

9/31/58a

When Auntie Gladys was in prison

VOTES FOR WOMEN.

The Women's Social and Political Union.

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August 19th 1912

Dear Madam

The Editor of 'Votes for Women' has handed me your letter, as I am at present acting as prisoners' Secretary for the Union. I cannot tell you how very deeply I sympathize with you in your distress about your sister. We all feel it very much too, and her wonderful courage and her spirit of self sacrifice have made a great impression, even on those who do not agree with our Cause or even our methods.

It must be very painful for you not to have any news. The Editor is sending you the numbers of 'Votes for Women' which have the full report of the trial. Many people are now writing to the papers and exclaiming at the monstrous severity of the sentences, and I do not believe they will be allowed to stand. You will see from the report of the trial that the judge in giving sentence said that if the militancy were to cease, (or words to that effect,) the sentences would be reconsidered. In other words, your sister and her comrade were punished for the possible misdeeds of others, and as a sort of

warning, and deterrent. It hardly seems it possible that it should be legal to punish people for what might have happened. The actual damage committed was very small, and I am collecting other sentences for incendiarism, both where damage was great and small and comparing them with those passed on our women. I have before me an account of a man in Liverpool, within the last few days, who was angry with his wife, because a licence was granted her for a public house, and the justices would not grant him a licence (presumably on account of his drinking habits). He soaked the beds in the house with paraffin and set fire to them. £5's worth of damage was done and the man was sent to prison for six weeks, with hard labour.

As to the prospects of remission of sentence, I think we may be very hopeful. We are doing all we can. At present there seems to be every hope that the Lord Lieutenant will give your sister the privileges of a political offender. She is not supposed to be able to receive letters, but all prisoners have occasional letters, so I should advise you to write to her (c/o the Governor, Mountjoy Prison Dublin). All letters are read by the authorities, and if any comment is made on prison treatment, or anything is said that they do not think the prisoner should hear, the letter is kept back. Therefore you had better be very guarded in what you say.

I am asking everyone I can to write to the Lord Lieutenant on her behalf. Mr Best, the chief of the staff, at Selfridge's has done so at my request, to speak for the very high character she bore, and to plead for her on that account. I hope Mr Selfridge may be induced to write. Hei

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His only objection to doing so is that he is an American subject, and that it might seem interference on his part. He is otherwise quite sympathetic, and may be induced to change his mind about this. The employes at Selfridge's are getting up a petition to the Lord Lieutenant, and some young business women are agitating among the 'Shop Assistants' Union' to get resolutions passed condemning the harsh sentence. Was not your sister in some business firm in Canada? Or was it in America? If it was in your neighbourhood could you not get her employer to write and testify to her high character? I feel sure that will impress those in authority more than anything, to think that women of her type feel that only by doing desperate deeds will the Government be made to listen to our grievances.

In writing to the Lord Lieutenant he should be addressed:

To the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland

Miceregal Lodge

Dublin

The letter should commence 'My Lord' as he is an Earl. Excuse my mentioning these details, but I know any one who writes would wish to use the correct forms. Any private person who writes would do good. The more letters that go on the subject the better. I enclose a few points that might be used in writing.

We have no definite news from the prison, but we believe the prisoners have adopted the hunger strike, as a telegram has just been received saying that Mrs Baines (the one who was given seven months) has been released, very ill. This gives great hopes, I think. If I receive any more news I shall at once inform you.

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Believe me

very truly yours

Winifred Mayo

Points for a letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland

1. Plead that this was the prisoner's first offence, and that not only was her previous character irreproachable, but that she was a woman particularly respected by all who knew her.
2. Point out that the actual damage she did was very small indeed, and that the judge, in giving sentence, ~~remarked~~ that he gave the sentence as 'a deterrent to others', and not apparently as a judgment for the offence itself.
3. Note that however we may deprecate her action, and condemn such a crime as arson, that the remarkable courage and the spirit of self sacrifice of the prisoner, who believed (however mistakenly) that her action would bring about freedom for other women, and better their condition, place her in a different category from an ordinary criminal, and that she can in no way be considered *as such*.
4. That taking all these points into consideration, you respectfully beg the Lord Lieutenant to consider whether a remission of such a terrible sentence may not be granted, and in any case the treatment of a political offender be granted to Gladys Evans.