

Since Ancient Egypt

Judge Says No Country in the World Giving Equal Rights



By OLIVE DICKASON

There is no country in the world where women have equal rights with men, a city court judge from New York State last night told a meeting sponsored by the Local Council of Women at Willard Hall.

"Even in the United States, which is considered advanced, women are discriminated against in a thousand ways," Judge Catherine Lautz of North Tonawanda declared. "The only country where women ever had full equality was in ancient Egypt."

Judge Lautz, whose talk opened the sixth series of law lectures to be sponsored by the council, observed that one of the big barriers to equal rights is women's ignorance of their legal status.

"Many women have no idea what their status is until they get into difficulties," the smartly dressed judge maintained. "How many women know, for instance, that under English common law, a husband can claim a wife's earnings, if they have been earned within her own household?"

Judge Lautz described English common law as one of the great handicaps which women have been working for years to overcome. Only within the past 100 years has progress been made. "Away back in the days of the Roman Empire, women had begun to make some progress in obtaining their rights," Judge Lautz said. "But they lost everything in feudal England. It wasn't until 1848, when Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized an equal rights meeting at Seneca Falls, N.Y., that the situation began to improve. This meeting was for the pur-

not encouraging vocational training for women, which is almost non-existent around the world.

As for equal pay—even those nations which have endorsed it in principle do not show enthusiasm in putting it into practice. Judge Lautz said that France signed the United Nations convention granting this right, and has complained ever since that it has put her at an economic disadvantage in world trade. In Canada, only three provinces have legislated for equal pay, and 14 states in the U.S.

Property is another field in which women are often the victims, the judge continued. Property laws, however, vary considerably from nation to nation and even from locality to locality. In some cases women have no property rights at all; under the old English common law, women lost all such rights to their husbands upon marriage. Even today the law says that property acquired under coverture belongs to the husband; this applies to such things as furniture. A husband and wife going into a business partnership will find that everything belongs to the husband unless a contract specifying otherwise has been drawn up.

The past 25 years have seen the biggest strides forward in respects to women's rights generally, the judge said. Most of the credit for this goes to the United Nations.

"But it can't do everything for us," she warned. "We have to help ourselves. In a survey made by the UN, it was found that women, once they got the vote, have done little with it. They have rarely taken public office, and have not been effective public citizens. Where