

The Common Cause OF HUMANITY.

The Organ of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

LAW-ABIDING.]

Societies and Branches in the Union 561.

[NON-PARTY

VOL. IX., No. 451.]

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1917.

[PRICE 1d.
Registered as a Newspaper.

Doctor Elsie Inglis.

We go to press this week under the shadow of a great grief. Doctor Elsie Inglis, who had just returned from Russia with the London Units of the Scottish Women's Hospitals (N.U.W.S.S.), died on the evening of November 26th. It is one of those losses that cannot be measured in words, a loss not to Dr. Inglis's friends and colleagues alone, but to our country and to the women's movement.

Elsie Maud Inglis was the daughter of John Forbes Inglis, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner at Lucknow. She was born in India, and educated in Edinburgh and Paris. She took her M.B., C.M. degree in Edinburgh, and it was in Edinburgh that she worked nearly all her life, building up a fine practice and winning the love and respect of those for whom she laboured. Her devotion to her medical duties did not prevent her from throwing herself into the Suffrage movement with strong conviction and love; sacrificing her income and her time, and the pleasures and amenities of life with the readiness which was characteristic of her nature. She was a pillar of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, toiling indefatigably for the Scottish Federation, and taking a vigorous part at Councils and in all kinds of national work. Then when the war began she conceived the idea of founding the Scottish Women's Hospitals, and made them the war work of her Federation and part of the war work of the National Union. They were offered first to the British Government, which, unfortunately, refused the offer; they were, however, accepted with gratitude by the Governments of Belgium, France, and Serbia.

In 1915, Doctor Inglis went out herself to Serbia to cope with the typhus epidemic. She remained in Serbia during the German invasion, staying with her Serbian wounded till the last. She was taken prisoner by the Germans, handed over to the Austrians, and finally released. She returned to England, but only to prepare for fresh efforts. Again she pressed the War Office to accept the Women's Hospitals for service with the British troops in the East. They were once more refused. Then an opportunity offered for helping Serbia again, and Dr. Inglis, who had become deeply attached to the Serbian people in the time of their misfortunes, was eager to take it. She went out again in

August, 1917, with the London Units of the Scottish Women's Hospitals (Units which were part of the war work of the London Society for Women's Suffrage), to serve with the Serbian division of the Russian Army on the Russo-Roumanian Front. During the last few months the Units have been working in Southern Russia, and it was there that Doctor Inglis fell ill. She returned to England last week, remaining in command of her Unit till it were all safely landed, and died at a British port on Monday evening.

Those who have known Dr. Inglis since the war will think of her as the founder and moving spirit of the N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospitals, whose good work is now known in all the Allied countries. Her Serbian friends (of whom she had many) will think of her as the devoted lover of Serbia, the country in whose service she died, and for whom we cannot doubt that she was glad to give her life; members of the N.U.W.S.S. will think of her first and foremost as a great Suffragist.

"Before the war," said Doctor Inglis, not very long ago, "I had only two thoughts—Suffrage and Surgery; and now I feel that I am working for Suffrage still." "When we come back, women will have votes," she said joyfully, as she left the wharf with her Units on her last enterprise. She was always a Suffragist, and her work for the Women's Hospitals was to her a part of her Suffrage work. She wanted women to take their full part and share in the service of their country and of the cause of freedom. Her services, and the services of the Hospitals



she inspired, were offered first and foremost to her own country; then when the offer was not accepted by our Government, she worked for the Allied cause and, for the sufferers of the war, wherever the need was sorest. A Serbian officer once said to her: "Some of us are more grateful to you for coming here and showing what women can do, than even for the practical help." She used to repeat the words with pride. She is an inestimable loss to our cause, but she has died for freedom and for those who have suffered most bitterly in the war, and our sorrow is mingled with pride.

The Labour Party's Election Plans.

The Annual Conference of the London Labour Party was held at Essex Hall, Strand, on Saturday last, when Mr. Henderson dealt with the new Franchise Bill and the steps the Labour party proposed to take to obtain a larger Parliamentary representation at the next general election. A scheme is to be submitted by the Executive of the Labour Party to the conference which will be held next January in Nottingham, and includes special provisions with regard to women members. They may be enrolled individually in the Labour Party in their constituency, and when the number of women members in a local Labour Party exceeds 500, it is proposed that they shall be entitled to send a woman delegate to the annual conference of the National Labour Party. They are to have four representatives on the National Executive, and it is further provided that in all cases in which the individually-enrolled members of a local Labour Party are entitled to more than one delegate to the national conference, the second delegate must be a woman.

An effort is also to be made to attract a new class of member. "Producers by brain" are in future to be eligible as well as "producers by hand," so that the Party will be open to anybody who works for his or her living, provided that he or she subscribes to the constitution and programme of the party. The Trade Unions, who have hitherto dominated the party conference, are now faced with the introduction among the individually-enrolled members of a new element whose influence is very difficult to calculate, but they still retain their "card vote," or system of voting by solid blocks, and ignoring the minority.

Disfranchisement of Conscientious Objectors.

On November 21st, the House of Commons decided, by 209 votes to 171, to disfranchise conscientious objectors. The Home Secretary, however, made it clear that at a later stage the Government would bring forward amendments securing the vote to conscientious objectors who have accepted non-combatant service, or done work of national importance. Some curious indications were given in the debate of the disposition to regard the vote as a reward, which is still so prevalent among some of our legislators. Lord Hugh Cecil, however, made a really fine plea to the House of Commons to respect freedom and the consciences of others as well as their own. He said:—

"Shall we retain for ourselves that self-respect which is essential in maintaining a great moral cause if we do not act up to our own principles for which we are fighting in the face of Europe, if we do not say to ourselves and in our own country, when people are acting conscientiously, that their conscience must not be punished and disabled for so obeying, because that is the allegiance we owe to the higher law we obey, and because so we must act as citizens of the true city, of the new Jerusalem which is the motive of us all?"

"It is in the belief in that higher region of allegiance which imposes on us something more than the State can ask from us, and which gives us something that the State can never give, that we should vindicate the great cause we have in hand."

"The amendment appears to enforce the law of the State as superior to the moral law, and I am certain that if we give countenance to that way of thinking, we run the danger of becoming, as I fear the Germans have some of them become, idolaters of the State, so that it is indeed, the abomination that maketh desolate, a blood-stained idol, the Moloch of our time."

Further Work on the Representation of the People Bill.

On November 22nd, the proposal to apply the principle of the single transferable vote to constituencies returning three or more members was defeated by 202 votes to 126: an adverse majority of 76. The principle of the transferable vote in single-member constituencies has, however, been accepted.

On November 27th, the House agreed that the grant of the proxy vote for soldiers and sailors should not be limited to the duration of this war.

An attempt to elaborate the provisions which prohibit expenditure by unauthorised persons on meetings and literature in support of candidates at an election, was defeated, but Mr. Hayes Fisher announced that the Government would in the House of Lords try to strengthen the clause which deals with these matters, "with a view to stopping the undesirable practice of outside propagandist bodies invading the constituency and interfering with the election."

Married Women and National Insurance.

The National Health Insurance Bill was read a second time in the House of Commons on November 23rd. We publish on page 407 an article dealing with the clauses of the Bill that specially concern married women in industry, and a letter on the same subject on page 410.

An Education Bill Next Session.

A deputation representing all shades of opinion in the House of Commons was received on Monday by the Prime Minister, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, with regard to the desirability of passing the Education Bill during the present Session. Mr. Adamson, Chairman of the Labour Party, introduced the Deputation; Mr. Birrell spoke for the Liberals, Sir Philip Magnus for the Unionists, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald for the I.L.P. Sir James Yoxall also expressed the views of teachers, Sir Charles Bathurst those of agriculturists, and Sir Swire Smith the interests of technical education. All the speakers maintained that the House of Commons as a whole was anxious that the measure should be passed as soon as possible. Both the Premier and the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed their sympathy with the object of the deputation, and said that though no definite promise could be given, it was the firm intention of the Government to pass the Education Bill into law at the earliest possible moment permitted by the circumstances of the time. If the Second reading cannot be taken during the present Session it will be given precedence at the opening of next Session.

Welfare of the Blind.

In reply to a deputation from the National League of the Blind, Mr. Hayes Fisher stated last Monday that the War Cabinet had agreed to the setting up of a special department in the Local Government Board to deal with the welfare of the blind, and had sanctioned the expenditure required for immediate administrative purposes. Sanction had also been given to the proposal to set up an Advisory Committee whose first duty would be to advise the departments on the preparation of schemes for the consideration of the War Cabinet. He hoped it would be possible to settle the personnel of the Committee very shortly. Mr. Stephen Walsh (Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Board) had consented to act as chairman, and he proposed to appoint some blind representatives and some women.

Dr. Addison on Health.

A meeting of the Faculty of Insurance was held on November 24th, at the Central Hall, Westminster. Dr. Addison, the Minister of Reconstruction, addressed the meeting, and asked for its support in evolving a comprehensive national scheme of health administration. The need for such a scheme was plainly shown he said, by the million defective children in our schools, the quarter-million unnecessary child-deaths since the war, the four million mothers and children still living in slum districts. The question of Health Administration was not being neglected: it was being confused. Dr. Addison showed how six Government Departments must intervene before a soldier discharged with tuberculosis could have his case dealt with.

The most illuminating part of Dr. Addison's address came when he quoted from the reports of the Committee set up to consider the health of munition workers. In one case the reduction of women's working hours from sixty-six to forty-five per week resulted in the increase of output from 100 to 158; boys' labour of seventy-two hours, producing 100 output, when reduced to forty-five gave an output of 158; men whose hours were reduced from fifty-eight to fifty-one increased their output by 39 per cent. Since decrease in hours of labour means not decrease, but increase, in national product, Dr. Addison rightly holds that one of the first steps towards national health should be to shorten the cruelly long hours of work which are ruining the efficiency of our industrial worker.

New Offices for the N.U.W.S.S.

The N.U.W.S.S. Office is full of hope that it has found a new home. Arrangements are going forward and we hope to be able to announce the address next week.