

The War Paper for Women

VOTES FOR WOMEN

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

VOL. VIII. (Third Series), No. 373.

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1915.

Price 1d. Weekly (Post Free)
11d.

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In 1864 Prussia wantonly attacked Denmark and defeated it by force of arms. While Prussia is again at war (for the third time since that date), Denmark has won, over all countries which refuse citizenship to their women, a victory in the great war of human freedom, by passing a bill which, though not yet fully ratified, is to enfranchise Danish women.

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OBJECT:—To secure a Government measure to give women the Vote on equal terms with men.

- The United Suffragists— (1) Believe that men and women can usefully cooperate on equal terms in one organisation for the enfranchisement of women. (2) Regard Woman Suffrage as the foremost political issue of the day, and will work without considering the interests of any political party. (3) Recognise various forms of suffrage activity as of value, and are ready to contribute any kind of service according to their capacity and conviction.

There is no fixed subscription or entrance fee, but members are relied upon to support the Society to the best of their ability.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1915.

VOTES FOR ALL SOLDIERS

A week or two ago, when women were publicly called upon to register for War Service, we congratulated the country, and especially our Liberal Government, on having discovered women at last. Unhappily, it now appears that, so far as the Government is concerned, our congratulations were premature. We yielded to the temptation of giving people greater credit than they deserve. That shows a generous disposition, and sometimes when one attributes too high a credit to a man, he rises to the occasion and tries to deserve it. But among our Cabinet Ministers we find no such signs of grace. The two leading members of the Cabinet—the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer—have lately been making long and eloquent speeches upon a matter with which women are very closely concerned, and yet in neither speech is there a single sign that either of these Ministers has reached the discovery of women yet.

We refer to the speeches of Mr. Asquith at Newcastle, and of Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons, both upon the supply of "munitions." Both speakers said a great deal, and quite justly, about the high national service now performed by the men who toil at the production of all necessities of war. Mr. Asquith was especially eloquent and insistent upon this point. He said he had come to Newcastle, the chief centre of armament manufacture, because:—

"In no other area in the British Empire—not even in Flanders or in France—are our national fortunes, our success in the greatest struggle in which we have ever been engaged, more intimately bound up with the efforts and energies, with the patriotism and the self-devotion of those who, like you, are specially called by the supreme exigencies of the time and by your own capacities and opportunities to render your best service to the State."

A little further on, after maintaining that "our honour, our security, our most glorious traditions, our best hopes, our most cherished ideals were put in issue" by this war, he further emphasised the value of the workman's service, placing it on a level with active service at the front, in the following words:—

"The miner, the shipbuilder, the engineer, the iron and textile worker, the railwayman, the docker—everyone who contributes, whether by brain or by muscle, to maintaining and increasing the supply of munitions upon which the efficiency of the fighting forces depends is, in as true a sense as any of our gallant sailors and soldiers, a patriot and a combatant."

With those words we entirely agree. Their truth is, indeed, obvious, for in war time, not only ammunition, but food, clothing, transport, and all manner of other manufactures are essential, and the country might just as well try to fight without soldiers as without the work-people who turn these various equipments out. The truth is obvious, and yet, like Mr. Asquith, we wish to insist upon it. We insist upon it

even more than Mr. Asquith, because he, as usual, forgot to take into account half the population of the kingdom. The Manchester Guardian called his speech "a remarkable example of compression." It was, indeed, so compressed that the very thought of women was pressed out of it. His descriptions were of men, his suggestions as to housing and transference were for men, his appeal was to men alone. Exactly the same is true of Mr. Lloyd George's speech of the same subject in the House of Commons. Except that Mr. George was rather more explicit, the purport of that speech was the same, the praise of the men workers was the same, the proposals were the same, and from end to end there was the same entire absence of any reference to the women who are doing equally national service. About women's service, from beginning to end, Mr. George uttered not one solitary word. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Chancellor of the Exchequer has yet advanced to the discovery of women.

Yet, outside the House of Commons, where women are unrepresented, and therefore unheard, everyone knows that women are toiling at this national service in all manner of employments, and too often on terribly unequal terms. At Newcastle Mr. Asquith called sixty-seven to sixty-nine hours' work a week a very high average for a man, and he praised the men for doing it. What does he say to the eighty-four hours a week that women work in armament factories? The truth about it was stated at the recent Board of Trade Conference over which Mr. Runciman presided. All this armament work is reported to be time work, and the Government gives no guarantee or promise of any kind that women shall be paid for time work at the same rate as men. In all Government contract work the Factory Acts are now suspended, and what does Mr. Asquith say to the cases at Leeds which we mentioned last week? In one case a girl under sixteen had been kept at work twenty-five hours at a stretch, and had "met with an accident." In another case a woman had been kept at work twenty-nine hours. This was too much even for the Home Office, which had granted suspension of the Factory Acts; and yet, as a result of its complaint, we read that the magistrate observed, "No one would be any the worse for the extra work," and dismissed the summons. When such abominations happen, when women are thus bled to death at lower wages than men and flung aside because their places can at once be filled, we are not only astonished that the chief Ministers of our country should ignore their existence, we are reduced to shame that Members of Parliament, to whom the word "honourable" is thought to be peculiarly appropriate, should remain indifferent and unmoved, while they themselves reduce their own hours of work to half and continue to draw their pay of £8 a week without reduction at all.

Within the last fortnight, in answer to questions from Mr. King and Mr. Samuel Samuel, both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have informed the House of Commons that the question of securing or extending the franchise to all soldiers and sailors during active service, or on their return from it, is receiving the Government's careful consideration. We agree that the question deserves all the consideration the Government can give. We only call upon Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George to be reasonable and extend their consideration one step further. They have both told us that men who are maintaining the supply of the requisites upon which the efficiency of our fighting forces depends are patriots and combatants as truly as our gallant soldiers and sailors. Let them open their eyes to discover that women, who maintain the supply both of requisites and of the very men who use them, are also patriots and combatants in as true a sense. And having at last made that discovery, let them take into their most careful consideration the enfranchisement of this splendid order of national servants equally with the rest.

WOMEN AS "DOCILE LABOUR"

By Ruth Cavendish Bentinck

Just now, when the Government is appealing to women workers, and when those who have studied industrial questions are protesting against blackleg labour, it is well to consider what position has hitherto been assigned to women in the wage-earning world. The subject is an all-embracing one, but it is instructive to look at one aspect of it, in any particular trade or process.

Take, for instance, Mr. Hunter's handbook on "Wool," in the "Common Commodities of Commerce" series. Wool not only forms the chief clothing of every human being living outside the tropics, but it is also required for a vast quantity of material needed for other purposes. England owes quite as much to wool as to cotton, yet it is an industry employing far more women than men—so much so, that whereas manufacturers used to erect their mills on streams which furnished them with water for power, and for scouring and dyeing, they now look for relays of labour, and are "tempted towards new colliery districts, where men are well employed and local work for women is absent."

And what is the position of these women who are so necessary to the wool and worsted industries? The first thing that strikes one on reading this handbook is that women are looked upon as though they were merely some sort of cheap lubricant necessary to the keeping of machinery in motion. When enumerating the many advantages which the British manufacturer commands, we are told one of the most important is the "apt and docile labour, the thoroughly sensible and conscientious workmanship" which is at his disposal; and "stress is laid on the cheapness of British labour, for it is clear that woollen and worsted work is less remunerative to the operative than work in cotton factories." Now the expression "apt and docile" is invariably applied to those forms of labour employing many women, nor are the reasons for this "docility" and "cheap labour" difficult to discover—indeed, Mr. Hunter furnishes us with them, for he says, "Trade Unionism does not find its most congenial soil among young women who, with children, form a large part of the operative class." This strikes us as regrettable when we read further on that:

Weaving employs many women and few men. Trial patterns on hand looms, the most expensive worsteds and woollens, are woven by men, but two out of three of all the persons in and about the weaving shed are women. Female labour is cheaper than male, although less resourceful, and cheapness and its concomitant abundance explain the presence of women in the weaving shed.

I can only remark that Trade Unions have found means of dealing with the "cheapness and concomitant abundance" of men in their trades; and as for women being "less resourceful," one would like to enquire whether women, however intelligent, would be allowed the privilege of working on trial patterns at the same rate of wages as men. But when one is told that—"For men worsted spinning provides work chiefly as over-lookers who have the oversight of the work done, and are responsible," and that men do "the work which puts most tax on the intelligence," and "officer the industry," it takes little imagination to realise that women would never be permitted to possess themselves of these delectable appointments, but that all they can ever aspire to is "the routine work . . . calling rather for patience and docility than initiative." For them only:

The monotony of the task of tending the machine, replenishing the weft, watching the pattern, restarting when anything is amiss and the loom bangs off . . . the work is not beyond the strength of women, and not incompatible with good health and good looks. [This essentially male solicitude for our appearance is the only indication that the author does admit women have at least bodies, though, of course, not minds!] The woman weaver is less boisterous and coarse than some of the operatives of thirty years ago.

And what is paid for this apt docility, this monotony and the routine work that is not

beyond our strength and does not detract from our natural refinement? From the figures, as furnished, it is impossible to say more than that, the average earnings per head of the workers being somewhere about £40 a year (inclusive of the male operatives, some of whom get 30s. a week and more), the wages of the women are probably not very much better than those of the girls and boys, who, when employed full time, receive 9s. 3d. a week for girls, and 10s. 2d. a week for boys—presumably on the mischievous assumption that a girl should eat less and be less warmly or cleanly clad than her brother, for we are not told that their work is of a different nature. An adult woman's work is apparently priced at its highest somewhere between 11s. 3d. and 13s. 10d. a week, according to the locality, and I make bold to say that no one has any right to expect "resourcefulness" and "initiative" for such a wage. There are people who would expect the Archangel Gabriel to be their cook, valet, groom, gardener, barber, and boots for no more than his keep—and then grudge him that, saying food must necessarily be injurious to angels. Initiative, must, and should, be paid for. The fact is, we don't want it; all we ask for is mere industrious routine work.

It would indeed be a mistake to spoil docile labour by encouraging potential brains in the next generation! We therefore wisely continue

to send children into the mills under the half-time rules; that is to say that—

If, by the age of twelve, they are able to pass severe educational tests, they are allowed to work in the mills on alternate mornings and afternoons, and attend school the rest of the day.

"Passing severe educational tests at the age of twelve" is a sentence as worthy of pre-Factory Act days as the following:—

From the standpoint of industrial perfection the earlier the child begins to practise the suppleness and deftness necessary in making a neat job of piecing broken yarn the better. A girl makes a better spinner for life by beginning at the age of eight than by beginning at nine, and better by beginning at nine, ten, or eleven than at the age of twelve.

And so we tread the old vicious circle. We place every hindrance in the way of the little over-worked, under-fed girl-child, in order to prevent her acquiring the skill and training necessary for those who would earn good wages; and we then say women cannot command good wages, not having the necessary training and skill. Similarly, we talk instinctively of "women and children," because we admit in our hearts that the welfare of children is women's business, and then we deny women any power to make or alter laws governing either the education or the work of the children. Then, having done all these stupid things, we say Man is a Reasoning Being!

THE VOTE NOW!

By the Rev. J. M. Maillard

The fact that it is necessary to keep urging the Government at this time to grant to women fair terms, in regard to employment on specifically public works, shows plainly the normal danger which besets women-folk in our country at all times. In demanding the vote we merely ask that women shall have power to checkmate underpayment, overwork, and bad conditions. This is quite obvious to those who have the subtle power of discerning the obvious. But what is less obvious, though nevertheless true, is the further demand which lies behind the vote, that women shall escape enforced moral and physical evils which are induced by political, social, and industrial inequality and injustice.

It is quite clear that women, because they are women, are open to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, and by the Government itself as far as the Government is gulled and twisted by such gentlemen. But again the moral issue is not so simple. The fact that women have responded in such numbers to the overtures of immorality amongst the soldier recruits of our country is due to the social fact that their minds have been made vacuous and their moral sense paralysed by the soul-destroying conditions of life.

The vote is immediately necessary as a protection because the vote is the authoritative voice of the community, and if there are any people in the community without an authoritative voice, those same people are unprotected; the unprotected are exploited. The Government of this country is the one authoritative body, and it only serves the circle of which it is the centre. The existing circle is not co-extensive with the community. Happy are they who come within the circle, for if the circle is exploited and has the intelligence to discover it (the circle does not always discover it, being entirely male), the circle is able, like the dungeons of old, to close in upon the authoritative body and produce political delirium tremens.

Nothing is free from the possibility of exploitation and injustice which is not in the circle. Women are not in the circle, and they are not only open to exploitation, but they are outside the range of redress when exploited. This is more or less true of all European com-

munities, and therefore there is a danger between the communities as there is within. Balance of power between the communities can never effect constant peace until there is a true balance of power internally. Being so constituted, the Governments of Europe are highly combustible, and when the commercial fuse of speculation and wild competition which links up the nations in combative rivalry is ignited, there is bound to be a conflagration. Looking at the composition of modern Powers with their undemocratic and partially representative houses of legislation and executive, it seemed inevitable that disaster should come.

And the most glaring cause of Governmental disease is the plague of male flies. Kill that fly!

Women must have the vote, not only because they are without what the vote signifies in modern civilisation, but also because women are an integral part of the community, and nothing but disaster can grow up in the nation when the genus "man," a four-legged and double-headed partnership, tries to carry on the world on one pair of legs and an odd head.

And we must have the vote now. Some Suffrage Societies are not working for the vote at present. They are organised for war service, and are doing an immense amount of practical good in commonsense ways for the country. But they will surely expect the prize later. They trust the Government. So do we, but not out of our sight. We want the vote now.

We often hear women spoken of as the nation builders. If the nation is to be free, strong, and happy, your nation builders must be such as well, for the nation, when built, is of the same living substance as the builders. What is found in the builders and their conditions is reproduced in what is built as faithfully as a photograph gives you a likeness of an object. If the nation builders are not free, if they have no national status, if they are struggling inch by inch through legalised oppression, woe betide your nation. Its perfection will be the maturity of a freak. Its best will be the worst at the best. Our nation is built up on a restricted humanity. It is unworthy of what we might be. Now is the day of salvation, and now is the day of the vote.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS.

Single insertion, 24 words or less, 1s. 6d., 1d. per word for every additional word (four insertions for the price of three).

All advertisements must be prepaid. To ensure insertion in our next issue, all advertisements must be received not later than Tuesday morning. Address, the Advertisement Manager, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 4-7, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, E.C.

NEXT SUNDAY'S SERVICES

ST. MARY - AT - HILL. - Church of Army Church, Eastcheap. Sundays, 9 and 6, views, orchestra, band. Prebendary Carlile.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

DR. BARBARA TCHAYKOVSKY will speak at the Suffrage Club, 3, York Street, St. James, on War Babies and their Mothers, on Tuesday, May 4, 8 p.m. Admission free. Collection in aid of the International Suffrage Shop.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE CELEBRATION. - The Women's Freedom League announce a United Meeting at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, May 12, at 8 p.m. Speakers: Miss Nina Boyle, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Mrs. Strickland, and others. Chairman: Miss Anna Munro. Admission free. Collection.

FORWARD CYMRIC SUFFRAGE UNION will hold a meeting in Hyde Park (near the Marble Arch) on Sunday next at 3. "The Red Dragon leads the way!" "Cymru am byth!"

FORWARD CYMRIC SUFFRAGE UNION will be represented at the Women's Exhibition, Caxton Hall, on May 10, 11, 12, 3 to 10 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Davies, 8.30 p.m. on 10th; Miss Fedden, 5 p.m. on 12th. Tickets: Price 1s.; after 7 p.m., 6d.; seasons, 2s. 6d.; can be obtained from Hon. Secretary, 69, Wimpole Street, W.

FORWARD CYMRIC SUFFRAGE UNION will take part in the Demonstration and have a platform in Victoria Park on Sunday, May 23. Members can join the procession at East India Dock Gates at 3.45, and march under the Red Dragon banner. Meeting in park, 5 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Sorensen, Mrs. Duval, Mr. David Roberts. Chair: Mrs. Davies. Rally, Welsh!

MEMORIAL HALL, Manchester, Monday, May 17, at 7.30 p.m., Recital of Pianoforte Duets and Solos by Hope Squire and Frank Merrick. Tickets, 5s. (reserved), 2s. 6d., and 1s., from Messrs. Forsyth Bros., 126, Deansgate; and at the door.

THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE holds public meetings at the Suffrage Club, 3, York Street, Jermyn Street, Piccadilly, each Wednesday afternoon at 3.30. Speakers: May 5, Mrs. Nevinson, L.L.A., on "Women and Brute Force"; Mrs. Tanner. Chair: Mrs. E. M. M. Clark. Admission free.

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YOUNG LADY wishes to take place of man who has enlisted as Groom. Would take entire charge of horses; good rider (astride) and driver. Willing to help in garden.—Box 104, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 4-7, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street.

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