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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
IN
NORWAY.

BY
FRU ELLA ANKER.



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NATIONAL UNION of WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES,
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NOTE.

Many of those who had the pleasure of hearing Fru Anker when she was in England this summer desired to have her address in a permanent form. The Literature Committee have, therefore, asked her permission to publish it as a pamphlet. This permission she has very kindly given. It will, of course, be understood that the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies does not hold itself responsible for opinions on questions other than Woman Suffrage. As Fru Anker observes, the laws which suit one country do not necessarily suit another, but her pamphlet clearly proves that the interests of women and children are not overlooked in Norway.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN NORWAY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The Suffrage movement in Norway is in a characteristic way connected with the two great historical events in our national struggle for freedom in 1814 and 1905.

In 1814 it was the first time that a woman demanded to vote, and it was for the first Parliament ever assembled in Norway. It was at the time of the great Napoleonic wars. Denmark, which had been on the side of Napoleon, was, at his fall, obliged to cede the whole united Kingdom of Norway to Sweden. When the news came to Norway that the country had been given away like another province, the people rose like one man, declared Norway independent, and chose their own king. It was a daring risk. The Swedish army was at the frontier, and delegates from all the great powers met in our capital to see the treaty of cession fulfilled.

The Norwegians then made an appeal to the people to elect members for a parliament to carry on the resistance against Sweden. The people answered with great enthusiasm to this appeal; and the women were as patriotic as the men, they gave what they could of gold and silver to the State for the defence. All were alike anxious that Norway should be independent again after four centuries of union with Denmark. The election day came and all the men went to the churches to give their votes for Norway's freedom, while the church bells all over the country were ringing.

At that moment a peasant woman who owned seven churches, managed her own farm, and was accustomed to rule the district, dressed in her best gown, drove with two horses to the church, and demanded to vote. She was refused, as a woman. But, it is an interesting fact that a century afterwards it was the great grand-daughter of this peasant woman who was the first chosen woman member of Parliament in Norway—Miss Anna Rogstad—and her first speech was for the defence of the country.

The Norwegian revolution in 1814 ended in this way, that we at last agreed to a union with Sweden under the same king, but we were to have our own constitution, our own government, our own parliament. The English delegates had helped us diplomatically all the time to obtain this great result, and the Norwegians have always felt a deep gratitude to Great Britain.

The actual Suffrage movement began in the seventies, roused by the inspiring impulses from British women and men. John Stuart Mill's book, "The Subjection of Women," was translated and

introduced to us by the Danish writer Georg Brandes, and roused at once a great sensation. The ideas were taken up by our woman movement and were advocated by our writers, chiefly Björnstjerne Björnson. My mother has told me how women at that time came together to discuss this book, how they cried over it, and dreamt over it, as if a new age was dawning.

I remember a ball in my father's home in the seventies. There had been the usual speech for the ladies in the style of: "Wine, women, and song," when a young student rose and made a startling address: "We have done with these phrases about women now," he said, "comparing her to stars and to flowers, and anything but human beings. We want companions in life, an equal in our own flesh and blood, an equal in our needs and wants and ideals." Then he quoted John Stuart Mill and ended with "Votes for Women." There was an outcry. Some women fled frightened to the corners, and some men were very furious. Then I saw my mother walking up to the speaker thanking him with tears in her eyes.

This is the fine, the remarkable thing in the Suffrage movement in Norway, that the men supported us from the first moment. They welcomed us with open arms to public interest and influence.

The people were prepared for it by our broad, democratic education. Our constitution, which is a daughter of the French Revolution, had placed the power into the hands of the great mass of the people, so the average man had for a century been accustomed to share the political work of the

country. The principle of our democracy is that every man who works and struggles for his life within the boundaries of our country, is entitled to influence legislation in his interest. It is the needs and interests of every grown-up individual who is dependent on legislation, which are to be represented by the vote. *The right to vote is based on the need for it. Government in this way does not only rest on the consent of the governed, but on the co-operation of the governed.*

This is not only simple justice, we argue. It is a benefit to the state, a strength to the nation, that all the forces and impulses from the brains and heart of the people combine to make legislation. In this way the greatest sum of intelligence and experience of life in the different conditions of society is represented. *The experience of life*, that is the education which counts for the vote, and is to govern the country. Therefore as soon as women demanded the vote, the men found it *a most natural demand*. No one can deny that women are as much dependent on legislation as men are, and they need the vote just as much as men to defend their interests in society, and their work and experience of life is as valuable to the state as the work of men.

It was a just and natural demand. But most of all, the men wanted women to get the vote to educate them in public interest.

They did not want women to remain at a lower intellectual stage than themselves. They did not want women to sit behind the closed doors of the nursery and the kitchen. They hoped and wished and encouraged women to be more broadminded and enlightened. Women would be more fit to

educate their children, they argued, if they knew more about the world in which their children were to live and struggle, and they would be better and more pleasant companions to themselves if they could be inspired by the same ideals as themselves, common ideals, which can make a home more happy than any money can make it. They wanted to get the whole level of the homes lifted by a more enlightened womanhood.

They did not like to see women so much absorbed by church interests and missionary work only, as was the case in Norway, to see women use their spare time to make clothes for children in India and Madagascar, not noticing that children were freezing and starving outside their own houses. They wanted to use the great charity force of women for the welfare of our own people, organised and made much more fruitful by means of the vote.

As Christians, who regard the soul of a woman of as much eternal value as the soul of a man, they could only rejoice at anything which might contribute to widen the views of women, and they wanted to lead the religious feeling of women into public life to inspire and purify public life.

They wished to see womanhood unfold her unknown forces side by side with man, the divine spirit of evolution working in them both for infinite ends. They did not say that women were not politically educated enough, because they realised that the vote and the responsibility was just the means of education for public interest.

There was, of course, some resistance from men and also from some few women.

“If women get the vote, they will lose their womanhood, they will neglect their children, they will shake the foundation of the state and cause a disaster to the nation.” It is so curious to hear these arguments repeated here, when we know that they have no reality. But the men as a whole trusted in nature and in womanhood. We shall never forget it. We are proud of our Norwegian men for their sense of justice, for their courage, for their trust in womanhood, their true manliness—
“Das ewig männliche ziehet uns an.”

The Suffrage movement in this way never became a sex war in Norway, and I believe there will never be a sex war, as women are mothers to sons as well as to daughters.

In 1885 the first Suffrage society was started in Kristiania by a young woman, Miss Gina Krog, who is now the Liberal candidate for a constituency in Kristiania.

Only some years afterwards the Labour Party took women's suffrage on their political programme. Both in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark it has been the Labour parties which first supported women. But the other parties came very soon afterwards.

In 1893 a Suffrage Bill was discussed in Parliament and got a majority. It was not passed into law, because a constitutional bill with us needs a two-third majority, and it was then rejected by the Conservatives. Some years afterwards the men got universal suffrage, and from that time the Con-

servatives began to favour a limited bill for women. Now a deadlock began in the Suffrage movement. The great national struggle for independence, which had lasted all the century, approached a crisis. We realised that we had to make a great effort to come out of the union with Sweden. At this critical time the Liberals did not dare to give women the vote, just as the Irishmen here. They feared the influence of new voters on this question. The Suffrage was postponed, but not forgotten.

Meanwhile our Parliament gave women admission to all the same schools and all the same professions as men. A woman in Norway can be whatever she likes, except a clergyman, consul, and officer in the army.

All the state schools, and most of the private schools, are co-educational. This has been a good way of preparing for the vote for women, as men have seen from their childhood that women are as intelligent and energetic as themselves. Women got municipal vote and were elected on the County Councils and as members of the jury. And women poured into all these new-opened departments of work and gave good evidence about their abilities.

Time was ripe for the vote, and then came our great year 1905. History repeats itself. The Norwegian Parliament dissolved the union with Sweden. Again the Swedish army was at the frontier. The people rose like one man, called to action as it were by the genius of the nation. Sweden said: “This is an arbitrary act of the Norwegian Parliament; it is not the wish and will of the people.” Our Parliament answered: “We are not afraid of

asking the people," and it made a referendum to the men of the country asking them to vote for or against the union with Sweden. Again the men of the country went to the polling places to vote for Norway's freedom, while the church bells were ringing.

At that moment the Norwegian women rose to the great occasion and made a referendum to all the women of the country asking them to vote for or against the union. After some days they presented a list of women voters to Parliament almost as large as the list of men voters; all of them voted for Norway's freedom knowing that we risked a war.

Our Parliament was proud to answer Sweden: Our act is sanctioned by the whole people, not only by the men but by all the women of the country.

This immediate national impulse of the women to back up the men at the most critical stage of our history won the vote for women. The first Parliament opened by King Haakon the Seventh of Norway and Queen Maud gave women the vote. The first act of free Norway was to honour the women.

The union was dissolved in peace, and this has prepared a better understanding between the two peoples, who now can fully appreciate each other. Common ideals and common dangers unite them now in a free natural co-operation. Next year we shall have a Peace Centenary between Norway and Sweden, and both peoples have collected a fund to erect a peace monument at the frontier in the form of Christ.

We got votes for women in 1907, but it was only a limited vote. The Labour and Liberal parties voted first for universal suffrage for women, but as this Bill again was rejected by the Conservatives, they voted for a limited Bill, based on taxation, a Bill which excluded two-fifths of the women. A woman over 25 years who paid taxes on an income of at least £25 a year, was to have the vote, and all married women whose husbands paid the same taxes. This Bill was carried by an overwhelming majority of all parties.

It was a magnanimous deed of the Labour Party to vote for this Bill which excluded their women. They sacrificed their own interest to open the way for women's suffrage.

The effect of the women's vote in Norway after two elections has been so good that now all political parties demanded universal suffrage, and *on the 12th of June, 1913, our Parliament unanimously gave universal suffrage to women over 25 years, that is on the same conditions as men.*

It cannot be said that the majority of women wanted the vote in Norway. Very few were opposed to it, but it was only a minority of the women, the enlightened women, who actually demanded it. I think a suffrage reform has never been demanded by the whole body, who was to profit by it. It is the free who must teach the slaves the value of freedom. It was the majority of men who deliberately wanted to share their privileges with women. There was no political necessity for it. The granting of the vote to women was therefore a victory of the men, a victory of justice and civilisation.

May I tell you that in *Denmark* the Government has proposed universal suffrage for women as for men as part of a constitutional reform, which was placed before a general election in May. An overwhelming majority of the people voted for it, so it is certain that a women's suffrage bill soon will be carried.

In Sweden the Government last year proposed suffrage for women on the same conditions as men. The Bill was passed by the first chamber, but rejected by the second chamber.

It does not seem that the example of Finland and Norway has frightened the two countries which are nearest to us and can best judge on the effect of women's vote. Denmark is even ready to adopt universal suffrage at one stroke.

HOW WOMEN USE THE VOTE.

The first election was in 1909, and the women at once took a great share in it, and still more at the last election, when they voted in almost the same proportion as men. 73 per cent. in the towns; in the country 50 per cent.

There are more women than men in Norway also. We cannot help it! But the men are not afraid of the women.

In 1910 the number of women over	
15 years was	826,097
The number of men over 15 years	699,467
	<hr/>
Majority of women ...	126,630
	<hr/>

The number of boys in 1910 below	
15 years was	423,693
The number of girls below 15 years	408,533
	<hr/>
Majority of boys	15,160
	<hr/>

More boys are born in Norway, but more boys die early, especially in the first year, and women generally live to a higher age. This accounts for the majority of grown-up women. I have been told that this is also the case in England.

There is thus a majority of women voters, but women do not vote as a sex against men. We do not want to fight men. We vote on political lines. We have not formed any woman party against men. I think it would be quite impossible to form a united party of women against men. We work side by side with men as their friends. We share the general political work of the country in co-operation with men according to our different opinions and interests.

We have a striking example of this. Miss Gina Krog, who is the leader of the women's movement, the President of the National Council of Women, was nominated as the Liberal candidate in a rich constituency in Kristiania, and was defeated. The Conservative women here voted for her political opponent, a man, and we found that all right. There was a great political issue at stake.

We never see this majority of women voters anywhere. They are mixed up with the men between the parties. The actual effect of the women's vote is to strengthen the influence of the home and the

family on legislation. Most women are married women, and generally husband and wife vote together on the same side of politics. They get their opinions naturally from the same sources. It is the married man who by the women's vote gets his vote strengthened or redoubled.

Generally the home and the family is considered to be the most stable foundation of the state, so the women's vote directly strengthens the foundation of the state.

And it works as a premium on good marriages! As an encouragement to husband and wife to agree! If they vote together the home is represented by two votes; if they do not agree they outweigh each other. I have never heard that the vote has broken up any marriage!

I think it is a danger to the state to have such strong women's organisations as here in England *without political responsibility*. It tempts women to stare onesidedly at their own grievances. They are now like an army of revolt against the government of man. Naturally this begins to threaten the foundation of the state. When they get the same rights and responsibilities as men, they will look at all questions more from the human point of view and in connection with general interests of society.

Women are members of the councils of all political organisations, and in this way they influence the party programmes with their interests, just as other sections within a political party. And all the parties are very ready to take up women's questions on their programmes. Their proposals are not directed against men, as we shall see.

The first direct effect of the vote is that women have taken up their home duties with greater respect and responsibility. They have worked to make women more able for their most sacred task as wives and mothers. There is no fear that women voters will refrain from marriage. They will certainly now, as always, find their highest happiness in marriage. As wife and mother a woman uses her greatest powers. In the wonder of creation she is nearest to God.

I do not think the Norwegian woman has lost her womanhood. It still holds good for us, I believe, the old ideal from the Bible:—

“Strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the time to come; she opens her mouth to wisdom and the law of kindness is on her tongue.”

I will give a concentrated survey of the work of women in Norway, which has been carried out by the influence of the vote. There may, of course, be things that would not suit you. Every country must build on her own basis of development. But I think it will interest you to hear how Norwegian women have used the vote.

The first thing women have thought about is to stop *infant mortality* by a better provision for the mothers. As you know infant mortality has grown very high in all countries of late, chiefly because the women have been driven away from the homes into the factories, and often are obliged to leave their new-born children to others, so the children do not get their natural food. After the first election we got maternity benefit for all women

directly engaged by employers. Childbirth is in our factory law considered as an illness, which entitles a woman to 60 per cent. of her usual earnings for six weeks after the birth of the child. This will make it possible for many a poor mother to stay at home at the time when it is most wanted. And she is *obliged* to stay at home during this time and nourish her child herself, if she is able to do it.

Women have worked to get this time lengthened to include two weeks before the birth, and to get *maternity insurance* for all married women whose husbands are insured. The Government has just now proposed to lengthen the time to eight weeks, and it proposes that every wife of a man who is insured in the State's invalidity insurance is to have one crown a day for eight weeks at the birth of a child. (One crown is like 1s. 1d.). That means £3 on the whole. These married working women are often as much in need of help as women directly employed outside their homes, and will now be able to take more care of themselves and their new-born children. If we in this way can stop or lessen infant mortality, perhaps there will be no majority of women voters after all!

The maternity insurance in our country is directly inspired by the insurance act of Mr. Lloyd George, so we are very grateful to him. It is the first acknowledgment of motherhood as a great service to the state.

Then the Government has proposed a Bill for a better provision of *illegitimate children and their mothers*. There are dying three times as many of these poor children as of ordinary children, only on account of the desolate conditions of the mothers.

The Government now proposes a greater responsibility on the father of the child, morally and economically.

The child is also to be entitled to take the name of its father and shall inherit alike with his legitimate children. The Bill has strict rules to ensure that only the real father will get the responsibility.

Women have established a complete practical education of women as *future housekeepers*. Practice in cookery—kitchen schools, as we call them—have been made obligatory in the elementary schools of the towns. Larger housekeeping schools are to be erected in all greater districts, supported by the state and municipality, and a high school for all housekeeping work is established by the state to educate teachers for all the elementary schools.

The men like that!

Information is planned to be given in the highest classes for boys and girls separately about the *health laws* and the *relationship between the sexes*. It intends to give the young people knowledge on this important matter in a finer and better way than they now usually get it. We hope it will make boys and girls more able to withstand immorality, which is as injurious to their character as to their health. The National Council of Women, an organisation which includes most of the women's associations, has awarded a prize for competition between medical women and men for the best book on this subject, which can be used by the teachers or by the parents in the homes. Women are most awake to this question of how to keep the young boys and girls pure and healthy—how to protect the fountain of life.

Our writer, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson has in his drama, "The Gauntlet," raised the claim of an equal moral standard for men and women *before* as *after* marriage. We understand, however, that this question can only be solved in connection with great economic changes—higher wages for women, earlier marriages for men. The first thing is to raise an ideal; if man and woman have the same ideal they will be able to carry it out. It is our thoughts and wishes and wants that create the reality of the future.

Were it only for this one reason, to try to find a means of preventing women from the degradation of immorality, it is necessary that women have the vote.

The marriage laws are already very good in Norway. The wife has just the same right over the child as her husband. He cannot do anything with her child without her consent. She is considered as the partner of his fortune, as he is the partner of her fortune. Her work in the household is considered as a contribution to the family income. I have been told that in England the husband has the only right over the child when it is over seven years, and can even send it away from its mother.

We have got a *new divorce law*, which fully confirms the equality of the sexes on all divorce grounds. We have had equality in this respect in practice for many centuries; it is now only legally confirmed.

Women have generally in the state's employment the same wages as men for the same work. Exceptions are the women telegraphists and the teachers in the elementary schools. The last classes have now got their wages somewhat raised by the influence of the women's vote.

Women have used their influence on the juries to claim a greater punishment for immoral crimes against women and children.

Then the women have worked for *Temperance*, and this is perhaps the most important of all.

The National Council of Women has now adopted in principle *compulsory social service for women*. It will work out a practical economic plan to propose for our Parliament. This means that women of all classes shall serve the state for a certain period in their youth to learn to fight against the enemies of public health. For some months one summer, and some months the succeeding summer, they shall learn the eugenics of the family, the practical nursing of children and sick, and get information about the great national diseases—for instance, tuberculosis, which kills more people than any battlefield. The women shall learn to prepare their homes for this fight and bring up a more healthy generation. We think it better to build the safeguard of public health on the education of women to *prevent* diseases instead of building costly buildings and sanatoriums to *cure* the diseases.

I will quote some declarations from prominent statesmen in Norway about the effect of women's vote given this year.

The present Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Gunnar Knudsen:—"In our country women have been entitled to vote at two political elections. They have taken part in the election in a rapidly increasing number. The experience acquired is very satisfactory, and all parties in Norway are now convinced of the justice of this reform, which first met some opposition from the Conservatives."

The present Conservative leader, the Judge Mr. Hagerup Bull:—"The women's suffrage, which with us has been carried out by the co-operation of all parties, has not existed long enough for its direct result to be easily pointed out. But as it at once has been used to a great extent, I think that the influence already can be noticed in two directions. It has at once contributed to widen the views of women, and it has, by the mere fact of its existence, had a beneficial influence on the attitude of the national assembly on different questions."

The Liberal Cabinet Minister of Justice, Mr. Johan Castberg:—"The women's vote has proved to be beneficial. It is giving more weight to the moral side of politics. It has in equal degree strengthened all political parties. It has not in any way weakened the national and political force of the people. No section of the people want the women's vote abolished. On the contrary, all political parties demand now on their programme that it shall be widened from the present limited vote to universal suffrage."

The late Conservative Minister of Justice, Professor Fredrik Stang:—"Women's vote in Norway has been working well and has been increasingly used. The vote was carried out by the co-operation of all parties."

As you see, all political parties now claim the honour of having given women the vote!

The Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Thinn:—"I consider the woman suffrage established in our country as an act of justice to women and a benefit to society on the whole."

The Reverend Eugene Hansen:—"The use of the women's vote has confirmed the justice of the arguments which led to its establishment. The women's vote is a natural consistent part of the people's vote, and is intended to introduce new views, judgments, influences and abilities, which are as indispensable and beneficial as those of man, into public life, and are bound to be added if the whole people is to be represented. Experience has confirmed this in the short time the vote has been working."

The vote and the political power has indeed roused the women to greater activity, self-confidence and responsibility. They read and discuss politics much more than formerly, to form responsible opinions, and the men pay much more attention to our opinions. I was at the country at the last election and saw them coming to the polling places, husbands and wives with their grown-up sons and daughters, with their maleservants and their maid-servants, each of them as much respected as the other. In several towns 90 per cent. of the registered women voted. A washing woman whose income was under the mark tried to get her taxes raised to get the vote!

They feel it as a case of honour. It is an honour which gives women more hope and energy. We are anxious to use our abilities to serve the state. Our help is wanted, and we are anxious to use our love and energy to make the world better. We have this feeling, that it is possible for us to do it.

And we want to show that we love old Norway more than ever.

As we cannot share the general conscription of men, we have collected a voluntary fund and given to the state for the defence. And a voluntary institution is established to educate women to be employed as nurses all over the country in time of peace, and as Red Cross sisters in time of war, and we have worked out all necessary appliances.

It is true that women are a power for peace. We work for the peace movement and believe in it. We look forward in faith to the time when the causes of war will be decided by justice and arbitration. Women who give life in pain and travail, and forget the pain in joy that a child is born into the world—we know the price of life. We will not waste lives in vanity, in greed for gold. We will not plunge into reckless wars. We are a power for peace. But this does not mean that women consider physical life as the highest of human treasures. We do not want peace at any cost. We know that there are things worth dying for. We are willing to give lives for freedom and nationality.

We live in a time when all small nations feel themselves threatened to their lives by mighty neighbours, and they feel it necessary to strengthen the defence, the material defence, and still more the national culture, the education and the prosperity of the nation, which is the best defence.

One of the most enlightened peoples of Europe is now bleeding to death at our frontier in the north, but the Finnish people know that even if their freedom is to be crushed the spirit of the nation will survive and rise in better times to come. The high moral and political standard of the Finnish women

who have the vote is one of the best strongholds of their culture.

In the same way the Norwegians have realised that by leading the sources of women's impulses, energy and abilities into public life, *they have strengthened the political fabric of the state and fortified the national culture.*

The Norwegians have fulfilled the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." And I believe their days shall be long in our land.

ELLA ANKER.



APPENDIX.

SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS.

The population of Norway is 2,391,782 (the census of 1910)

GENERAL ELECTION OF 1909.

Women voted at 73% in the towns.
Women voted at 46% at the country.

GENERAL ELECTION OF 1912.

Men electors (25 years universal suffrage)	502,284
Women electors (limited suffrage) ...	324,990
Electors	<u>827,274</u>

64% of the electors voted.

Men in the towns	72%.
Men at the country	67%.
Women in the towns	73%.
Women at the country	50%.

THE CENSUS OF 1910.

Boys born in a year ...	32,339
Girls born in a year ..	30,566
Men over 15 years ...	699,467
Women over 15 years ..	826,097

Men over 25 years	501,716	} The difference about 100,000.
Women over 25 years	607,709	

1,109,425

NEXT ELECTION, 1915, ON UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

A majority of women electors of about 100,000, out of about 1 million electors, out of 2½ million population.

WOMEN IN STATES EMPLOYMENT.

Women can be appointed to all the high State Offices except as clergymen, consuls and officers in the army. Women can be judges, magistrates, university professors, teachers in the higher schools, and get all sorts of positions in the government departments. The wages are fixed for the office and women have the same wages as men.

We have just got the first woman professor at the University, the first judge, and the first district physician. Several women have offices in the Government departments of justice, of war, and in other departments. All these officials are appointed by the King and can only be deposited by the Court.

In the **Post Office** women have always had the same wages as men. A recent attempt to reduce their wages was rejected by the Government with a large majority in Parliament—thanks to the indirect influence of the women's vote.

In the **Telephone Offices** only women are engaged so there is no competition.

The **Telegraph Offices** are arranged differently for men and women, so they do not compete except to the higher positions. The women have just got their wages raised, but they have not yet the same wages for the same work.

The **Teachers in the Elementary Schools**, where the majority are women, have recently got their wages raised, but they are still lower than the wages of men.

Several women are engaged in the bank of Norway.

