

MONTHLY NEWS
of the
**Conservative Women's Reform
ASSOCIATION.**
NEW ISSUE.

President: THE COUNTESS OF SELBORNE.

Chairman of Executive Committee: LADY TRUSTRAM EVE.

Hon. Sec.:

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JANUARY, 1919.

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. . . . It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

Spoken by Abraham Lincoln on the occasion of the consecration of a portion of the battlefield of Gettysburg as a burial ground for the fallen.

**The Present Political Situation and the
Future Work of the Association.**

BY THE COUNTESS OF SELBORNE.

Though a triumph for the Coalition was expected, the majority is far greater than any of the prophets foretold. From a practical point of view it is too big, as these huge majorities are, as a rule, difficult to lead. They have a tendency to break up into their component parts. The great majority of the majority is, however, formed by members of the Conservative and Unionist parties. So we might even see the Coalition break up, after the problems of the war which have called it together have been, at least, provisionally settled, and a party majority still remaining sufficiently strong to carry on the Government.

The electoral position is unstable. A small proportion of the electorate voted in most constituencies. The probability is that a very large number of the abstainers were Liberals or Labour Party, who considered that the best interests of the country would be served by returning the present Coalition Government to make the peace, but who could not quite make up their minds to vote against their own party candidate.

With such a predominantly Conservative House of Commons, reforms are likely to be more restricted in their scope and of a more tentative character than some of our more eager members would desire. There are certain measures, however, to which a very large number of Conservatives have pledged themselves, and which we may therefore expect the new Parliament to deal with. One is the reform of the House of Lords, which will, I hope, be accompanied by a restoration of its effective veto. Since 1910 we have been living under a one-Chamber Government, modified only by the power of the second chamber to hold up a Bill for two years. This has proved a calamitous plan, and brought us within an ace of Civil War in Ireland. There is the Irish question itself, which will have to be dealt with. There is a Home Rule Bill, which satisfies nobody, on the

Statute Book. The Government have pledged themselves that Ulster shall not be forced under an Irish Government against her will, so an amending Act to the present one, which does include Ulster, is inevitable.

Then there is the Bill for constituting a Ministry of Health, and one for providing houses in this emergency for the people, both Bills of great interest to women.

This last one bristles with difficulties. The District Councils, who are the bodies to be entrusted with the provision of these cottages in rural districts, have no experience in such work. If it is done in a hurry, it will be extravagantly and ill-done; if it is not done quickly it will not meet the emergency. Meanwhile there is a great danger that the fact of the State undertaking the work, will prevent private building, which might otherwise be available.

Perhaps it may seem timid and mid-Victorian to many of my readers, but I confess I wish that private enterprise had been encouraged to deal with this necessity. However, the die seems to be cast that we are to make this experiment in Socialism. At any rate we shall gain experience, if we get nothing else. There is a further evil, which is that very extravagant hopes have been raised in people's minds by the speeches which have been made and the articles which have been written on this subject. It has been proposed to build houses which would cost at least 12/- to 14/- rent per week in the market, and let them for 5/-. I do not expect for a moment that many local authorities, if any, will do this. It would be a bad thing to do, as it would create a small class of privileged people who would live in superior subsidized dwellings, practically receiving from the public the worth of seven to nine shillings a week.

But the consequence of such talk will be that the people will be very much disappointed with the houses when they get them.

As regards the special changes which we, as women, desire to see made in the laws, it will depend upon our own action whether we obtain them or not. Equal guardianship of children,

equal divorce laws, the abolition of the prohibition to enter the legal professions, or the higher ranks of the Civil Service. These and other desirable changes in the law we can obtain if we choose to work for them. But nobody will press them upon us, if we show no desire for them! Therefore it seems to me there is still necessary and important work for an organization like the Conservative Women's Reform Association.

OUR WORK.

Since the publication of *Monthly News*, as the organ of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association ceased in April, 1918, the Executive Committee, of the new Association has been engaged in the re-organization of the work on the basis of the "Aims and Objects" which we publish below.

The members of the new Executive are:—

Chairman: Lady Trustram Eve, Winifred, Countess of Arran, The Lady Betty Balfour, *Miss Balfour, Mrs. John P. Boyd-Carpenter, Mrs. Currie, *Miss Mabel Fletcher, *Miss Gilstrap, †Miss Eveline Mitford, Mrs. Mylne, *Mrs. Rowland Prothero, Miss Minna Rathbone, Mrs. Scoresby Routledge, M.A., The Lady Edward Spencer Churchill, *Mrs. Hubert Walter, Mrs. Fabian Ware (*Hon. Treasurer*).

**Co-opted Members.* †*Ex-officio Members.*

Sub-Committees.

The Finance Committee was appointed immediately after the election of the Executive, and in the early Autumn an Education and Literature Committee was formed, which lost no time in formulating a programme of work. This included a series of lectures held on October 18th and 25th and November 1st, followed by a course of study lectures.

The speakers in the first series were: Dr. Dickinson Berry on the "Slav races in relation to Italy and Austria"; Major J. W. Hills, M.P., on "Problems of Labour," and Mr. W. K. Hichens, C.M.G., on the "Economic Future of the Woman Worker."

The subject of the study course was the "History and Aspects of Socialism." The Committee were fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr. Alfred Milnes, M.A. for this course; and those members who attended were so deeply interested in the lectures, that in response to several requests we are publishing next month a short résumé of them. The lecturer compiled for us a list of books suitable for the study of the subject, a copy of which may be had on application to the Secretary.

A meeting was held, under the auspices of the Association, in Regents Park Road, by kind permission of Mrs. Vernon Wills and Miss Hallows, at which Lady Trustram Eve, Chairman of the Executive Committee, gave an address on the "Responsibilities of the new Women Voters."

Forthcoming Meetings.

The Committee has arranged a most interesting series of lectures for the early spring, the first of which on "Prisoners of War," with Captain C. C. Craig—himself a prisoner in German hands for four years—as speaker, will have taken

place by the date of publication of this paper.

On Friday, January 24th, Sir Francis Piggott, M.A., LL.M., has kindly consented to lecture on a subject of engrossing interest at the present time—the "Freedom of the Seas." On February 3rd Miss Matheson will speak on the general question of "Housing," and on February 14th Lady Barrett on the proposed "Ministry of Health." The lectures will be held at Lady St. Helier's house, 52, Portland Place, W. Tickets: Single lecture, 2/6; series, 6/-. Lady Barrett, as Dr. Florence Willey, before her marriage, spoke for us on several occasions.

The Committee propose to follow this series by a study course on the "Housing" question, further particulars of which will be given in our February issue.

Electors in England and Wales.

OVER ONE-THIRD WOMEN.

The figures have been published of the number of Parliamentary electors on the First Register under the Representation of the People Act for constituencies in England and Wales. There are in all 17,225,990 electors of both sexes in England and Wales, of whom 6,778,530 are women. The number of women electors for the Parliamentary counties of Derby and Wiltshire has not yet been ascertained.—*Times*, December 24th, 1918.

The *Times* commented on the great proportion of women voters who went to the poll on Dec. 14th.

Fate of the Women Candidates.

Name.	Constituency.	Result.
Mrs. Despard (Lab.) ...	Battersea (N.)	Defeated by 5597
Miss E. Phipps (Ind.)	Chelsea	Defeated by 6740
Mrs. Corbett Ashby (L.)	Ladywood (Birmingham)	Defeated by 7853
Mrs. Pethick Lawrence (Lab.) ...	Rusholme (Manchester)	Defeated by 9462
Miss A. V. Garland ...	Portsmouth (S.)	Defeated by 11559
Mrs. Dacre Fox (Ind.)	Richmond	Defeated by 4749
Miss C. Pankhurst (Ind.)	Smethwick	Defeated by 775
Mrs. J. McEwan (L.) ...	Enfield	Defeated by 6303
Mrs. O. Strachey (Ind.)	Brentford	Defeated by 7814
Mrs. How Martyn (Ind.)	Hendon	Defeated by 12364
Miss Violet Markham (L.)	Mansfield	Defeated by 4957
Miss Mary McArthur (Lab.)	Stourbridge	Defeated by 1333
Mrs. Mackenzie (Lab.)	University of Wales	Defeated by 563
Miss E. Murray (Ind.)	Bridgeton (Glasgow)	Defeated by 9896
Miss W. Carney (Sinn Fein)	Victoria (Belfast)	Defeated by 8916
Mme. Markievicz (Sinn Fein)	St. Patricks (Dublin)	*Elected by 4083

We hope that by the next General Election this Association will have the pleasure of supporting a woman candidate for Parliament who represents the views of Progressive Conservatism.

Our New Aims and Objects.

1. To unite those who hold Conservative principles and desire the progress of the Nation and the Empire on Constitutional lines.

2. To consider all policy from the Imperial and International standpoint as well as from the Insular and Local.

3. To encourage intelligent understanding between all sections of society in the belief that the welfare of every part of the nation is necessary to the whole.

4. To promote well-considered measures of reform, especially those dealing with domestic and economic subjects.

5. To strengthen a sense of individual responsibility, and to oppose excessive State interference and control.

6. To develop a fuller interest in Local Government as opposed to a Central Bureaucracy, holding that Local Government is best adapted to many of the needs of this nation and affords valuable training in Citizenship.

7. To press for an adequate proportion of women on public bodies and in civil services.

The Association proposes to further these objects by meetings, provision of speakers, distribution of literature, and by the establishment of a Club with Study Centres.

Covering Letter.

Under the revised title of the Conservative Women's Reform Association it is intended to carry into other spheres the interests and activities of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association. All patriotic women, whether or not they formerly desired a vote, wish to be of service to their country; the majority feel that changes in both international and social conditions are necessary and urgent; but those with Conservative principles also realize that alteration to achieve its end must be based on knowledge of the past, be well-considered and just to all concerned. It is these thoughtful women whom the Association aims at uniting for common action; it will be disastrous if all new developments are left in the hands of extremists. There are difficult times ahead which will need all our work, wisdom and tact; and it is obvious that results can be achieved by an Association which could not be attained by individuals.

The Association is organized on an independent Conservative basis: it will not be bound by the official policy, but as a body with Conservative sympathies it hopes to make its influence felt with the leaders of the Party.

It wishes also, wherever possible, to assist in raising measures above the sphere of factious politics, in the same way as the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association secured that the Suffrage question remained a non-party one by bringing influence to bear on the Conservative side of Parliament.

It is proposed in the first instance to work for the opening to women of the legal and other professions, and to secure their equality before the

law, more especially with regard to the guardianship of children; it is also intended to give attention to such problems as the housing question and rate of wages for women.

To be strong enough to achieve its aims the new body must be large in numbers, representative of all classes, and with means at its disposal for propaganda. An appeal is therefore made to all women, who are in sympathy with its policy, to join the Association; it is hoped that where possible they will give active help in forming local branches or in other ways, but that those who have no time for additional work will not be deterred from becoming members and thus affording the movement that practical sympathy, without which it cannot prosper.

Members are earnestly begged to apply to the Office for copies of the "Aims" and letter to send to friends.

Adoption of Sir Ernest Pollock as Coalition Candidate for Leamington.

Our readers will be interested to learn that Miss Hulbert, the Hon. Secretary of the Leamington Branch of the Association, was invited by the Men's Conservative Association in that town to support the adoption of Sir Ernest Pollock, K.C., as Coalition candidate. She accepted the invitation, and was thus the first woman in the constituency to speak in support of the adoption of a candidate.

France.

Various feminine societies have united in signing a petition to Parliament for the vote. Many cases of women's organizing powers during the war are quoted in proof of feminine capability in public affairs. Five women are to sit on the municipal council at Metz, and in the invaded districts wherever women have taken public office in place of men they have shown themselves capable.

Women's Suffrage In Holland.

The Constitution of Holland as revised on December 17th, 1918, gives women eligibility for membership to Parliament without giving them the vote; it assigns to the Electoral Law the task of conferring the power to the vote upon them. Since July there has been one woman M.P., and on September 28th, immediately after the opening of the States-General, Mr. Marchant, a Radical member, introduced a bill which extends the suffrage as already possessed by men to all Dutch women equally. The text is as simple as possible: it proposes to drop the word "male" from the qualifications of electors. The women are rejoicing at these proposals, and Englishwomen will rejoice with them. What encourages their hopes is the fact that, judging from the press, even the Conservative parties are not averse to the measure. The First Chamber (Senate) is a reactionary body, and it is therefore to be hoped that the Bill will not be discussed before this Chamber is renewed next July.

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