

MONTHLY NEWS  
of the  
**CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST**  
WOMEN'S FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION.

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**Suffrage Victory in New York State.**

The State Referendum which has been taken on Woman Suffrage during the recent elections has been carried by a favourable majority of 94,000 in New York State, but lost in Ohio. An amendment giving women equal suffrage with men was passed by both Houses of the New York Assembly in 1916 and again in April of this year; but before a constitutional amendment can become law, it must be ratified by a referendum.

New York is the thirteenth State to give women parliamentary equality with men; and this victory is taken as a lucky sign by American Suffragists, who prophecy that victory for the whole country will follow after the thirteenth State has been won over.

**Women and Parliamentary Elections.**

If we find ourselves entrusted with the duty of helping to select a Member of Parliament we should consider seriously the responsibilities of the charge. The voters are the basis of the whole government of England. On them is built up the structure of the House of Commons. The competence of Parliament depends upon the way they fulfil their duty.

It should not be forgotten that government is not a perfectly easy and simple thing. To produce good government needs thought and effort, and a democratic government has special difficulties of its own. In reading the records of past ages, we must be struck with the fact that few nations have managed to make democratic institutions survive for more than a generation or two. Therefore we must realize that on each one of us depends in part the choice of the government of this great Empire; and that if we do not choose rightly, we endanger the institutions of our country.

But the choice of the individual voter is narrowed down by the customs of our elections to two or three alternative candidates. The new woman voter, anxious to do the best she can with the power just given to her, may feel that though in theory she chooses the Government of the country, in practice she can only help to decide on the rival claims of Messrs. Poodle and Doodle to represent the constituency in which she has a vote. Their election addresses are both full of the noblest sentiments. They both appeal to the true patriotism of the voters, and swear that the measures they recommend are the only ones to save the country. How is the conscientious voter to judge between their respective claims?

First of all, let her consider the character of the candidates. The member that is about to be elected is not a mere delegate. He will not have only to consider the questions mentioned in his election address, but any other problem that arises during the time Parliament lasts. Therefore it is much more important that he should be a good sensible man, than that he should promise any particular law. So I would urge the woman voter to first cut out any candidate who has personally a bad record—a shady financier, a man of doubtful honesty, of bad moral character, should receive no votes from women. Herein they can render great service to their country, because as soon as the party wire-pullers know that men of unworthy character are unacceptable to a large body of voters, they will take care not to put them forward as candidates. Too often a candidate is chosen merely because he is rich, without any enquiry into the manner in which he acquired his wealth.

But supposing that all the competing candidates are of equally good character, the woman voter should vote for her party. Parties are necessary to the working of democratic government. Broadly, they mean the banding together of those elements in the electorate that can agree on a common main policy. Without parties you can get no continuity of policy. The course of the government of the day would waver with every breeze of popular feeling.

As a rule, parties are divided into the people who desire change and those who dislike it, but there are many other currents of opinion that go to build them up. Those who love liberty above all things will be on one side; those who value order supremely upon the other, because, pushed to extremes, liberty is inconsistent with order, and order must act as a restraint on liberty.

The lover of liberty is akin to the individualist—the man who believes that the true way to build up a nation is to nourish the individual, and encourage freedom of action in all relations of life. The admirer of order, on the other hand, will value Socialist ideals, and believe that the nation will advance more surely under State direction than under the principles of *laissez faire*. There is some truth on both sides, and the woman voter will choose her party according to the ideals which have the greatest attraction for her. She will also very probably be influenced in her choice of parties by her estimation of the leaders. If she believes one to be more trustworthy and of better counsel than the others, she is likely to join the party that follows him. Having chosen, she



should support her party candidates as a rule.

But though I believe it will be absolutely necessary to form into parties, I cannot see that it is necessary to nourish violent feelings of animosity against the party from whom you happen to differ. Why not assume that your opponents are honest, even if you think them mistaken? You can be loyal to your own party, without being bitter towards others.

Then occasionally exceptional circumstances arise, which may throw upon the voter the necessity of re-considering her position. For instance, the leader of the party, which she ordinarily supports, may resolve on a course which seems to a portion of his party wrong and dangerous. In the hurly-burly which such a crisis always provokes, it is extremely difficult for voters to judge rightly. According to their capacity for sound right judgment in these emergencies, is the success of their nation in making democratic institutions work well. To be prepared for these crises, which are bound to occur, the woman voter should study history as much as she can, and for the rest she must trust to her own common sense—that most valuable of all guides in politics.

The main utility of the woman voter to the country will, probably, be proved to exist in her influence on Members of Parliament in questions of health and social amelioration. As a rule these questions excite no hostility, and are forwarded by men of either party who take an interest in them. They suffer by being crowded out by the purely party questions, these having the greatest interest for politicians and their keenest supporters. By forming associations in constituencies for the purpose of forwarding these reforms, and pressing them upon the notice of the candidates for their suffrages, women voters will be able to do here—as they have already done in other countries—build up healthy homes, protect children and young girls, improve sanitation, provide for sick people, old people, neglected babies, and other helpless members of the community. The care of these falls upon women in every State. I hope they will use their new powers to make such care more effectual. MAUD SELBORNE.

#### Women's Council.

##### A NEW DEPARTURE

The Executive Committee have decided that in future at meetings of the Council an address, followed by discussion, shall be given on some topic of immediate interest to women. At the meeting arranged for Tuesday, November 27th, at 2 o'clock, at 35, Onslow Gardens, S.W. 7 (by kind permission of Mrs. John P. Boyd-Carpenter), Mr. Evan Hughes, M.A., Head of the Organization Department, National War Savings Committee, will give a short address on "War Savings," which will be followed by discussion, in which it is hoped that many of our Council members will take part. By this means we shall obtain accurate information on subjects which are of vital importance at the moment, and this will be an occasion at which we can ask questions on points about which we are in doubt.

#### Conditions of Enfranchisement in Ireland

The conditions of Enfranchisement in Ireland are so often misunderstood, that we think the following statement by Miss Mellone, the Hon. Press Secretary of the Belfast Suffrage Society, will interest our readers:—

"The municipal register in Ireland only includes married women when they have a qualification in respect of property or occupation of premises distinct from that of the husband. Under the Representation of the People Bill, the married woman will be able to qualify as a Parliamentary elector if her husband is entitled to be registered as a local government elector in a constituency, and will thus possess the Parliamentary, though not the municipal, franchise. Further, under clause 3, sub-section (a) of the Bill, as amended in Committee, women lodgers occupying furnished rooms will not only remain without the Parliamentary franchise, but will lose the municipal vote which they at present possess—a fate shared by men occupying furnished rooms as far as the municipal vote is concerned, though in their case the Parliamentary franchise, being based on residence, not occupation, will be safeguarded. Women living in furnished rooms have possessed the municipal franchise since the Urban District Councils in Ireland were formed, and the matter is serious. A letter has been sent by the Belfast Suffrage Society to the local Parliamentary representatives and to the Irish party leaders, calling their attention to the matter, and expressing the hope that they will support any action which may be taken when the application of the Bill to Ireland is considered. In view of the statement by the Government that the matter should be dealt with if raised by Irish Members, there should be no difficulty in securing amendment of the Bill in both directions."

#### Women's Local Government Franchise.

##### THE PRESENT POSITION.

The Representation of the People Bill may have reached the Report stage ere these lines appear. In this stage several important matters must be dealt with, but time must be economized if the Bill is to be law by Christmas. One amendment, certain to be moved, proposes to extend the local government franchise to the wives of local government electors.

It is well to realise the early Victorian arrangement of the first four clauses of the Bill. The marginal notes read:—

- Parliamentary franchises (men).
- University franchise (men).
- Local government franchise (men).
- Franchises (women).

The subsections of Clause 4 respectively relate to the parliamentary, the university, and the local government franchise—for women.

Subsection (3) of clause 4 consists of five lines:—

- (3) A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a local government elector for any local government electoral area where

she would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man: Provided that a husband and wife shall not both be qualified as local government electors in respect of the same property.

The proviso in the last sentence which denies to husband and wife the right to be joint occupiers on the same conditions as other people, dates from 1894, and now contrasts oddly with the provision in subsection (1), which specially entitles the wife of a local government elector to enjoy the parliamentary franchise.

To understand the first three lines of the subsection, we must turn back to Clause 3—"Local government franchise (men)." The qualification which entitles a man to registration as a local government elector, is the occupation as owner or tenant of land or premises for the qualifying period fixed by a later clause at six months ending January 15th or ending July 15th.

On June 20th, when subsection (3) was before the House of Commons in Committee, Mr. Charles Roberts moved to delete the restrictive proviso, and to insert instead "or where she is the wife of a man entitled to be so registered." He quoted the estimate that without the amendment the number of women local government electors would be 1,000,000, and with the amendment 6,000,000, and pointed out that the women who would be added to the local government register would be women who are to have the high responsibility of the parliamentary vote. Mr. Adamson supported, speaking on behalf of the working-class married woman. There were many strong expressions of support in favour of the amendment. Mr. Hemmerde and others urged the inconsistency of giving women votes in Parliamentary matters, and refusing the same women power to vote in local politics and for the administration of laws. Mr. Gilbert showed that the adoption of the amendment would cause a great deal more interest to be taken in local elections by the women themselves, and instanced how much married women with children were concerned with action taken by education committees, care committees, health visitors and other visitors. Mr. MacCallum Scott urged how more and more active and direct control over the domestic lives of the people is now taken by local authorities. Mr. Arnold Ward supported, and thought that the vote ought also to be conferred on the husbands of women local government electors. Lord Hugh Cecil, Colonel Gretton and Mr. Jardine declared against the amendment. Sir George Cave acknowledged the serious spirit in which the Members had spoken on the amendment, but considered that the Committee would not be entitled that day in a thin House to accept an amendment making so great a change in the electorate. Mr. Dickenson tactfully emphasized that the Home Secretary had not closed the door to reconsideration at a later stage of the Bill.

Since June 20th the amendment has certainly gained support in the country.

The deletion of the proviso that husband and wife shall not both be qualified as local government electors in respect of the same property, is

the removal of a disability on marriage rather than on sex, and has been desired for many years. The positive part of the proposed amendment does certainly make some women desire that similarly the local government franchise shall be granted to the husbands of women local government electors, in order to retain a single local government franchise for men and women. But owing to the form and arrangement of the early clauses of the Bill it would be difficult to obtain this in a session when there is so little time, and when few amendments, however good, can be urged on Report.

Mr. Charles Roberts' amendment is now in charge of Mr. F. D. Acland, for Mr. Roberts in October received an appointment which has taken him to India. Twenty other Members, of all parties, are acting with Mr. Acland. The only risk seems to be that the House may deem the proposed increase in the number of women local government electors to be unduly large. But reason is on the side of the amendment, and this is especially realized by the men most intimately acquainted with local government. The position is full of hope.

Resolutions from women's organizations cannot be too numerous, and should carefully follow the terms of the amendment. Letters also to private Members are timely. M. G. KILGOUR.

#### Canada and Women's Suffrage.

The Canadian Senate has passed the third reading of the War Time Election Franchise Bill. This enfranchises all women who are relatives of soldiers on service. It is a curious system of selection, by which women voters are chosen on the merits of their male relations. Absurd as is the principle or lack of principle upon which it is based, the present effect of the scheme is to enfranchise the majority of Canadian women. There is strong feeling in Canada in favour of granting full women's suffrage. In a letter to a Vancouver correspondent, Sir Robert Borden expressly states that if returned to power he will place upon the statute-book a measure enfranchising all British-born women, and making it possible for women of foreign birth to obtain naturalization.

With reference to the above, the *Times* says:

"Nor was there much, if any, hostile criticism of the proposal to enfranchise the female relatives of soldiers. The Opposition's chief contention was that the franchise should be extended to all women who now have votes in provincial elections. When the last Dominion General Election was held, women were not enfranchised in any part of Canada. Since then British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario have established equal suffrage. Under the old practice of using the provincial lists for federal contests, all women would now vote in these four provinces. But the War Time Election Act gives the franchise only to the female relatives of soldiers. Before the Act was introduced, all the leading women's associations of the country were consulted, and even the Equal Suffrage organizations agreed to the restrictions which the Government



suggested. It was held that women whose husbands, sons, or brothers had gone to the Front had made special sacrifices and were entitled to special political recognition. The Prime Minister argued that those who were making the chief sacrifices for the country should have greater proportionate authority over the national policy and the national destiny. With Woman Suffrage prevailing in all the Western Provinces, where the bulk of the "foreign" population lives, adoption of the provincial lists would have doubled the voting power of those who have few, if any, representatives in the oversea forces.

"Recognition of this fact explains the denial of complete woman suffrage and the submission of the women's organizations to the Government's action. It is estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 women will have votes in the impending contest. Practically every household from which a soldier has enlisted will have three votes, if the men actually in the field are able to cast their ballots, as against one for the household from which no sons have gone to the Front, or from which there were none to go. Many women who have been active in relief, patriotic, Red Cross, and recruiting movements will not have the franchise. In numerous cases this will be unjust, but from women there is no serious protest. Since activity in patriotic work could not be made a practicable basis of enfranchisement, only confusion could have resulted from a multiplicity of qualifications. The significance of the position of women is that they demand a Parliament which will carry on the war, and which will represent the elements in the country upon which a War Government can depend."

#### Miss Mary Gurney.

We much regret to record the death of Miss Mary Gurney—a Member of our Council—and one of the earliest members of our Association. Miss Gurney was well known as a pioneer in the cause of women's education. She worked with the Dowager Lady Stanley of Alderley, Mrs. William Grey and others in providing schools in which girls should receive instruction on the same lines as that given to boys in public schools. Their efforts resulted in the foundation of the Girls' Public Day School Company (now Trust). Miss Gurney was also associated with Girton College, Cheltenham Ladies' College, and other institutions, and she was a member of the educational section of the Victoria League. She was an ardent Suffragist, and always took great interest in our work.

Mrs. Gilbert Samuel represented our Association at her funeral, and other members of the Executive Committee were also present.



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### WEEKLY LECTURES.

### HOUSE DINNERS.

Wed., 21 Nov., 7.15 p.m.—House Dinner (for Diners only). "The Lighter Side of Officialdom." Miss Amy E. Otter. Chairman: The Rev. A. E. de Cetto.  
Wed., 28 Nov., 8 p.m.—"Engineering for Women." The Hon. Lady Parsons. Chairman: Mr. John Cameron Grant.  
Wed., 5 Dec., 7.15 p.m.—House Dinner (for Diners only). "Singing to Soldiers in France." Miss Effie Mann. Chairman: Sergt. John Simpson.  
Wed., 12 Dec., 8 p.m.—"The Work of the Women Patrols." Major E. H. T. Parsons, Chief Constable, Metropolitan Police. Chairman: Mrs. Gilbert Samuel.

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Tickets from the Secretary, 144, High Holborn, W.C. 1; or The Suffrage Shop, 5, Duke Street, Adelphi, W.C. 2.

## The WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

WILL HOLD  
PUBLIC MEETINGS ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS

IN THE  
MINERVA CAFE, 144, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C. 1.,

Nov. 21.—Speaker: Mrs. Despard. Chairman: Miss Margaret Hodge.  
Nov. 28.—Speaker: Mr. J. G. Mallon, on "The State as Merchant." Chairman: Miss Nina Boyle.

THE CHAIR WILL BE TAKEN AT 3 p.m.  
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