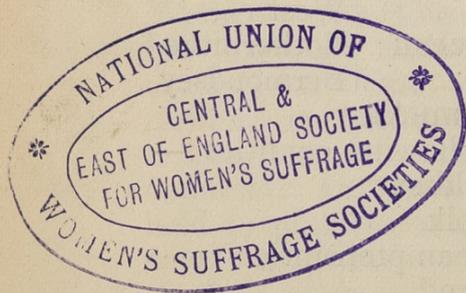


All who are able to suggest the names of possible Local Hon. Secretaries, or give other help in starting work in constituencies not yet organised, are earnestly invited to communicate with Miss Palliser, Secretary of the Central and East of England Society, 20, Great College Street, Westminster.

It is to the wishes of their constituents that M.P.'s look; the Associate Scheme will give ample opportunity to all who would work, for it has the merit of being practicable in every locality, large or small, central or remote. The scheme should therefore commend itself to the careful attention of all who would strengthen the movement at its roots.



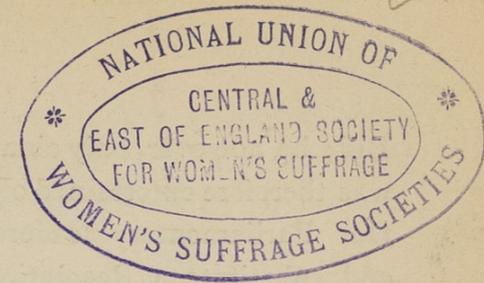
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1898

## ANNUAL REPORT.

MUCH in accordance with the anticipations of your Committee, no further progress was made in Parliament this Session. On the opening day of the Session, a Conference of Members of Parliament favourable to Women's Suffrage was held in Committee Room 13 of the House of Commons, to decide on the policy of the Session. Mr. George Wyndham, M.P., presided. After some discussion, in which Mr. Faithfull Begg, Mr. William Johnston and Mr. Atherley Jones stated their views of the importance of some Parliamentary action being taken, it was decided to ballot for a day, and to proceed by Bill or Resolution according to the result.

The following ladies, representing the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, were present:—Lady Frances Balfour, Mrs. Fawcett, Miss Blackburn (Central and East of England Society for Women's Suffrage), Mrs. Russell Cooke, Mrs. Broadley-Reid (Central and Western Society), Miss Roper (North of England Society), Mrs. Arthur Francis Bristol and West of England Society), Miss J. McLea (Cheltenham), Mrs. Enfield Dowson (Nottingham and District), Mrs. Gray Heald (Leeds), Miss Louisa Stevenson and Miss S. E. S. Mair (Edinburgh), Mrs. Charles Baxter and Miss Edith Palliser (Secretaries of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies).

Mr. Joseph T. Firbank (M.P. for Hull, East), was the most successful of those who balloted for a Women's Suffrage

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Bill; he however, only obtained twenty-sixth place, and no hope was therefore entertained of the Bill being reached this Session. Our Parliamentary leaders purposed to withdraw the Bill and substitute a Resolution, but were prevented from taking this action by the presence of two other Bills on the Order Book dealing with the same subject, set down by Mr. Ernest Spencer (M.P. for West Bromwich) and Sir Charles Dilke, Bt., (M.P. for Gloucester, Forest of Dean).

It is a matter of regret to your Committee that Mr. Ernest Spencer should not have acted in conjunction with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, because his Bill was one to which they could have given their hearty support.

Mr. Firbank kept his Bill down for March 9th, when it stood third on the Orders of the day. The Bills which preceded it, however, occupied the whole time of the House.

The Bill was next set down for June 15th, when it had second place, but when that date was reached, nine measures, which had made progress before Whitsuntide, had precedence, and, consequently, the Bill was not reached.

The text of the Bill was the same as that introduced by Mr. Faithfull Begg last Session,\* and was backed by Mr. J. T. Firbank, Mr. Faithfull Begg, Mr. George Wyndham, Sir John Maclure, Bt., Mr. Griffith Boscawen, Mr. William Johnston, Mr. Jebb, Mr. Courtney, Mr. McLaren, Sir James Rankin, Bt., Mr. Atherley Jones, Mr. Justin McCarthy, Sir William Arrol and Sir Albert Rollit.

\* (1) This Act may be cited as the Parliamentary Franchise (Extension to Women) Act, 1897.

(2) On and after the *passing of this Act* every woman who is the inhabitant occupier, as owner or tenant, of any dwelling-house, tenement or building within the borough or county where such occupation exists, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter in the list of voters for such borough or county in which she is so qualified as aforesaid, and, when registered, to vote for a member or members to serve in Parliament.

Provided always that such woman is not subject to any legal incapacity which would disqualify a male voter.

Your Committee are now glad to be able to state that the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, of which preliminary mention was made in last year's Report, is now fully established.

The arrangement has led to changes in the names of some of the old societies, in order that the title should the better indicate the geographical area undertaken by the Societies respectively. Thus the Central Committee, at 20, Great College Street, has become the Central and Eastern Society; the Central National Society, at 39, Victoria Street, has become the Central and Western Society; and the Manchester Society has become the North of England Society.

The Executive of the Union will pursue the policy of promoting a Bill in the House of Commons, until such time as the Government of the day will make the question a part of one of their own measures, in accordance with the policy announced by the Executive of the National Union in November of last year.

Although the Women's Suffrage Bill was not debated in Parliament, your Committee have satisfaction in recording that the question has not been without public discussion. At the Meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Derby, a Resolution in favour of Women's Suffrage was carried by a majority of 58, thus re-affirming, on the part of the Liberal Party, the Resolution passed at the Parliamentary Reform Conference at Leeds in 1883.

Your Committee have also pleasure in stating that the scheme for local work which aims at more widely extending the influence of this Society and the interest in its work, to which a brief allusion was made in our last Annual Report, has now passed beyond the initial stage, and made most satisfactory progress: and they are glad to be able to announce that it has been adopted by nearly all the Societies represented on the National Union.

The necessity for this work arose from the importance of gaining a foothold in every constituency within your Society's area, and from the desirability of keeping in touch with the countless friends, who, from time to time, had shown some active sympathy (such as signing petitions, distributing tickets for meetings, &c.), but who were constantly lost sight of from their not being subscribers.

Such undertakings would clearly throw a great additional burden of work on the office, which it could not effectually carry out, even were the necessary funds available. Some kind of local machinery was, therefore, required, which should be simple and easily set in motion.

The plan adopted is for your Committee to appoint a Local Hon. Secretary in each constituency, who shall work directly under the central office and be responsible for a complete record of all friends of the cause living in her constituency, and for the distribution of literature and information as to local work. To enable her to keep an exact and reliable list of supporters, all friends who are not already members (*i.e.*, subscribers) are asked to become associates, by signing their names and addresses in a book kept specially for the purpose by the Local Hon. Secretary.

The rules for associates are extremely simple. They are as follows:—

- (1) Any person who has attained the age of 18 years, and who is in favour of any extension of the Parliamentary Franchise to women, may become an associate of the Central and East of England Society for Women's Suffrage.
- (2) No money contribution is required from any associate, but annual subscriptions or donations being necessary for the carrying on of the work, may be sent, if desired, to the Secretary of the Suffrage Society, 20, Great College Street, Westminster.
- (3) Any associates changing their address should inform

the Local Hon. Secretary of the change. If they remove into a different constituency, the Local Hon. Secretary will forward their name and address to the Local Hon. Secretary of the new constituency.

Though the main object of the local associates' scheme has been to unite all friends with your Society, whether they could give pecuniary help or not, yet, in the present low state of the exchequer, and particularly in view of the very small steady income (in the shape of annual subscriptions) on which your Committee can rely, it has been a source of great satisfaction to find that the scheme, from a financial point of view, yields satisfactory results.

In the last twelve months £45 9s. has been spent in the work of organisation, while £28 of fresh *annual subscriptions* have been already obtained directly through the work of the scheme. Seven hundred and sixty-seven supporters have been enrolled in the three constituencies where work has been carried on. In these constituencies we had formerly considerably less than fifty members. Drawing room meetings in furtherance of the scheme have been held by Mrs. Sterling, 18, Sheffield Terrace, Kensington, Mrs. Scott, 18, Church Row, Hampstead, Mrs. Annan Bryce, 35, Bryanston Square, Mrs. Murray Macdonald, 15, Thurlow Road, Hampstead, and by Mrs. Russell Scott, Lyndhurst Gardens, Hampstead. The speakers at these meetings have been Mr. Faithfull Begg, M.P., Mr. Brynmôr Jones, Q.C., M.P., Sir W. Wedderburn, Bt., M.P., Mr. Murray Macdonald, M.L.S.B., Miss Davenport Hill, Miss Florence Davenport Hill, Hon. John Wallop, Mr. Fletcher, L.C.C., Mrs. Arthur Francis, Lady Cecilia Roberts, Mr. C. E. Maurice, Mrs. Percy Boulnois and the Rev. Henry Rawlings, M.A.

Your Committee would like to call attention to the fact that they have been enabled to start this scheme solely through the kind generosity of a few members of your Society, and that the results obtained represent the work of one paid worker, supported by a voluntary organiser, with most efficient

volunteer help. With more funds available the results would have been far greater, and your Committee hope, therefore, that contributions will be sent in to this fund which is carrying out work of the utmost value to your Society.

They would here like to call to your recollection that last year's balance sheet, although showing a balance in hand of £55 18s. 1d., also showed that accounts were at the time due and unpaid amounting to £95 8s. 5d. Therefore, instead of there being a balance of £55 18s., there was in reality a deficit of £39 19s. 5d., with which your Committee had to begin the year's work. The Committee wish to point out with the greatest gratitude that Mrs. Fawcett came forward and lectured twice, giving the proceeds of these lectures, amounting to £48 7s. 2d., to your Society's funds. In addition, there were other donations from members and friends amounting to £60 12s. 6d. With this timely help your society has been able to free itself from debt, and to show this year a genuine balance of £38 16s. 3d. They would also like to call special attention to the fact that the recurrence of such help cannot be relied upon in the future.

General Meetings to further the objects of your Society have been held in different parts of the country, and were addressed by Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Arthur Francis, and Miss Edith Palliser.

At the invitation of the Political Committee of the Junior Constitutional Club, Mrs. Fawcett gave an address at that Club, in November last, on Women's Suffrage.

This year your Committee have with great regret to record the loss of many old and valued supporters of the Women's Suffrage movement. By the death of the Rt. Hon. C. P. Villiers (Wolverhampton), Mr. George Dixon (Birmingham, Edgbaston), Sir Frank Lockwood (York) and Mr. Abel Smith (Herts, E.) your Committee have lost constant and steady supporters in Parliament of measures for the enfranchisement of women. The Rt. Hon. C. P. Villiers voted for the measure from

1870 to 1892, and Mr. George Dixon also voted constantly for the Bill, though not so frequently, owing to his absence from the House. They have also lost, through the resignation of their seats, the support in Parliament of Mr. Dampier Palmer (Gravesend) and of the Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton (Notts, Newark).

Among their supporters outside Parliament, your Committee have further to record the loss of an old and valued friend in Sir James Stansfeld. Sir James Stansfeld voted with Mr. John Stuart Mill in 1867, and backed Bills for the enfranchisement of women through a long series of years.

The following resolution was forwarded to Lady Stansfeld by your Committee :—

Resolution—

“ That this Committee is very sensible of the steadfast, self-sacrificing support given throughout his life by Sir James Stansfeld to further the claim of women to political enfranchisement. They desire to express their sympathy to Lady Stansfeld in this heavy loss.”

Our Society has also met with the loss of an old member and former supporter in the House of Commons in Baron Dimsdale, of Essendon, Herts.

The following Resolution was forwarded by this Committee to Baron Dimsdale's family :—

“ That this Committee remember with gratitude the steady support and many services rendered to the cause of Women's Suffrage by Baron Dimsdale, both in and out of Parliament, through a long series of years. They deeply deplore the loss they have sustained by his death, and they desire to tender their sincere sympathy to the members of his family.”

Your Committee have satisfaction in recording that at the bye-elections which have taken place since our last Annual Report was presented, ten of the successful candidates are known to be friends of Women's Suffrage. These are :—



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