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A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

**Work Undertaken by the Local Councils**

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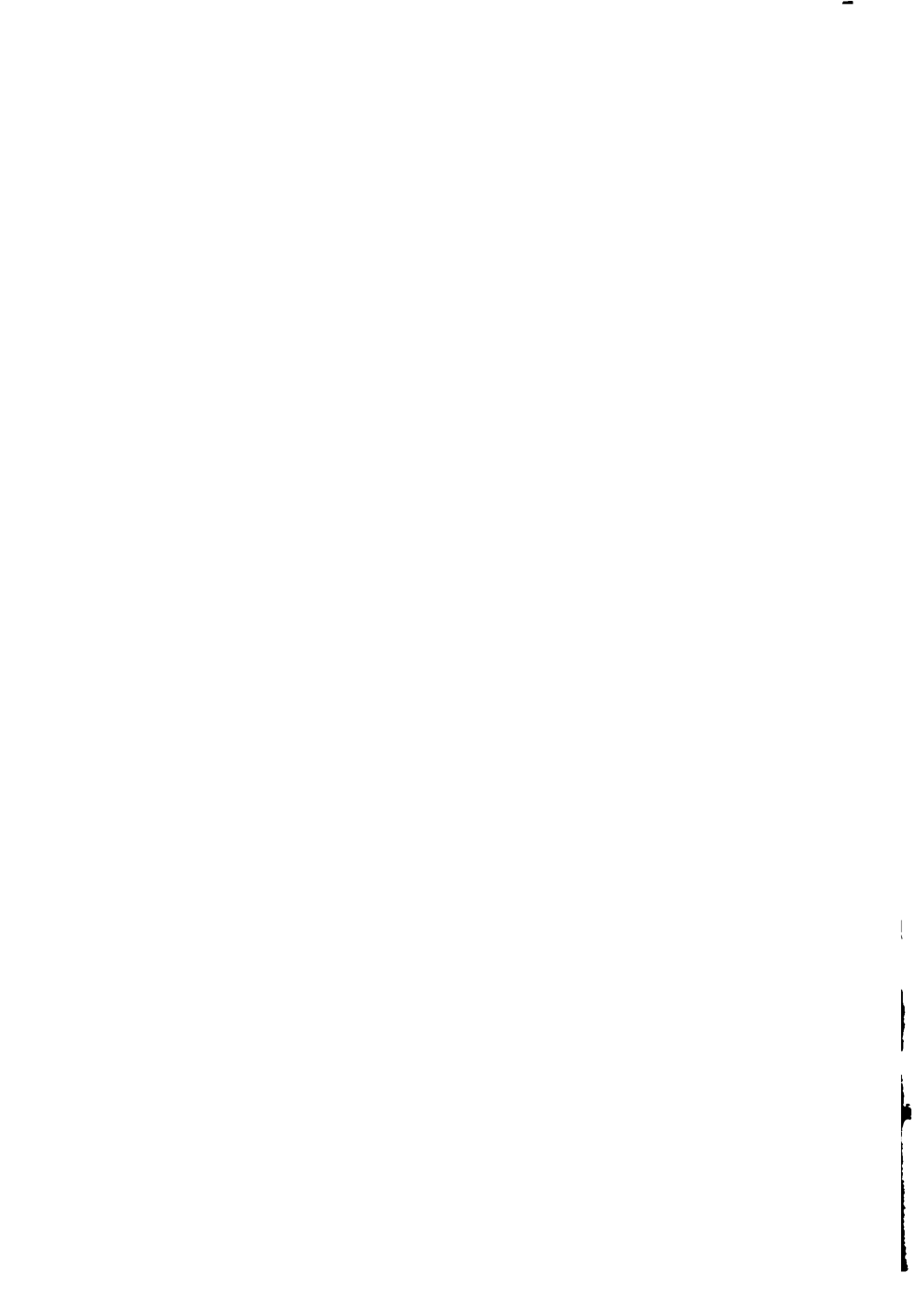
**National Council of Women  
of Canada.**

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COMPILED BY

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from 1899 to 1902.



**I**N this short account of the various activities of the Local Councils, the information has been taken solely from their own annual reports as printed in the Annual Report of the National Council. The task has not been an easy one, inasmuch as there is no very sharp line drawn between National Council work and Local Council work, but an attempt has been made to classify them under the heading of (1) Work undertaken at the request of the National Council, and (2) Work undertaken on the initiative of the Local Councils themselves. Except in special cases the work has been looked at as a whole and has not been credited to each individual Council carrying it out. It has, moreover, often been difficult to define exactly the result of actions taken in hand; the special task of Local Councils appears to be quite as much to initiate movements as to carry them to completion, and in any case the publicity given to any movement through a Local Council and the consequent awakening and educating of public opinion, and sometimes also of legislative and civic bodies, is the main, though oft- intangible, result aimed at in the binding together of societies in one common aim and for one common purpose. The Council prides itself on the care with which it undertakes any new task, and also on the thorough investigation it makes and the exact information it procures before presenting petitions or appealing to any public body.

**I. WORK UNDERTAKEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL.**—This heading comprises for the most part the points of interest discussed at the Annual Meetings and relegated to Standing Committees or direct to Local Councils for further elaboration; so far as possible the results of the action are given in each case.

In 1894 Local Councils were asked to institute an *Inquiry into the Condition of Women in Prisons* and to recommend the appointment of a sufficient number of *Police Matrons*. This was taken up by Local Councils where the conditions made it necessary for them to do so, and during successive years the following results of their petitions, investigations, or appeals are recorded:—the appointment of Police Matrons in many places, or of an additional one; better conditions in various localities for women prisoners, such as complete separation of the sexes and of the young from the old; the provision of sleeping accommodation in police cells; the securing of covered patrol wagons. Local Councils have also co-operated with the Prisoners' Aid Association in petitioning for the classification of prisoners and the isolation of those awaiting trial for the first time. Earnest efforts towards jail reform have been made by these societies, and petitions sent to the authorities from time to time; while the moulding of public opinion on this subject is still part of their work. In one case a Council was invited by the civic authorities to appoint two of its members to pay periodic visits

to the Jail and Poorhouse and report to them on the conditions there. In another district persons arrested on suspicion found more comfortable provision made for them than the bare police cell. Child offenders have not been forgotten by our workers; petitions have been presented, asking that boys under a certain age be sent to reformatories and not classed as hardened criminals; also a memorial was forwarded to the authorities approving of the Youthful Offenders' Bill recommended by the Ontario Prison Reform Commissioners.

The appointment of Women Factory Inspectors.—The Ontario and Quebec Legislatures were memorialized on this subject, and the laws were amended so as to allow of the appointment of women inspectors; the Local Councils of these Provinces feel, therefore, that they have been largely instrumental in securing the valuable services of three devoted women inspectors. Following the appointment of the same, came a request that their salaries be increased owing to the enlargement of their sphere of work since the provisions of the Factories Act were applied to shops both in Ontario and Quebec, this also having been pressed upon the Legislatures of these two Provinces by the Local Councils.

*Manual Training.*—This is a subject to which the Local Councils have devoted themselves since 1894. In that year the Provincial Legislature of Ontario was approached, with the result that Manual Training was added to the school curriculum. The Local Councils of Ontario then began to press the various Boards of Education to introduce this subject into the public schools, and they have continued to do so from time to time, while giving their support to any other plan which would place this boon within reach of the children of the Dominion. In the Province of Quebec Manual Training was permissible, but the efforts of the Local Councils tended to increase the usefulness of this branch of education. By petition of the Toronto Local Council the privileges of the City Technical School were made available to women, and there are now large and flourishing classes devoted to instruction in the Domestic Arts, and Government examinations in the same have also been secured. In Hamilton the Young Women's Christian Association established a School of Domestic Science, which grew into a Normal Training School, and to this the Local Council lent its hearty support. In places where School Boards have not seen their way to meet the demands of the Local Councils, they have themselves made a beginning by starting Cookery or Sewing Classes, or Schools of Domestic Science, or they have co-operated with and supported the efforts of other societies in this direction, and have in every way endeavored to educate public opinion up to the point of appreciating the present

successful position in which the movement stands, this movement which they helped so largely in earlier days to foster and encourage.

*Length of Working Hours for Women and Children in Factories.*—The Local Councils were asked to collect information on this point, to be handed in to a Standing Committee, which presented a very valuable report in 1896; after this the subject was dropped, it not being considered advisable to carry it beyond the report stage, owing to the division of opinion in the Council as to the real advantage to be derived from taking such a stand on behalf of women.

*Laws for the Better Protection of Women and Children.*—This subject has held a very important place in Council work. The Local Councils have aided very materially in collecting information and in quoting reliable cases, which the Standing Committee has been able to bring in report form again and again before the Ministers of Justice until certain amendments to the Criminal Code which this Committee petitioned for have been made. The Councils are still asked to take their share in this work as long as there are laws bearing upon the subject which require amendment. The details of this important work are to be found in the yearly reports of the Standing Committees, rather than in those of the Local Councils. The same may be said about the *Spread of Pernicious Literature*, on which the Council has taken so strong a stand. Here again the Local Councils have aided the Standing Committee appointed to deal with this matter, so that an amendment to the Criminal Code was asked for and granted, making it a penal offence to sell as well as to publish such publications. They have, at the request of the Post Office officials, watched the printed mail matter which came within their reach, and have reported on any suspicious cases; they have also warned School authorities and have instructed mothers, by means of talks and of printed leaflets, of the insidious dangers which may beset their little ones at any moment through the circulation of harmful reading matter and pictures. Moreover, pure reading has been encouraged, and the work of the National Home Reading Union and of similar societies has been distinctly fostered.

*The Position of Women on Boards of School Trustees* was taken up in 1897.—Local Councils had already been interested in this subject; a member of one Local Council had come out at the head of the poll; another was proud to be defeated by one vote only; while a third had succeeded in getting a bill passed stating that two women should be appointed on each School Board in the Province of New Brunswick. Since then the effort has been continued with more or less success, and a valuable pamphlet bearing on the different modes of appointing

or electing women on Boards of School Trustees has been printed by the Council. Still, however, even members of Local Councils hold back and are afraid, in spite of several noble examples, to submit themselves to the ordeal of election; but the Standing Committee at work on this subject may be trusted to encourage all such efforts. In New Brunswick, where the office is filled by appointment, there are now sixteen women willing to serve their generation in this way.

An attempt to secure the proper *Inspection and Care of the Teeth and Eyes of Public School Children* was also made; but apparently without any very tangible results.

The attention of the Local Councils was called in 1897 to the important subject of a *Connected and National System of Immigration for Women*, with a distributing centre and Local Committees to supervise the immigrants. Only a few Councils engaged actively in this work, and these were for the most part either specially interested in the arrival of the women, as in Montreal, Quebec, Saint John and Halifax, or in the need which they were meant to supply. In the places just mentioned, much work has been done to secure proper receiving Homes and suitable matrons. The Standing Committee on this subject is now asking for the active co-operation of all the Local Councils in securing beforehand suitable openings for better class women immigrants.

The fact cannot be overlooked that the National Council did much to inaugurate the *Victorian Order of Nurses*, and only those who are connected with the inner workings of our Local Councils can at all realize the efforts made by a large number of these bodies to secure and keep in running order a local branch of this most valuable work.

*The Care of the Aged and Infirm Poor*, although the work of a Standing Committee, has been warmly taken up by many of the Local Councils, and every facility given to enable the National Council to press for amendments to the Vagrancy Act, so that the poor may no longer be committed to jail on the charge of poverty. Much has been done to obviate this by appeals to the Legislature, by efforts to have Homes of Industry established, and by the support of Homes and Refuges. Akin to this is the commitment of the Insane and Imbecile to Jail pending their removal to an Asylum. This injustice has roused many Local Councils to careful investigation, resulting in appeals to the Legislature not yet entirely successful; but the minds of the authorities as well as of the public are alive to the necessity of removing this stigma also from the Statute Book. In one case better accommodation for the insane was provided at once at the instance of a Local Council; but much still remains to be accomplished in this direction.

A very able paper on *Work for the Unemployed* caused this subject to be directly taken up by Local Councils, and the movement has resulted in the successful establishment of Potato Patches, Poor Relief Societies, Friendly Help Societies and Boards of Associated Charities. Without doubt the Local Councils have undertaken no more important work than their earnest assistance in the organization of these magnificent schemes, which attempt to solve so sanely some of the vexed problems of our day and generation.

A very thorough investigation into the number of *Feeble Minded Women* at large in the country was made by Local Councils. The results, as well as many sad facts gleaned from the experience of Homes and Institutions, were laid before the Legislature; the care of these unfortunates is brought up from year to year by the Standing Committee appointed to deal with the subject, but it is only as the public is awakened to the fact that they are nourishing a feeble minded race of individuals in their midst that any radical steps can be taken to remove this source of danger to the nation.

*Efforts to Check the Spread of Consumption* occupied the attention of Local Councils in 1899, and they have helped forward the general move toward a right treatment of the whole subject. Proper provision for the patients themselves has been appealed for; but the best results achieved by Local Councils have been in securing the prohibition of expectoration in streets, public places and street cars in many places.

Local Councils have been asked to recommend the *Addition of Women Physicians to the Medical Staff of Hospitals, Asylums for the Insane, and other Institutions where women are provided for*. This follows on a resolution passed in 1895 urging that influence be used to place women on Boards of Philanthropic Institutions. These requests have been successfully carried out in more than one instance.

Another object brought to the notice of Local Councils has been the securing of a *Weekly Half-Holiday for Employees in Stores* and other places of business, which was coupled with a plea for *Early Shopping*. Members of Council have the power to do much in this direction by their individual action; but the other matter has also been given serious consideration, and will continue to receive the same until the time is ripe for definite steps to be taken generally.

A Standing Committee was appointed in 1899 to raise a *Loan to assist the Doukhobor Women*; this was quickly raised by the Local Councils, and a warm interest was evinced in these newcomers to the Dominion; valuable personal assistance was given in many quarters, and the Councils have been endlessly good in

disposing of the artistic needlework produced by the women when later on this Home Industry was organized and in working order.

The share which the Local Councils took in the production of the vast amount of statistics and information contained in the *Canadian Women's Handbook*, which the Council undertook to prepare as the Government's contribution to the Women's Section of the Paris Exhibition of 1900, must not be overlooked. They also shared heartily in the work of collecting signatures to the *Address to Queen Alexandra from the Women of Canada*. They assisted the *Red Cross Society* to form Branches, and they gave practical aid to the Contingents of Canadian Soldiers sent to South Africa.

Recent subjects referred to them for consideration are:—An Inquiry into the Working of Women's Exchanges; Agriculture for Women; The Encouragement of the Industrial and Fine Arts, and of Purity of Speech and Accent; the Formation of Vacation Schools and Playgrounds. This latter movement has already been successfully started by at least one Local Council during the summer of 1902.

II. WORK UNDERTAKEN ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE LOCAL COUNCILS THEMSELVES, in all of which one or more Local Councils have taken definite action.

The securing of a Curfew By-Law and the enforcement of the same; assistance to procure a Truancy Act; assistance given to a Parks' Protective Association; organization of Health Talks to Mothers and printing of Cards on the Subject; petition to allow women to preside at School Examinations; institution of a Woman's Exchange; organization of Women's Departments at Agricultural and Industrial Exhibitions at the special request of the authorities thereof; petition against the reduction of Teachers' salaries; petition to have temperance teaching in the public schools; petition for Act to prohibit children under the age of fifteen being on the streets at night without proper protection; petitions—many of them—to prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors, or to raise the license so as to make it prohibitive for the smaller stores to sell cigarettes to boys; organization of Reading Clubs and assistance given to start Libraries and Reading Rooms; petition to close liquor saloons on Labor Day; provision of an Ambulance Wagon; assistance sent to Famine sufferers in India and to the Armenians; prompt and ready assistance organized to relieve sufferers in great fires; petition for stricter observance of the Sabbath; petitions for a pure water supply and for a better sanitary condition of the streets, and for the beautifying of cities; petition that the names of streets be put up at each corner, and that all houses and places of business be numbered; petition to have a Children's Protection Act in British Columbia, which



Act passed its third reading in 1901; the introduction of the Kindergarten into the public schools of Manitoba; appeal for a Factory Act for Nova Scotia; petition for better sanitary arrangements for Female Employees in stores and offices; petition for Act compelling relations to support their aged and Infirm Poor; request that the retail liquor business be separated from other businesses; appeal for precautions to prevent people going on unsafe ice; appeal for the removal of Improper Posters, also for the supervision of Posters before they are put up; appeal against the introduction of a Music Hall where none existed; the replacing of the Memorial to Lord Sydenham in the Kingston Cathedral, which was destroyed by fire, the Ontario Government placing a sum in the hands of the Kingston Local Council for this purpose; institution of inquiry into the Sweating System and request to co-operate with the Federated Trades Council for the suppression of the same; inquiry into the conditions of Maternity Boarding Houses; consideration of instituting public baths and suitable lathing places for boys; consideration of plans for the prevention of smoke; also of the needs of newsboys; appeal for the disinfection of Home-Made Clothing; publicity given to the want of a pure Milk Supply and assistance in securing the same; investigation into the sanitary condition of markets; support given to the formation of branches of the Aberdeen Association and of Women's Historical Societies; petition for Free Employment Bureaus; petition to provide vestibuled fronts to street cars in the winter.

In connection with *Work for the Sick*, Local Councils have done their fair share. Hospitals have been agitated for, have been collected for, have been built, have been enlarged, have had women's wards, memorial wards and children's pavilions added; appeals have been made for the erection of suitable buildings for infectious diseases:—all through the efforts of Local Councils. It is, therefore, gratifying, to learn that members of Local Councils have here and there been made permanent members of Hospital Boards in recognition of their services to the cause of humanity and progress.

This long list of undertakings may not be absolutely complete, but it is sufficiently so to give a very fair idea of the interests and activities of Local Councils during the years from 1894 to 1902.

A few of the other subjects discussed at Local meetings are here appended:—"The Domestic Problem," "Housework as a Profession"; "A Kindergarten School for the Blind"; "Training of Children"; "Social Purity"; "Amusements and Entertainments, with the Duty of Parents in regard thereto"; "The Treatment of Women given to Inebriety"; "The Woman

of To-day"; "Rescue Work"; "Co-Education"; "The Development of National Literature in Canada"; "The Distribution of Literature Among Settlers"; "The Uses and Abuses of Books"; "House Sanitation"; "Hygiene in the Home"; "Boys' Clubs"; "Physical Culture for Women"; "The Importance of Fostering and Developing Patriotism in Children"; "Preventible Causes of Insanity"; "Foods"; "How our Towns are Governed"; "Our Relations to the Public Schools"; "A Plea for Compulsory Education"; "Infectious and Contagious Diseases"; "The Consumers' League Movement."

These show clearly that one very important side of Council work has not been neglected, namely, the information of its members on the live issues of the day and the consequent opening of the minds of the public to a variety of reforms which can only come about when the nation at large is fully awakened to their absolute necessity. In this slow, laborious and often little appreciated task the Local Councils are taking their share, and no one can measure the extent of their influence in this direction, nor realize fully how their strength lies in this bond, which unites together for mutual work the societies existing in any one place.

A careful study of the above mentioned activities will surely divulge the fact that the National Council is what it claims to be—a common meeting ground, where women of all shades of opinion and from any and every Society can join hands, if they will, in the search for "unity of thought, sympathy and purpose," and in the attempt to do by united and organized action what would be impossible to the individual. The more this is realized, the more will the Council be strengthened in its undertakings, and Council workers are glad and proud to record their sense of a growing appreciation of this side of their work, not only in the minds of individuals, but in the estimation of public bodies, which is a great step gained. The Local Councils, as component parts of the National Council, provide a framework, an organization, by means of which the women of this Dominion can, if they will, work steadily, unceasingly, gloriously in the cause of righteousness.

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71  
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