for nurses. I am sure these courses will be found very useful. Our country has more villages than towns. Our village women should be taught how to protect themselves and their children and prevent diseases and have better health in villages. A vernacular course will also be found very useful for this purpose. There is also a Health Visitors' Course for women. Then there are sister-tutors, Nursing Superintendents and matrons of large hospitals and institutions very much needed in India. The pay for these different classes of nurses ranges from Rs. 50/- to 250/- per mensem. I appeal to you, young ladies, to come forward in larger numbers and take these courses and help in this much needed service to the sisters of our mother land. With these words I support this resolution.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*Mrs. Perin Ramesh Chandra* (Punjab) then moved the following resolution:

#### REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT

"This Conference views with alarm the growing economic crisis in the country due to the aftermath of famine and flood, the high cost of living and the prospect of mass unemployment threatening untold suffering to families and especially women.

While emphasising the fact that only a National Government can effectively deal with this problem, this Conference demands the following immediate measures:

- (a) vocational centres for training unskilled destitutes and other women in cottage industries;
- (b) employment in peacetime industries and work for all thrown out of jobs."

She said: In my opinion this resolution is of greater importance than others. In Bengal three lakhs of labourers are expected to get unemployed. Two and a half lakhs of railway labourers are to be thrown out of jobs. The labourers from the Military and war factories number 50 lacs. The vast majority are to be discharged after 3 or 4 months. About 50 lakhs of families will be there who will have no home, and no cloth. And then if we take on an average that every house has at least four members we can understand how great is the problem facing our country. It is difficult to arrange for their

livelihood. Our outside guests will say that this unemployment question will not be with India only. It is throughout the world. But I may remind them that ours is not a free country. I know Americans have also to face the problem of unemployment, but at least they are free and have their own Government and they can do something; but here if we were to do anything the reply will be that it is not permissible under the Defence of India Rules and we cannot do anything. It is not only the unemployment caused by closing of the factories but there are the orphans of the Bengal and other famine-stricken areas. You know that when famine broke out, the people there sold their fields for bread, the fishermen their nets and the labourers their tools. The question before us is not only that of two crores of people left homeless because the breadwinner is unemployed, but of those also who have sold their means of livelihood during the Bengal famine. In 1938 there were 5,000 prostitutes in Calcutta but now the number has gone to 40,000. They are not bad women but for the sake of livelihood and for the upkeep of their children they have taken to this profession. Our Government could not do anything for them, because it was an alien Government and our leaders were in jail. The question of other countries cannot come on the same footing. The factories of other countries have developed during the war, but not so in our country. It is true that some industries have developed but they were only for the purpose of war. In fact those factories which produced war materials should now produce consumers' goods. But the present Government does not want that our market should be full with swedeshi articles. They want to bring in foreign material in the Indian market. Therefore since we haven't got our own Government we cannot produce articles necessary for our use and thus give employment to our people.

Although we haven't got our National Government it does not mean that we cannot do anything. Our Conference has thought of opening industrial centres for men and women—specially for women so that they could stand on their own legs and protect their self-respect. In Europe today small zamindars are given lands but in our Bengal small kisans sold their lands to big zamindars. In Bankura district 3,000 acres of lands changed hands during the famine. So in our country it is not that big zamindars give their lands to small zamindars but contrary is the question. All these questions should be considered when considering the question of unemployment. Above all, till an unemployed man is able to get any employment he should get something from Government. Those women who used to work in the military could be given training anew for peace-time work such as nursing. The employment bureau to be opened by the Women's Conference shall arrange for procuring work for those women who write to us. I feel sanguine that you will support the resolution.

*Miss Kapilaben Khandwala* (Bombay) referred to the gloomy picture painted by the mover of the resolution and observed that unemployment was

a sort of national calamity that was facing us. In her opinion it was the creation of the war and as the war was over, these people were thrown out of employment. Although for similar reasons people all over the world would face unemployment, the question was different with countries which were free. India was not so. Therefore, unless there were a National Government established in India soon the solution of the unemployment problem was practically impossible. Besides unemployment, famine and flood conditions added fuel to the fire in India. A Government of the people would try its best to not only absorb as many people hitherto unemployed in expanding industries but also in ship-building, automobile industry, irrigation, road and house-building, starting social and educational centres, nursing, teaching, etc. A foreign government's sole desire was to dump the market of the colonial countries with their goods, which process not only made the countries exploited poorer, but also increased the unemployment problem manyfold. Therefore, in supporting the resolution, she strongly demanded the immediate establishment of a National Government in India.

*Miss Suddha Roy* (Calcutta), while strongly supporting the resolution, emphasised that social services should be organised; women could work as nurses in health services; teachers were required to help in the health centres; unemployment insurance should be introduced so that these workers would have something to fall back on. Establishment of a National Government was the only solution to all these evils she concluded.

*Mrs. Sita Suri* (Punjab) whilst supporting the resolution said that the only cure for our problems was the formation of a National Government which the All-India Women's Conference should demand from the British Labour Government as our Birth right.

*Shrimati Pushpaben Mehta* (Gujarat): India is a very poor country. Let us start work at least in our Branches even on a small scale with public support and sympathy, and then make our demands to the Government.

*Mrs. Vimal Ranadive* (Bombay), speaking in Marathi, further supported the resolution.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*Mrs. Jayashree Raiji* then moved the following resolution:—

#### HOUSING PROBLEM

“This Conference expresses grave concern over the continued acute shortage of houses in the big cities and calls upon the Government to restore all the public and private buildings commandeered for war purposes.

While appreciating the beginnings made by some Provincial Governments and Municipalities in town-planning, it urges on all Provincial

Governments the immediate necessity of initiating legislation making it obligatory on Municipalities and employers of labour to construct economical and sanitary houses for the middle and labouring classes. It also calls on District Boards immediately to plan and carry out reconstruction of village homes."

She said: The housing problem is of much importance because the health condition of the people depends on the housing conditions. It is nearly six months since the war ended and still there is no improvement in the housing condition in the cities. I am speaking from my experience as regards the conditions in Bombay but I think similar conditions prevail in other big cities like Calcutta, Karachi and Madras.

In Bombay City, the City Engineer Mr. Modak in his report stated, that over one lakh of people sleep on pavements. You can imagine the condition as the rainfall is 75 or 80 inches in Bombay. In Matunga—Labour centre about 10,000 people are living in small huts made of gunny bags. I have myself visited the locality and found that rain had entered their huts; the place was full of squallar and mosquitoes and flies. That is why I said that the problem is of as much importance as of food and clothing. The Government when they requisitioned houses, first took possession of chawls of the poor people. They forced them to vacate these chawls. Hundreds of families were asked to clear out of their houses in 24 hours. Big houses of the rich people and palaces were not touched.

Just now there is no necessity of keeping these houses and still the Government do not release them and the people are undergoing great hardships for want of proper tenements. Landlords ask for large amounts as *Pagri*. I am told that for a room 8 by 12 feet some landlords had asked Rs. 4,000 or 6,000 as *pagri*. Then there is the question of refugees. I ask the Government why are these refugees not sent out of the country, now that the war is over. We demand that these refugees be sent away immediately.

The next question is that of the release of the building material. People want to build their houses and there is also plenty of material. I am told there is plenty of cement, bricks, etc., lying idle and those people who want to build their houses cannot get cement and bricks.

I would request that our women should take great interest in planning new houses specially when they are going to have planning in other directions. This planning of houses is also of as much importance as other things and the National Planning Committee should take up this question also and should have more women in the Committee because women know how to plan their houses. In villages also there is no facility for bath rooms or lavatories and our women specially in their child births have to suffer great hardships as they have sometimes to go out a long distance for these purposes. I request that our Women's Conference should take more interest in planning of new houses in villages. I



am told that near Kolhapur there was a very nice village specially built for refugees. They had all the facilities. There was a church, a school, a market and big roads etc. I wish our Government will take as much interest while taking up the planning of our villages. I put this resolution before you and I hope you will support it.

*Mrs. Manjula Gandhi* (Bombay): I would like to place before you a few facts about Bombay from where I come.

I think the housing conditions in Bombay are the worst and most scandalous particularly in labour areas. There is no end of sanitation difficulties. Often, a room measuring 15 feet by 20 feet is occupied by 20 to 30 persons in two 'shifts', cooking, bathing and sleeping in that single room. The Matunga Labour Camp was originally intended for the accommodation of 3,500 people at the most. But at present it is stuffed with 11,000 people the lavatory and water arrangements remaining the same as before. This scarcity of accommodation has encouraged shrewd landlords to demand illegal gratifications in spite of the Rent Act and D.O.I. Rules. The result is that the middle class people also are finding it extremely hard to get housing accommodation anywhere. Punishment by Courts of Law, hitherto lenient, must be deterrant and there must be a regular hunt for such culprits. Building materials should now be released immediately.

*Mrs. Malatibai Bedekar* (Bombay), further supporting the resolution, pleaded for the middle class families drawing Rs. 100/- or so a month—from which stratum most of the members of her Constituent Branch—Thakurdwar—are drawn. She suggested that Tenants' Association should be organised to deal with the increasing menace of the greedy landlords, specially in big cities.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*The President*: I have great pleasure in announcing the election of the following two Office-bearers:—

Mrs. Kulsum Sayani is elected Honorary General Secretary unopposed.

Dr. Mrs. Malinibai B. Sukthankar is also elected Honorary Terasurer unopposed.

For six Vice-Presidentships the following 13 have been nominated (voting will take place tomorrow):

(1) Dr. Miss Devi Valiram; (2) Mrs. Urmila Mehta; (3) Miss Leilamani Naidu; (4) Mrs. Renuka Ray; (5) Mrs. Gulbanu J. R. Doctor; (6) Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rao (subsequently withdrew); (7) Dr. Mrs. K. Tarabai; (8) Miss A. Khemchand; (9) Shrimati Ammu Swaminathan; (10) Begum Hosain Ali Khan; (11) Mrs. Anasuyabai Kale; (12) Mrs. Kamamma H. Dasappa; (13) Mrs. Hannah Sen.

*The President* then announced that Group Photographs would be taken at 9 a.m. next morning, after which the Conference would meet at 9-30 a.m.

The Conference then adjourned at 5-30 p.m.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH DAY—31ST DECEMBER 1945

9-30 A.M. to 12 Noon: 2-30 P.M. to 6-30 P.M.

The Conference met at 9-30 a.m. on Monday the 31st December 1945 with *Shrimati Hansaben Mehta* in the Chair.

At the outset *the President* took the opportunity of impressing upon the delegates and visitors the urgent necessity of collecting funds for the A.I.W.C. which was carrying on much good work as was evident from the reports read in the Conference, and made an appeal for funds. She announced amid acclamation the name of Miss Draupadi Advani who had come with the first donation of Rs. 51/-.

*Mrs. Vimal Ranadive* (Bombay) then moved the following resolution:

## CLOTH

“This Conference views with alarm the acute scarcity of cloth in the country which has reached such proportions particularly in some of the rural areas that cases of women committing suicide for want of wearing apparel have been reported. In view of the fact that all efforts so far taken to meet the emergency have been totally ineffectual, it calls upon the Government to:—

- (a) release immediately for civilian consumption all cloth produced in India;
- (b) increase cloth quotas so that these may meet minimum needs;
- (c) fix a ceiling price for cloth and take vigorous measures against infringement of control orders and rules;
- (d) give every facility to the textile industry of India for development and to help weavers to obtain adequate quantities of yarn;
- (e) start hand spinning and weaving centres straightaway in rural areas in order to give immediate relief in the matter of cloth shortage to the villagers;
- (f) take measures to prevent foreign goods from exploiting the present situation.
- (g) take measures to eradicate black marketing.”

She said: You know well that the conditions of cloth scarcity has paved the way to so many suicides of our sisters in Bengal. A change has come in the rationing arrangements but it is wrong to construe that the difficulties are over. We do not get as much cloth as we require. Cloth comes in the shops no doubt but it disappears very soon and we are often told that all the cloth has

been sold out. Instances are not rare where women are unable to move out of their houses for want of cloth.

Cloth is manufactured in India in much greater quantity than is really needed; but it is allowed to be exported to countries outside in spite of the serious hardship our people are undergoing. The second thing is that there is too much black-marketing. The merchants have earned thrice as much of their original capital during the time of this war. We should see then what the Government have done in this respect. They have tried to stop black-marketing, but failed as they did not want any support from the people. In connection with the rationing also the work has not been satisfactory. The membership of the management of the Control Board, which is set up for controlling black-market consists mostly of merchants and not of the public. Several highly placed Government servants have been found guilty of accepting bribes. When our children and women are dying for want of cloth why should the Government not put an effective control over all these things? Now the war is over. The European countries want to export their goods to India and compete with the Indian industries. This is not to the advantage of India. They want to kill our industries.

The fourth demand is that the rates should be reduced to such an extent that even a poor person is able to buy it without difficulty. We should help the labourers who are able to produce the cloth for us. I request you all to pass it unanimously.

*Mrs. Yashodabai Chokhavatia* (Hyderabad Dn.): It is difficult to mention all the difficulties that we are undergoing on account of the war. A sari which cost Rs. 1/8/- is being sold at Rs. 20 to 25. In many places our school girls are unable to go to school and appear for the examination for want of cloth. In Bengal the condition was and still is so pitiable and embarrassing that for want of cloth women have been committing suicide and even selling their self-respect. Considering that hand spinning and weaving would be very useful, I requested the grown up girls of the Hyderabad to learn spinning about 5 years ago but they would pay no heed to it at the time; you will be happy to learn however that today about 300 girls have learned spinning. I would request you all sisters here and also the delegates and representatives of the different branches to learn and teach spinning which alone will solve India's problem of cloth. I second the resolution wholeheartedly.

*Mrs. Ruki Gidwani* (Gujarat): There has been a great scarcity of cloth in this country but now that the war is over and the scarcity of cloth is likely to be less we are in a position to take a more dispassionate view of the whole situation since we shall very shortly be settling down to peaceful conditions. My predecessors have made claims that the quantity of cloth that was being given to the people today is not enough and it should be increased. The reso-

lution as it stands on the agenda reads, "increase cloth quotas so that these may meet minimum needs." I have an amendment to make, i.e., I want that the words "by stopping all exports should be added at the end of this clause. Now my amendment reads as:

"(b) increase cloth quotas so that these may meet minimum needs, by stopping all exports."

In order to have a proper idea of the cloth situation in the country and how the quota system works one has to get an idea of how cloth is being distributed today and what is the entire production of India today and what it was before the war. Just before the war the entire production of India was about four thousand million yards from mills, about 1,200 million yards from hand-looms and imports from outside were about 700 million yards. So the total production or rather the total cloth available for consumption was in the neighbourhood of 5,900 million yards. Today our mills are in a better position. They are producing much more. Out of this production about 400 million yards are being allotted for export even today. The quantity of cloth available at present is 4,800 million yards from mills and 1,700 million yards from hand-looms, so that the total production available to day is about 6,500 million yards and if we take the population of India as 400 millions, it works out to a percentage of about 16 yards per head. From the pre-war figures you will see that including the imports the total amount of cloth available for the public was only 5,900 million yards or roughly 14 yards of cloth per head of population, that there is a surplus production of at least 600 million yards and there is no deficit. Then you would naturally ask why this scarcity. But there are other causes for this namely controls, black-markets, hoarding, smuggling of cloth across India's borders and lastly exports of cloth from India. The scarcity of cloth from which the public has suffered is really not so much because we are so short of cloth as because of maldistribution. It is a pity that for the last 2 or 3 years people have been put to lot of inconvenience but there were military demands to be satisfied and they always get priority over civilian needs. During the war time Government were taking away 25 per cent of the total production of cloth for military purposes. But now that the war is over they are reducing the war contracts but it would be idle to imagine that all cloth reserved for military purposes would immediately be released for civilian consumption. So if we approach the Government to increase the quota of cloth then perhaps the answer that we would get straight away will be "that they are distributing whatever cloth is being produced in the country." Specially as at the end of this resolution we have a clause in which we say that Government should take measures not to allow foreign cloth to come into the country, then the natural question is how can Government supply more cloth than India can produce. But you will see from the figures given above that our total production is 6,500 million yards out of which Government is exporting about

400 million yards every year, even today when the shortage of cloth in the country is so acute. That is the only loophole where we can ask the Government to close in and if at all the quota of cloth is to be increased it can only be increased by stopping the export of cloth.

*Miss A. Khemchand* (Hyderabad, Sind) explained the sum and substance of the amendment and seconded it in Sindhi.

*The President*: The amendment before you becomes a resolution and those who want to speak should speak briefly.

*Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur* speaking in Hindustani specially laid stress on clause (e) and reiterated the message of spinning wheel which Gandhiji gave to India and to the world. In her opinion there would have been no suicides in Bengal if enough hand spun and handloom cloth were available there. She requested the members of the Conference to encourage hand spun and hand-woven cloth.

*The President* then put the resolution as amended to vote. It was carried unanimously.

*Dr. Phulrenu Guha* (Bengal, East) then moved the following resolution:

### FOOD

"This Conference reiterates the Food Resolution passed at the last Annual Session. It calls attention to the fact that the food problem is still grave particularly in Bengal and other distressed areas where recent floods and draught have aggravated the situation. It emphasises the need for the public as well as political parties to insist upon:

- (a) satisfactory machinery for the distribution of food;
- (b) the provision of an adequate nutritious diet of essential food-stuffs and milk to cover minimum requirements as well as subsidies for milk for children and nursing mothers;
- (c) the enforcement of strict measures against the distribution either by Government or private agencies of foodstuffs unfit for human consumption."

She said: At the last Conference at Bombay a resolution on food was passed; most of our branches have tried to implement the resolution into action as far as a voluntary organisation like ours can do. The resolution that is now before the house is a comprehensive one and so I will only deal with the main aspects of the question without going into details regarding the causes of scarcity of food. Great importance is laid by the Government on hoarding and black-marketing. Of course hoarding and black-marketing were there and are

there. All over the world there are some people who take advantage of such a situation as we are in but I think it will not be out of place to point that in India it is not difficult to find out people who could well afford to hoard the commodities. But neither the Government of India nor the Provincial Governments cared to check black-marketing; or it may well be said that they are incompetent to do so. Every Indian today knows how the Government failed to handle the situation of food and how corruption prevailed among the Government officials. If the contribution to war is measured by the number of deaths, I think Indian contribution to this war is next to that of Russia. Unless there is a National Government or a Government which feels for the people in the country they cannot be helped properly. But I think we could well remind the Government of the grim fact as to what they have done in India regarding food compared with what they have done in their own country. There not a single Englishman died of hunger during the whole period of war. Not only that, the general health of England has improved considerably due to rationing and nutritious diet. And we know our situation. I think it is needless to give figures to show what quantities of foodstuffs are produced in India and how much foodstuffs are produced in England. It is true that the people in England might have deprived themselves of other amenities of life, but every Britisher is given food and cloth all right.

Here I would like to draw the attention of our friends coming from foreign countries and who are present here that we have been made to swallow such foodstuffs as are unfit for human consumption, and there are hundreds of such examples; unfortunately we have to put up with such a generous rule of our benefactors.

The Government of India and different Provincial Governments spent thousands of rupees for "Grow More Food" Schemes but we know that unless there is a sound long-range economic plan, along with a plan for irrigation and agriculture, their success cannot be assured. We cannot get rid of the scarcity of food without a long term plan regarding food policy. Every Indian rich or poor must be ensured of a minimum nutritious diet; milk should be given to children and nursing mothers and invalids and enough money should be provided for this as it is done under the National scheme in England. We hear that there is a plan to feed people in occupied countries of Europe but we are anxious to know what the plan for India is. Also there was recently a conference in Australia regarding nutritious diet for all countries. We do not know what is the position of India. I think no Government has a right to govern a country where it fails to feed its people.

*Mrs. Vatsala Subedar* (Gujarat) in seconding the resolution, regretted that in rationed areas skin diseases were prevalent due to poor stuff supplied and suggested employment of women Inspectors of Food to prevent corrupt practices hitherto noticeable.

*Mrs. Mithan Lam* (Bombay): Rationing is a thing that ought to have been introduced all over India immediately the war started, because as has been found in England and elsewhere, without rationing the poor persons suffer. Before rationing was introduced in Bombay I with my own eyes have seen women and men waiting patiently in a queue longer than the length of this pandal. Poor people stayed for hours in a queue and then were told that the food was finished. We have worked as volunteers in Bombay at the foodgrain shops and so we know that it is only rationing strictly enforced that has brought about the required results. Of course Government is to blame because it has been lax. Some of the Government officials concerned were also interested in black-marketing. One does not like to say it, but I must say that there is a lot of anti-social spirit also amongst ourselves. There have been cases in which people have failed to realise that they should not hoard up things. Rich persons in Bombay have been fined heavily for having hoarded bags and bags of grain while the poor were starving.

Now coming to the part (c) we would like strict enforcement of measures either by Government or by private agencies. Many doctors in Bombay say that there has been a great increase in skin diseases due to the very poor quality of foodgrains that have been supplied at the Government and rationed grain shops. I would suggest that we ask that more and more educated women be employed as Inspectors of food; this will tend to curb corruption to a great extent. If you have trained women who will not yield to many of these corrupt practices then perhaps you will be able to improve our situation.

I would like to contradict the last speaker that England had very much food during the war. I know Miss Agatha Harrison is here and she will bear me out. They introduced rationing early in the war and the quantity allotted was very small particularly of meat and fats. But the people agreed to rationing because they realised that without it the poor would suffer. They have very little of black markets as people generally are against it, and try to stamp it out. If we could evince that public spirit which the English people have shown during the war, we will have more food for everyone. We must also do everything in our power to stamp out the black market. If we women set our faces against it, refusing to buy from the black market doing without certain things, rather than paying black market prices, it will die a natural death.

*The President*: I would like the speakers to be very short now. Unless they bring new points it is no use talking the same things again and again.

*Mrs. Kundrani Gandhye* (Indore) complained that the quality of food supplied at the rationing shops was not good. Flour that was supplied was of the worst quality. The bread smelt bad. The system of distribution was very faulty. Even at the moment the foodstuffs were being exported. She thought the resolution was of great importance and hoped all would support it.

*Mrs. Manoramabai Kharkar* (Maharashtra): I particularly represent Khandesh. Milk and Ghee used to be in abundance in the District of Khandesh and it used to be considered as a Ghee Store-house or depot of milk and Ghee. But in these days of extraordinary situation there is a great scarcity of these items of food.

According to the instructions of Government, agriculturists have to cultivate and produce a particular type of cotton called "Jarilla" for the purpose of greater production of cloth as the local species of cotton which used to be grown so far was not conducive to sufficient output. But the evil is that the seed of the Jarilla is not useful as food for cattle who do not eat it. Consequently the supply of butter has considerably gone down. Much of the butter again goes for the supply of the Military.

The quality of grain supplied to people in these days of war is of an inferior quality and it is having an adverse effect on the health of the people at large. In Khandesh Bajri is a more general crop, but people get much less of it on account of distribution in other parts of the country. Rice rationed out to people is of such inferior quality that it is hardly better than stuff used for poultry.

It is necessary that the articles produced in one part of the country should first be supplied to the people of the locality and after their wants are satisfied they may be exported outside.

It is also urgently necessary that Government should pay more attention to the supply of milk especially to infants, Nursing Mothers and pregnant women who are already suffering from lack of a proper supply of good milk.

*Mrs. Ramabai Bhole* (Hyderabad Dn.) further supported the resolution.

*Mrs. Sarlabai Bhave* (Bombay) further supported the resolution adding that the prices should be reduced.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*Miss Leilamani Naidu* (Hyderabad Dn.) then moved the following resolution:—

#### SARGENT SCHEME

"In affirming the imperative need for refashioning education in the country, this Conference endorses the main principles of the National System of Education envisaged in the Sargent Scheme and demands an immediate introduction of free Basic education on a countrywide scale so that every single citizen of a free and democratic India shall have equal opportunity to contribute fully to the country's economic progress and social security.



Miss Naidu while moving the above resolution in an eloquent speech said that Gandhiji was the only person who had been able to give a perfect idea about India's vast economic needs and her intellectual and cultural genius, which would also ensure material prosperity. The Wardha Scheme of Basic Education was Mahatmaji's message to a hostile and incredulous world. The resolution by no means implied support *in toto* to the Sargent Scheme, but accepted its principles. She maintained that freedom without liquidation of ignorance was worthless and she would give freedom from ignorance a prominent place in the World charter.

*Miss Sarla Devi Narsian* (Sind) speaking in Hindustani said: There could be no two opinions on the fact that the Sargent Scheme should be introduced in India as early as possible because we know that there is too much of ignorance in India where only 15 per cent of the people are educated. All this truly indicates the amount of progress that we have made in this respect so far. The Sargent Scheme is a huge scheme which deals with education from the pre-basic to the University standard. At present we leave out of consideration the pre-basic and college systems of education, and concentrate upon the basic education which takes into its fold all children between the age of 6 and 14. You will be very much grieved to learn that the present expenditure on education is 0-8-9 per child whereas in England it is Rs. 33/2. The Sargent Report proposes an expenditure of Rs. 33/- per child on primary education and Rs. 51/- for secondary education. This amount is necessary and it is not the time to think of expenditure, although an amount of 200 crores of rupees is required on this account. We always found that money when required for war and other purposes was always forthcoming in abundance. Children between the ages of 6 and 14 number six crores in India. To impart education to these children. Fifteen lakhs of teachers will be required and the majority of them will be women. It is but proper that there should be improvement in the status of teachers. I second the resolution wholeheartedly.

*The President*: We have among us a visitor from Ceylon and she is an educationist and they are doing a lot of work in the direction of education and I would like her to say a few words.

*Miss Elsie Solomons*: This is just a sign of intense courtesy and generosity to include in the list a visitor and to give her a chance of expressing her ideas, but I am sure that when I give you a brief sketch of our new education bill you will realise that perhaps it is not wholly irrelevant to the question in hand. Ceylon's prospects in the political and educational sphere today are much more favourable than any dependency in the world. We are now at the moment on the threshold of freedom. We have universal franchise for several years with no bar against sex or illiteracy; but more important of all, Ceylon on the first of October 1945 passed the new free education scheme—free education from the

age of 5 right on to the university. Next we have compulsory education from 5 to 16 with special various centres in the secondary schools. We have also solved the problem of common language in the country. English is compulsory from the III standard as a second language in Ceylon. But receiving our elementary rights is not the end but just the beginning. It is rightly said that the winning of the war is much easier than the winning of the peace. The winning of the peace is a continual and continuous process of growth and the Ceylonese know that with our new free education bill and with complete freedom on the threshold we are merely at the beginning and every man and woman must face his or her responsibility and make his or her individual contribution to that process. It was for this reason that I accepted the invitation to come to your Conference because I was so sure that we would receive inspiration and help from this Conference. At the first impressive meeting when we heard the eloquent and heart-throbbing speeches of both your senior and junior leaders, I wondered if you—the majority of you—had the unusual talent that we had heard of, that we were so thrilled and moved by or whether we glowed in the reflective glory of a few self-sacrificial lives of the past and the present. If every woman here would respond to the call and make her own individual contribution, the new world we are all hoping for would be nearer perfection. I thank you for the warm welcome extended to us.

*Miss Susheela N. Pradhan* (Gujarat) while supporting the resolution strongly suggested that more vocational institutions should be started in all the Provinces.

*Mrs. Gangubai Patwardhan* (Baroda): I think a year and a half ago we passed the same kind of resolution which we are reiterating this year. I understand we appointed a sub-committee to go through the Sargent Scheme and make recommendations. I would just request the Education Section Secretary to explain what they did about this in the one year and a half. I think this is an All-India Body. Now a big scheme—a National Scheme relating to national Education is before us. I would therefore request the Standing Committee to appoint a sub-committee on Education again to work and publish a tract as they are publishing tracts on several subjects—and give us their agreed suggestions. This is my humble suggestion.

I have one more thing to suggest. In Baroda the B. T. College publishes a Quarterly called *Journal of Education and Psychology*. In the last four issues they have discussed the Sargent Scheme of Education. I think if our Sub-Committee goes through them it would be a guidance to them. The Sub-Committee should go through all the details of the Scheme and submit their concrete proposals in the matters as early as possible.

The resolution was put to vote and carried unanimously.

*The President* called upon Dr. (Mrs.) Sukthankar, who had been authorised to convey a message from the National Council of Women in India.

## GREETINGS FROM THE N.C.W.I.

*Dr. (Mrs.) Sukthankar*: The National Council of Women in India send you their warm greetings for the Conference and their best wishes for a very successful session under the able Presidentship of Shrimati Hansaben Mehta. The National Council of Women in India is an All-India Organisation and has branches in Bengal, Bombay, Nagpur, Behar. The National Council of Women had already intimated to you their desire of having the privilege of sending a fraternal delegate on a reciprocal basis. I hope the A.I.W.C. will consider the matter and agree to their suggestion. They feel that there are many matters, such as, Franchise, Hindu Code and other matters of all-India importance in which the N.C.W.I. and A.I.W.C. could unite.

## A.I.W.C. CONSTITUTION

At this stage, in placing before the Conference the consideration of the Draft of a revised *Constitution of the A.I.W.C.*, which had already been prepared by the Constitution Member with the help of a small Sub-Committee and printed and circulated to the Branches about six months ago, *the President* said that several members of the Standing Committee had approached her in order to allow consideration of the draft to be postponed for one year in view of the fact that it had not been possible to present an agreed Constitution and also that they were anxious to have a really good constitution.

*Shrimati Kamaladevi* moved and *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur* seconded that the consideration be postponed for one year as the Draft did not seem to be complete and as sufficient time could not have been given to it by the Standing Committee.

*Lady Rama Rau*, Member for Constitution, said that she with some members had worked on the draft, meeting about 15 times, and sometimes working the whole day on it—that it had been presented to the Half-Yearly Meeting of the Standing Committee held at Surat and had been circulated according to rules before the present Session of the Conference. In her opinion the Constitution should be discussed at the Conference.

*Mrs. Perin Ramesh Chandra* (Punjab) strongly pleaded in favour of discussing the Constitution. She regretted that the small Sub-Committee that had been formed at Hyderabad (Sind) a few days ago could not have enough time to meet and formulate an agreed draft—but suggested that the delegates assembled there must be given a chance of discussing this at least at a closed session of the Conference.

*Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru* said that the framing of a Constitution was a delicate affair, and, in her opinion, sufficient attention could not be given to that in a full Conference. She, therefore, supported the idea of a closed

session and proposed that the main principles to be embodied in the Constitution might be laid down there. She also suggested that five members could be nominated by the Session and that Committee could thus be entrusted with the task of drafting the Constitution afresh on those principles. That draft could then be presented before the next Session of the Conference.

A little time was asked for, for consultation among the delegates and then the following decision was arrived at:

“That a closed Session of this Conference be held in which the fundamental principles on which the New Constitution should be based may be laid down and also that a Sub-Committee be formed which would frame a Constitution on those principles to be presented at the next half-yearly meeting.”

*Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru* then moved the following resolution:

#### COMMON LANGUAGE

“This Conference reiterates its keen support of Hindustani as the common language of India. To this end it recommends:

- (a) that all members should study and learn it;
- (b) and that Conference work and propaganda, whether by words of mouth or publication should be increasingly carried on in Hindustani.”

*Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru*: The resolution reiterates our demand that Hindustani should be the *lingua franca* of India and enjoins on every sister to learn it. I am ashamed to say that even after working for 20 years we have not been able to adopt the Hindustani language as our medium. But it is satisfactory to note that at least during this session most of the speakers spoke in Hindustani. People of England speak in English, the Germans speak in their own language and in France the French people speak in French. In no part of the world people speak in a language spoken by those living 6,000 miles away. Such an abnormal phenomenon can be seen only in a slave country like ours. It is difficult to appraise the enormity of the harm this unnatural love for a foreign language has done us. It has cramped our minds and thoughts and has strengthened the chains of our slavery.

The sooner we set ourselves free from this cultural slavery the better for us. This use of the foreign language has cut us adrift from our own people. We can never truly represent the masses as we claim to do until we have learnt to converse in their own language. Now that our membership is expanding it has become a necessity for us. I hope very soon we shall not only speak in Hindustani but do all our work of correspondence etc., in Hindustani. I would like to point out here that in South of India, where the language of the people

is entirely different from ours, love of Hindustani is rapidly increasing and thousands of men and women are learning it every year. Amongst those who are taking Hindi examinations, the number of women are much larger than those of men. Our organisation therefore should lead the way in adopting Hindustani as its language.

*Mrs. Premlata Gupta* (Hyderabad, Dn.): The language of India has always been one but the foreigners took advantage of our mutual struggles and wished us to consider ourselves as separate communities like Sikhs, Mussalmans, Jains with different languages. Thus arose the question of several languages. I only want that the same position should be attained by Hindustani which it commanded heretofore. The root language of all the languages is Sanskrit and Hindustani is very much akin to Sanskrit and therefore in consonance with all the other languages. But we people feel proud to speak and work in foreign languages. Thus we have forgotten our own national language. It is a matter of great pleasure to me that the delegates present here have pressed that the proceedings of the sessions should be in Hindustani.

One of the causes of paucity of workers is that most of our work is carried on in English and the people at large who are asked to work for us complain that if they were to understand our proceedings they would willingly unite and work with us. We can achieve success only when we are able to take our voice to the ears of women in the villages and in every house and that can only be done through the medium of Hindustani. Therefore if you want Swaraj—your own Raj—or National Government—then work in Hindustani. I do not say that you should ignore your own provincial language but Hindustani should be established as a national language. Our children can have their education more easily in their own tongue rather than in a foreign language which has become a usage these days. There is no dispute about Hindustani being the national language of India. With these words I second the resolution.

*Miss Sundri Malkani* (Sind): I rise to support the resolution. A look at other languages would convince you that only Hindi can be the language of Hindus and no other language. Mahomed Kassim, Mohamed Ghorri and Taglaq had Hindi language in their books and daftars. Urdu is of Amirs and Begums and Hindi is of the poor. We want a language which should be a pick of both these languages and will pave way to the unity of Hindus and Muslims. Our foreign Government have introduced the English language in India because, it is said, that if you want to retain your rule permanent over any nation, you should conquer it socially. I will therefore request that you should all make up your minds from this day to study Hindustani so that every child and adult should be able to understand it.

*Miss Konda Parvathydevi* (Andhra): My mother tongue is not Hindi. I have got very little knowledge of Hindi. Still the interest in the language makes

me bold enough to speak before you in that language. The great Poet Kalidas said "Friendship can be achieved through conversation". That is to say that conversation is an instrument of making friendship, which means unity. We are striving hard to establish unity amongst our people. Unity cannot be maintained unless one understands the other. There must be one common language throughout Hindustan. Hindustani is the language which can be learnt easily and is spoken by largest number in our country. It is necessary to undertake measures for convincing the people of the utility of Hindustani, to create permanent interest in them and induce them to learn the language. I support the resolution wholeheartedly.

*Mrs. Indira Bai Devdhar* (Maharashtra) speaking in Hindi, said: The visitors from outside will merely mock at us when they find us speaking in a foreign language and yet fighting for the freedom of India. They will go and convey this fact to their countrymen and women. The Government offices today are functioning in a foreign language. In fact they also should function in the Hindustani language. One can pull on without a mother but no nation can live without its national language even for a day.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*Mrs. Hajrah Begum* (U.P., Agra) then moved the following resolution:

#### HEALTH INSURANCE

"This Conference agrees with the principles of the proposed Government scheme of Social Insurance (popularly known as the Adarkar Scheme) which seeks to cover the health and medical facilities of workers through insurance contributed to by the employers, workers and the Government jointly.

This Conference also agrees with the proposal to include Maternity Benefit in this Scheme.

This Conference, however, demands that the following provisions be included in the proposals:

- (a) full pay during the three months' maternity leave;
- (b) extension of the Scheme to workers of seasonal factories;
- (c) provision of creches and hospitals attached to mills;
- (d) extension of the Scheme to cover families of workers."

In other countries health insurance has become very common. In two words the purport of this scheme is, "*Kamate wakt do our bimar hote wakt lo.*" But in India a beginning only has been made in this direction. Of the provisions of the Adarkar Scheme, some have been accepted by Government and the rest are still under consideration. All the provisions are not before you but the basic principle of them all is here. This scheme is specially meant for labourers working in the factories. The scheme will be worked out of a fund

raised from contributions made by the labourers, the factory management and the Government jointly. Every labourer will contribute one day's wage towards this scheme; owners and employers will contribute 41 per cent and the rest by the Government—Provincial Government as well as the Central Government. The labourers will be benefited to this extent that from the day they are employed all responsibilities about health etc., will be taken over by the Government and then if a labourer who has contributed for six months falls ill he will get pay and an allowance to the extent of 8 annas or 10 annas per rupee upto 90 days. This scheme is meant only for labourers no doubt but the Conference is taking this resolution because there are lakhs of women whose husbands are labourers working in the factories. Many women are also working in the factories and, naturally, this scheme should include maternity benefits with full pay during the three months' maternity leave.

It should also be enacted that where there are women workers there should be a nursing home.

We know that our National Government is to come into effect very soon which will surely take up progressive legislations if we make a united demand not only for the Centre but also for our Branches. Small committees should be formed by Branch Representatives who should work on this resolution. Then there should be meetings of labourers of various factories. Then we should print small pamphlets. I am sure, by all these means we will be able to do substantial work. I hope all of you will support this resolution.

*Mrs. Yamutai Kirloskar (Mharashtra)*: I second this proposal. I want to speak only on one or two clauses and one is maternity benefit, which, I think, is very important to us women. By the Adarkar Scheme the workers get leave but without pay. So, naturally, one is not inclined to take the leave because, then, there is no money, there is no other provision and so the workers cannot starve. Consequently they have to work under any circumstances. A woman goes to the mill leaving her baby at home. There is nobody to take care of the baby. She does not get enough so that she can save something for this period so she is forced to work during this period. There is nobody to take care of the child and thus you can see the necessity of the workers getting full pay during this period. In olden times the Romans used to bow low to the expectant mother when she passed by them and give her the greatest respect. Even in our own literature we find mention of similar customs. The mother-in-law would very gladly tell her son about the happy incident—of the expectation of a baby and then in return you know how the husband would ask his beloved wife if that is true and you know well the happiness that the affirmative answer causes. But look at the conditions now. When she is doing a national job—when she is giving a man to the nation, she is given the worst treatment. When she realises the fact that she is to get a child, she is shocked because she does not

feel secure. Hospitals are extremely rare. Hence the demand that hospitals should be attached to the factories. The husband and wife work for years and years. They can just make the two ends meet. They cannot save anything for their own old age. So they have to go on working and working till the end of their lives. There is no rest for them, nothing nourishing or pleasing. Don't you think that at least they should be treated as human beings? Hitherto only the millowner was blamed (and I think rightly) for not providing the workers with any medical help. But the Government has also some duty to do. It takes taxes. It can command anybody and ask him to go to the front in times of war so why could the Government not contribute to the welfare of those whom it can command at any time? I hope you will support me when I second this proposal.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

#### VICE-PRESIDENTS

*The President:* I wish to declare the result of the election of the Vice-Presidents.

Dr. Devi Valiram.

Mrs. Hosain Ali Khan.

Mrs. Gulbanu J. R. Doctor.

Mrs. Anasuyabai Kale.

Miss Leilamani Naidu.

Mrs. Hannah Sen.

My congratulations to all of them.

*Mrs. Nirmalaben Desai* (Bombay) speaking in Marathi, moved the following resolution:

#### HARDSHIPS OF THIRD CLASS TRAVELLING

"In view of the great hardships women-passengers travelling third class have to undergo on account of overcrowding in the trains and due to the absence of adequate booking and sanitary arrangements this Conference demands that:

- (a) more third class compartments also for women be provided in every train running in India;
- (b) separate booking widows be provided at every important station for women only;
- (c) special care to be taken for the cleanliness of the waiting rooms as well as the compartments."





**Mrs. Gulbanu Jehangir R. Doctor, Vice-President, A.-I. W. C.**  
The A.-I. W. C. deeply regrets to announce the death of Mrs. Doctor which occurred on the 13th March 1946, and wishes to place on record its gratitude for her contribution to the cause to which she has given years of unstinted devotion and service.

*Mrs. Pushpaben Mehta* (Gujarat), in seconding the resolution, said: You can well understand the difficulties of travelling in the third class compartments. It is only in India that there is no value for third class travellers. Many a time I have found that girls of good families, but, unfortunately, not born with silver spoons in their mouths, being disrespected. The male ticket collectors oppress women very much at the junction stations. Women do not get proper information about the timings of trains with the result that sometimes they have to pass their nights at the junction stations and are even led astray. We, therefore, demand that the compartments for women should be checked by women, and there should be an Information Bureau at every big junction. Where "Ladies" second class compartments have been removed such should be provided again.

*Mrs. Tarabai Patwardhan* (Maharashtra) supported the resolution in Marathi.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*The President* permitted one Sindhi delegate from Karachi to acquaint the delegates with the shameful conditions arising out of polygamy prevalent in their Province.

### POLYGAMY IN SIND

A Sindhi lady then apprised the house of the miseries brought about by polygamy and quoted some living instances and requested the House to take up a resolution urging Government to enact a law making polygamy an offence prescribing three years' rigorous imprisonment for the same; for she said polygamy brought about miseries to women and women alone could understand it.

Before adjourning, *the President* announced that the New Committee would meet at 9-30 a.m. and the Conference Session at 11-30 a.m. the next day.

The Conference then adjourned at 6-30 p.m.

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTH DAY —1ST JANUARY 1946

11-30 a.m. to 1-30 p.m.

*The President*: Before we begin, I wish you all a very happy New Year. There is one sad news which I wish to give you and that is that the three officers of the I.N.A., namely, Capt. Shah Nawaz, Capt. Sehgal and Lieut. Dhillon have been declared guilty. It comes as a New Year's present to India. It is a pity that in spite of the all-India protests the Government did not think it fit to discharge or release the men. The sentence has not been announced. But whatever the sentence, I hope that the Government will commute it, and, on behalf of the Conference I do request the Government to commute the sentence.

There is a message—a very long message from the women of Russia and I would request *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur* to read out and also translate it in Hindustani:

#### MESSAGE FROM U.S.S.R.

“Dear Women of India, The Soviet Women’s anti-Fascist Committee sends ardent greetings to the participants of the Eighteenth All-India Women’s Conference and best wishes for success in your work. We are sincerely grateful for your invitation but regret that owing to campaign for the elections to Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. which is now under way we are unable to send a representative to your Conference.

“We learned from your letter that your work is mainly in the sphere of the Education and Social and Economic welfare of the women and children of India. The International Women’s Congress in Paris set up the International Democratic Women’s Federation for the co-ordination of the activities of millions of women striving for the complete eradication of Fascism and Fascist ideology. The establishment of a stable and lasting Peace among the peoples. The presentation of further aggression and the guarantee of democratic rights and social progress the Congress discussed and adopted decisions on the Economic, Social and Legal rights of women and measures to improve their position and also outlined an extensive programme on Child Problems and Child Education. We are certain that these decisions will also help you in your work for the improvement of the social, economic and legal rights of the women and children of India.

“Best wishes for the greatest success in the New Year. Write to us about your work and lives. Awaiting your reply and with best regards we are yours sincerely. N. Popova, Chairman of the Soviet Women’s anti-Fascist Committee.”

*The President:* The resolution on “Benares Hindu University” is to be dropped because we are informed that the person in question has now been admitted to the University.

The following resolution was then moved *from the Chair* and passed unanimously:

#### TEA PLANTATION INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

“In view of the reported scandalous maltreatment accorded to tea plantation labour amongst whom women are employed in large numbers, this Conference appoints a small Investigation Committee to visit the areas concerned and submit a report to the Standing Committee of the A.I.W.C. at the next half-yearly meeting.”

*The President:* Mrs. Kulsum Sayani, one of the Commissioners of Hindusthan Scouts, will move the resolution on Hindusthan Scouts.

*Mrs. Kulsum Sayani* moved the following resolution:

## HINDUSTHAN SCOUTS

“This Conference is of the opinion that all Branches of the A.I.W.C. should encourage the Women’s Section of the National Hindusthan Scout Association. They believe that active co-operation with the National Hindusthan Scout Association in Branch areas should be established.”

Speaking in Hindustani, *Mrs. Sayani* said: This resolution was passed in the Cceanada Conference in another form. Today we are stressing the need of encouraging the Women’s Section in Scouting and calling upon our 200 Branches and Constituent Branches to take it up seriously and take proper training courses in scouting.

There are two opinions regarding the popularising of scouting—one is that it should be introduced in the school curriculum and be made compulsory, and the other is that scouting being a voluntary service should not be mingled with force of any sort, direct or indirect. Whatever it be, I am of opinion that scouting is one of the most essential nation-building activities and in fact no education is complete without scouting. In schools today the children are taught in a way that develops their mental faculties and, with physical culture recently introduced, their bodily side as well; but nowhere is there proper provision to train the higher faculties of head and heart, such as selfless service, good turns, to face life with a smile and many other qualities which can be developed through scouting.

Often, in my tours to the various Branches, members have asked me as to what constructive work they could take up after going through the scout training. I think one of the most immediate problems facing India is that of Adult Education. Scouts could very easily, in their own way, take up this question and help to eradicate illiteracy.

*Mrs. Santosh Anand (U.P., Agra)*: While seconding the resolution, I request you all to pass it because it is very important that scouting should be developed in India. Scouting is very essential in a country like India, where, it is said, that there is a lot of simple living and high thinking. We have advanced far too much in the field of thinking but have neglected the simple practicalities of lives. In our schools we give far too much importance to the mugging of books but neglect the development of the physical health of children—all the more so of girls. Scouting will not only give physical training but will also inculcate a spirit of service in the children. They will practise the motto of ‘help each other’ and will become useful citizens to the country. We should have scouting not only in schools but should also spread it in every mohalla and every corner of a town or a village. Thus we shall raise the standard of efficiency of every child in our country. Perhaps you will be interested to know that in Allahabad we are working vigorously to propagate the scouting move-

ment there among boys and girls. We have gone to the neighbouring villages too and our results are showing progress from month to month. I shall request you all not only to pass this resolution but that you all should be interested in scouting and should do your best to spread the movement in your Branches.

*Mrs. Gangubai Patwardhan* (Baroda): I am here to support this resolution because all these days I have been feeling that there is a want of disciplined workers. Girl Guiding is a movement which will really teach us, women, a good deal of lessons. So, I, as a worker in this line for the last 20 years, can say that if you close your schools, it does not matter much. Instead of schools start Girl Guiding centres. What are we doing in schools? We are giving them instruction which is of no use in their daily life. We want real workers—workers who can organise things and who know their job well. If you want to train workers, I think, the Hindustan Scout Association will help you in that work. We want military discipline tempered with civility and politeness. We want people who know their job—who can work in the society and help women to learn different activities that we want to carry on for the benefit of women. Then ten rules in scouting embody our ideals teaching us to be good citizens, good mothers, good sisters, and good workers in the field. They teach us how to withstand difficulties, how to face unwelcome situations which confront us. Scouting is very useful to us and if we want really good organisers, good workers, it is scouting that will help us. I am, therefore, very glad to support this resolution.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

*The President*: Now we have finished our work on the agenda. Mrs. Lam has asked my permission to say a few words on a very interesting proposal and I allow her to speak.

### WOMEN'S HOSTELS

*Mrs. Mithan Lam*: I thank you Madam President for giving me leave to speak about a plan which I have been thinking of for some time. Yesterday we all passed a resolution on education. We want more teachers. We want more girls to be educated so that they could go and take their share in national affairs. We also want more literacy. We have found in Bombay, and I am sure you have also found in the big cities that there are many girls willing to learn—willing to come up from the mofussil and to go in for higher education. But the main problem is that these girls do not know where to stay. Their parents do not want to send them to the big cities, unless they are sure they have a proper place, well run, where their girls would be quite safe and looked after properly. We have this difficulty in Bombay. Every hostel is packed to its capacity. We have so many inquiries from parents of the girls from the mofussil, particularly when the new term starts. "Can you accommodate my

girl? She is willing to stay with 4 or 5 people in a room, but can you accommodate her?" and the reply we have to give is, "Sorry, there is no accommodation."

Therefore, I suggest that this Conference should sponsor a certain number of hostels—first in the big cities like Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Delhi, where you get girls from mofussil for higher education. These hostels should be run of course on non-communal lines, where every Indian girl, if she is studying for higher education can come and have a nice place to stay at. There is also another part of the same proposal. We should not rest only with starting hostels. There are Y.W.C.A. hostels in all these places, but there has been a tendency—particularly amongst the orthodox people that they do not like to send their girls to the Y.W.C.A. hostels—I do not know why. Most of these hostels were started generally for Anglo-Indian working girls. Perhaps the hours are a bit too late to suit Indian ideas. I have talked to many people and they say that they do not want to send their girls to the Y.W.C.A. hostels. Therefore, there is an urgent need for such homes. I suggest that we should start hostels on similar lines and the Y.W.C.A. hostels with certain modifications to suit Indian conditions. We should have certain other activities also, for instance, games, lectures—lectures on leadership, guiding, in short, make it a centre for all women's activities.

Now you will tell me, it is easy making speeches, but where are we to find the money for all this. I say there are two ways in which we can do it. You have passed resolutions unanimously. If you are anxious to see these resolutions implemented, there is, I think, one way in which we can implement them particularly the resolution on Education. Start a small fund. There are millionaires in Hyderabad City—you could tap each one of them, we have got plenty of rich members amongst the delegates; they could do something. We could at least have Rs. 5,000 as subscription from them here.

Another thing. Let us tap the masses. I will give you an illustration. Madame Amina El Said from Egypt told me that in Cairo all the 'fezes' were at first imported from Czechoslovakia and Austria. The leaders said that they did not want to import foreign fezes, but should make them locally. And so they started a piaster fund (A piaster is equal to two annas). She said, "I went to the people including fakirs and they also gave us their share." If we approach the masses of people who are becoming conscious, and ask them for two annas I think they would not refuse. We must tap millionaires and poor people as well, and we can find enough to start our hostels on the lines suggested, first in the bigger provinces and then in our own provinces. We can first of all have a building on hire, and then as the funds are made available we can purchase our own building. The Y.W.C.A. have got a big building in Bombay. They wanted to start another hostel for Indian girls. They went to

a sale. There were also other bidders. You are aware that the value of the buildings in Bombay has gone up tremendously. But as soon as the men discovered that these ladies were out to buy the property for the girls' hostel, the men out of chivalry withdrew and said that they were not going to bid against them, and the Y.W.C.A. got the building at very reasonable price. If the Indian men could do all that in the case of Y.W.C.A. they could also do the same thing in the case of Indian institutions if they are well managed. This is my proposal and if you will consent to it, I shall be very thankful.

*The President:* We have finished our agenda and the work of this Session is over. I have to thank you all for the kind co-operation that you have given me in making this Session a success. I consider this Session a very unique one because for one thing we have had so many visitors from different countries. For us it has been a very interesting experience to have contacts with representatives of the various countries. I hope they will carry happy memories of this conference. But I would like to impress upon them one thing and that is that we are not satisfied with the things as they are. If they wish that we should co-operate with them in their efforts to establish world peace as their resolution of the Paris Conference desires us to do, they should realise that India must be free before we can wholeheartedly support them in their endeavour to do so. And I appeal to the delegates who have come here to work up the Charter as that is the programme of work before you. We want health section—we want housing and sanitation. Our houses are not sanitary at all. People must be educated in the knowledge of hygiene and sanitation and that is one thing that you all can do. Next comes the question of nutrition. It is also a very important item on our programme and I hope the branches will take it up in right earnest. We have got our charter. We are going to present our memorandum. We are going to tackle the question of the W.A.C. (I.)s and we are also going to tackle the question of unemployment of those who will soon be thrown out of work. I would suggest to the Bombay Branch and the Delhi Branch and the Madras Branch that wherever there has been employment of large number of women who will be thrown out of work to call Conferences of these women and find out what their needs are so that it will be possible for us to help them in whatever way we can. I have also suggested in my address that branches should take up the work of training social workers. Probably they have already got some social workers. Yesterday one lady approached me and asked me that she was willing to take up social work if she was allowed to do so. You, in your branches and areas, have a number of social workers about whom we do not know anything. You will try to find out these workers and help them to find work and thus help our cause.

During the last few days you have had to put up with me and my shortcomings. If I have displeased any one, I ask for forgiveness. I had to be

strict but I had to be strict in order to be kind because I did not wish to waste the time of other delegates. I also thank the Hyderabad Branch for the great hospitality they have shown. Sind is a backward province—we know that. And when all the other Branches were not willing to have the Conference it was Hyderabad Branch which came to our rescue and for that also we should be very grateful to them. Delegates may have some grievances but they must bear in mind that the task of the Reception Committee is always very difficult. I myself have had experience in Bombay twice—first when I was the Secretary of the Reception Committee and second time when my sister was the Secretary of the Reception Committee. The task of the Reception Committee is very difficult and we should be generous enough to forgive any inconveniences we may have to suffer. The food problem is always difficult. I personally feel that when we have a domestic science college like the Lady Irwin College, it ought to prepare simple menus which could be made use of by the Reception Committees. This will help to solve the food difficulties. Once again I thank you all for your co-operation in making a success of this Conference and I hope you will all co-operate with me during my Presidentship to carry out the programme of work as chalked out by us.

*The President:* There is one important thing which I have forgotten and that is the appeal for funds. We have a big programme to carry through. We have our Central Office and if you all feel that the All-India Women's Conference is worth being helped then I hope you will help us generously. The branches also should work hard to get more funds.

The following donations towards the funds of the All-India Women's Conference were announced:—

Miss Draupadi Advani	Rs. 51
Dr. Anna Thomas	51
U. P. Agra Branch	100
Mrs. Devi Dayaram Advani	100
The Lebanese Visitors	200
Rajkumari Amrit Kaur	325
Bombay Branch	300
Punjab Central Branch	150
Do Do (if the President visits)	2000
Gujarat Branch	150
Calcutta Branch	150
Dr. D. H. Bana (Baroda)	101
Mrs. Ranga	100
Lady Rama Rau	100
Dr. Miss Devi Valiram	100
Maharashtra Branch	150



Shrimati Nalinkumari	100
A Sympathiser	100
Indore Branch	150
Mrs. Raksha Saran	101
Dr. Tarabai Chitale	101
A member of Hyderabad Sind	100
Wife of the President of Hyderabad Municipality	100
Madras Branch	100
Hyderabad (Deccan) Branch	100
Baroda Branch	100
Foreign Visitors through Miss Agatha Harrison	500
One member from Indore	51
Mrs. Renuka Ray	100
Delhi Branch	100
Mrs. Alabux	100
Mrs. Jagtiani	51
Mrs. Mangla Mehta (Karachi)	100
Rotary Club, Hyderabad (Sind)	100
Mrs. Kamala Ratnam	30
Maharani Lalita Kumari Devi of Vizianagaram	100
Mrs. Rupma Lakhani	100
Mrs. Sita Suri	25
Through Mrs. Hansaben Mehta, President	1701
Mrs. Sulbha Gupta (Benares)	100
Mrs. Sharada Gupta (Benares)	50
Benares Constituent Branch	25
Mrs. Rajkumari Devi (Benares)	25
	Rs. 8,438

*The President:* Now some of our visitors would like to say a few words.

*Dr. Hanna Rydh:* I thank you all for your hospitality and for kindness shown to us. We have very much appreciated the hard work you all have done. The Standing Committee has been working night and day, and you all, hundreds of you here, have been sitting for hours and hours listening, learning and talking from the platform. We all support your desire for freedom and we are sure you very soon will get it (applause). Our last word to the Conference is goodluck to you in your work for India.

*Miss Venutai Chitale:* It is a very happy day because the All-India Women's Conference have carried on their work successfully and I congratulate not only the Conference but all who were present here. We were not only

helped by women but also by men. But it is a sad day today. It is a New Year's Day and everybody here is startled because we had a very sad news, that is, those who have been really called patriots in other countries for the same war have been condemned and we are all sad. If all the millions of women of India could go and march and protest together, surely we could deafen the whole world and I hope we shall be able to do something towards that.

*Lady Rama Rau*, speaking in Hindusthani, moved a hearty vote of thanks to the Chair. She said that the calm, dignity and efficiency with which Mrs. Hansa Mehta conducted the proceedings were ideal. The President was one of the oldest members of the Organisation, who had served the Conference with unceasing zeal in many capacities.

Lady Rama Rau also gave a vote of thanks to the Hon. General Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer for the untiring work so ably carried throughout their term. Their re-election is a sure proof of appreciation of their work.

She thanked the Reception Committee, particularly the Chairwoman, Dr. Devi Valiram, and the Secretary, Miss A. Khemchand, the private hostesses, the volunteers, the Press and all those—men and women—who helped to make the Conference a success.

*Mrs. Renuka Ray*: I have great pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks moved by Lady Rama Rau. At the outset I want to thank the volunteers. When we arrived in this city, we were met by the volunteers with bright and welcoming faces at the station, and ever since then, in spite of a great deal of work and sometimes of very trying orders from some of us, they have carried out their work in a cheerful, energetic and disciplined manner. It is a very happy augury for future. It is really a matter of great pleasure and pride to see them.

The Reception Committee who had gone through so much trouble, as our President has mentioned, in organizing the Conference should also be thanked for all that they have done to make the Conference a great success. We must not leave the men of Hyderabad out. I know for instance in the house where I was staying, that is in Miss Samtani's place, her brothers did a great deal for us. Similarly, I am sure in other houses, many of the men have come forward and done whatever was possible for them to do in order to make the women who had come for the Conference from far and wide, comfortable. Lady Rama Rau has already referred to the Press and I am sure that we all join her in expressing our gratitude towards them. Their assiduity and untiring effort to obtain news cannot go unappreciated by us. The outgoing President, Shree-mati Kamaladevi, is one of those who gave the lead not only in the past year but at the very inception of the Women's Conference. I have hardly the appropriate words to offer our appreciation of the excellent work done by her.

As for the new President, we have all seen how ably she has conducted the meetings here. I feel sure that with her balanced judgment and tact we can look forward to a year of work during which we shall be able to work in harmony and co-operation. Lady Rama Rau has thanked every one in detail, including the General Secretary and the Treasurer for their untiring work. We are happy to have them once more in the same positions for another year. As for the delegates, I am one of them. I do not think it necessary for us to thank ourselves. Let us hope that we shall be able to go forward and achieve great results in the coming year, under the presidentship of Mrs. Hansa Mehta.

*Dr. Miss Devi Valiram*, on behalf of the Reception Committee, thanked the various hostesses, public institutions, individuals and firms, the Press and the Press Photographers for helping the Committee in various ways. She also thanked the volunteers heartily. She asked the President and the Delegates to excuse all shortcomings in the arrangements. But for the co-operation of all, the Conference would not have been a success at all.

*The President*: Now we sing our National Song and then disperse.

After 'Vande Mataram' was sung the Conference terminated.

## RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE 18TH SESSION

### I. CONDOLENCE RESOLUTIONS

(1) This Conference of the All India Women's Conference records with deep regret the sudden death of Shriman Raja Rajwade and offers its heartfelt condolences to Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade on the irreparable loss she has sustained. This Conference directs the Secretary to convey this resolution to Rani Rajwade.

(2) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference expresses its sense of grief at the death of Shrimati Satyavati Devi, the Congress worker of Delhi, and conveys its condolences to her relatives.

(3) This Conference expresses its deep sense of loss at the tragic death of Miss Jyotirmayee Gangulee, an ardent worker for the cause of Indian freedom.

(4) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference deeply mourns the death of Shri Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and offers its sympathy to her family.

(5) This Conference expresses its grief at the untimely death of Shri Nanjamma, an indefatigable worker for the cause of women in Mysore.

(6) This Conference expresses its sense of grief at the sad demise of Shrimati Kamalawati Tejram Malla, sister of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru.

## II. CONGRATULATORY RESOLUTIONS

(1) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Shrimati Swaminadhan who has been returned to the Central Assembly and Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru and Shrimati Jethibai Sipahimalani who have been returned unopposed to the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Sind respectively. They wish them all success in the work they will be called upon to do.

(2) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on the excellent work she has been able to do during her recent visit to England and her election as a Vice-President of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Conference.

(3) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference records its appreciation of the admirable work done by Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in America during the last year.

(4) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Mrs. Renuka Ray on her successful campaign, as our representative in the Central Assembly, against the abolition of the ban on women working underground in mines.

(5) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference congratulates Mrs. Anasuyabai Kale, the President of the Capital Punishment Relief Society for the tireless efforts she made on behalf of the Chimur and Ashti prisoners, which were crowned with success.

(6) This Conference of the All-India Women's Conference expresses its appreciation of the work done by Mrs. J. K. Handoo and the Indian delegates of the Board-meeting of the International Alliance of Women Voters in Geneva.

## III. OTHER RESOLUTIONS

(1) NATIONAL GOVERNMENT:—This Conference feels that the question of Indian Independence cannot be delayed any longer and that the prevailing distress and chaos in the country can only be surmounted by the transfer of complete power to the Indian people and the establishment of the National Government enjoying the full confidence of all. It

is also of the opinion that the constitution-making body as envisaged by the British Government cannot be a truly representative body, elected as it will be on a very restricted franchise.

(2) **PEACE AND FREEDOM:**—This Conference reiterates its belief that peace and freedom are indivisible, that the establishment of permanent peace is only possible when all the subject-people of the world have attained complete independence with full power over their own destinies. This Conference, therefore, views with great alarm and distress the fact that the close of major world hostilities has seen the opening of smaller fronts to suppress the rising tide of freedom movements in the various colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Europe by the various imperialist powers, and the ruthless assaults particularly on the people of Syria, Lebanon, Indo-China, Indonesia etc. It expresses its strongest protest against the combination of the imperialist powers jointly to hold the subject-people in bondage.

This Conference expresses its sympathy with and sends its greetings to all those who share with us a common struggle against imperialism and hopes that this will forge a common link of comradeship and lay the foundations of a larger brotherhood of nations.

(3) **INDONESIA:**—This Conference expresses its strong protest against the use of Indian men, ships and money to suppress the freedom movements of the people of the East and demands the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia.

(4) **I. N. A. DEMONSTRATIONS:**—This Conference deplores the high-handed action of the authorities responsible for the opening of fire and lathi charges on peaceful processions of unarmed students in Calcutta, Lahore and Bombay, in connection with the I. N. A. demonstrations, and urges the immediate investigation of all reported incidents by a representative, impartial tribunal of officials and non-officials.

(5) **HINDU CODE:**—This Conference reiterates its demand for the removal of legal disabilities of women and hopes that the Draft Hindu Code will be introduced into the Central Legislatures at an early date. It trusts that the newly elected Assembly will support the Code and put it on the Statute Book without delay.

(6) **I. N. A.**—In view of the unique circumstances under which the I.N.A. was formed after the fall of Singapore and the spirit of patriotism which inspired its activities, the Conference joins in the Nation-wide demand for the release and repatriation of all I. N. A. personnel.

(7) CHARTER OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS:—This Conference authorises the new Standing Committee to draft:—

- (a) a women's charter setting out their rights as citizens of a free India.
- (b) a memorandum embodying their concrete demand to be placed before the National Government as soon as it is formed.

(8) RAILWAY CONCESSION:—The All-India Women's Conference is grateful to the Railway Board for giving concession to the Delegates and Standing Committee Members in travelling first and second classes over the Indian State Railways. They earnestly urge upon the Railway Board that similar facilities be extended also to those travelling Inter and Third classes which will enable a far larger number to travel.

(9) CIVIL LIBERTY:—Whereas civil liberty is the inherent right of every citizen under a civilised Government, this Conference demands:—

- (a) the immediate withdrawal in toto of the Defence of India Regulations;
- (b) the restoration of complete freedom of speech, press, association and movement;
- (c) the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, in particular those detained indefinitely without trials and those who have already served life sentences and others who have put in long years in jail;
- (d) the removal of bans on those released from prison.

This Conference emphatically protests against the ban on entry into Mysore State still imposed on Shrimati Kamala Devi by the Government of that State and demands its withdrawal forthwith.

10. FRANCHISE:—This Conference reiterates its demand for universal adult franchise and deplors the existing restrictions on the right to vote with special reference to the antiquated provision for the

Central Legislature under which only one per cent of the whole population is qualified to exercise the right of franchise.

It strongly condemns the manner in which preparations have been made for the coming elections as their effect has been to exclude large numbers of qualified voters from the opportunity to exercise their right, such as not giving sufficient time for revision of Rolls, and by charging fees for applications to register in some cases.

In particular, the Conference emphatically protests against the highly cumbersome procedure which has been followed for the registration of women voters, thus further reducing their limited voting strength.

11. PALESTINE:—Whereas this Conference stands for peace and is against the imposition by force of the will of the strong nations on the weak, it views with grave concern the situation in Palestine, for centuries the home of the Arabs where they have built up their own culture and lived at peace with people of all faiths. It, therefore, extends its whole-hearted sympathy and moral support to the demands of the Pan-Arab Association of Women for the rescinding of the Balfour Declaration which provides a national home for Jews in Palestine against the wishes of the Arab people. It calls upon the U.S.A. and Britain to set right this wrong without delay.

12. REHABILITATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT:—This Conference views with alarm the growing economic crisis in the country due to the aftermath of famine and flood, the high cost of living and the prospect of mass unemployment threatening untold suffering to families and especially women.

While emphasising the fact that only a National Government can effectively deal with this problem, this Conference demands the following immediate measures:—

- (a) vocational centres for training the unskilled destitutes and other women cottage industries;
- (b) employment in peacetime industries and work for all thrown out of jobs.

13. REMOVAL OF CASTE BARRIERS:—This Conference maintaining that the exclusion of any individual on the basis of class or caste

distinction from any institution or sphere of activities is compatible with the ideal of democracy, urges the recognition of the right of common use of wells, schools, hospitals and other public amenities.

14. W. A. C. (I.) :—This Conference expresses its grave concern about the status and conditions of Indian (including Anglo-Indian) women in the W. A. C. (I.) (Women's Auxiliary Corps of India) and demands the appointment of a non-official commission of enquiry, with a personnel commanding public confidence to investigate and report on the policy, functions, living and service conditions and the future of the organisation, with particular reference to the desirability of its maintenance on a permanent basis. Should, however, the Government refuse to accept the demand for a proper and comprehensive enquiry, this Conference urges the immediate dissolution of the W. A. C. (I.), in view of the widespread disquiet caused by the almost complete absence of Indians in its higher ranks and the treatment accorded to the Indian rank and file involving in many instances loss of personal and national self-respect.

15. COMMON LANGUAGE :—This Conference reiterates its keen support of Hindustani as the common language of India. To this end it recommends :—

(a) that all members should study and learn it;

(b) that Conference work and propaganda, whether by word of mouth or publication should be increasingly carried on in Hindustani.

16. SARGENT SCHEME :—In affirming the imperative need for refashioning education in the country, this Conference endorses the main principles of the National System of Education envisaged in the Sargent Scheme and demands an immediate introduction of free Basic education on a countrywide scale so that every single citizen of a free and democratic India shall have equal opportunity to contribute fully to the country's economic progress and social security.

17. HINDUSTHAN SCOUTS :—This Conference is of opinion that all Branches of the A. I. W. C. should encourage the Women's Section of the National Hindusthan Scout Association. They believe that active co-operation with the National Hindusthan Association in Branch areas should be established.



18. NURSING:—This Conference resolves that Indian women should be encouraged to qualify as midwives and nurses. It demands that a higher status, better salaries and proper housing quarters be guaranteed for nurses throughout India and more training centres for them be established.

19. CLOTH:—This Conference views with alarm the acute scarcity of cloth in the country which has reached such proportions particularly in some of the rural areas that cases of women committing suicide for want of wearing apparel have been reported. In view of the fact that all efforts so far taken to meet the emergency have been totally ineffectual, it calls upon the Government to:—

- (a) release immediately for civilian consumption all cloth produced in India;
- (b) increase cloth quotas so that these may meet minimum needs, by stopping all exports;
- (c) fix a ceiling price for cloth and take vigorous measures against infringement of control orders and rules;
- (d) give every facility to the textile industry of India for development and to help weavers to obtain adequate quantities of yarn;
- (e) start hand spinning and weaving centres straightaway in rural areas in order to give immediate relief in the matter of cloth shortage to the villagers;
- (f) take measures to prevent foreign goods from exploiting the present situation.
- (g) take measures to eradicate black-marketing.

20. FOOD:—This Conference reiterates the Food Resolution passed at the last Annual Session. It calls attention to the fact that the food problem is still grave particularly in Bengal and other distressed areas where recent floods and draught have aggravated the situation. It emphasises the need for the public as well as political parties to insist upon:

- (a) satisfactory machinery for the distribution of food;
- (b) the provision of an adequate nutritious diet of essential foodstuffs and milk to cover minimum requirements as well as subsidies for milk for children and nursing mothers;
- (c) the enforcement of strict measures against the distribution either by Government or private agencies of foodstuffs unfit for human consumption.

21. HOUSING PROBLEM:—This Conference expresses grave concern over the continued acute shortage of houses in the big cities and calls upon the Government to restore all the public and private buildings commandeered for war purposes.

While appreciating the beginnings made by some Provincial Governments and Municipalities in town-planning, it urges on all Provincial Governments the immediate necessity of initiating legislation making it obligatory on Municipalities and employers of labour to construct economical and sanitary houses for the middle and labouring classes. It also calls on District Boards immediately to plan and carry out reconstruction of village homes.

22. HEALTH INSURANCE:—This Conference agrees with the principles of the proposed Government scheme of Social Insurance (popularly known as the Adarkar Scheme) which seeks to cover the health and medical facilities of workers through insurance contributed to by the employers, workers and the Government jointly.

This Conference also agrees with the proposal to include Maternity Benefit in this Scheme.

This Conference, however, demands that the following provisions be included in the proposals:—

- (a) full pay during the three months' maternity leave;
- (b) extension of the Scheme to workers of seasonal factories;
- (c) provision of creches and hospitals attached to mills;
- (d) extension of the Scheme to cover families of workers.

23. **HARDSHIPS OF THIRD CLASS TRAVELLING:**—In view of the great hardships women-passengers travelling third class have to undergo on account of over-crowding in the trains and due to the absence of adequate booking and sanitary arrangements this Conference demands that:—

- (a) more third class compartments for women be provided in every train running in India;
- (b) separate booking windows be provided at every important station for women only;
- (c) special care to be taken for the cleanliness of the waiting rooms as well as the compartments.

24. **TEA PLANTATION INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE:**—In view of the reported maltreatment accorded to tea plantation labour amongst whom women are employed in large numbers, this Conference appoints a small Investigation Committee to visit the areas concerned and submit a report to the Standing Committee of the A.I.W.C. at the next half-yearly meeting.

DRAFT BUDGET

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DRAFT BUDGET

1945-46.

<i>Income.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Balance in hand .. ..	7,596	2 1	Hon. Gen. Secretary's Office Expenses .. ..	1,500	0 0
Delegates' Fees .. ..	1,770	0 0	Salary of P. A. to Hon. Gen. Secy. .. ..	2,220	0 0
Donations anticipated ..	5,000	0 0	Prov. Fund Contribution ..	96	0 0
Affiliation Fees .. ..	600	0 0	Expenses on Roshni ..	1,500	0 0
Subscription for circulars ..	150	0 0	Hon. Treasurer's Expenses..	150	0 0
Sale of Report .. ..	70	0 0	Expenses on Sections and Sub-Sections .. ..	300	0 0
Sale of Roshni .. ..	1,000	0 0	Affiliation Fee to International Alliance .. ..	27	0 0
Interest on Fixed Deposits..	200	0 0	Bank's Commission .. ..	15	0 0
Other Interest .. ..	15	0 0	Hon. General Secy.'s Expenses for visiting Branches..	600	0 0
Miscellaneous Receipts ..	10	0 0	Printing and Stationery ..	1,800	0 0
			To be transferred to Central Office Account .. ..	4,000	0 0
	<u>16,411</u>	<u>2 1</u>			
				<u>12,208</u>	<u>0 0</u>

CENTRAL OFFICE

1945-46.

<i>Income.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Balance in hand .. ..	1,879	10 0	Office Secretary's Salary ..	2,700	0 0
To be transferred from General Accounts .. ..	4,000	0 0	Office Expenses .. ..	1,200	0 0
			Rent for Office Premises ..	60	0 0
	<u>5,879</u>	<u>10 0</u>	Deficit from last year ..	200	0 0
			Miscellaneous .. ..	100	0 0
			Pay of a typist .. ..	1,200	0 0
				<u>5,460</u>	<u>0 0</u>

## THE ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S Receipts and Payments Accounts for the

	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
<b>To Bank and Other Balances on 1st November 1943 :</b>						
Fixed Deposit with the National Bank	5,790	0	0			
"    "    "    Bank of India	2,983	1	0			
With the National Bank of India	4,664	14	3			
"    "    "    Account No. 2 (Provident Fund)	533	15	0			
With Honorary General Secretary	87	9	0			
"    Convener, Indigenous Industries	20	0	0			
"    Mrs. J. R. Doctor (Member in charge)	21	0	0			
"    Mrs. Mazumdar (Member in charge)	5	6	6			
"    Honorary Treasurer	13	12	0			
<b>To Donations for All India Women's Conference Association</b>				14,119	9	9
Expenses				1,753	12	0
"    Amount received from Bombay Women's Reception Committee half net Proceeds of entertainment plus half Cash Balance				5,458	12	3
"    Collection for Central Office				6,001	0	0
"    "    "    Save the children Fund*				1,15,837	0	6
"    Bengal Relief Fund amount paid to Honorary Treasurer All India Women's Conference Bengal Relief Committee (as per contra)				586	0	0
"    Bengal Relief Fund*				8,197	0	0
"    Bombay Explosi on Relief Fund*				21,100	0	0
"    Kasturba Memorial Fund*				476	0	0
"    Donations for Mrs. Naidu's purse				1,358	0	0
"    Subscriptions towards "Roshni"				9	0	0
"    Delegation Fees				2,050	0	0
"    Affiliation Fees				700	0	0
"    Sale Proceeds of circulars				318	0	0
"    "    "    of Annual Reports				79	3	0
"    Fees of Members in charge				33	0	0
"    Interest as per Bank Pass Book				119	13	0
"    "    on Fixed Deposit				218	5	0
"    Provident Fund Contribution				180	0	0
				1,78,593	7	6

## CONFERENCE

Year ending 31st October, 1944.

	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
By Honorary General Secretary's Office Expenses† .. ..				1,417	7	6
„ Central Office Expenses† .. ..				1,673	10	6
„ Printing charges of report .. ..				1,250	0	0
„ Salary of Personal Assistant to Honorary General Secretary .. ..				1,800	0	0
„ Dearness Allowance of Personal Assistant to Honorary General Secretary (from June 1943 to September 1944) .. ..				400	0	0
„ All India Women's Conference Association's Contribution towards Provident Fund .. ..				90	0	0
„ "Save the children" Fund* .. ..				1,09,188	3	0
„ Honorary Treasurer of All Indian Women's Conference Bengal Relief Committee (Calcutta) as per contra .. ..				586	0	0
„ Mrs. Naidu's purse and silver casket .. ..				1,525	12	0
„ "Roshni" our contribution towards Expenses and Subscriptions .. ..				306	0	0
„ Affiliation Fee to the international alliance of women .. ..				27	3	3
„ Education Fund Association .. ..				10	0	0
„ Return of circular money paid by mistake .. ..				10	0	0
„ Honorary Treasurer's Expenses .. ..				43	1	0
„ Expenses of the Convener, Indigenous Industries .. ..				5	7	0
„ Bank charges .. ..				24	4	6
<b>By Bank and other Balances :</b>						
Fixed Deposit with National Bank .. ..	5,930	0	0			
„ „ „ Bank of India .. ..	3,061	6	0			
With National Bank of India .. ..	50,255	14	0			
„ „ „ of India Account .. ..						
No. 2 (Provident Fund) .. ..	713	15	0			
With Mrs. Mazumdar (Member in charge) .. ..	5	6	6			
„ Honorary General Secretary .. ..	97	6	9			
„ „ Treasurer .. ..	90	13	0			
„ Central Office .. ..	81	9	6	60,236	6	9
				1,78,593	7	6
<b>†Details of the Expenses of :</b>						
				<b>Central Office</b>		<b>Hon. General Secretary's Office.</b>
				Rs.	a.	p.
Office furniture and other equipments .. ..	660	14	0			
Salary of Office Assistant .. ..	390	0	0			
„ „ „ Peon .. ..	120	0	0			
Advertisement charges for permanent Secretary .. ..	179	4	0			
Remuneration to typists .. ..	154	8	0			
Printing and Stationery .. ..	76	10	0	489	11	0
Postage, Telegrams, Telephones, Registration Charges .. ..	26	14	6	458	3	3
Office Rent and Deposit .. ..	40	0	0	165	0	0
Travelling Allowance to Personal Assistant .. ..				118	1	0
Price of books .. ..				61	1	3
Milk Campaign Expenses .. ..	20	0	0			
Miscellaneous .. ..	5	8	0	125	7	0
	1,673	10	6	1,417	7	6

\*NOTE :—Most of the Balance of these donations has been handed over to the respective Funds in 1944-45.

Examined and found correct..

Bombay, 7th March 1945.

SORAB S. ENGINEER &amp; CO.,

Incorporated Accountants,

Registered Accountants, Hon. Auditors.



## CONFERENCE

Year ending 31st October, 1945.

	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
By Central Office Expenses*				4,069	12	3
„ Honorary General Secretary's Office Expenses*				1,471	0	0
„ Salary and Dearness Allowance of Personal Assistant to Honorary General Secretary				2,100	0	0
„ All India Women's Conference Associations contribution to Provident Fund				90	0	0
„ "SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND" (earmarked for Bengal)				9,845	13	6
„ "SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND"				6,100	0	0
„ Bombay Women's Relief Committee				21,100	0	0
„ Kasturba Memorial Fund				476	0	0
„ Mrs. Cousins Purse				401	0	0
„ All India Women's Conference's Contribution towards "ROSHNI" Expenses				300	0	0
„ Advance to Personal Assistant to Honorary General Secretary against Salary				300	0	0
„ Honorary Treasurers Expenses				93	6	6
„ Affiliation Fee to International Alliance for Women				54	6	6
„ Subscription for "ROSHNI"				12	0	0
„ Bank Charges				5	11	0
<b>By Bank and other Balances :</b>						
Fixed Deposit with the National Bank of India Ltd.	6,020	0	0			
Fixed Deposit with the Bank of India Ltd.	3,177	2	0			
With the National Bank of India Ltd.	7,596	2	1			
Fixed Deposit with the National Bank of India Account No. 2. (Provident Fund)	700	0	0			
With the National Bank of India Current Account No. 2 (Provident Fund)	193	15	0			
With Honorary General Secretary	26	6	9			
With Honorary Treasurer	16	9	6			
With Secretary Central Office	4	15	3			
				17,735	2	7
				64,154	4	4
<b>*Details of the Expenses of :</b>						
				<b>Central Office</b>		<b>Hon. General Secretary's Office.</b>
				Rs.	a.	p.
Salary and Dearness Allowance of Secretaries	2,545	0	0			
„ „ „ „ of Peon	540	0	0			
Type Writer Purchased	480	0	0			
Printing and Stationery	83	13	6			383 5 6
Travelling Allowance to Honorary General Secretary						200 0 0
Travelling Allowance to Personal Assistant to Honorary General Secretary						247 12 0
Postage Telegrams Telephones and Registration Charges	222	0	0			392 5 0
Office Rent	60	0	0			180 0 0
Subscription to Press cutting Agency	36	0	0			
Expenses of Tracts supplied free by us	37	8	0			
Miscellaneous	64	2	9			64 6 6
Price of books	1	4	0			3 3 0
	4,069	12	3			1,471 0 0

Examined and found correct.

SORAB S. ENGINEER CO.,  
Incorporated Accountants  
Registered Accountants,  
Hon. Auditors.

Bombay, 12th December 1945.



## STATEMENT REGARDING REGISTRATION

The All-India Women's Conference has been duly registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on the 18th July, 1930.

*Memorandum of Association of the All-India Women's Conference*

1. The name of the Conference shall be "The All-India Women's Conference."

2. The Conference shall not engage in party politics but unite on such points as affect women and children.

3. The object of the Conference shall be:

(a) To promote in India the education of both sexes at all stages;

(b) To deal with all questions affecting the welfare of women and children.

*Signature of witnesses*

(Sd.) Sarojini Naidu.

„ Sushama Sen

„ Margaret Cousins

„ Rameshwari Nehru

„ A. L. Huidekoper

„ Shareefah Hamid Ali

„ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.

4. The Standing Committee Members become the Governing Body of the Association.

**THE CONSTITUTION OF A.-I.W.C.**

## ARTICLE I

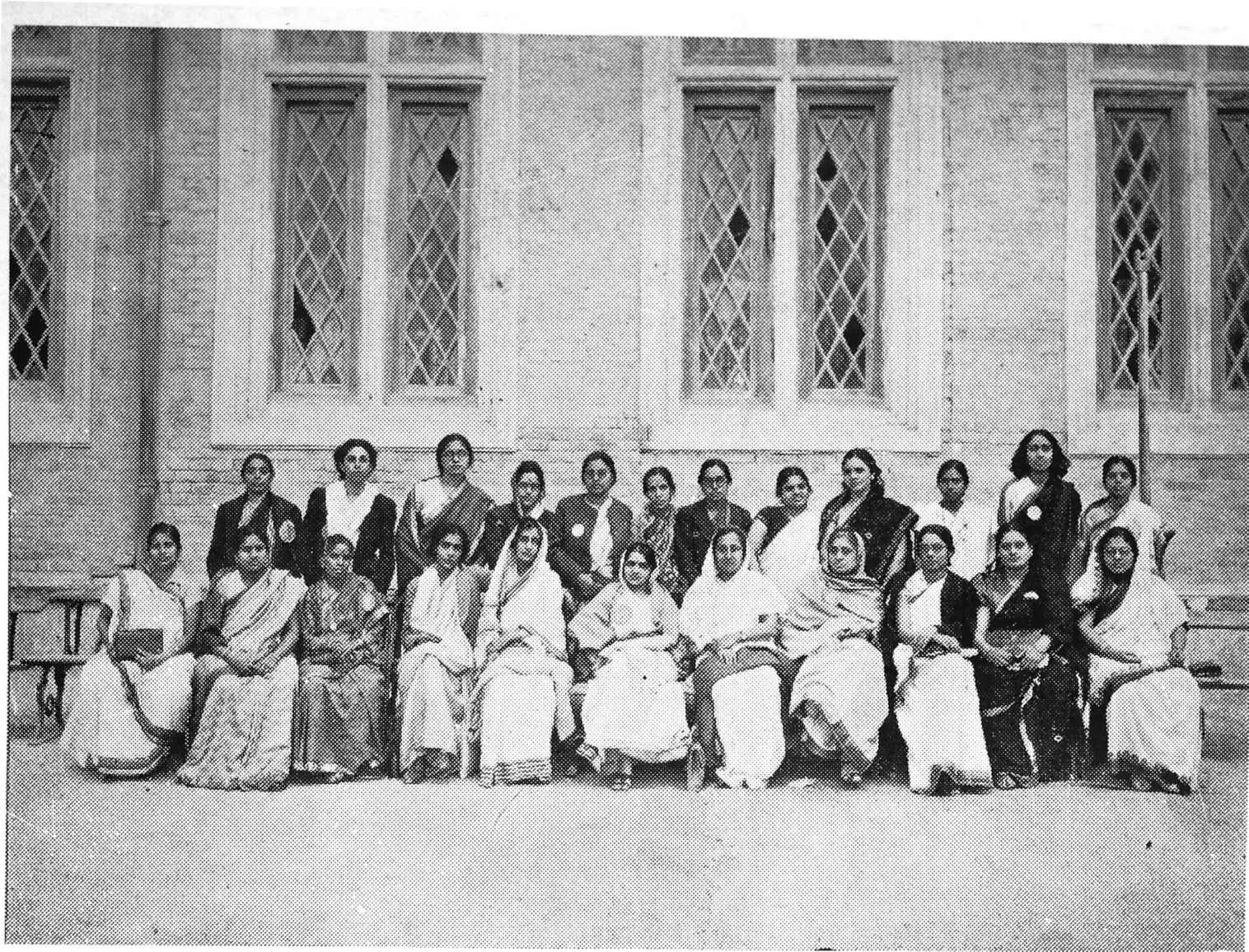
*Name:*

The name of the organisation shall be "The Association of the All-India Women's Conference," hereinafter to be called the "A.-I.W.C."

## ARTICLE II.

*(a) Policy:*

The A.-I.W.C. shall not belong to any political organisation nor take an active part in party politics, but shall be free to discuss and contribute to all questions and matters affecting the welfare of the people of India with particular reference to women and children.



**Members of the Standing Committee of the A.-I. W. C., 1944-1945.**

(b) *Aims and Objects:*

1. To work actively for the general progress and welfare of women and children.
2. To inculcate in women and children the ideals of true citizenship.
3. To promote education along right lines.
4. To work and press for social reform.
5. To strive to establish equal rights and opportunities for all.
6. To work for a united India.
7. To set and demand a high moral standard in all departments of life.
8. To stand for international good will and world peace.

ARTICLE III.

*Composition:*

(a) *Patrons.*

(b) *Office-Bearers.*

(c) *Standing Committee.*

(d) *Branches.*

(a) *Patrons:*

(i) Past Presidents.

(ii) By special invitation of the A.I.W.C.

(b) *Office-Bearers:*

(i) President and Chairwoman.

(ii) Six Vice-Presidents.

*Note:* A Chairwoman of the Standing Committee shall be elected for the year from amongst the Vice-Presidents in case the President does not desire to fill the office.

(iii) Treasurer.

(iv) General Secretary.

(v) Organising Secretary.

(vi) Sectional Secretaries (if required).

*Note:* No paid officers of the A.-I.W.C. shall be entitled to vote.

(c) *Standing Committee.*

(i) The Office-Bearers.

(ii) Members-in-Charge of Special Subjects.

(iii) Branch Representatives.

(iv) The Liaison Officer in India.

(v) The Secretary of the All-India Women's Education Fund Association.

## ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

- (vi) *Ten Patrons:*
  - (a) The retiring President;
  - (b) 9 Patrons elected by the Standing Committee.
- (vii) Conveners of sub-committees whenever such sub-committees are appointed.
- (viii) *Co-opted Members:*
  - (a) "Ordinary", not more than 7.
  - (b) "Extraordinary", not more than 10.
- (d) *Branches:*

Areas in Provinces and States, as decided on by the Standing Committee from time to time.

*Note:* Patrons shall be entitled to attend the Conference of the A.-I.W.C. and to vote at the open sessions.

Life Associates under the old Constitution will have the right of attending the open sessions of the Conference and voting as hitherto.

## ARTICLE IV.

*Agencies of Work:*

The work of the A.-I.W.C. shall be carried out through:

- (1) The Standing Committee and its Executive;
- (2) The Branches, Constituent Branches and their Committees, by means of
  - (a) Conference.
  - (b) Meetings.
  - (c) Correspondence.
  - (d) Publications.

## ARTICLE V.

*Conferences:*

## I. The All-India Conference:

- (a) Conferences of the A.-I.W.C. shall be held periodically, at a time and place fixed by the Standing Committee.
- (b) The following shall be entitled to attend:
  - (i) Patrons.
  - (ii) Standing Committee Members.
  - (iii) Branch Delegates.
  - (iv) Reception Committee Delegates.

- (v) Special Delegates (by invitation by the Standing Committee).
- (vi) Visitors (not allowed to participate in the deliberations).

*Note:* Life Associates under the old Constitution will have the right of attending the open Session of the Conference and voting as hitherto.

## II. *Branch Conferences:*

Public Conferences shall be convened annually by all the Branches and their Constituent Branches.

## ARTICLE VI.

### *Branches and Constituent Branches*

#### 1. *Constituent Branches.*

Any group of ten members, which accepts the aims and objects of the A.-I.W.C., may, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee, become a Constituent Branch and carry on the work of the A.-I.W.C.

#### 2. *Branch:*

A Branch shall be an association of the A.-I.W.C. in a specified area, with a minimum membership of 50, and shall consist of all the Constituent Branches within that area.

(*Note:*—In event of there being only one Constituent Branch in a given area, its provisional recognition as a Branch shall be decided on by the Standing Committee.)

*Specified Areas:* Ajmere-Merwara, Andhra, Assam, Baroda, Bengal East, Bengal West, Berar, Bihar, Bombay City and Suburbs, Calcutta City and Suburbs, C. P. North, C. P. South, Cochin, Delhi, Gujarat, Gwalior, Hyderabad-Deccan, Hyderabad-Sind, Indore, Jath, Karnatak, Kashmir, Kolhapur, Konkan, Madras City and Suburbs, Maharashtra, Malabar, Mysore, N.W.F.P., Orissa (Utkal), Phaltan, Punjab Central, Punjab East, Sangli, Sind, Tamil Nad, Travancore, U.P. Agra, U.P. Oudh, Bengal Central.

- 3. Each Branch shall carry out the ideals of the A.-I.W.C. and work under its direction.
- 4. Each Branch shall be responsible for its own finance.
- 5. Every Branch shall frame its own Constitution in keeping with the Articles and Bye-Laws of the A.-I.W.C. Association and subject to the approval of the A.-I.W.C. Executive Committee to which all proposed amendmends and alteration also shall be submitted.

**6. Representation:**

Constituent Branches shall be entitled to ask for the privilege, in rotation, of electing the Branch Representatives, S.C.M.

**7. Membership:**

Any woman in India, over the age of 16, shall be eligible to become a member of a Branch of the A.-I.W.C. on payment of subscription to, and in accordance with the rules of, that Branch.

**ARTICLE VII.****Delegations:**

- (a) Only Branch Members shall be entitled to attend the annual session of the A.-I.W.C. Conference as Branch Delegates. They shall be nominated and elected by the members of the Branch.
- (b) The quota of representation for each Branch shall be determined by allotting one delegate to a number of members which is equal to the total number of members divided by the number of delegates.
- (c) The number of delegates to any annual session of the A.-I.W.C. Conference shall be fixed arbitrarily by the Standing Committee at its half-yearly meeting.
- (d) The quota of representation shall be based on the half-yearly returns of membership submitted by the Branches.

**Example:**

(1941) Total A.-I.W.C. Membership	8,000
Total number of Delegates	200
Therefore One Delegate for every	40 Members
If a Branch has 400 members, it gets $\frac{400}{40}$ -	10 Delegates.

**ARTICLE VIII.****Finance:**

1. All moneys received shall be held in deposit by the Treasurer at a Scheduled Bank, in the name of the A.-I.W.C.  
Cheques shall be signed by any two of the following Office-Bearers: President, Treasurer and General Secretary.
2. Each Branch shall send annually to the Treasurer, before July the 1st, a minimum affiliation fee of Rs. 25/-.

## ARTICLE IX.

I. *Bye-Laws:*

1. The Standing Committee shall have power to make Bye-Laws and Regulations for carrying out the work of the A.-I.W.C. and to alter them and add to them from time to time as occasion may require.
2. These Bye-Laws and Regulations may not be altered or added to except by the Standing Committee, at one of its meetings, by a two-thirds majority of the members present, and provided that:
  - (a) notice of such proposed alteration or addition shall have been sent in writing, by registered post, to every member of the Standing Committee at least three months before the meeting, and
  - (b) the Bye-Law in question has been in existence for at least a year.

II. *Alteration of Constitution:*

The Constitution of the A.-I.W.C. may not be altered except at a Conference Session by a two-thirds majority of the members present, provided that a notice of such proposed alteration shall have been sent in writing, by registered post or under certificate of posting to every member of the Standing Committee, at least three months before the Conference.

**BYE-LAWS (A.-I.W.C.)**

## I

## THE CENTRAL OFFICE

Bye Law  
No.

- (1) There shall be a Central Office of the A.-I.W.C., in a town selected by the Standing Committee.

*Note—Until such time as the Central Office Scheme materialises, the office shall be where the General Secretary resides.*

- (2) The staff of the Central Office shall consist of:—
- (i) The General Secretary, in charge.
  - (ii) The Organising Secretary.
  - (iii) The Personal Assistant to the General Secretary.
- (3) *Publications:*—The Central Office shall be responsible for the proper publication and distribution of:—
1. a full report of each Conference Session.
  2. a duly edited volume of reports, annually, of work done by all the Branches, as well as important information collected by them or by Members-in-charge of Special Subjects and Conveners of Sub-Committees.

Bye-Law  
No.

3. a short sketch of the history of the A.-I.W.C., together with a memorandum of important resolutions passed at previous conferences, the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the A.-I.W.C. and other relevant matters, brought up-to-date each year.
- (4) *Library*:—There shall be a Reference Library of the A.-I.W.C. housing all reports, journals and file-information received at the Central Office.
- (5) *Records*:—Copies of the A.-I.W.C. records shall be available to Standing Committee Members, from the Central Office, on a written application to the General Secretary.

Any of the original records shall be open to inspection by the Standing Committee Members, at one of its meetings, provided due notice has been received by the General Secretary.

- (6) *Circulars, Minutes, etc.*
1. (a) *Branch Representatives* (S. C. M.) shall receive from the Central Office, the circulars, minutes and other official literature, on payment of the full Branch-subscription for the year.
- (b) On payment of Rs. 10/-, three extra sets of the circulars, minutes etc., may be obtained by a Branch Representative (S. C. M.) in order to facilitate the work of her Branch.
- (c) All Constituent-Branches shall be entitled to receive, for information only, circulars and other literature from the Head Office of the A.-I.W.C., on payment of Rs. 7/- for one set or Rs. 10/- for three sets, annually to the Honorary Treasurer, A.-I.W.C.
2. *Standing Committee Members*, other than the Secretaries and Branch representatives, shall pay a subscription of Rs. 3/- for the circulars, minutes, and other official literature received by them from the Central Office for the current year.
3. *Patrons and ex-Office Bearers*, who are not members of the Standing Committee for the year, shall be entitled to receive the circulars and minutes on a payment of Rs. 10/-.

## II

## APPOINTMENTS

- (7) All paid officers and workers of the A.-I.W.C. shall be appointed by the Standing Committee and be responsible to it.



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## III

## ELECTIONS

(8) *Rules of Election:*

1. Elections shall be conducted by ballot.
2. The election of all Office Bearers excluding the President, shall be held at the time and place of each Conference Session.
3. No one shall be eligible to stand for an office of the A.-I.W.C. except that of the President, unless she has already served on the Standing Committee for at least one year.
4. Nominations not in conformity with the following rules shall be considered invalid:—
  - (a) The Names of members eligible to stand for election shall be duly proposed and seconded by those qualified to nominate, and shall be sent in writing to the General Secretary within the time specified.
  - (b) All nominations, except those for the office of the President shall bear the written consent of the nominees.
5. Once a nominee has given her consent for election to any office other than the Presidentship, she shall not withdraw without the consent of the Executive Committee.

(9) *Election of Office Bearers:*I. *President:*

(a) Every member of the Standing Committee shall be entitled to send in one nomination for the Presidentship. Such nomination shall reach the General Secretary within 3 months after the last session of the A.-I.W.C. Conference.

The General Secretary, before circulating the nominations received for the Presidentship, should ascertain whether the nominees are willing to stand for election or not, and mention the names of nominees who have withdrawn from the election.

(b) Nominees for the Presidentship wishing to withdraw their names shall inform the General Secretary to that effect within three weeks of the complete list of nominations being sent to them by the Central Office.

A candidate wishing to withdraw her name after the specified time shall communicate her reasons immediately to the Chairwoman who shall consult the Executive Committee on the matter.

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(c) Voting papers, with the nominations mentioned in alphabetical order, shall be sent to all Standing Committee Members who shall then forward their votes, by registered post so as to reach the General Secretary at least a fortnight before the date of the half-yearly meeting of the Standing Committee.

*Note—Nominations and voting papers not in accordance with Rules (a) and (c) above, shall be considered invalid.*

2. *Chairwoman*: The Chairwoman, when elected to act for any President who does not desire to fill the office, shall be nominated and elected by members of the Standing Committee, from among the Patrons (S. C. M.), Vice-Presidents and Ex-Vice-Presidents immediately after the session of the Conference.

3. *Vice-Presidents*: Vice-Presidents shall be nominated by the members of the Standing Committee and elected by the General Body. No one shall be eligible to stand for a Vice-Presidentship for more than four consecutive years.

4. *Secretaries*: When the General Secretary or the Organising Secretary is honorary, she shall be nominated and elected by the General Body.

5. *Treasurer*: The Honorary Treasurer shall be nominated and elected by the general body of the Conference.

(10) *Election of other Standing Committee Members*:

1. *Patrons (S. C. M.)*: Nine Patrons shall be elected to the new Standing Committee by the General Body.

2. *Members-in-charge of Special Subjects*: Members-in-charge of Special Subjects shall, as required, be elected annually by the new Standing Committee from among past or present members of the Standing Committee. Should the person selected be from among past members of the Standing Committee, she shall first be co-opted to the Standing Committee, as an Ordinary Member.

3. *Branch Representatives (S. C. M.)* shall be nominated and elected by their respective Branches in accordance with their constitutions.

4. *Liaison Officers*:

(a) Liaison Officers for organizations abroad and those appointed to act as Liaison Officers between the A.-I.W.C. and other organisations, shall be nominated and elected by, and from among members of the Standing Committee,

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No.

(b) Liaison Officers representing other Bodies on the Standing Committee of the A.-I.W.C. shall be appointed by the Committees of their respective organizations.

5. *Conveners of Sub-Committees* shall be nominated and elected by, and from among, the members of the Standing Committee.

#### IV

### COMMITTEES

#### THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- (11) An Executive Committee shall be appointed annually by the Standing Committee to administer the affairs of the A.-I.W.C. within the terms defined.
- (12) *Composition*:—The Executive Committee shall consist of:—  
*Ex-Officios*:—
- (a) The Chairwoman
  - (b) The Honorary General Secretary
  - (c) The Honorary Treasurer
  - (d) The Member-in-charge of Constitution
- (*Elected by and from among, members of the Standing Committee*:—
- (e) Not more than two Patrons (S. C. M.)
  - (f) Not more than two Vice-Presidents
  - (g) Six other members, of whom not less than four shall be Branch Representatives (S. C. M.)
- (13) *Quorum*:—The quorum of the Executive Committee shall be seven members.
- (14) *Powers*:—*Invitations*—The Committee shall be empowered, in exceptional circumstances, to invite Special Delegates and Special Visitors to a Conference Session.
- (15) *Duties*:—*The Executive Committee shall, among other things,*
1. ratify constitutions of Branches and Constituent-branches as submitted through the Constitution Member.
  2. recommend, for inclusion in the Conference agenda, any from among urgent and important resolutions apart from those sent in by the Branches or those drafted by members of the Standing Committee other than Branch Representatives.
  3. decide any other matters referred to it by the Standing Committee, or urgent matters referred to it by the Chairwoman,

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### THE STANDING COMMITTEE

- (16) The Standing Committee shall administer the affairs of the A.-I.W.C. and decide questions affecting its policy, subject to the Constitution, and shall carry out any general or special instructions that may be issued by the General Body.
- (17) *Business:—*
1. The business of the Standing Committee shall be carried out through:—
    - (a) Meetings
    - (b) Circulars
    - (c) The Executive Committee, within the terms defined.
  2. At every annual meeting of the Standing Committee, there shall be presented:—
    - (a) The report of the General Secretary for the year.
    - (b) A duly audited Balance Sheet, by the Honorary Treasurer.
    - (c) The Organising Secretary's report for the year.
    - (d) Reports of the Fund Association and the Lady Irwin College, by the Secretary of the Fund Association.
    - (e) Reports of their work by:
      - (i) Members-in-charge of Special Subjects.
      - (ii) Conveners of Sub-Committees (if any).
- (18) *Quorum:—*The Quorum of the Standing Committee shall include at least four Branch Representatives (S. C. M.), and shall be one-sixth of the total number of members on that Committee.
- (19) *Powers:—The Standing Committee shall, among other things, have power to:*
1. co-opt, subject to Article III (C) of the Constitution
    - (a) Ordinary Members:
    - (b) Extraordinary Members:
      - (i) Experts on any subject.
      - (ii) Representatives of other All-India Women's Organizations, on a reciprocal basis.
  2. appoint, from among the members of the Standing Committee, as many assistant secretaries as may be required from time to time;
  3. appoint Sub-Committees and *Ad-Hoc* Committees;
  4. appoint one or more of its members to represent the A.-I.W.C. on any other Body or at any meeting inviting it to do so;

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5. appoint delegations in response to invitations from abroad or for any special purpose;
6. decide the question of affiliation of the A.I.W.C. to any International Women's Organisation;
7. invite Special Delegates and Special Visitors to attend a Conference session;
8. refer urgent matters to the Executive Committee, within the terms defined.

- (20) *Duties*:—At its first meeting held after the Conference, the Standing Committee shall select special subjects for study, research or practical work. Such subjects shall be under the care of Members-in-charge of Special Subjects appointed in accordance with the rules of election.

The powers and terms of reference of such members shall be clearly defined by the Standing Committee at the time of their appointment.

- (21) *Meetings*:—

1. Ordinary Meetings of the Standing Committee shall be convened at least twice a year, a Half-yearly meeting, and the Annual Meeting, at a time and place selected by the Standing Committee.
2. Extraordinary Meetings of the Standing Committee shall be called on the written requisition of at least two-thirds of the total number of members on the Standing Committee.

- (22) *Agenda*:—

1. All items for the Agenda shall be sent so as to reach the General Secretary at least four weeks before the date of the meeting.
2. The agenda shall be sent, by the General Secretary, to all members of the Standing Committee, and others entitled to receive it, at least a fortnight before the meeting.

- (23) *Minutes*:—The Minutes of the Standing Committee Meetings shall be recorded by the General Secretary.

A copy of the Minutes shall be posted to every member of the Standing Committee and others entitled to receive it.

- (24) *Decisions*:—

1. Important decisions taken by the Standing Committee shall be in the form of resolutions duly proposed and seconded.

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2. Important proposals for decision by circulation shall be sent under postal certificate to every member of the Standing Committee. The decision shall be declared according to the majority of replies received from at least one-half of the total number of members on the Committee within the period fixed for the purpose. Should the requisite number of replies be not received, or should the majority of replies received show any objection to the matter being decided by circulation, the question shall be laid before the Standing Committee at its next meeting.

Urgent business not conflicting with the general policy of the A.-I.W.C. shall be referred for decision to the Executive Committee.

(25)

*Attendance:—*

1. *Chair:—*In the absence of the Chairwoman, the Chair shall be taken by some one elected by, and from among, the members present at the meeting. The order of selection shall be as follows:

Patrons (S. C. M.)

Vice-Presidents

Members-in-Charge of Special Subjects

Liaison Officers, subject to the rules

Branch Representatives

other members entitled to the vote.

2. *The General Secretary:—*If the General Secretary is unable to attend a meeting of the Standing Committee, she shall, in consultation with the Chairwoman, delegate her duties *pro tem.*, to some other member of the Standing Committee, preferably an ex-Secretary.

3. *The Honorary Treasurer:—*Should the Honorary Treasurer be unable to attend a meeting of the Standing Committee, she shall delegate her powers, *pro tem.*, to the General Secretary or to some other responsible member of the Standing Committee, preferably an ex-Treasurer.

4. *Branch Representatives:—*In case a Branch Representative is not able to attend a meeting of the Standing Committee, the Local Committee of her Branch shall authorise her to send a substitute whose name shall be notified to the General Secretary at least a week before the meeting.

#### SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

(26)

The need or otherwise of calling a Subjects Committee for the forthcoming session of the A.-I.W.C. Conference shall be annually

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No.

decided by the Standing Committee at its Half-yearly meeting. In case no Subjects Committee is formed, the Standing Committee shall be summoned to function in its stead.

(27) The Subjects Committee, subject to Bye-Law No. 26, shall consist of:—

- (i) All members of the Standing Committee for the year.
- (ii) Branch Representatives as elected to serve on the new Standing Committee for the ensuing year.

*Note:—In the event of any present Branch Representative having been re-elected for ensuing year, the Branch Committee shall appoint one of its delegates as second Subjects Committee Member.*

(28) The Subjects Committee shall meet before the session of the Conference and may further be summoned during the session if required.

(29) The Subjects Committee shall examine, and draft the final form of the resolutions to be brought up for discussion at the Conference. It may resolve itself into sub-committees for this purpose and may refer on points to the Standing or Executive Committee.

The Subjects Committee may limit the number of resolutions so as to facilitate fuller discussion and suggestions of practical importance.

*Sub-Committee:*

(30) 1. The period of life of a Sub-Committee appointed to carry out the work of the A.-I.W.C. shall be one year. The Sub-Committee may be re-appointed if required.

2. *Ad Hoc* Committees may be appointed to deal with problems that arise from time to time. Conveners of these may be co-opted as Extraordinary Members of the Standing Committee, if desired.

(31) Conveners of Sub-Committees shall have power to co-opt upto 3 additional members who shall have specialised in the subject dealt with by the Sub-Committee.

(32) The Chairwoman and General Secretary shall, *ex-officio*, be members of all Sub-Committees.

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## V

## VACANCIES

- (33) *Vacancies Occurring between the elections*
1. among the Office-Bearers shall, subject to the rules, be filled by the Executive Committee from among past or present members of the Standing Committee.
  2. among members of the Executive Committee shall be filled by that Committee, subject to the rules, from among members of the Standing Committee.
  3. among Members of the Standing Committee other than the Office Bearers, Branch Representatives or representatives of other organisations shall be filled by the Standing Committee.
  4. among Branch Representatives (S. C. M.) or representatives of other organisations shall be filled by the Branch or organisation in question.
  5. on a Sub-Committee shall be filled by the Convener from among members of the Standing Committee.
- (34) *Paid Officers and Workers:* Any vacancy among paid officers and workers of the A.-I.W.C. shall be filled by the Standing Committee.

## VI

## DUTIES

- (35) *General:—All Members of the Standing Committee shall*
- (a) be conversant with the Constitution, Bye-Laws and Regulations and modes of procedure of the A.-I.W.C., and shall be responsible to the Standing Committee for the efficient discharge of their official duties;
  - (b) whenever possible, tour in their respective areas on behalf of the A.-I.W.C. In the case of a Branch Representative (S. C. M.) this duty may be relegated, by her local committee, to some other person;
  - (c) make it a point of attending all meetings of the Standing Committee held during the year. Reasons for unavoidable absence must be communicated, without delay, to the General Secretary.
- (36) *The Chairwoman* shall be responsible for the proper conduct and order of all meetings at which she presides.



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- (37) *Patrons (S. C. M.) and Vice-Presidents* shall fulfil any special duties deputed to them by the Standing Committee, and shall cooperate with the Chairwoman and members of the Standing Committee in matters affecting the welfare of the A.-I.W.C.
- (38) *The General Secretary* shall
1. be in charge of the Central Office and carry out such other duties as may be decided on by the Standing Committee from time to time.
  2. issue circulars to the Standing Committee Members at least once in every two months. A summary of the information received in answer to such circulars, together with other relevant matter in regard to the progress of work, shall be issued by her for information of the Executive Committee from time to time.
  3. circulate, as soon as possible after receiving it, any information which a Standing Committee Member may send to her for that purpose within four weeks before the Half-yearly Meeting or within six weeks before a Conference-Session meeting of the Standing Committee. Urgent matters may be attended to at the discretion of the General Secretary;
  4. arrange for Railway concessions for all the Office-Bearers, Standing Committee Members and Delegates attending the meetings or conferences of the A.-I.W.C.;
  5. convene the meetings of the Standing Committee.
- (39) *The Organising Secretary* shall, as directed by the Standing Committee, assist in the formation, organisation and development of the branches and sub-branches of the A.-I.W.C. in various areas of the country. She shall also assist the General Secretary in the work of the Central Office, and shall carry out any other instructions that may be issued by the Standing Committee from time to time.
- (40) *The Honorary Treasurer* shall be responsible for (a) the collection and distribution of all moneys, and for the proper maintenance of accounts, pertaining to the A.-I.W.C. (b) the framing and presentation of a Draft Budget at the first meeting of the New Standing Committee.
- (41) *Duties of Branch Representatives (S. C. M.)*
1. A Branch Representative (S. C. M.) shall be one of the Secretaries of the Branch Association and must be resident in the area in which the headquarters of the branch happens to be.

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2. The Branch Representative (S. C. M.) shall be the liaison Officer between the branch and the Standing Committee of the A.-I.W.C. She shall present the views of her branch on all important issues arising for discussion at meetings of the Standing Committee, and shall attend to all A.-I.W.C. circulars and correspondence in consultation with her local committee.

3. The Branch Representative (S. C. M.) shall be responsible for carrying out the work suggested in the annual time-table of the A.-I. W.C. She shall forward to the General Secretary:—

(a) Three weeks before the Half-yearly meeting of the Standing Committee; a six-monthly report of the work done by her branch, and items for the agenda of the Standing Committee meeting.

(b) Six weeks before the Conference Session: a copy of all resolutions passed by the branch conference, duly classified; and items for the agenda of the Standing Committee Meeting.

(c) Four weeks before the Conference Session:—

(i) the names of the Branch Delegates and Ordinary Visitors attending the All-India Women's Conference.

(ii) the name of the Branch Representative (S. C. M.) as elected for the ensuing year.

(iii) the name of a second Subjects Committee Member *in case* she herself has been re-elected as Branch Representative for the ensuing year.

(iv) The full annual report of the Branch Association.

(d) The names of any Special Delegates or Special Visitors to the A.-I.W.C. Conference that may be recommended by the Branch.

(42) *Members-in-Charge of Special Subjects and Conveners of Sub-Committees shall*

(a) within their terms of reference, collect and disseminate information, do propaganda work, file relevant press-cuttings, and keep in touch with other members dealing with similar subjects in the branches;

(b) keep the Central Office in close touch with their work and, as far as possible, posted up-to-date in regard to any legislation dealing with their special subjects which has been introduced, or is pending, in the legislature;

(c) forward detailed six-monthly and annual reports, one at the time of the Half-yearly meeting of the Standing Committee and the other at the time of the Conference.

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(43)

*The Liaison Officers* for organizations abroad shall regularly send to the Chairwoman and the General Secretary A.-I.W.C. important extracts from their correspondence.

2. *Liaison Members* between the A.-I.W.C. and other organisations shall represent the views of the A.-I.W.C. at committee meetings of the bodies to which they have been elected and shall be responsible for supplying the Standing Committee of the A.-I.W.C. with all information required.

## VII

## THE A.-I.W.C. CONFERENCE SESSION

(44)

*Invitation*

Any Branch wishing to invite either the A.-I.W.C. to hold its conference or the Standing Committee to hold one of its meetings within the Branch area, shall extend a formal invitation through the Branch Representative (S. C. M.) to the Chairwoman of the Standing Committee.

(45)

*The Reception Committee*

1. A Reception Committee of women shall be organized by the Branch Representative (S. C. M.) as soon as possible after the invitation to hold the Conference Session in her Branch area has been accepted by the A.-I.W.C.

2. The Reception Committee of the Conference Session shall, *pro tem.*, be deemed to be a separate unit and, as such, shall be entitled to elect five delegates from among its members. The other members of the Reception Committee may attend the Conference as Special Visitors.

3. The entire amount of Delegates' fees shall be credited to the account of the A.-I.W.C. Association.

4. Half the proceeds of the Variety Entertainment organised by the Reception Committee, plus half the surplus of the money collected by the Reception Committee for the Conference Session, after the expenses are paid, shall be handed over to the A.-I.W.C. Fund.

(46)

*Programme:* After a formal discussion of the provisional programme by the Standing Committee, at its Half-Yearly meeting, the General Secretary shall be responsible for drawing up the final programme of the Conference Session, in consultation with the Chairwoman of the A.-I.W.C. and the Branch Representative (S.C.M.) of the place where the session is to be held.

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(47)

*Delegates to the All-India Women's Conference shall be:*

- (a) All Members of the Standing Committee.
- (b) *Special Delegates:*
  - (i) Patrons who are not members of the Standing Committee for the year.
  - (ii) Those invited to attend as Special Delegates.
- (c) *Ordinary Delegates:*
  - (i) A.-I.W.C. Branch Delegates.
  - (ii) Five Reception Committee Delegates.

(48) *Special Delegates* shall have all the rights of Ordinary Delegates, and shall further be entitled to attend, by invitation of the Standing Committee, any of the other meetings of the A.-I.W.C. held during the Conference Session. At *such meetings*, they shall not, except by permission of the Chair, participate in the discussions; they shall not, in any case, vote at such meetings.

(49) *Visitors:*

1. Special Visitors may, by permission of the Chair, speak during the open discussion of the Conference but shall not have the right to vote.
2. Ordinary Visitors may attend the Conference meetings but shall not be entitled either to speak or to vote.

(50) *Resolutions:*

1. Only those resolutions which are passed at the Branch Conferences or are drafted by Standing Committee Members other than Branch Representatives, and which are duly forwarded to the General Secretary shall be considered for inclusion in the agenda of the A.-I.W.C. Conference. Exceptions may be made by advice of the Executive Committee, in the case of important or urgent resolutions.

All such resolutions shall be subject to alteration, revision or rejection by the Subjects Committee (or by the Standing Committee if no Subjects Committee has been called for that session).

2. Resolutions for the agenda of the A.-I.W.C. Conference shall reach the General Secretary not later than six weeks before the date of the Conference. They shall be sent duly classified according to the subject-matter, and should be marked as follows:—

- (a) "Urgent" (such as those relating to Bills pending in Legislatures)

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(b) \*\* (those of special importance because of their All-India application)

(c) † (local resolutions for which the backing of the A.-I.W.C. Conference is needed).

3. Copies of all resolutions, properly classified, shall be issued by the General Secretary to the members of the Standing Committee and to all others attending the Conference as Delegates.

(51) *Amendment:—*

1. Amendments to the original resolutions may be moved by members of the Subjects Committee during any of its sittings.

2. Amendments to the resolutions as placed on the agenda of the Conference may be proposed by any Delegate. Such amendments shall be given to the General Secretary, in writing, one day before the Conference-sitting at which the resolution is due to be moved.

A delegate wishing to propose an amendment to an amendment during a sessional sitting of the Conference shall send it up, in writing, to the Chair.

(52) *Business:—*At every session of the All-India Women's Conference there shall be presented:

(a) A report of the A.-I.W.C. work done since the previous conference (General Secretary).

(b) A duly audited Balance Sheet, (Honorary Treasurer).

(c) Resumes of the Branch Reports (Branch Representatives).

(d) Reports from Members-in-Charge of Special Subjects.

(e) Sub-Committee reports, if any (Conveners).

(f) Brief reports of the A.-I.W.E. Fund Association and the Lady Irwin College (Honorary Secretary, Fund Association).

(53) *Procedure:—*

1. *Language:—*At sessional sittings of the Conference the speeches shall, as far as possible, be in Hindustani. At the discretion of the Chair, important speeches may be translated into the language of the area in which the Conference is held.

2. *Time and Conduct:—*The amount of time to be allowed to such speaker, and the conduct of the proceedings, shall be left to the discretion of the President, subject to the rules of procedure followed

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by the Indian Central Legislature modified, where necessary, by the Standing Committee.

### VIII

#### PATRONS

- (54) 1. Patrons who are not members of the Standing Committee for the year, shall be entitled to attend the Conference Sessions as Special Delegates. They may also participate, but without power to vote in all other meetings the A.I.W.C.

### IX

#### CO-OPTED MEMBERS

- (55) 1. *Ordinary Co-opted Members* shall have the full rights of Standing Committee Members.
2. *Extraordinary Co-opted Members:*
- (a) Representatives of other organisations on the Standing Committee.
  - (b) Those co-opted for special purposes or for stated periods of time only.

Extraordinary members shall not have the right to vote except as delegates.

### X

#### JOURNALS

- (56) A journal shall be regularly published in the name of the All-India Women's Conference, in accordance with directions issued from time to time by the Standing Committee.

### XI

#### PUBLICITY

- (57) 1. Proper publicity arrangements shall be made by the Reception Committee at the time and place of a Conference Session. The General Secretary (A.-I.W.C.), and others appointed by the Standing Committee to assist her, shall fully co-operate with the Reception Committee in this matter.
2. *Statements:* No statement on behalf of the A.-I.W.C. shall be released for publication unless it has the approval and signature of the Chairwoman.

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## XII

## ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S EDUCATION FUND ASSOCIATION

## A.-I.W.C.

- (58) 1. *A.-I.W.C. Liaison Officer*: The Standing Committee shall appoint, from among the twelve elected members on the Governing body of the A.-I.W.E. Fund Association, one to act as the Liaison Officer between the A.-I.W.C. and the Lady Irwin College. Such member shall represent the views of the A.-I.W.C. at meetings of the Fund Association and shall keep herself up-to-date in matters pertaining to the College.
2. *Rules for Election*. The rules for election to the Governing Body of the A.-I.W.E. Fund Association shall be published along with the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the All-India Women's Conference Association.

## XIII

## FINANCE

- (59) 1. *Reserve Fund*. All donations shall be credited to a Reserve Fund of the Association of the All-India Women's Conference.
2. *The Financial Year* of the A.-I.W.C. shall be from the 1st of November to October the 31st.
3. *Balance Sheet and Donors*. The Annual Balance Sheet, as ratified by the Standing Committee, and the names of all Donors paying Rs. 10/- or more for the current year, shall be printed in the Annual Report of the A.I.W.C.
4. *Affiliation and Registration Fees* shall be sent to the Honorary Treasurer, A.I.W.C., before the Half-yearly meeting of the Standing Committee of that year.
5. *Delegates' Fees*: Each delegate to the A.-I.W.C. Conference shall pay a fee of Rs. 10/- to the Honorary Treasurer.
6. *Standing Committee Members*: Members-in-Charge of Special Subjects, Liaison Officers and Conveners of Sub-Committees (if any), shall be allotted certain sums, to be determined by the Standing Committee, for their expenses. Any further expenditure incurred by these members shall require the sanction of the Executive Committee.

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7. *Paid Officers and Workers*: The salaries, increase or decrease in salaries, and the allowances (if any) of all paid officers and workers of the A.-I.W.C. shall be decided on by the Standing Committee.

## XIV

## THE A.-I. W. C. CONSTITUTION AND BYE-LAWS

(*Vide Article No. IX.*)

- (60) 1. All proposals of alteration to the Articles, Bye-Laws and Regulations of the A.-I.W.C. shall be stated in the exact form in which the alteration is desired to be effected, and copies shall be forwarded to the General Secretary and the Constitution Member by registered post.
2. All proposals of alteration to the
- (i) *Articles* must reach the General Secretary at least four months before the date of the Conference Session.
  - (ii) *Bye-Laws and Regulations* must reach the General Secretary at least four months prior to the Half-yearly meeting or the Conference-Session meeting of the Standing Committee.

## THE ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S EDUCATION FUND ASSOCIATION

(As the All-India Women's Conference is strongly represented on the Governing Body of the All-India Women's Education Fund Association, which came into existence through the Conference after its first Delhi session, it recommends this Fund to all those interested in the development of girls' education along the lines of its Memorandum.)

### MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

1. The name of the Association is "The All-India Women's Education Fund Association."
2. The objects for which the Association is established are:—
  - (1) The management of the Fund known as "The All-India Women's Education Fund."
  - (2) The promotion of the education of women and girls of India including:—



- (a) The aid of any schemes for the furtherance of education in all its branches, of the women and girls of India as may from time to time be recommended by the Conference known as the All-India Women's Conference or under such other names as the Conference may hereafter be registered (hereinafter and in the Rules and Regulations of the Association referred to as the All-India Women's Conference):
  - (b) The institution of propoganda for the education of the women and girls of India.
  - (c) The increase of the supply of better trained teachers, having particular regard to the inclusion of training in domestic subjects.
  - (d) The encouragement of the production of better text-books and attractive and suitable literature in the vernacular.
  - (e) The exploration and initiation of schemes for the education of children of Kindergarten age, for the extension of suitable education amongst children in rural areas, for the support where possible of approved schemes which already exist, and for the provision of suitable housing accommodation for women teachers, especially in rural areas.
  - (f) The extension of facilities in existing educational institutions for courses of training in home-craft, fine arts, domestic science, physical culture and other suitable subjects.
- (3) The purchase or acquisition on lease, or in exchange, or on hire or otherwise, of any real or personal property, and any rights or privileges necessary or convenient for the purpose of the Association.
  - (4) The erection, construction, alteration and maintenance of any buildings necessary or convenient for the purpose of the Association.
  - (5) The sale, improvement, management and development of all or any part of the property of the Association.
  - (6) The promotion and establishment of branches and of other societies or associations with similar objects particularly in the constituent areas of the All-India Women's Conference, and the affiliation or amalgamation of such societies or associations with this Association.
  - (7) The doing of all other such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

## I. MEMBERSHIP

1. There shall be the following grades of members of the Association:—
  - (a) President. (b) Patrons. (c) Vice-Patrons. (d) Life Fellows. (e) Life Members. (f) Members.
2. The President shall be elected at a General Meeting for a period of three years.
3. The Patrons of the Association shall be donors of sums amounting in the aggregate to not less than Rs. 20,000, and such other distinguished persons as the Governing Body may think proper to appoint. Every patron shall be at liberty to appoint a representative to attend and vote at the General Meetings of the Association on his or her behalf.
4. Vice-Patrons shall be donors of sums amounting in the aggregate to Rs. 10,000. Life Fellows shall be donors of sums amounting in the aggregate to Rs. 500. Life Members shall be donors of sums of not less than Rs. 100.
5. Members shall be persons who pay an annual subscription of not less than Rs. 5, such subscription shall be due in advance on the 1st November in every year.
6. The Governing Body may elect any person to honorary membership of any grade in recognition of services rendered to the Association.
7. The Honorary Secretary of the Association shall maintain a register of members of the Association and this register shall be open to inspection.

## II. GENERAL MEETING

8. (a) The Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be held once a year at Delhi at an interval of not less than 10 and not more than 15 months. The Executive Committee, however, shall have power to alter the venue for any especial reasons (Notice of such Annual General Meetings shall be given at least one month before the date fixed and such notice shall specify the business to be transacted. Members of all grades shall be entitled to attend and to vote on any question that may be submitted to the meeting for determination).
- (b) At such Annual General Meeting the report and balance sheet for the past year, and the budget for the next year, shall be presented and an Auditor appointed for auditing the account of the next year. Any other business may be brought forward with the assent of the Chair.
9. (a) An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association may be convened at any time by the President for any purpose connected with

the Association and shall be convened on the written requisition of at least 30 members stating the object of such meeting.

(b) At least 18 days' notice shall be given of such meeting, with the agenda to be brought before it, provided that accidental omission to give such notice to any member shall not invalidate any Resolution passed at such meeting, and no business other than that specified in such agenda shall be transacted.

10. (a) All General Meetings of the Association shall be presided over by the President or in her absence by the Chairwoman of the Governing Body, or in absence of both by some other person elected by those present.

(b) All questions shall be decided by the votes of the members present, taken by show of hands, but anyone present may demand a division which shall forthwith be taken and the result declared by the officer presiding.

(c) In case of equality of votes, the officer presiding shall have a second or casting vote.

### III. THE GOVERNING BODY

11. (1) The Governing Body of the Association for the purpose of the Act XXI of 1860 shall consist of the President and 21 members including an Honorary Secretary and an Honorary Treasurer, all of whom with the exception of the Honorary Treasurer, shall be women.

(2) From and after the Annual General Meeting of 1938 the Governing Body shall consist of:—

(a) the President, the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer.

(b) Nineteen members of the Association elected triennially as follows:—7 elected by the Association and 12 elected by the Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Conference of whom 2 shall be from Indian States.

(3) The members of the Governing Body shall all be members of the Fund Association.

(4) Casual vacancies among office-holders or members of the Governing Body shall be filled by the Governing Body and any person so chosen shall retain his or her office so long as the vacating member would have retained the same if no vacancy had occurred. In the event of a vacancy or vacancies occurring among those members elected by the Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Conference, the Governing Body shall fill it or them from among names submitted to them by the said Standing Committee. No action

of the Governing Body which may be otherwise valid, shall be rendered invalid by the reason of any such vacancy remaining unfilled, provided, however, that the number of vacancies so remaining unfilled shall not at any time exceed 3 (three). An absence of 12 months out of India shall constitute a vacancy.

(5) The Governing Body shall have power, when necessary, to co-opt persons having expert knowledge in any Branch of the Association's work. The number of persons so co-opted shall not at any one time exceed five. Any co-option shall cease at the will of the Governing Body.

12. The Governing Body shall hold their Annual Meeting on the same day and at the same place as and immediately after the Annual General Meeting of the Association or at such other place and time as the Executive Committee may decide. The Governing Body shall, at the Annual Meeting, elect from among themselves a Chairwoman who will preside in the absence of the President and a Vice-Chairwoman who in the absence of the Chairwoman shall conduct her duties and exercise her powers. In the absence of both at any meeting, such meeting may elect its own Chairwoman from those present. Any vacancies in these offices shall be filled up by the Governing Body.

13. Ordinary meetings of the Governing Body shall be held at such place and time as may be fixed by the Executive Committee. The annual budget and report of the Association shall be considered at one such meeting in each year.

14. An extraordinary meeting of the Governing Body may be called at any time by the President or Chairwoman.

15. Upon a requisition in writing made by any five members of the Governing Body stating the object the President or Chairwoman shall call an extraordinary meeting.

16. Eighteen days' clear notice of any meeting of the Governing Body, specifying the place, day and hour of the meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted shall be given to every member of the Governing Body by notice sent under postal certificate, provided that the failure to give such notice to any of the members shall not invalidate any resolution at such meeting.

17. At a meeting of the Governing Body six members must be present in person to form a quorum.

18. If no quorum is present within an hour of the time fixed for a meeting of the Governing Body, the meeting shall be held after an interval of 24 hours. If there again be no quorum, only urgent business may be transacted, and at such meeting three members shall form a quorum.

19. In the event of an equality of votes at any meeting, the presiding officer shall have a second or casting vote.

20. (1) The Governing Body shall at their annual meeting elect the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer. They may also appoint an Honorary Assistant Secretary and an Honorary Assistant Treasurer. These shall not, ex-officio, be members of the Governing Body but in the event of the absence from any meeting of the Secretary or Treasurer they shall act in their respective offices as members of the Governing Body. Persons holding these offices shall be eligible for re-election. Any vacancies in these offices occurring during the year shall be filled up by the Governing Body.

(2) All other appointments shall be made by the Executive Committee.

21. The Governing Body, subject to these Rules, shall have general control of the affairs of the Association with authority to make standing orders regulating its own procedure, the procedure of the Executive Committee, and the powers and duties of its officers. In particular it shall provide for a proper record of all proceedings, and for an accurate account of all receipts and payments to be opened to the inspection of the auditor.

22. In addition to the powers and authorities conferred on them either by Statute or Rules of the Association, the Governing Body shall have power to do all such acts as are to be done by the Association, with the exception of those which by these Rules or by Statute are expressly directed to be done by the Association in General Meetings.

#### IV. COMMITTEES

23. The Governing Body shall at their annual meeting elect an Executive Committee of eight members besides the office-bearers. Any vacancies in the elected members of the Executive Committee occurring during the year shall be filled by the Executive Committee.

This Executive Committee will perform the current duties of the Association and such other duties as the Governing Body may prescribe. The transactions of the Executive Committee shall be duly recorded and laid before the Governing Body at its next meeting for information or confirmation. In case of emergency the Executive Committee may perform any duty and exercise any power of the Governing Body. The Executive Committee may appoint any sub-committee and delegate to it any powers which may be necessary, but the proceedings of such sub-committees shall in every case be reported for information or confirmation to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall meet at such time and in such places as they think proper and at all their meetings four shall form a quorum.

24. The Chairwoman, Vice-Chairwoman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, shall be ex-officio members of the Executive Committee. The Honorary Secretary shall be ex-officio member of all sub-Committees (In the absence of either Honorary Secretary or Honorary Treasurer their Assistants, if any, act as members of the Executive Committee and any of the Sub-Committees).

25. (1) All matters affecting the finance of the Association shall be referred to the Executive Committee before being determined by the Governing Body.

(2) The Executive Committee shall scrutinise the accounts of the Association and shall consider the Report of the Auditor. It shall also prepare the annual budget and submit it through the Governing Body, to the General Meeting of the Association.

26. When a Branch of the Association is formed, or any other body having for its objects the purposes for which the Association is established desires affiliation, the case shall be examined by the Executive Committee before being submitted to the Governing Body, and no such branch shall be recognised or body affiliated without the vote of the Governing Body. It shall be a condition of recognition or affiliation that each such branch or body shall have a regularly constituted committee, and shall pay an annual affiliation fee to be fixed by the Governing Body, and that its accounts be audited by an auditor approved by the Governing Body.

27. Unless otherwise desired by them, branches and affiliated bodies shall remain independent in the administration of their funds and in the conduct of their operations but they shall furnish to the Governing Body such reports and information as may be required by the Governing Body and shall assist by correspondence and conference in the furtherance of their common objects. The Governing Body shall have power, subject to the Rules to assist branches and affiliated bodies in such manner and to such an extent as it may consider to be conducive to the objects of the Association.

28. The Governing Body shall be at liberty to appoint sub-committees for such purposes and with such powers as they may think proper.

## V. GENERAL

29. All moneys at any time standing to the credit of the general account which shall not be required for current expenses, and which the Governing Body shall not determine to transfer to the Building or any other account, shall be invested by the Honorary Treasurer, with approval of the Executive Committee in securities authorised by law for the investment of trust funds.

30. The Bankers of the Association shall be the Imperial Bank of India and also if necessary the Central Bank of India Ltd.

31. The Executive Committee shall provide a seal and also provide for its safe custody, and the seal shall never be used except by the authority of the Executive Committee previously given and in the presence of two Members of the Executive Committee who shall sign every instrument to which the seal is fixed, and every such instrument shall be countersigned by the Honorary Secretary or some other person appointed by the Executive Committee.

32. If any corporation, firm, school, college or body of trustees makes any subscription or donation to the Association, the privileges which such subscription or donation carries shall be exercised by a person whom the above-mentioned may from time to time nominate for a period not exceeding ten years to be determined by the Governing Body.

33. (1) None of these Rules shall be repealed or altered and no new Rules shall be made except by Resolution passed by majority of not less than three-fifths of the members of the Governing Body present at an ordinary meeting and confirmed by Resolution passed by a subsequent General Meeting of the Association.

(2) Interpretation of these Rules shall be vested entirely in the Governing Body.

#### BYE-LAWS FOR THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE GOVERNING BODY

1. The Executive Committee shall conduct all elections to the Governing Body.

2. Every candidate for election to the Governing Body shall be a member of the Association and shall be nominated by a member of the Association. Nomination forms for membership for the Governing Body shall be posted to each member of the Association in such form and at such time as the Executive Committee may think proper. No person can nominate herself or himself.

3. The nomination forms must be returned to the Honorary Secretary of the Association by the date fixed for that purpose accompanied by the consent in writing of the candidate nominated.

4. All nominations shall be scrutinised by the Executive Committee who shall have absolute discretion to reject any nominee. Notice of the names of all candidates so nominated together with voting papers in the form approved by the Executive Committee and instructions as to voting shall be posted to each member of the Association. The voting papers must be returned to the

Honorary Secretary in special envelopes provided only for this purpose by the date fixed in the notice.

5. The voting papers shall be opened and scrutinised at a meeting of the Executive Committee or by the Honorary Secretary and two scrutinisers appointed by the Executive Committee. The votes for candidates will be counted separately and the candidate or candidates, as the case may be, receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. In the event of two or more candidates for one vacancy heading the poll with the same number of votes, the Chairwoman of the Executive Committee shall exercise a casting vote.

6. The declaration of the Chairwoman of the Executive Committee declaring the candidates elected shall be final and shall be reported to the Association at the Annual General Meeting. Successful candidates shall be notified immediately of their election.

7. If, during the interval between the posting of the nomination papers and the counting of the votes, a candidate, nominated by a member of the Association, is elected to the Governing Body by the Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Conference her name shall be removed from the voting paper.

8. The Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Conference shall have power to nominate not more than 3 (three) names for each vacancy occurring during any year in the Governing Body among its representatives. In the event of these nominations not being sent in to the Honorary Secretary of the Association within one month of the request for such nominations, the Governing Body shall fill the vacancy or vacancies themselves.

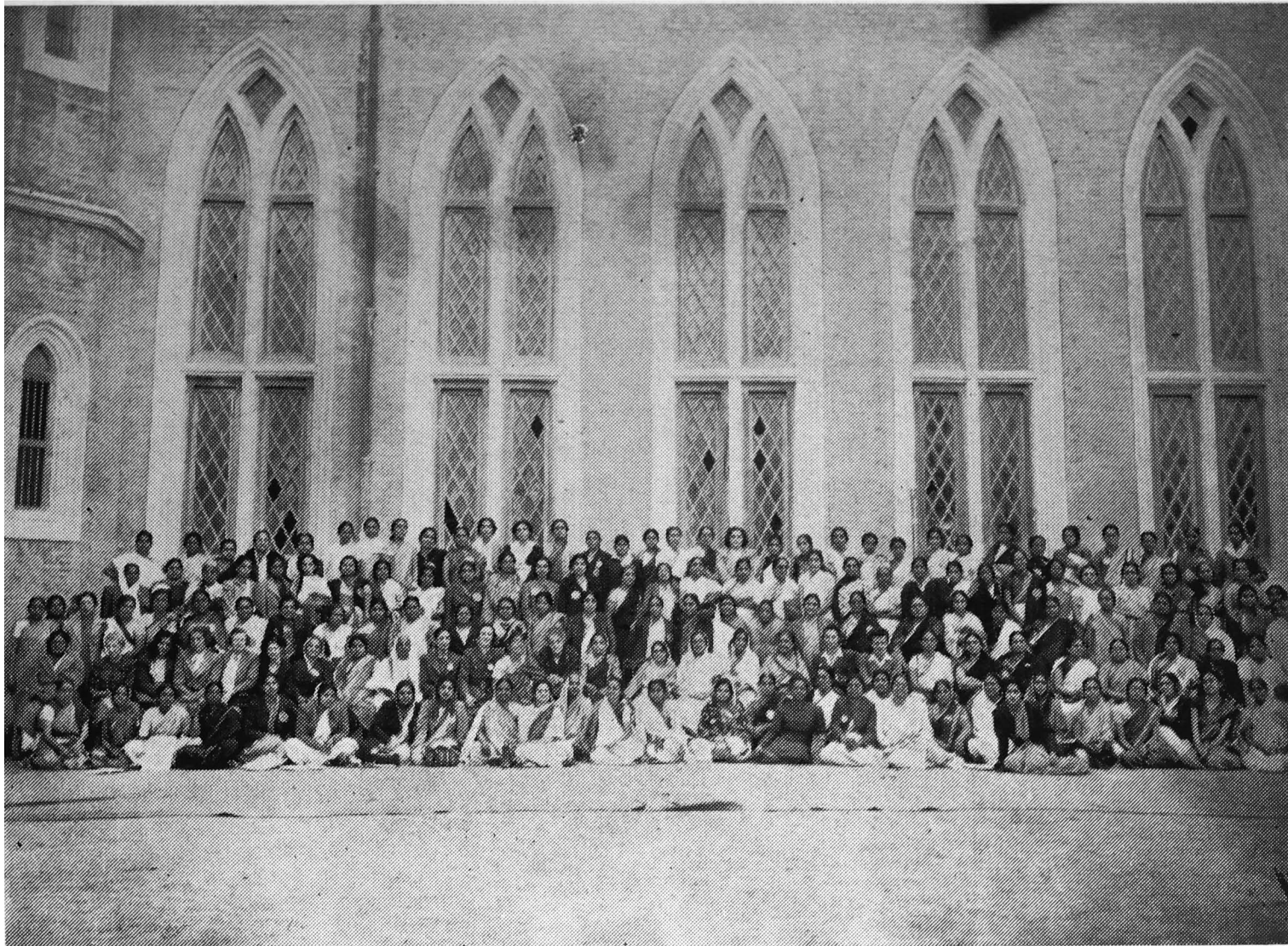
9. In order to simplify elections for office-holders of the Executive Committee nominations for these should be sent in by the members of the Governing Body to the Honorary Secretary at least 3 (three) days before the Annual General Meeting.

## HISTORY OF THE ALL-INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

### 1. *Origin of the All-India Women's Conference.*

The All-India Women's Conference owes its origin to a circular letter from Mrs. Margaret E. Cousins who, in the autumn of 1926, as Secretary of the Women's Indian Association, Adyar, Madras, addressed an appeal to women all over the country to form local committees and hold Constituent Conferences in each of the Provinces and in certain other clearly defined districts and Indian States, for the purpose of declaring their views on problems of education.





**Delegates to the XVIII Session of the All-India Women's Conference, Hyderabad (Sind), 1945.**

The original stimulus which gave rise to Mrs. Cousins' letter was an appeal made by the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, at the Prize-Giving function of the Bethune College, Calcutta, in which he called on Indian Women to "tell us with one voice what they want, and keep on telling us till they get it." Mrs. A. L. Huidekoper, an ex-Principal of the Bethune College (who, we are glad to say, is still one of our very active members), made use of this appeal as the basis of two articles which were published in *Stri Dharma*, the monthly magazine, of the Women's Indian Association, and it was after this that Mrs. Cousins took up the matter in the way just described. Her appeal met with a wide and enthusiastic response, and Constituent Conferences were held in 22 places during the months of September to December, 1926, and the First All-India Women's Conference was organised to take place at Poona, where it was duly held from January 5th to 8th, 1927, under the distinguished Presidentship of Her Highness the Maharani Chimnabai Saheb Gaekwar of Baroda,—Mrs. Cousins being the first Honorary Organising Secretary. The Resolutions passed at that Conference related almost without exception to education, ranging from matters concerning Primary Schools up to those relating to College and Adult Education. The sole exception was a Resolution condemning the practice of early marriage, as it interfered with education and supporting Sir Hari Singh Gour's Age of Consent Bill, which was then about to come before the Legislative Assembly.

## 2. *The Second Conference.*

In 1928, the Second Conference was held in Delhi under the Presidentship of Her Highness the Begum Mother of Bhopal, the proceedings being opened by Her Excellency Lady Irwin (Lady Halifax). In addition to reaffirming most of the Resolutions of the First Conference, notable Resolutions were passed relating to Rai Saheb Harbilas Sarda's Bill for the restraint of Early Marriage, which was at that time under consideration, as well as urging the Government to give representation to women in the Central Legislature, so that they might be able to express their views on pending measures affecting the interests of women and girls. The Second Conference was noteworthy also as the origin of All-India Fund for Women's Education.

## 3. *The Third Conference.*

The Third Conference, that of 1929, was held at Patna, with Her Highness the Dowager Rani of Mandi as President. It was on this occasion that the scope of the Conference was definitely widened to include Social Reform and a separate section for Social Reform was created to work on lines parallel to those of the Section concerned with Educational Reform. Section were appointed to carry on work throughout the year in the following directions:

- (a) The drafting of a special curriculum for schools, based on the ideals underlying the Resolution passed by the Conference.
- (b) The revising and creating of new text-books.
- (c) The investigation of the conditions of the training of teachers in all parts of India. Under the Social Reform Section also a Sub-Committee was appointed to carry on the campaign to raise the age of marriage.

#### 4. *The Fourth Conference*

By 1930, when the Fourth Conference was held in Bombay under the Presidentship of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the increased efficiency of the organisation had become very noticeable; and the Honorary Organising Secretary, Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, was able to report the accomplishment of a large amount of very effective work done by the constituent bodies in many parts of India. Prominent among the list of reforms effected through the support of the Conference and its members was the passing of the Sarda Act which, (while in the opinion of the Conference the age-limits specified in the Act were much too low, and the Act possessed some other obvious defects) was yet a bold step in the right direction. Following up that success the Social Reform Section of the Conference took a very active part in the agitation for Reform of the Laws of Inheritance as affecting women, while on the educational side an immense amount of useful constructive work, in addition to propaganda, was done by local members and committees of the Conference and its Constituencies in such direction as the opening of new girls' schools, Industrial Schools, Schools for children of the Depressed Classes, Adult Education, Prison Visiting, Relief to Women passengers on the Railways and Child Welfare and Maternity work. A new field of work, that in connection with female labour, was opened up through the opportunity of giving evidence before the Labour Commission, while by the delegation of distinguished members to International Conferences, such as the Berlin International Congress of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, the work of the Conference became known to women of other countries and *vice-versa*.

It was in 1930, that the Committee of the Education Fund which had been registered the year before as the "All-India Women's Education Fund Association," decided to make a full inquiry about a suitable education for girls. An All-India Committee was appointed to investigate this matter. The members of the Committee made inquiries in their own provinces at first and then met together at Pachmarhi, C.P., in July and made their Report.

#### 5. *The Fifth Conference*

The Fifth Conference was held at Lahore, in 1931 with Dr. (Mrs.) Muthulakshmi Reddi as President. Although the year 1930-31 had been one of great

difficulties owing to the pre-occupation of the country with political matters, it was nevertheless a year in which the work of the Conference made great forward strides. The number of Constituencies had by this time risen to 33, and many more schools, hostels and centres for adult education were reported as having been started through the efforts of members. The institution of the observance of March 1 as 'Women's day' and the holding of meetings in almost all the Constituencies on that day to popularise and explain the work of the Conference, was another noteworthy innovation. Vigorous and well-timed propaganda was carried on with a view to safeguarding the Sarda Act from amendments designed to nullify its usefulness; work was continued, in the direction of getting the laws of inheritance amended, and new work was undertaken in Baroda towards getting the State to lead the way in putting on the Statute Book a Divorce Act for Hindus. There were increasing signs all over the country that the propaganda of the members of the Conference in their various Constituencies was beginning to bear fruit in the changed attitude of the public towards the amelioration of the conditions of women in general, their better education, their proper representation in legislative and administrative bodies, and in the judiciary as Honorary Magistrates. The question of abolition of untouchability began to be tackled, too, in some Constituencies, notably in Madras, and while the attempt to deal with Labour questions (for which the formation of a special Conference had been contemplated) suffered a temporary setback owing to the disturbed conditions of the times, the keenness of members to tackle that among the other many difficult problems of the day, was intensified rather than diminished.

#### 6. *The Sixth Conference*

It was in 1932, when the Conference had Madras as its venue, and its President was Mrs. P. K. Ray, that it was clearly seen that although the constitution of the Conference debarred it from taking part in *Party* politics, it could not, if it were to perform its function of establishing women in their rightful position in the state and in society, avoid concerning itself with politics in widest sense of the term. The status of women in the new constitution of India, particularly in relation to their fundamental rights, their representation in the various bodies and the conditions of their enfranchisement, was a matter of vital importance not only to politicians, but to the whole country: and it was overwhelmingly felt that every opportunity must be taken before the constitution was actually drawn up in detail, to impress upon those concerned in framing it, views of nearly half of those who would have to abide by it when framed. To this end, in April, 1931, representative meeting was held in Bombay, under the Presidentship of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the outcome of which was that the All-India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association, and the National Council of Women in India, conjointly drew up

a Memorandum to be placed before the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference. In May this Memorandum was submitted to all the Constituencies, with an invitation to them to give their considered opinion upon the views stated therein, and again in its final form, before it was actually submitted to the Franchise Committee, the Memorandum was circulated to the Constituencies, from which no dissentient opinion was received. The essential points which were decided to press in the Memorandum were as follows:

- (1) Equal rights and obligations of all citizens without any bar on account of sex.
- (2) No disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.
- (3) Adult suffrage.
- (4) Women to fight elections on equal terms with men, in mixed general electorates.
- (5) No reservation of seats for women as such, nor special nomination or co-optation.

A deputation of ladies belonging to the All-India Women's Conference also waited on His Excellency the Viceroy, in May, and presented a Memorandum asking for women to be represented at the Round Table Conference.

The Social Reforms Section was kept busy again this year in agitating against the attempts to amend the Sarda Act. Rai Saheb Harbidasji Sarda's Bill to secure a share for Hindu Widows in their husbands' family property was very widely supported in the Constituencies. The year was also noteworthy for the number of laws passed in Indian States, safeguarding women's rights, or enhancing their status.

The work of the Education Section went forward with unabated vigour on the usual lines, progress being made with the scheme for opening a Women's College for Home Science, Educational Research, and Training of Teachers. The Text-book Sub-Committee made considerable progress with its arduous labour, as did also the Sub-Committee on Labour, and Indigenous Industries.

#### 7. *The Seventh Conference.*

The Seventh Conference met at Lucknow in 1933 under the Presidentship of Lady Ramanbhai Nilkanth. In the work of the preceding year, that of representing the viewpoint of Indian Womanhood on the constitutional question had remained uppermost, owing to the fact that the Indian Franchise

Committee was occupied with its labours in India during the cold season of that year, and the Standing Committee of the Conference felt it obligatory that it should continue to press the views laid down in the Memorandum presented the year before to the Round Table Conference. Nine members of the All-India Women's Conference gave evidence at various centres, that of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Chairwoman of the Standing Committee) being specially noteworthy for the firm stand which she made upon the principles laid down in the Memorandum in spite of the fire of searching cross-examination. From the point of view of immediate results however, those efforts were alas! in vain, and the publication of the Communal Award was the signal for an outburst of protests from our Constituencies.

The work of the Social Section went on apace; in many Constituencies the earnest practical efforts towards the removal of untouchability and caste restrictions proved conclusively, to those who have eyes to see, that women are not—as they are usually supposed to be—the custodians of orthodoxy and conservatism. In many of the State Constituencies as well as those of British India there was a strong movement in favour of providing for divorce in Hindu society, and its equalisation for men and women among Muslims. The promotion of the cause of Swadeshi and of indigenous industries was also a very important feature of the year's work, as was also the number of instances in which members of the Conference were successful contesting on terms of equality with men elections for seats on Municipal Corporations and academic bodies of Universities.

The opening of the Lady Irwin College for women, at Delhi, on November 10, 1932 was the event of the year in the Educational Section,—concrete evidence of the value of the work which had quietly and steadily been proceeding since the starting of the Education Fund four years ago. Important as was that event, however, one must not allow it to overshadow all the other less spectacular day-to-day work of members in the Constituencies, for without that real underlying zeal for the educational uplift of women, throughout the land, in villages as well as in towns in quiet and devoted care and service, as well as in laying of foundation-stones and presiding over public meetings, our Conference would have never grown into the solid organisation that it now is.

#### 8. *The Eighth Conference:*

Our Eighth Session was held at Calcutta, Lady Abdul Qadir being the President on that occasion. The most prominent feature of the work of 1933 had again been the political one. Owing to the publication of the White Paper in which it was seen that the attempt made by our representatives in 1931 and 1932, to gain equal status had completely failed, it became necessary to frame

a second memorandum in which while it was reiterated that the proposals contained in the first Memorandum provided the only satisfactory solution, the White Paper proposals were examined and a clear statement made as to how far they could be regarded as even an adequate "second best". This Memorandum was submitted to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the British Parliament, and later, three elected members representing our Conference, as also the National Council of Women in India, and the Women's Indian Association, were invited to London to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Suffice it to say here that through Memorandum II and the firm stand taken by our delegates in giving their evidence, we showed that, while willing to adopt an accommodating attitude in regard to details during the period of transition we stood immovably for the principle of equal status and against that of communal and special representation.

One very useful outcome of the political work outside India has been the many contacts that our delegates made with women's organisations of other countries and with institutions of international scope including the various organisations connected with the League of Nations.

Wider and wider though the scope of our activities has become, it must not be thought that this had the effect of making the current of local work flow more sluggishly. On the contrary, the work of the Educational and Social Reform Sections grows even more intensive as it grows extensive. As a whole our Movement gathers force everyday from new streams of local enterprise.

### 9. *The Ninth Conference.*

The Ninth Session of the All-India Women's Conference held its sitting in December, 1934, at Karachi under the Presidentship of Mrs. Rustomji Faridonji. Practical achievement was the key-note of the Conference in the year 1934—for, in spite of many handicaps particularly of funds and workers the reports of work in the various Constituencies showed that a distinct advance was being made due to the unbounded enthusiasm of the members. For Bihar Earthquake Relief Fund the Constituencies of the Conference itself raised over thirty thousand rupees apart from the fact that they helped in the collection of other Central Funds.

The extracts relating to women in the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee were studied in detail by the Conference, and deep disappointment was felt that the clear demands of Indian women were being ignored and it was decided that even at that eleventh hour efforts should again be made to impress on the British Parliament the united desire of Indian women for a non-communal electorate for women at least and their dislike of the wife-hood



qualification which was being imposed on them. A resolution to this effect was forwarded to the Secretary of the Joint Select Committee and to the Secretary of State for India through the Liaison Officer, and this resolution was reiterated unanimously at the Half-yearly meeting.

A successful effort was made during the course of the year to create a widespread demand for the appointment of a Commission on the legal disabilities of Indian Women, which would suggest reforms in the light of modern conditions. An All-India Day was held on November 24, 1934, when meetings were held in every Constituency, and thousands of signatures were collected to support this demand. Until there is success in obtaining a more equitable system of laws, this work will be continued, as the members of the Conference feel that they cannot carry out their duties as citizens as long as they are hampered by legal restrictions both personal and civic.

The interesting report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to investigate the conditions in mines, and its suggestions that women should be eliminated from underground work aroused a great interest in the Conference and the desire there evinced to help the unfortunate women miners showed clearly how real was the claim that the Conference aimed at improving the conditions of women of all classes.

A notable feature of this year was that for the first time a permanent contact was made with the British Women's Organisations. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was appointed as the Liaison Officer for the Conference to keep in touch with Mrs. Lankester the Liaison Officer of the British Women's Organisations appointed for the same purpose. The presence of distinguished Special Visitors like Dr. Maude Royden and Mrs. Corbett Ashby during the Conference session was a proof of the great interest evinced by women in the ideals and problems of each other.

Year by year the activities of the Conference are increasing and the success with which it is tackling every new problem is abundant proof that the women of India are not only conscious of their duties but intend to contribute their due share in the task of nation-building.

#### 10. *The Tenth Conference.*

The Tenth Session was held in Trivandrum in December 1935 under the presidentship of Her Highness Maharani Setu Parvati Bayi of Travancore. Her guidance and keen interest in the proceedings of the Conference and in the discussions made this one of the most successful sessions.

It was the first time that the Conference was held in an Indian State, a State where the percentage of literacy amongst women is higher than in any other part of India, where the purdah system is unknown and where women



have equal rights and privileges,—in other words where women's rights are recognised.

An important feature of the year's work was the tremendous increase in the number of constituencies which have taken up village uplift work in earnest and have already achieved considerable progress. Rural-work, Maternity and Child welfare centres have been organised and systematic courses of lectures on sanitation and health arranged.

The Sub-Committee on the Child Marriage Restraint Act did good work during the year. A Bulletin was issued giving the statistics of child marriage in our country. A good deal of propaganda was done during the year through the Press to create opinion in favour of amending the Sarda Act. It is a matter of pride to note that Mr. B. Das was given permission to introduce a Bill in the Legislative Assembly to amend the Sarda Act and most of his amendments were based on the suggestions made by the Conference.

The immediate necessity for a common language for India was recognised by the Conference. A Sub-Committee was appointed to report on the ways and means that could be adopted for the realisation of this ideal. Another Sub-Committee was appointed for the spread of literacy in the country. It was realised that unless a concerted and intensive campaign against illiteracy was organised, the normal and material progress of the land was bound to be hampered.

The work of the Liaison Group which was appointed for the first time last year had gone on well during the year. The establishment of this contact with the British women's organisations has been of great service to the Conference. The Group as a whole, worked increasingly to press the demand of the Conference concerning Franchise and did their best to educate public opinion in England. The Group also arranged busy programmes for Conference members during their stay in England. This gave them an opportunity of speaking about the Conference. Ample publicity was given in English newspapers to all they said and did on behalf of the Conference.

The Constituencies had collected funds in the previous year for relief of people in Bihar stricken by the earthquake; this year also funds were raised in the same way for the Quetta Earthquake Relief. Special mention must be made here of the organised help that was given by the members of Constituencies in Central Punjab, Sind and North-West Frontier Province to the refugees in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and other places.

With regard to franchise there was nothing much left to be done. All efforts to alter the qualifications for franchise mentioned in the Government of India Bill were of no avail; repeated demands, representations, and statements met with but little success and the Government of India Bill was passed

into an act. A resolution was passed reiterating the disapproval of the Conference of the franchise qualifications but urging on the women to use the powers granted to them by the Act, however inadequate they may be.

There was lively discussion on the question of Birth Control during the proceedings of the Tenth Session. The Conference was fortunate in having Mrs. Sanger, one of the prominent workers in the United States of America, whose vast experience and knowledge was helpful. The Conference passed by a large majority the resolution supporting the necessity for instruction in methods of Birth Control through recognised clinics.

Notable visitors from foreign countries, U.S.A., England, Japan and China were present at this Session. It was a source of great encouragement and inspiration to all. The women's cause is the same all over the world and it gave one an opportunity of exchanging ideas and learning one another's experiences.

The number of Constituencies and members had been increasing during the year. The report of the work done in the different constituencies showed that women were taking a much greater interest in social work. The activities had increased and most of the constituencies had undertaken practical work in some direction.

#### 11. *The Eleventh Conference:*

The Eleventh Session of the A.-I.W.C. was held at Ahmedabad in December 1936, under the Presidentship of Mrs. M. E. Cousins. This year we entered the second decade of our work. It is gratifying to note from the work of the past ten years that the A.-I.W.C. has now taken its rightful place as a representative and fully established women's organisation in India. This year more concentration was given to the need for medical inspection in schools and to the opening of hostels for girls and for the removal of illiteracy by starting even night schools. The year 1936 should be mentioned for the outstanding event of the year, *viz.*, the opening of the State Temples of Travancore to all classes of Hindus by H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore, when H. H. Maharani Setu Parvati Bayi, his illustrious mother, was our President. A great deal of propaganda work was carried out by our Constituencies by holding meetings and enlisting public support for the Social Bills introduced in the Legislative Assembly—*e.g.*, Dr. Deshmukh's Bill to amend the Hindu Law governing Hindu Women's Rights to Property, Mr. B. Das's Bill to amend the Sarda Act in order to make it more stringent, Dr. Bhagwan Das's Bill seeking recognition of inter-caste marriages, and Mr. Hafiz Abdullah's Muslim Personal Law Application Bill,—and to urge their adoption by the Assembly.

Our Constituencies also tried to introduce improvements with regard to sanitation, health and education in the villages and this year was also devoted to the uplift of Harijans. Leper relief, tuberculosis work, maternity and child welfare encouragement of indigenous industries were dealt with during the year. The Special feature of this year was the work done by our Franchise Sub-Committee for the enrolment of women voters for the new Legislature, Municipalities and District Boards. At the request of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, a Memorandum on the Political, Legal, Social and Educational Status of Women in India was submitted to the League of Nations and the Government of India. The question of a Central Office to meet the expansion of our work was also considered and a scheme for the same was also prepared. We had this year Special Visitors from England, Australia and other visitors from U.S.A. and Holland who attended the Conference.

#### 12. *The Twelfth Conference.*

The Twelfth Session of the All-India Women's Conference was held at Nagpur in December, 1937, under the Presidentship of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

The most notable feature of the year 1937 was the inclusion of about 60 women in the Legislatures of the various provinces, which was possible on account of the facilities given to women to contest elections held under the Government of India Act 1935. One of these, namely, the Hon'ble Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was elected to be a Cabinet Minister which shows gigantic strides made by the women's movements in the country. A few of our women have been elected as Deputy Speakers of various Legislatures and some have been appointed Parliamentary Secretaries.

More constructive work was undertaken by the Branches. The Standing Committee considered the draft curriculum of girls, primary schools in India, and the suggestions made by us were considered helpful by the Educational Commissioner to the Government of India. Some of the Constituencies have started conducting village schools and also other useful village work, such as, adult classes, night schools, etc. A scheme has been prepared by the Convener of the Common Language Sub-Committee, which is expected to be useful for solving the common language problem.

The Standing Committee prepared a programme of legislation for improving the social status of women and the same was forwarded to the Prime Ministers of the new Provincial Governments and to the new women members of the Legislatures. Also brochures dealing with such vital problems as child marriage, birth control, temperance, etc., have been prepared in different vernaculars and forwarded to local committees. Much propaganda was done and

meetings were held regarding the legal disabilities of women and resolutions expressing public opinion in the matter were forwarded to proper quarters.

Mrs. S. C. Mukerjee, an ex-Chairwoman of the Standing Committee, was appointed by the Government of India as Indian delegate to the Conference of the Central Authorities of the League of Nations in Eastern Countries for combating traffic in women and children, held at Bandoeng, Java, in February, 1937. An excellent report on the women suffrage movement was prepared by Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, which is expected to educate women on the subject.

Mr. Ekstrand, Director of Opium Traffic and Social Questions Section of the League of Nations, visited India on his way back from Java and gave lectures under the auspices of the A.-I.W.C. stressing the work to be done for children suffering from physical and mental congenital defects and some of our Constituencies have started work on the lines suggested by him.

Propaganda against child marriage was vigorously carried on and steps were taken to file complaints and to prosecute cases against offending parents and priests, with some measure of success.

Mrs. Grace Lankester, our Liaison Officer in England, was present at the Nagpur Session. It is gratifying to note that our Liaison work in getting on satisfactorily. There has been increasing contact with other countries in the world and an invitation was received from British Guiana to attend the Centenary Celebration of the Indian Emigration.

Untouchability work has been pushed ahead, and as a result some Municipalities have thrown open tanks and wells to Harijans. One of our Constituencies is running a free Harijan School. Following the example of the Travancore State, some other Indian States have allowed Temple entry to all Hindus. Some members of Constituencies are paying regular visits to Jails and provincial and State Governments are being urged to take steps to improve the condition of women prisoners, and also to provide suitable occupations for women labourers eliminated from the mines.

Swadeshi Exhibitions were held in many Constituencies and there was a large sale of Swadeshi articles. A directory of Swadeshi articles has been prepared. The Indigenous Industries Sub-Committee prepared a Scheme which was forwarded to the Director of Industries in various provinces and states. A scheme for unregulated industries is in hand.

New Sub-Constituencies have been opened at Bhusawal, Kirloskerwadi Bijapur, Belgaum, Patan, Mehsana, Visnagar, Navsari, Amreli, Surat, Broach and Rajpipla. This brings the list of sub-constituencies to more than 100. There are now 38 working Constituencies.

The most important development this year was the resolution tabled at the Session at Nagpur for widening the scope of the Conference by amending Article II of the Constitution so as to enable the Conference to take part in the progressive welfare of the people of India in all directions and not merely in educational and social spheres. To this resolution several amendments were tabled. For want of the necessary four-fifths majority required for changing the Constitution, the question remained undecided. But the discussion showed a keen desire amongst the members to widen the scope of the activities of the Conference.

### 13. *The Thirteenth Conference.*

The Thirteenth Session of the All-India Women's Conference was held in Delhi in December, 1938, under the Presidentship of Rani Lakshmbai Rajwade. The Conference had distinguished visitors, Miss Mary A. Dingman, President of the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the International Women's Organisations, Mlle. P. Hage of the International Labour Office, Geneva, Mrs. Ali from Japan, Mrs. Harlow from the United States of America, Miss G. F. Greig of Australia, and Miss Agatha Harrison. Most active work was done in the removal of illiteracy and this was not restricted to towns but was extended to the villages as well. Schools have been started for Harijans and practical knowledge on subjects of sanitation and hygiene given. The Conference studied in detail the Wardha Education Scheme and a practical scheme of working Nursery schools was drawn up.

A Common Language Sub-Committee carried its work and suggested a constructive scheme which was followed by many Branches. The social work of the Conference has been extensive. Public opinion was created regarding bills introduced in the Provinces and in the Central Legislature in particular dealing with Divorce, Monogamy, Restraint of Polygamy and the Legal Disabilities of women.

Exhibitions of the products of agriculture and various industries, such as home-craft, painting, leather-work, clay-modelling, needle-work, etc., were held.

Considerable attention was given to maternity and child welfare. Several of our Branches conduct maternity and child welfare clinics. The Health Sub-Committee devoted itself to improving the sanitary conditions prevailing in the schools of their Provinces and persuaded the authorities to improve living conditions of workers. Indigenous industries were encouraged by helping the sale of the products of cottage industries by canvassing orders for them.

Another important feature was the promotion of inter-communal harmony by the formation of what is called the "Family Circle" which includes men and women of all castes and creeds and communities,

Propaganda against Child marriage continued as before.

The Liaison Group in England continued its work of giving publicity to the work of the A.-I.W.C. abroad.

The newest venture, however, is the publication of the journal belonging to the Conference.

The work of the Conference has extended and there are now 40 Branches and 150 Sub-Branchees. New Branches were opened in Jath and Kathiawad during the year. Work in several other Branches was re-organised through the services of an Organising Secretary.

#### 14. *The Fourteenth Conference.*

The Fourteenth session of the Conference was held in Allahabad under the presidentship of Begum Hamid Ali. Owing to the International situation, overseas members were not able to come. The Conference continued its work but the horror of totalitarian wars and the insecurity of small states were too near and recent not to have brought out the wholesale condemnation of such wars by the Conference. The procedure followed in the previous Conference held at Delhi was continued at Allahabad. The group discussions naturally reduced the time available for plenary sessions but it was felt that free and frank discussions and exchange of experiences were more valuable and educative than platform oratory.

The Liaison group in Great Britain continued its work of not only giving publicity to the women's work in India but also of creating public opinion to recognise the just claims of this country in the political sphere.

The creation of a new liaison officer for South Africa was another feature of this session.

For the first time the General Secretary of the year was made responsible for the Bulletin of the Conference and with the help of the President and Patrons and other members of the Conference four issues of the Bulletin were published with two supplements, one on Education and the other on Health.

The appointment of an Organising Secretary for the United Provinces was followed by the further activities in this direction and resulted in the organisation of a new Branch in Dehra Dun and the re-organisation of the Benares unit. The total number of Branches at present is 35, the number of units 121, and total membership is 8607.

#### 15. *The Fifteenth Conference.*

The Fifteenth session of the Conference was held at Bangalore in December 1940, under the Presidentship of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru. After the Tenth

session this was the first time that the Conference met in an Indian State. Though the country was passing through very critical times and though some of our leading workers were in jail still a fairly large number of delegates attended the Conference. The decision to send a goodwill mission to China on behalf of the A.-I.W.C. was postponed due to unavoidable reasons. A welcome feature of this session was that some of our sisters from Ceylon were present and it is sincerely hoped that this precedent will be followed by our sisters from other neighbouring countries to foster better understanding amongst the Asiatic nations.

The Branches of the Association carried on their various activities during the year and while some of them did very valuable work, the activities of others were only nominal. Almost all the Branches did some valuable work to tackle the problem of the appalling illiteracy of our masses and it is a matter of legitimate pleasure and pride to us that their activities bore useful fruit. Besides, various Branches did useful work in other directions, such as opening hostels for girl students, opening maternity and child welfare clinics, opening nursery schools and organising Swadeshi exhibitions.

As a result of the agitation carried on by the Conference the Government of India was persuaded to appoint a Committee to examine the injustice done to women under the Hindu Law. The Conference raised its emphatic protest against the limitations imposed by the terms of reference to the Committee so appointed. It is a matter of deep regret that the Government has not realised the futility of such piecemeal legislation when the whole problem of the position of women under Hindu Law requires a full and comprehensive examination in order to adapt the law to meet modern conditions.

The Lady Irwin College continued to progress satisfactorily during the year under review. The number of admissions was increased during the year and the increasing number of applications for admission to the College demonstrate its great utility and popularity.

Mrs. Lakshmi N. Menon continued to render valuable service to the Conference as Editor of the *Roshni*. *Roshni* has become a valuable instrument for carrying on the propaganda of the Conference and for expressing the feelings of the womanhood of India. We hope this mouthpiece of the Conference will continue to expand its manifold services to the cause.

The Conference represents the womanhood of India of all castes and creeds and of all shades of opinion. Its primary object is the amelioration of the conditions of the women of our country and all its propaganda and activities are directed towards achieving that primary aim.

### 16. *The Sixteenth Conference.*

The Sixteenth Conference met at Cocanada in December 1941 under the Presidentship of Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. In spite of the comparatively smaller attendance due perhaps to the remoteness of Cocanada, the enthusiasm and seriousness evinced by those present made the Conference a great success.

The resolutions of the Session covered a wide field of national and international importance such as War and Peace, Civil Liberties, Control of Prices and Communal Harmony, etc. The Conference adopted two concrete proposals, the village Reconstruction Project and the Scheme of starting a training Camp for Provincial Organisers and other women workers. Both these resolutions were implemented with considerable success.

Despite the worsening internal and international situation, constructive work of various kinds was undertaken by the Conference and its Branches. New Branches were opened at Kashmir and Hyderabad (Sind) and several moribund Branches were revived. All the Branches worked for the spread of literacy among adults. The notable success of the Bombay Branch in conducting thirty classes earned well-merited recognition from the Bombay Government which sanctioned a grant for six months of Rs. 500/- a month, the maximum it pays to any society.

The questionnaire of the Hindu Law Committee engaged the serious attention of all the Branches. The detailed replies of the Branches were consolidated and sent to the Rau Committee. The Standing Committee of the Conference urged in its report to the Hindu Law Committee the appointment of at least two representatives on the Committee and the extension of the terms of reference so as to include an inquiry into all the disabilities of women under Hindu Law.

The Lady Irwin College by raising the status of Domestic Science as a school subject progressed steadily.

The Branches rendered valuable service to the cause of the health and welfare of women and children by running nursery schools, physical activity centres, clinics, and by arranging distribution of milk to needy children, lectures on sanitation and dietetics, hospital visiting, T. B. investigation, etc. Harijan work and general educational activities were also undertaken by some of the Branches.

The training of women in small cottage industries and the marketing of these products as well as the finding of employment for women formed important planks of the programmes of some Branches. Exhibitions, organised by local Conferences of the Branches, of women's handicrafts, particularly of



swadeshi materials, attracted much attention and thus popularised the use of swadeshi.

At the beginning of the Session, Shrimati Kamaladevi formally presented to the All-India Women's Conference a beautiful Chinese scroll worked in silk—the picture of an Eagle perched on a pine tree before the rising sun. It is the gift of Madame Chiang Kai Shek and when Shrimati Kamaladevi was in Chungking she received it on behalf of the women of India. It will always be treasured as a symbol of the good fellowship between China and our country.

#### 17. *The Seventeenth Conference.*

The Seventeenth Conference met in Bombay in April 1944, under the Presidentship of Shrimati Kamaladevi; 205 delegates attended.

The two years under review had been full of unexpected developments both in India and abroad and the Conference had not escaped from the reactions of the political and economic upheavals. In spite of this the Branches continued to carry on many of their activities.

Since the last Session held in Cocanada in December 1941, the amended Constitution had come into force whereby all Constituent Branches had now an equal status. The Standing Committee met four times during the period under review at Abrama, Poona, Khar-Bombay and Delhi. The Annual Session of the Conference was not held in 1943 owing to the abnormal situation in the country. During a period of eight months while the President, Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Honorary General Secretary, Mrs. Urmila Mehta, were in detention, Lady Rama Rau and Mrs. Kulsum Sayani acted as Chairwoman and General Secretary respectively.

The main features of the work undertaken during the period under review were:—

1. Scheme for Training of Women for Social Service.
2. Agitation in support of the Hindu Law Committee.
3. Relief work in connection with floods and famine in different parts of the country.

The Scheme for training women for social service was drawn up as a consequence of the lack of trained women to carry on work in our Branches. A training camp organised and run under the personal supervision of Shrimati Kamaladevi was held at Abrama (Gujarat) from March 1942 to June 1942. The Hon. General Secretary, Shrimati Mridula Sarabhai and Shrimati Miraben helped in organising the Camp. Shrimati Miraben did pioneer work in planning the Camp and helping with the construction.

Forty-nine women out of whom eleven were Muslims received training in the following subjects, amongst others:—Home Industries, Spinning, Co-operative Societies, Health Visitor and Midwifery courses, Adult and Primary Education, Health and Hygiene, Civics and Scouting.

The Tata Graduate School of Social Science placed five of its lecturers at the disposal of the Camp and helped generously in several ways. Many eminent men and women visited the Camp, gave their time and the benefit of their knowledge to the students.

Mrs. Renuka Ray was nominated to the Central Legislative Assembly as a Representative of the All-India Women's Conference during the pendency of the Intestate Succession and Marriage Bills. Propaganda on both these bills was carried on intensely by all the Branches of the A.I.W.C.

Funds were collected by all the Branches for relief in Midnapur after the devastating cyclone of October 1942. Special mention could be made of the Delhi Branch as having contributed a sum of Rs. 13,000/- for that purpose.

In connection with the famine of Bijapur several members of the Standing Committee visited the distressed areas and Lady Rama Rau helped to collect large sums of money for the relief operations. The Khar-Santa Cruz Constituent Branch (Bombay) helped actively by sending 3,500 garments and organising an embroidery and needle-work centre for the women of that district. In the light of experience of conditions in Bijapur a revision of the Famine Code of Bombay was specially demanded by the Standing Committee at Khar in May 1943.

July 1943 saw the culmination of the food crisis in Bengal which resulted in the terrible famine. The President and the Hon. General Secretary toured the affected areas on two occasions to devise a scheme of relief work. The Calcutta Branch issued an appeal to all the Branches for help and received Rs. 60,000/-. Besides this, some of the Branches sent donations to other relief organisations which were already functioning in Bengal. The Calcutta Branch and the Branches in the districts were responsible for starting milk centres for infants and nursing mothers, gruel kitchens and medical relief.

The attention of the President was drawn to the helpless condition of thousands of destitute children in the famine areas and a scheme for starting children's homes was immediately undertaken. A central fund called the "Save the Children Fund" was started. This name was subsequently changed to "All-India Save the Children Committee" as an organisation called "Save the Children Fund" was already in existence in Geneva with Branches in London and New York. The first meeting of this Committee was held in Calcutta in February 1944 and the following Office-bearers were elected:

*President*: Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit;

*Secretary*: Mrs. Urmila Mehta;

*Treasurer*: Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar.

In response to the President's appeal large sums of money were received both in India and from China, America and Britain.

The Conference quarterly, *Roshni*, which was ably edited by Mrs. Lakshmi N. Menon, was taken over by Mrs. Indira Maydeo in March 1943. In spite of difficulties in obtaining paper, etc., the *Roshni* appeared regularly.

The Lady Irwin College made steady progress under the able guidance of Mrs. Hannah Sen and the number of students increased.

Since the removal by Government of the ban on women working underground in mines, the Conference protested vigorously against the relaxation.

## BRANCH REPORTS-IN BRIEF

MAY 1944 TO NOV. 1945

### (1) ANDHRA (Membership 3143)

1. Tours by Branch Representative in districts and villages.
2. Collections for Mrs. Cousins.
3. Members of some Royal Houses have become Patrons of the Andhra Branch.
4. Questionnaire of Dr. Rao, Food Planning Member answered.
5. Lectures, etc. during Dassera week.
6. Get on the Rolls campaign.
7. Gandhi Jayanti with non-stop spinning in several places.
8. Adult Education classes.
9. Guntur Mahila Sangham runs a Poor Dispensary.
10. Guntur has opened spinning and handwork centre for labouring women.
11. A Co-operative Society started.
12. Provincial Standing Committee has met and framed constitution and By-laws.
13. In Gudur the Constituent Branch has succeeded in obtaining a plot of land from Government and have erected on it a headquarters building "Kasturba Bhavanam" where the chief activities are—weekly meetings, classes in Hindi, Telugu, English, Arithmetic, music, needlework and spinning. An Exhibition of needlework was held on the opening of the building.

## (2) BARODA (Membership 479)

1. Food Committee—grain shop in Harijan area.
2. Grain shop in lower middle class locality started with Government help.
3. Flood Relief—Committee formed to collect information about Government centres. Also collected clothes and gave medical help to people in distress.
4. Working for cultural development of Harijan women. Many Harijan women are members of our Association.
5. Running successful co-operative stores.
6. Annual Conference in October 1945.
7. Patan organised Baby Week—running Industrial Home for women—thinking of running a co-operative store.
8. Kalol—interested in maternity and child welfare, industrial classes and Adult Education.
9. Navsari—Adult education and help to Harijans.
10. Visit to Shrimati Hansaben Mehta, President-elect.

## (3) BENGAL CENTRAL (Membership 85)

1. Distributed milk (8 centres) supplied by the Red Cross. 800 children got milk.
2. Industrial School—(1) Toy making, (2) sewing and embroidery, (3) weaving and teaching reading and writing also. 20 women earn Rs. 25/- to Rs. 45/- a month each in this school. More apply to join but are not taken, as large-scale selling of articles could not be arranged yet.

## (4) BENGAL EAST (Membership 870)

1. Educational Activities—Dacca and Comilla running one primary School for Harijans each; Faridpur and Chandpur running one primary school for girls, each.
2. Social Welfare Activities—Dacca running 3 milk centres 250 children getting milk; Chittagong running 13 milk centres in towns and villages feeding 620 children; Faridpur running 5 milk centres 450 getting milk, Comilla 1 feeding 80.
3. Baby Clinics and Maternity Homes—Comilla running a Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic; Dacca started one but could not continue for want of wholetime nurse and midwife; Chittagong has got a donation of Rs. 3,000/- with which a clinic will be started soon.
4. Medical Relief Centres—distributed medicine to a large number of kala-azar, malaria and dysentery patients.

5. Food Centres—Ran two centres feeding 200 children daily.
6. Relief Work—Saris, dhotis, frocks and shirts distributed in 3 instalments to 151 deserving women and children by Dacca. Chittagong distributed 5 bales of cotton blankets, 50 pairs of saris, pants, etc.; Faridpur distributed garments.
7. Industrial Activities—Dacca runs an industrial school for training women in tailoring, embroidery, knitting, clay modelling, preparing fruit preserves etc. and helps pupils to sell the products.  
Chittagong sold garments among middle class families at concession rates (garments made by members).  
Faridpur runs a school for wicker work and soap-making.

(5) BENGAL WEST (Membership 287)

1. Constituent Branches at Betur, Beharjuri, Akui, Brindabanpur, Birbhum and Midnapur recognised by the Standing Committee.
2. Members helping in Education, Maternity Clinic and Hospital. Milk distribution—relief work.
3. Relief Section—money and clothes received. Money spent for buying more Cloth. Cloth distributed among mothers at the Baby clinic and amongst children at different milk centres.
4. Biharjuri Const. Branch runs a primary school with 75 students—Rs. 600/- raised by public subscription.
5. Hospital Department of Bankura Const. Branch raised money and funds for distribution among distressed families.
6. Work of maternity and child welfare clinic started in 1940—going on well—mostly poor women and children take advantage of it—Health visitor—Doctor. Not enough response from local people for the work. Too much conservatism amongst middle and upper classes.

(6) BERAR (Membership 287)

1. Amraoti—Opened Milk Centre; Preparation of list of voters to the Assembly; Adult education and literacy classes undertaken. Cottage industries started—Moderate price store opened in town. Affiliated association conducts children's school arranges lectures. Yeotmal continuing its good work in conducting classes in nursing, embroidery, physical culture and literacy. Also conducting a library. Degras Const. Branch among others is very active having own building.

(7) BHOPAL (Membership 102)

1. Newly started Branch. Spinning work undertaken.

## (8) BOMBAY (Membership 4075)

1. 17th Session, A.I.W.C. held in Bombay in 1944.
2. Harijan Committee visited chawls, studied problems and generally agreed to help in the work of Harijan Sevak Sangh.
3. Milk Committee volunteers helped Bombay Municipality in making the subsidised milk scheme a success. Sent representations to Government and Bombay Municipality (1) for raising of milk quota; (2) extending the age limit for children eligible for supply, and (3) extending the scheme to expectant and nursing mothers.
4. Labour Committee laid great stress on proper maternity benefits to all provinces and in all employment of women. Maternity benefits should be part of the proposed Social Insurance Programme.
5. Varied cultural and music programmes have done a lot to keep interest of members in the work. Planning free medical aid for poor women.
6. Educational Conference—main outstanding achievement of the year. First to be organised by a women's Association. Opened by the Mayor Mr. Nagindas Master and presided over by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.
7. Co-operated with Kasturba Memorial Committee collected Rs. 2241/-.
8. Formed the Women's Flood Relief Committee. Collected Rs. 24,427 and 60,000 yards of cloth for distribution in Flood-stricken areas.
9. Ville Parle Const. Branch formed during the year. Karve University Matriculation Classes run.
10. Ville Parle runs a Balmandir for labour class children.
  - „ „ collected Rs. 1000/- for Kasturba Jayanti Fund.
  - „ „ Kathakali dances held to help finances—raised Rs. 1129/-.
  - „ „ arranged meetings on Milk problem and to discuss the question of women in mines and cloth rationing.
11. Udyog Mandir (industrial school) run by Dadar and Bal Mandir by Khar Const. Br.

## (9) CALCUTTA (Membership 650)

1. Industrial Centres—one in North with 350 members and 4 in South with 100 members run in Calcutta. Tailoring, needle work and training in clay work, leather work, condiment making, spinning and weaving, Day Nursery, Educational training to children. The earning of members is from Rs. 45/- to Rs. 15/- a month. Free tiffin to women and medical aid.
2. Relief Committee and Milk Sub-Committee gave evidence before the Famine Enquiry Commission.

3. Milk shortage make-up Drive in conjunction with Calcutta Corporation.
4. Milk Day observed.
5. Harijan Bal Mandir—160 children get 1/4th seer of milk, oil and soap and towel and medicine, garments and saris for mothers. Recently a nursery school has been started here.
6. Adult Education—night school—40 attend.
7. Volunteer corps with 40 volunteers organised.
8. Basic Education Camp—Teachers trained for destitute children's homes under Shri Ashadevi.
9. Propaganda for Hindu Code.
10. Women in Mines Day observed—public meeting.
11. Public meeting—Traffic in Women and Children.
12. The President and the Hon. General Secretary visited the Branch.
13. Buy Swadeshi campaign in conjunction with Calcutta Corporation Commercial Museum.
14. Donation to Kasturba Fund.

(10) C.P. NORTH (Membership 194)

1. Members helped in nursing hundreds of patients and making food arrangements when the Saint Parmanand Blind Relief Mission came and operated on more than 300 villagers.
2. Tried Adult Education and Harijan work, but failed in both.

(11) C.P. SOUTH (Membership 435)

1. 10 Constituent Branches out of 13 are working well.
2. Free Milk centres continue to be run.
3. As part of cultural activity and also to raise funds, drama, "Sheila" written by a member Mrs. Indumati Deshmukh successfully staged realising Rs. 700. The play is available for other Branches on application.
4. Milk week observed with lectures, lantern shows and prizes in different localities.
5. New Congressnagar centre in Nagpur city runs a Magazine containing articles from members written by hand every month.
6. At Chhindwara Const. Branch there are a toy-making centre, midwifery classes, Child welfare centre with milk distribution and winter centre for weaving Kosha silk. This Constituent Branch also successfully agitated with the help of the local labour leader for raising wages of women working in saw mills from 4 annas to 10 annas.

7. At Warora Child welfare centre with milk distribution. Annual Conference held here. Chimur visited and inquiries revealed that families of those in jail are in want for maintenance and education.
8. At Chanda—A Balak Mandir run.
9. At Arvi—music class is run and may soon open milk centre. Participated in opening first High School for girls. Contributed Rs. 150/- to Kasturba Fund.
10. In all 60 answers to Dr. Rao's questionnaire regarding present diet of pregnant and nursing mothers sent.
11. Visit of the President and Hon. General Secretary.

## (12) DELHI (Membership 272)

1. Handicrafts Centre—classes in cutting, Tailoring and Embroidery run.
2. Shadow Mushaira held by the Cultural Sub-Committee.
3. Protest meeting for women in mines held.
4. Rs. 1000/- sent to the Kasturba Gandhi Fund.
5. Mina Bazar organised for sale of household goods.
6. Milk campaign—Deputation to Chief Health Officer urging free milk to be given to T.B. patients, nursing and expectant mothers and children under 14; imposition of ban on sale of milk and milk products; Regulations regarding the keeping of goats to be relaxed, sprouted gram to be given daily to all Municipal school children.
7. Branch Conference in October presided over by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Resolutions including organisation of Development schemes to absorb millions of people thrown out of employment, and regarding I.N.A. men were passed.
8. Standing Committee meeting held in November 1944 in Delhi.
9. Simla supervising milk distribution by Simla Municipal Committee to 245 boys and 27 girls from poor families.  
 Harijan quarters to be renovated and rebuilt. Municipality to supply woollen clothes to its menial staff every 3 years. Social worker for Harijan work to be employed.  
 Cloth rationing difficulty solved for women.  
 Public meeting, presided over by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, held.

## (13) GUJARAT (Membership 530)

1. Five Constituent Branches.
2. New Constitution framed and approved by all Constituent Branches.



3. The following activities were carried out:—
- (a) Milk Day and Mines Day observed; Milk Centres run.
  - (b) Food relief work and agitation regarding high prices of foodstuffs.
  - (c) Propaganda for Draft Hindu Code; agitation against polygamy.
  - (d) Get on the rolls campaign.
  - (e) Harijan welfare.
  - (f) Child welfare and maternity work.
  - (g) Agitation for adult franchise, teaching of handicrafts alongside free and compulsory primary education, protesting against Bengal's cloth famine, for adequate post-war food and milk policy etc.
  - (h) Physical training classes run for girls.
  - (i) Standing Committee meeting held at Surat in May.
  - (j) President visited Ahmedabad, and Hon. General Secy. visited Bulsar.

(14) GWALIOR (Membership 157)

1. Meeting to protest against employment of women in Mines.
2. Nursery school for lower class children run.
3. Industrial class started.
4. Amalgamation of three different women's organisations with Gwalior Mahila Mandal.
5. Visit of H. H. the Maharani Saheba to the Mandal. Visit of the Hon. General Secretary to Gwalior in November 1944. Talks on Adult Education and literacy.

(15) HYDERABAD (Deccan) (Membership 250)

1. Two schools functioning well—attendance from 60 to 80. Primary education imparted to all irrespective of caste or creed.
2. Women's Hostel—Refugees from Burma and evacuees from Madras found this a very convenient place when in need of temporary shelter.
3. Co-operation with other organisations.
4. Visit of the President and Member-in-charge of legislation.
5. Demand for cheap milk.
6. Made propaganda regarding women in Mines.
7. Meetings held in connection with the Draft Hindu Code.
8. Annual Conference dealt with questions like constitutional reform in the State, Child Marriage Restraint Act, Inheritance Bill for Hindu Women, etc.
9. Membership has been decreasing. More active members needed.

## (16) HYDERABAD (Sind) (Membership 102)

1. Permanent Activities—(1) Balamandir (2) Music and Dancing Class; (3) Hindusthan Scout Association; (4) Creche; (5) Weekly medical treatment of women and children in bustees including magic lantern lectures on health and care of the eyes.
2. Observation of Milk Week—display of posters, playlets and songs on milk, Exhibition and demonstrations, etc.
3. Women in Mines Day observed.
4. Grand Exhibition of arts and crafts and demonstrations by women workers.
5. Lectures and charts for education on diet.
6. Planning Home for destitute women.
7. Get on the rolls campaign very successful.
8. A new Constitution framed.
9. Enthusiastic large-scale preparations for 18th Session of the A.I.W.C.

## (17) INDORE (Membership 395)

1. Collection made for Bengal Famine Relief.
2. Joint Milk Committee of 14 local women's organisations formed for Milk-Week campaign. But Government schemes have been slow to be formed.
3. Cloth shop opened during cloth crisis of 3 months.
4. Home Industries Committee has started work.
5. Signatures supporting Draft Hindu Code being collected.
6. Collection for Kasturba Memorial Fund.
7. Due to past efforts of Indore Branch, Government has allotted 3 seats in State Legislative Council to women. The Branch put up candidate for 2 seats.
8. 4-anna membership has given fillip to number of members.
9. Rangoli Exhibition held to raise funds.
10. Rescue Home planned.

## (18) JATH (Membership 92)

1. Work carried through Education—craft work, Health, athletics and Rural Uplift Committees.
2. Education Committee works for Adult literacy and discussions on various subjects. Education not much popular amongst women.
3. Discussions group very popular—Ranisāheb and Princesses taking interest.

4. Health Committee visited about 300 homes in towns. Advised them to use the State Maternity Home.
5. Rural Uplift Committee recently started—making people literate and teaching them cleanliness.

## (19) KARNATAK (Membership 370)

1. Dais trained given two equipment boxes by the District Board.
2. Adult Education—80 ladies received literacy certificates.
3. Urged Bellary Municipal Health Department to have at least two clinics in centre of town.
4. Members urged to enrol voters on the basis of literacy in the coming elections.
5. Visit of the President.
6. Mangalore Constituent Branch has the following activities:—
  - (1) Child welfare—2 creches, free meals, etc.
  - (2) Adult Education—Hindi, English, needlework, spinning and cooking classes, also free adult literacy classes.
  - (3) Sent contributions to (a) Kasturba Fund and Mrs. Cousins' purse.
  - (4) Vocational centre has progressed satisfactorily—Hand-made paper, tailoring, embroidery etc. taught.
  - (5) Library books increased.
  - (6) Azad Rangers Troop of Hindustan Scout Association.
7. Bellary—Adult Literacy class held; Dais trained.

## (20) KASHMIR (Membership 168)

1. Jammu Constituent Branch has the following activities to its credit:
  - (1) The Constituent Branch was started in March 1944.
  - (2) Two industrial centres have been opened—one in Jammu and the other in village Chakrohi; Charkha competitions held.
  - (3) Distribution of milk in Harijan quarters; lectures.
  - (4) Baby show, lectures on health, charts on midwifery, pre-and post-natal care shown.
  - (5) Material being collected for easy books in Hindi and Urdu on child welfare.
  - (6) Propaganda for Hindu Code.
- (7) Two annual functions with cultural programme.
- (8) Great illiteracy among women slows down work.

## (21) KOLHAPUR STATE (Membership 186)

1. Industrial Centre started—also classes for cooking, sewing and spinning.
2. Arranged lectures on different subjects and constructive programme for women.
3. Milk Week was observed with great enthusiasm—procession, posters, feeding 3,000 children with milk and cattle-show and milkmen's meeting were special features.
4. Running co-operative stores encouraging middle class women to prepare fine articles and arranging their sale. The store was opened by Mrs. Hansa Mehta.
5. Medical household equipment lent out wherever necessary.
6. Two welfare centres with free milk and medicines—2 milk centres; co-operated with Government committees regarding food and milk.
7. Library started.
8. Harijan welfare—distributed cloth among Harijan women.
9. Women in Mines Day observed.
10. Government has given land free for Mandal Building.
11. The President visited the Branch.

## (22) MADRAS (Membership 75)

1. Propaganda for Hindu Code—some members gave evidence before the Hindu Law Committee.
2. Telegrams on Assembly Cut Motion re: Women in Mines.
3. Running one Milk centre—feeding 60 children every morning with milk. Also medical inspection and distribution of fruit and sweets on festivals.
4. Sewing classes, giving women a source of income.
5. Free Reading Room.
6. Amalgamation of Madras Branch and Women's Indian Association—now called Women's Indian Association (A.I.W.C. Branch).
7. Questionnaire of Government of India Food Department Planning Adviser answered.
8. Questionnaire on conditions of Labour by Member-in-charge of Labour also answered.
9. Visits of President and Shrimati Sarojini Naidu.

## (23) MAHARASHTRA (Membership approx. 5,000)

1. Constituent Branches 30.
2. A Camp was held on food and on women's organisations including lessons in cottage industries and cultural items.
3. Membership Drive.
4. Quarterly journal soon to be published.
5. Propaganda on milk, cottage industries, protesting against Government's ban on "Satyarth Prakash" as violating civil liberties, control of liquor.
6. Milk campaign and 3 milk centres.
7. Three cottage industries centres: Central Sales Depot at Poona contemplated.
8. Gave evidence before the Hindu Law Committee.
9. Agarkar Day celebrated.
10. Maternity leave pressed for Sholapur women workers.
11. Waited in deputation on Government to control liquor sales to Bhils and other West Khandesh aboriginal tribes.
12. Get on the Rolls campaign.
13. Women in Mines Day celebrated.
14. Literacy, Hindi and English classes.
15. Some Festival Days observed.

## (24) MYSORE (Membership 1369)

1. Village schools and industrial school.
2. Food depots being run in the Centre and some of the Constituent Branches have proved very useful for working class women.
3. Adult literacy work taken up in great earnest. Four new centres opened recently.

## (25) MALABAR (Membership 60)

1. Recently reorganised with membership 60; great enthusiasm evinced in a recent meeting.

## (26) ORISSA (Membership 99)

1. President visited Cuttack. Branch reorganised.
2. Training of women in cottage industries.
3. Get on the Rolls campaign—2000 women enrolled as voters.

4. Tried for free scholarships of Rs. 20/- each for training from Government without success.
5. Tried to stop publication by Government of a scandalous newspaper without success.
6. Protest against proprietor of a firm for not giving proper maternity benefits to the labourers employed. Invited Government's attention to the fact.
7. Made propaganda for having hostels for girl students.

## (27) PHALTAN (Membership 275)

1. Adult Literacy Campaign teaching women to discuss topics.
2. Classes in English and Marathi.
3. Two libraries opened.
4. Sales Depot run with women volunteers as salesmen.
5. Outdoor physical training class for women where lathi, lezim and swimming are taught.
6. Class for children 4—6 years of age for play and instruction.
7. Monetary grants from Durbar and other institutions continues.
8. One Constituent Branch started.

## (28) PUNJAB CENTRAL (Membership 1332)

1. Membership in 4 Constituent Branches 1332, while at the last session it was 90.
2. 3 industrial centres with 60 trainees at Lahore; 1 at Amritsar—27 trainees; 1 at Ferozepur—50 trainees.
3. One primary school for girls with 60 pupils started at Amritsar—expenses met through collections among kisans themselves.
4. Made propaganda for rationing of milk, kerosene, cloth and for civil liberties with other organisations together. Distributed 4,000 yards of cloth to the needy.
5. Women in Mines Day observed. Nine meetings with large attendance held.
6. Milk Day observed at Amritsar and Lahore; ran a milk centre for poor children at Lahore for 3 months.
7. Collected and sent to Dr. B. C. Roy Rs. 3000/- for Medical Relief.
8. Collected contributions for Kasturba Fund.
9. Held successfully 2 Exhibitions at Lahore and one at Amritsar with contributed work from workers.

10. Observed Ashti, Chimur and Jallianwalla Bagh Day, and Rani of Jhansi Day.
11. Propaganda for Hindu Code by meetings—both mohalla and public meetings. Gave evidence before the Rau Committee.
12. Cultural shows very successfully held at Amritsar and Lahore, yielding a large income to the Constituent Branches concerned.
13. Weekly lectures organised and at some places daily reading of useful literature.
14. Women Workers' Training Camp lasting 5 weeks with 30 (thirty) trainees --out of whom 16 were from villages—held with great enthusiasm.
15. Two spinning competitions with 36 and 40 women held during Liberty week.
16. Constituent Branch Annual Conferences were attended by 500 women each.
17. 6000 women—for the first time in the history of Lahore—attended the Punjab Central Branch Annual Conference presided over by Mrs. Naidu and addressed by Mrs. K. Sayani, Hon. General Secretary.
18. Waiting to frame a Constitution after A.-I.W.C. Draft is adopted.

## (29) SIND (Membership 140)

1. Constituent Branches—Sukkur, Sikharpur and Karachi.
2. Educational—Two Adult Literacy centres both running at Sukkur.
3. Social—(i) Visiting Harijan quarters: meeting Harijan women and children having talks and entertaining children; (ii) Milk to the poor and school children (iii) Distribution of milk and fruit to patients in the hospitals.
4. Industrial—One industrial centre has recently started work at Sukkur on an experimental basis for teaching sewing, embroidery and toy-making, to enable women to earn their own living; one more will be started next year.

## (30) U.P. AGRA (Membership 679)

1. Primary School—20 women and children.
2. Running two Milk centres—Milk Week observed Allahabad and Benares.
3. Training Class for Scouts.
4. Famine and Medical Relief work—remitted money to Bengal and Bihar Relief Funds and retained some money for Milk work. Subscribed to Kasturba Fund.

5. Benares women's meeting attended by Muslim women for the first time, where the latter took keen interest.
6. Cawnpore raised fund for famine relief work—had one month's programme of meetings lectures and bazars, etc. —the Branch Annual Conference was held at Cawnpore—Mrs. K. Sayani presiding. Great enthusiasm evinced.
7. Nursing Class—helping with nursing in hospitals and labour areas.
8. Propaganda for Ashti and Chimur prisoners—sent help to deserving families of political prisoners.
9. Campaign on Hindu Code—Get on the rolls campaign.
10. One industrial school run.
11. Giving free milk also proving focal point to organise women and children into work centres.
12. The Hon. General Secretary visited Allahabad, Benares, Lucknow and Dehra Dun also.

(31) U.P. OUDH (Membership 225)

1. 3 Constituent Branches—Lucknow, Moradabad and the newly started Rae Bareli.
2. Moradabad reports the following:
  - (1) Membership 150. There are 9 grades.
  - (2) Propaganda for Draft Hindu Code.
  - (3) Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics regularly visited.
  - (4) Employment Bureau has helped 490 to get employment. Also work for beggars found.
  - (5) Subscribed to Bengal Relief Fund.
  - (6) Harijan welfare.
  - (7) Social service Centre with school and nursery school for children of all communities and different social status from Harijans to progressive folk.
  - (8) Milk and medicines distributed; Milk campaign.
  - (9) Aid given to obtain food and cloth from control shops; Food propaganda.
  - (10) Industrial classes to teach women sewing, darning, tailoring, basket-making etc. Sales also made.
  - (11) Women in spinning mills visited—one member has had a whole model village built for mill-labourers including a school and medical centre.



- (12) Nursing Division. Women and girls advised and helped to be trained as nurses.
- (13) Adult Education classes.
- (14) Compulsory girls education agitated for.
- (15) Women helped to contest Municipal and District Board elections.
- (16) Women artists helped—cultural activities.
- (17) Women in Mines campaign.
- (18) Food questionnaire of Dr. Rao answered.

*Appendix*

## CENTRAL OFFICE INFORMATION AND RESEARCH BUREAU.

### REPORTING ON WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT: GOVT. SERVICES

By Miss Avabai Mehta, Secretary, Central Office.

#### *Introductory:*

I have had several aims in compiling my statistics on women in employment. I feel that although facts and figures have an important place in an Information Bureau, we as workers have to convert them into tools for furthering the ideal of the A.-I.W.C. which is the raising of the status of women in every walk of life. Two principles have to be affirmed: (1) that full and widespread facilities for women to participate in the economic life of the country are an absolutely integral and inseparable part of the equality of status with men for which we are striving. (2) Such facilities lead directly to the raising of the economic status of all women, homemakers as well as those who work outside the home. It is as a realisation of this that many talented women, who do not need an extra income, nevertheless adopt paid careers, in order to open the way for others, who may be forced through economic necessity to take up gainful occupations. Thus, the primary purpose of conducting investigations into the employment of women has been to assist in bringing about equal opportunities for them in this sphere.

Therefore, my enquiries have been framed:

- (a) to obtain actual figures of women in employment in government services, business and industry, and professions.
- (b) to ascertain, by comparison, what lines new or old offer opportunities for women, so that they can be diverted to them, and better still, directed to qualify for them.
- (c) to discover, on the educational side, what potential women employees are desirous of doing in the way of careers, with a view to finding out what kinds of training and employment facilities are needed most.

(d) to press for higher standards and fuller opportunities to practice a wider variety of skills.

(e) ultimately, when sufficient groundwork has been prepared, to discover if better correlation can be brought about between women's home functions and work outside the home.

It will be noticed that all the above criteria, though various, are interlocked, and have to be kept in mind as forming one integral whole rather than as separate parts.

1. I have concentrated on acquiring information about government services chiefly, owing to the big wartime increase of their women employees. Almost all the main government departments in the centre and provinces have been approached so far for particulars regarding women employed under them. Answers have trickled in slowly, and are still due from many of them. But, on the whole, the attitude displayed has been obliging, although occasionally red tape intervenes. Some of the departments, especially at the Centre, have had their replies routed through the Women's Section, Information and Broadcasting Department. This Section, whilst supplying the figures required, was completely stereotyped in its replies dealing with the personal and qualitative points in the Questionnaire, unlike most of the departmental heads themselves. Thus, its replies have lost in informative value. In view of a Standing Committee Resolution, closer contact with this Section has not been sought so far.

2. *Disqualification by reason of sex.* I find that under sec. 275 of the Government of India Act 1935, a person is not disqualified by sex from being appointed to any civil services or posts under the Crown in India. But power is given to the Governor-General and provincial Governors within their respective jurisdictions to disqualify women from specified services or posts by general or special orders. Thus, for example, in Madras Province, women are disqualified for the I.C.S., the Indian Police, posts in the men's branch of the Educational and Medical Services, and certain other minor posts where women are held to be "obviously unsuitable". Even where posts are open, the question is raised whether it is "expedient" or not to employ a woman when she applies for a position.

In spite of such bars by special orders, a great many categories of government and semi-government posts are open to women. Some government departments are reluctant to collect the information owing to the labour involved, especially in the cases of Education, Health, and some other departments. But judging from the replies received, the number of women employed is very small indeed. We are made aware that there is only a thin sprinkling of women in government services, and that too, chiefly in the three Presidencies and the Punjab.

3. *The Salary Scales.* It is noticeable that these are generally the same for men and women, with the addition of maternity benefits for women. Maternity leave in general, is on full pay for a period which may extend up to the end of three months from the date of its commencement or to the end of six weeks from the date of confinement, whichever be earlier. Such leave is not debited against the Leave Account. But discrimination in salary does exist, especially in executive and administrative grades. Even such a body as the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, which employs a woman Professor of Maternity and Child Welfare at a maximum salary of Rs. 1,450, has put women on a lower basis. Similarly, in the Punjab Educational Department they are lower in some cases; but re-organisation of the women's service is under government consideration here. In the Office of the Director of Public Health, Punjab, the scales are not the same in most cases. In the WRINS (WAC(I)) West Coast, they are sometimes higher, sometimes lower. In certain categories women are paid higher salaries than men, for example, in All-India Radio, Posts and Telegraphs, Home, Defence, Labour, Education, Health and Lands, I. and C. S. Department etc. There appears to be no hard and fast principle about it.

4. *Promotion.* Most women are employed in the lower grades—chiefly as clerical staff, telephone operators and typists, where promotion is equally available with men. In higher grades, the question of equal promotion is often not allowed to rise as the posts are sanctioned or ear-marked for women within a fixed range.

5. *Salaries.* The following are some of the best paid posts held by women, discovered by me so far:—

- (a) Head of the Women's Section, I. & B. Dept. Rs. 2,500.
- (b) College Principal in Punjab Education Dept. Rs. 900 to 1,250.
- (c) Professor of Maternity & Child Welfare, Institute of Hygiene Rs. 1,450.
- (d) Asst. Director of Public Health, Madras Rs. 600 to 1,200.
- (e) Inspectress of Health Centres, Punjab Rs. 700 (vacant at present).
- (f) Deputy Post-mistress, Posts & Telegraphs Dept. Rs. 650.
- (g) Asst. Director of Public Health, in charge M. & C. W., C.P. Rs. 300-800.
- (h) Asst. Information Officer in Bureau of Public Information, New Delhi, Rs. 600.
- (i) Asst. Civil Passage Controller Rs. 600.
- (j) Secretary in Bengal Agricultural Dept. Rs. 550 plus DA.
- (k) Asst. Private Secretary to the Governor of Bengal (temporary) Rs. 500.
- (l) Asst. Station Director, AIR, Rs. 350 to 550.

- (m) Lady Conciliation Officer in Labour Dept. N. Delhi Rs. 475.
- (n) Cipher Officer, Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept. N. Delhi Rs. 375.
- (o) Statistician in Civil Supplies (Bengal) Transportation & Storage Rs. 350.
- (p) Asst. in Punjab Irrigation Secretariat Rs. 300.
- (q) Woman Welfare Worker in Bombay Port Trust Labour Welfare Dept. Rs. 300.
- (r) Two Rationing Officers in Bombay Civil Supplies Dept. Rs. 300 each.
- (s) One Superintendent do Rs. 275.
- (t) Asst. Secretary to Food Advisory Committee & Enquiry Officer Rs. 250.
- (u) Artist in the Directorate of Information, Bombay Rs. 250.
- (v) Asst. Inspectress of Factories, Madras Rs. 230.

Among some of the interesting appointments held by women are:

- (i) Lady Inspector of Government Railway Police, Punjab Rs. Rs. 100 to 150.
- (ii) One Head and ten foot constables in Punjab Police.
- (iii) Biometrical asst. at the Locust Sub-station, Imperial Agricultural Institute, New Delhi. Rs.
- (iv) Asst. Private Secretary to Governor of Bengal Rs. 500
- (v) Research Asst. in Madras Agricultural Dept. Rs. 75 to 200.
- (vi) Special woman officer in Madras Registrar of Co-operative Societies' office Rs.
- (vii) 20 women in the Information and Broadcasting Dept. viz. 3 writers, 1 journalist, 2 editors, 1 general assistant, 2 Key Animator Cartoon Film Unit, 9 Monitors, (European and Indian languages and translators), 1 indexer and 1 technical assistant.

7. *Outdoor work.* Posts involving strenuous outdoor duties are generally considered unsuitable for women and therefore, there is an almost complete absence of women in such departments as the Metereological, Forests, Agricultural, Veterinary, P.W.D., Police, Excise, Archaeological, Geological, Surveys, Port Trusts, Customs, etc. except just a few posts as clerks. In other countries, women have already entered similar jobs in technical capacities, but not so in India as yet.

8. *Married women workers.* In England and several other Western countries, a great deal of sharp discrimination is exercised against married women,

but in Indian government services at any rate, there is a complete absence of such an attitude, with the notable exception of the Posts and Telegraphs Department, and perhaps one or two others. In fact, one of the Punjab Departments answered that it was not even known to them how many women employees were married, as their names underwent no alteration on marriage! Thus, in this respect at least, India is far ahead of Western countries where the refusal to employ married women often assumes grave proportions and works deep social injustice.

9. *Physical Fitness.* One argument which has often been directed against employing women is that they are physically unable to put in the same regular hours as men. This is supposed to be due, generally to their physique being more delicate, and sometimes to the fact that home affairs interfere with regular attendance. Anyway, almost every government department has reported that the attendance of women is equal to that of men, thus proving the above argument to be entirely fallacious.

10. *Qualifications.* Most departments have supplied general details of the qualifications needed for women seeking to enter their service, which need not be particularised here. It must be said, however, that most of them visualise women in the clerical line, although some indicate the special academic or scientific or technical qualifications necessary. All the better paid posts require graduation plus special training of some sort, given either by the department itself, or by some outside agency.

11. *Prospects for women.* Maternity and child welfare organisations obviously afford good scope for qualified women. Health and Education departments also fall in this category, but it is difficult to say more about them as, in most cases, figures were not supplied on the ground that it would be too laborious to collect them. The sprinkling of women in other departments (see paragraph 5 "salaries") shows to some extent the direction in which women can concentrate in training. For instance, posts of Statisticians, Inspectresses of Factories, Information Officers and Welfare Workers have very attractive prospects in the way of interesting work and fairly good pay. Two pre-requisites are postulated however: (i) the availability of sufficient really well-trained women and (ii) an expansionist government programme which can absorb such specialists for the benefit of the people governed. Incidentally, women specialists in the above-mentioned lines have prospects in private undertakings or companies also.

There is one category of service which is very important from the point of view of the average woman employee, viz. stenographers. Not only in government services but in business generally, fully trained women stenographers have

good prospects not only as regards pay, but also in regard to promotion into the realm of secretaries of varying importance. There is usually no prejudice against women in this line. In fact, a really efficient stenographer is considered a great asset in office administration, and women are generally very deft at the work, and in the opinion of many executives, very suitable for confidential duties. A couple or more of government departmental heads have also mentioned that women are suitable for confidential duties. Training as a stenographer is a pretty sure guarantee of employment and is well within the capabilities of the average woman.

Many of the departments indicate that there is plenty of scope for more women in their service. This is probably partly due to the exigencies of the war which was going on at the time of answering, and which still continue to a diminishing extent. None the less, the attitude shown by the departmental heads is fairly broadminded, where shown at all. Within the limits of rules of appointment and vacancies, it appears as if no particular prejudice exists against women. Most of the heads who have ventured to answer the question have expressed approval of women seeking careers. The following quotations from some of the departments will show particular views or angles of approach on this matter:—

“There is no objection to women being employed in the different vacancies occurring in this Institute provided they fulfil the requisite qualifications laid down for individual appointments”. (Imperial Agricultural Institute, New Delhi).

(Women can be employed) “so far as they conform to the qualifications laid down for appointments and to the rules of communal representation in services”. (Imperial Dairy Research Institute and Dept.)

“Women are not suitable in most cases for outdoor duties.....it should, however, be possible to employ them in larger numbers for indoor office work” (Bombay Port Trust).

“The desire of women to have a career and make a living is commendable and we are willing to encourage it.” (Directorate of Public Relations, Bengal).

“It is my opinion that women generally are particularly suited for work of a routine nature. The office of the Labour Commissioner does not employ any women in its Conciliation Section. A Statistical section has been formed recently and is functioning for about two years. Here there are employed two women whose particulars are given herewith. There is no bar to women being employed as Labour Officers, but so far men have come forward. However,

three ladies were allowed to learn Labour Welfare Conciliation etc. as Trainee Labour Officers and have since left after training" (Labour Commissioner's Office in Bengal, Commerce Labour & Industries Dept.)

"Whenever women feel that they would like to take up duties normally done by men, I shall have no objection to encourage such aspirations." (Director of Agriculture, Madras.)

"There is a five-year scheme for the organisation and development of cottage industries co-operative societies for women in the province under consideration and when this scheme comes into effect, there will be need for more women officers and technical instructresses for handicrafts" (Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Madras).

On the other hand, opinions such as the following examples, were expressed:

"Individual departments of the Seett. cannot do anything in the direction of employment of women until a definite policy is formulated by Government regarding the matter."

"The desire (of women to have careers) cannot profitably be furthered so long as early marriages are the rule. It is a waste of effort to employ in any save routine posts women who will almost certainly leave to get married in a few years! It is not the present policy of government to employ women in general offices and in view of the demand for employment of men that is likely to arise immediately after the war, there is little prospect of the policy being revised at this stage." (This is by a Public Health and Local Self-Government Department no less!)

One officer of a Public Health Department wrote, regarding the desirability of careers for women "This is a very disputed question and I am not prepared to air my views here"!!

Another Public Health Dept. approves of women's careers, but "not at the cost of home". It is an odd circumstance that one of the few large employers of women (with more than a thousand women in the whole service) asserts that "women's sphere of activity is home, school and hospital. They should not join clerical or outdoor appointments where their output is much less. Scope of employment for men in those posts should also not be reduced."

The above examples are given merely as illustrations of the varying opinions that prevail about women in employment, and may provide useful guidance in educative propaganda.

The following two opinions are of direct interest to us, and have a bearing on the question of an Employment Bureau:

The head of the Bombay Supply Department under whom 1,100 girls work in Rationing and other allied departments, wrote: "Generally speaking, women have an aptitude for clerical work and they are suitable for it. This department being temporary, its dissolution will create a problem and not offer a solution thereof, which perhaps the Conference is trying to understand and solve."

The WRINS (WAC(I) ) West Coast wrote (in connection with the BPWC Conference on Trades Industries and Professions): "A certain proportion of this service is now disbanding and it is desired to find employment for those who are found surplus to the Establishment but are desirous of obtaining work. It would be appreciated if suggestions could be given as to the openings and employment available and suitable to these personnel when every assistance possible would be given to enable applicants to take up these posts."

### *Observations*

(a) From the statistics so far collected, which are representative for our present purposes, it is only too apparent that the surface has just been scratched for the employment of women in government and semi-government services. The number of women employees, as it stands, as well as in comparison with those of men, is fractional. Considering the multifarious types of work which government undertakes through its departments, there are many varieties for which women are very suitable. In fact, apart from forestry, PWD engineering, and a few like that, which do involve arduous outdoor duties, there is scarcely any department which offers a natural obstacle to women. In England, America and other countries, women are employed in the civil service in very large numbers, in spite of the prejudice against married women. They begin at the bottom or wherever they are placed by reason of the qualifying examination, and then rise to bigger posts by promotion and examinations. Now the Consular Services have also been thrown open to them, and the highest hierarchy of the Diplomatic Service has also been penetrated.

(b) It is only when large numbers of women freely enter government service that the Consular and Diplomatic possibilities come within practical and sure range. In government work, even more than elsewhere, the lower clerical grades should not be despised by us in our aim to increase women's employment. When women become a commonplace in those grades, promotion and other factors will help to bring the higher ones within their reach.

(c) Women have a handicap which arises from the government practice of having posts sanctioned for women in many of the departments. This pro-



babaly means that they are taken up only to the number sanctioned. This matter should be examined. It should be possible to have very many more posts made available to women in all provinces in fair and equitable competition with men. In fact, pressure through propaganda is definitely necessary to induce government to take up a more positive attitude towards employing women. It is not enough just to remove a technical bar against them in general, and to impose it in specific cases. What is needed is an expansionist, liberal policy which is willing to introduce new methods, new blood and new ideas of how to do things, and in this women would play a fair part. The A.I.W.C. should press for a more actively sympathetic and enthusiastic attitude on the part of government towards the idea of employing women.

(d) Side by side with this, I must state my impression that the number of women applicants itself is very small in the first place. It is not possible to discover what proportion of women applicants are taken up for appointment, but as the head of a Revenue Department has aptly remarked "Government has thrown open the public service to women and it is up to them to come forward and avail themselves of the opportunities offered."

(e) *Information and Training.* Perhaps many women do not apply because they do not have sufficient information about the possibilities of government service. And certainly a good number of those who seek posts have not even minimum qualifications and so have to be content with inferior jobs. The Matriculation is the starting qualification for most work, and if typewriting or stenography is added to it, the chances are better. For higher posts, graduation is essential. But if instead of making a bee-line for arts courses, women were to spread out in the various branches of science for example, there might be scope in agriculture, botany, sericulture, meteorology, nutrition, pharmaceuticals, etc. Also, qualifications in economics or commerce would help with income-tax jobs, statisticians, etc.

(f) *Quality.* Qualified personnel is a great need. So long as women expect to earn without first studying hard and acquiring as much training as they possibly can, they will always be at the tail-end of prospects for good salaries. It is not always means for training that they lack, though that is an important consideration, but often, it is a slipshod mentality that wants to run before it can walk, which assumes that everything will be all right by some fluke or luck.

One reply from an Accountant-General employing 35 women stresses this very important point. He says: "These women have entered the office during the last two or three years. It is, therefore, too early to state whether they can adapt themselves to audit and account work. The present position is that

none of them has passed the important technical test called "A" grade examination. But several of them have passed the office confirmatory examination. In future, the recruitment to clerical cadres of this office is to be done through an open competitive examination to be held by the Federal Public Service Commission."

Wherever recruitment is by examination it should be possible for women to have a very fair chance provided they are qualified. In this age of specialisation, adequate qualifications are the pre-requisite of all activity, even home-keeping.

(g) A general examination of the chances women have in government services reveal that (i) departments where women's place is recognised but where big expansion is desirable are Public Health and Hospitalisation, Maternity and Child Welfare, Juvenile Delinquency (Court officials, probation officers and officers in Homes), Welfare and Personnel Officers, Education Department, etc. (ii) Departments legally open and where just a few are employed—Accountant-General's, Income-Tax, Revenue, Finance, Labour etc. More in All-India Radio, Information and Broadcasting, Posts and Telegraphs, and Supply (temporary). (iii) Departments legally open but practically no women employed—Commerce and Industry, Co-operatives, Information, Legislative, Home, Judicial, Police, Customs, Local Self-Government, etc.

(h) Regarding the *Commerce and Industries* Departments, it is most surprising to find no women employed at the Centre, and in most provinces. I believe that many important matters and projects are dealt with by Industries Departments where the welfare of women is also affected. Thus, suitably qualified women must become available and be taken in these departments to work on specialised lines.

Trade statistics and trends, and production questions should appeal to some women. Furthermore, as far as this and the co-operative departments deal with questions of cottage-industries, there is not only a real scope, but actual need for engaging women. Provided they have the necessary technical qualifications, there is an enormous amount of work awaiting them and suited to their talents. They can work to expand the growth and returns of cottage-industries. Their intimate knowledge of home conditions would prove a valuable asset as cottage-work is so often carried on co-operatively by men and women in the home, such as weaving, or solely by women such as spinning, embroidery, basket-making etc.

Government should be approached to examine afresh the possibilities of employing women under this department.

Also, women welfare officers should be attached to all Industries Departments especially for cottage-workers. Their plight is frequently worse than that of even factory workers, and welfare work is essential amongst them.

(i) *Welfare and Personnel Officers.* There is a great need for welfare and health officers in very many government or semi-government concerns. The Bombay Port Trust, for example, employs welfare officers in its Labour Colony, and this kind of appointment should extend to labour colonies attached to Railway Boards, P.W.D.'s, Industries Departments, Co-operative Societies etc. on an adequate scale.

All progressive and up-to-date concerns, whether governmental or business, in Western countries, now employ Personnel Officers. These are specially trained persons who look after the welfare, personal grievances, or maladjustments or problems, of the large staffs which are employed. Women are very suitable for these posts even where the staff is almost exclusively male. The Supply Department in Bombay in its Rationing section does employ such a Personnel Officer over the 1,100 women employed. Government should be pressed to make Personnel Officers, men as well as women, a permanent feature of all Departments. This kind of work, however, is by no means easy, and can only be undertaken adequately by women with high qualifications, both academic and specialised.

(j) *Women in Research.* Some enquiries into women doing research have brought out the fact that this is gradually becoming an attractive field for women. If there are sufficient numbers qualified, government research departments might provide employment for some of them. Every encouragement and support possible should be extended to such workers, by seeing that they gain fair treatment in the matter of bursaries and scholarships during study, and later equal chances in employment. Only a small number of women can be absorbed in such jobs comparatively speaking, but their work and position would provide a real fillip to the raising of women's status generally. If women are to be equal co-operative members of society, an adequate number of them should form part of the highest research institutions in the land.

From the data already in hand, women are doing well in research, and are the recipients of scholarships and awards. Their progress and needs should be watched with sympathetic interest, and timely support extended, on occasion, by our Conference.

(k) Information has also been sought on the numbers of college girls who are contemplating paid careers after their studies are completed, and on

the kind of jobs they desire to have. Interesting information has been forthcoming, but the process is continuing, and it is too early yet to make any analysis. It does seem, however, as if many young women are quite anxious to carve out careers for themselves, irrespective of whether they come from well-to-do families or not, and have the ambition of earning fairly high income, though how far this can be attained is a moot point.

*Suggestions on propaganda steps by A.I.W.C.*

(1) The Conference should induce government to adopt a more positively favourable attitude towards the possibilities of employing women.

If it needs to sanction posts, the range can surely be extended. This work should be carried out by us province by province, as conditions vary.

(2) Government must be made more keenly aware of the desirability of having women welfare workers in much larger numbers in Industries Departments, as well as all those departments which rely on large labour forces. Even where welfare workers are appointed at present, their numbers are inadequate to carry out a really effective programme of amelioration.

(3) Government must be asked to employ women Personnel Officers in sufficient numbers.

On the other hand, the Conference should:

(a) Continuously impress upon women who want to have jobs, that specific training and qualifications are absolutely essential. They should not be encouraged to skimp their training, but on the contrary, training facilities should be vastly increased for them.

(b) It is worth considering whether the A.I.W.C. should not sponsor the idea of introducing school courses in typewriting, book-keeping and elementary business principles for boys and girls in every school. In England, the Matriculation course itself has been bifurcated into the ordinary type, and a commercial type. The standards and status are the same, but the commercial Matriculate can walk straight into a job without the need for extra office training. In America, typewriting is a compulsory feature of school-life along with certain other such skills useful in after-school occupations.

It is time Indian schools put themselves into a higher gear in these respects. I definitely advocate that girls also should get all these facilities, whether they intend to work later or not. Such training would be a safeguard against subse-

quent need, and for the intelligent woman would be handy even in the home or in social activity.

*Conclusion.*

Out of the data collected, I have tried to bring out significant points regarding women's work in government services. The data is still inadequate, and the investigation needs to proceed very much further before these tentative conclusions can merge into a full picture. As I have already said in my Report, this is research work which has to be continued year after year, at a speed which is regulated by the facilities available.

In the coming months I propose to undertake similar investigations into business concerns and educational institutions employing women, to collect data, to sift and evaluate the material, point out its significance in relation to what has been accomplished so far, so that the view of women in employment can be seen in its proper setting. When we have perspective we shall not be deterred from taking action for advancing the cause of women through the influence of false assumptions, untenable generalisations and high-sounding platitudes. These have been our bugbears so far, but their darkness can be dispelled by real knowledge.

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