

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

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No. 2113. Vol. 92.

AUGUST, 1944.

Price Sevenpence

## EDITORIAL.

### EQUAL CITIZENSHIP (BLANKET) BILL IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

As our space is so very limited, we publish the following report, with which we are in sympathy, as sent in by the Women's Publicity Planning Association:—

In the most adverse conditions imaginable, on Sunday, July 9th, the following resolution was carried *nem. con.*:

This meeting, composed of men and women from all sections of the community, held in Trafalgar Square, London, one hundred years after the right to use this central forum of the Commonwealth was granted to the British people,

*Calls upon the Government* to establish equality for men and women in all our laws by means of the Equal Citizenship (Blanket) Bill;

Thus giving British women the status of full citizens so that they may take their rightful share in the building of post-war Britain and a peaceful international society.

Mrs. Rebecca D. Sieff, Chairman of Women's Publicity Planning Association, presiding, stressed the need for the establishment of the principle of equality for men and women in all fields of law, not at some far distant date, but now, otherwise the post-war world would not contain freedom for women, but will fix upon them their present lower status. She spoke of the many occasions on which equal pay had been recommended by Commissions, Trade Union Congresses, International Conferences, and by Parliament. Yet the Government was shelving the question indefinitely by promising a Royal Commission which it was in no hurry to appoint. The Equal Citizenship (Blanket) Bill will make equal pay compulsory in the Civil Service, for teachers and other Local Government employees, in rates fixed by Trades Boards and in the Fair Wages Clause in public contracts.

Miss Sybil Morrison explained the idea behind the campaign which was to gain public opinion in support of altering all the laws which contain sex discrimination by the passing of one Bill. She said that many injustices had been removed by much hard work and continual protesting during the last 80 years, but that such piecemeal reform had outworn the patience of women who were undoubtedly taking their full share in the life of the nation.

She stressed the fact that the Equal Citizenship Bill would remove discriminations in the law against men as well as women and that the Bill was designed to raise

the legal status of that sex in a disadvantageous position to the level of the sex which has the advantage in the present law. For example, men are at a disadvantage in that they can be made to pay alimony in a divorce action even if given the custody of the children. The Bill would give husbands as well as wives the power to claim alimony—as in Scots law.

She reminded her listeners that the Government was so grateful to the women of this country that they had called a special meeting in the Albert Hall at which eight Cabinet Ministers, including the Prime Minister, had flattered and thanked them for their great services to their country. "Women," she said, "want neither flattery nor gratitude; they want the only possible recognition for service to their country, whether in peace or war; equal rights as a citizen."

Miss Monica Whately, L.C.C., explained a number of laws drawn up for the protection of women workers. She saw no reason why if there were machines which would draw dangerous dust away so as not to destroy the lungs of workers these should not be compulsory when only men were employed. "Why should not men workers have equally as good washing arrangements as are required for women when they work with poisonous material?" she asked. The Bill would make these Sections of the Factories Act apply to both sexes. The maximum hours laid down by law for women workers were actually far longer than the post-war working week for which the T.U.C. were asking.

As regards heavy trades or ones which put a strain on the nerves, a medical examination for all workers before they were taken on would be a far better safeguard than any special regulation for women.

Sex discrimination in law ran into about 37 Acts and over 100 Sections. There was no way to establish equality except to amend all these by establishing a principle which should also ensure that there should be no sex discrimination in new laws.

No class of professional women have been more despitely used than Registered Nurses, whose Headquarters and money are being used by the Government to bolster up its Nurses Act, 1943, without their consent. Serf legislation. It is only within recent years that Registered male nurses have organised, and it is apparent that as soon as they realise how unjustifiably their funds are being used by the Government they will, we hope, urge reform. Our Headquarters and our cash are our own, and Parliament and its Ministries have no right to use them without our consent.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)