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# National Society for Women's Suffrage.

## OCCASIONAL PAPER,

Issued by the Central Committee, 10, Great College Street,  
Westminster.

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## NOTES.

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WITH the opening of a new Session of Parliament, the Executive of the Central Committee desire to place before their members, and the many friends who have helped their work during the past months, some notes as to the prospects and progress of the Women's Suffrage movement.

THERE has never been a time of greater activity in the history of that movement. The vital political questions which have excited the public mind, the debates on the share which should be accorded to women in the duties and rights of the Parish Councils to be formed under the new Local Government Act, the anticipation of a Registration Bill which will re-open various electoral questions, all have helped to promote this activity, which has found a mode of combined expression in the Appeal from women to Members of the House of Commons, now being signed all over the kingdom.

THE expectation that the Registration Bill will be one of the foremost measures introduced by the Government in the Session of 1894, gives the Parliamentary friends of the movement the prospect of being able to introduce a motion for Women's Suffrage as an amendment to that measure.

THE difficulty of securing time in Parliament for the passage of any measure introduced by a private member has increased enormously in recent years. In the Session of 1893 no fewer than 307 Bills were introduced by private members. Of these only 39 got beyond the stage of Second Reading, and only 22 reached the final stage of the Royal Assent.

THE opportunity, therefore, of raising the question on a Government measure is of the utmost value, and the friends of the movement should watch the progress of the Registration Bill, so that when the opportunity arrives they may urge their Members to give their support to such amendments as our Parliamentary friends decide to bring forward.

The Central Committee have forwarded a request to Viscount Wolmer, M.P., that he will repeat the notice for an instruction, which he gave last year on the Registration Bill going into Committee.

THE Local Government Act, which received the Royal Assent on March 5th, will introduce some fresh considerations in any future measure dealing with the Parliamentary franchise for women, if the precedent of local franchises is adhered to for the Parliamentary franchise, as was done in the Bill introduced by Sir Albert Rollit in 1892. Notice of the clauses affecting women will be found at page 7.

THE Committee note with pleasure that by the enterprise of an esteemed worker in the women's

suffrage cause, a monthly paper, entitled *Women's Suffrage News*, has been started, "in the hope that it may prove a bond of union between all true workers in the cause of women's enfranchisement." The first number appeared on 25th January, and will be issued on the 25th of each month; price one halfpenny. Communications should be addressed to the Editor, at Messrs. Bale, 106, Great Titchfield Street, W.

THE following members have been added to the General Committee of this Society since the publication of the last Annual Report:—

Mrs. BRIDGES.	Miss STAPLETON (Tunbridge Wells).
Miss CONSTANCE ELDER.	The Lady FRANCES TURNER.
Mrs. HARLE (Falfield).	Mrs. EDWARD WALKER (Leeds).
Hon. Mrs. ARTHUR LYTTTELTON.	Miss C. E. WHITE (Charleville).
Lady NOTTAGE.	Viscount WOLMER, M.P.
Mrs. ARTHUR PATTON.	The Lady MAUDE WOLMER.
Mrs. PENDER (Thornby Hall).	

THE extension of the franchise to women in New Zealand has brought theory to the test of experience in one portion of the British Empire. The Electoral Act, which provides that "person includes woman," received the Royal Assent on September 19th, 1893, and a General Election took place on November 28th.

The accounts which have reached this country so far have been somewhat meagre, and for the most part somewhat biassed, either for or against; but taking all into consideration, and weighing one against

another, three things seem clear: (1) That women voted in large numbers. We hear on good authority that they comprised two-fifths of the number of those who recorded their votes. It would be interesting to know if the women in the county districts, for whom last year vote by post was proposed, comprised a fair proportion of these. (2) That confidence in the personality of the candidate usually outweighed allegiance to party—which accords with the expectations of most of those who are working for the suffrage in this country. (3) That notwithstanding considerable eagerness and excitement occasioned by the new experience, the elections were conducted in a most orderly and peaceful fashion.

#### WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE APPEAL.

THE Women's Suffrage Appeal extends steadily; new workers continue to arrive; fresh requests for books and literature, and applications for speakers, are continually received at the various Women's Suffrage offices. The Special Appeal Committee are therefore to be congratulated on having seen their way to extend the time for the collection of signatures to March 31st.

All who are at work are earnestly requested to send in all the signatures they can, to the Secretary of the Special Appeal Committee, 47, Victoria Street, S.W., or to the Secretary of whichever Women's Suffrage Society they may be in communication with, not later than March 31st.

### THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT.

#### CLAUSES AFFECTING WOMEN.

Clause 3 (2).—No person shall be disqualified by *sex or marriage* for being elected or being a member of a parish council.

Clause 20 (2).—No person shall be *disqualified by sex or marriage* for being elected or being a guardian.

The above clauses effectually set at rest the uncertainty which has hitherto attended the election of married women as guardians, and any woman is now eligible as a parish councillor or as a guardian, who is on the Local Government Register of Electors, and has resided during the whole of the twelve months preceding in the parish or within three miles thereof.

After November 8th, when the first elections under the Act will take place, not only all the duties now performed by guardians will be liable to devolve on women, but also all the multifarious duties of the national housekeeping, so to say—all (other than ecclesiastical) performed by vestries and churchwardens and sanitary authorities—care of street paving and lighting, of wash houses, public libraries, recreation grounds, allotments, water-courses, drains, public ways, &c.

Clause 22.—The chairman of a district council, *unless a woman* or personally disqualified by any Act, shall be by virtue of his office justice of the peace for the county in which the district is situate.

Although several instances occur in history in which women have held the office of justice of the peace, it is not remarkable that the Legislature was unwilling to change existing precedents by a side issue. Accordingly Parliament has adhered to the modern precedent created by the service of women on the Poor Law Boards, but has declined to revert to ancient precedents in regard to the magisterial bench.

Clause 43.—For the purposes of this Act *a woman shall not be disqualified by marriage* for being on any local government register of electors, or for being an elector of any local authority, provided that a husband and wife shall not both be qualified in respect of the same property.

This clause was added in Committee of the House of Commons, by the President of the Local Government Board, the Hon. H. H. Fowler, in deference to an instruction, which was moved for by Mr. M'Laren, and carried on November 16th by a majority of 21, viz., 147 to 126.

This is the first statutory recognition of the electoral right of a married woman. At the same time it preserves the practice of one vote for the household by not allowing any double voting of husband and wife as joint occupiers.

#### THE NEW ZEALAND FRANCHISE.

THE passages in the Electoral Act of New Zealand, by which women have been admitted to the franchise in that colony, are as follows:—

The Act, which is entitled “An Act to amend and consolidate the Law relating to the Qualification and Registration of Electors, and the Conduct of Election of Members of the House of Representatives,” September 19th, 1893, provides in the interpretation clause that “person includes woman.”

Clause 6 (*qualification male and female*) enacts that—

“The Members of the House of Representatives shall be chosen in every electoral district appointed for that purpose by the votes of

the inhabitants of New Zealand, who shall possess within the district the qualifications defined by this Act, that is to say—

“(Freehold.) (1) Every person of the age of twenty-one years or upwards, having of his own right, and not as a trustee, a freehold estate in possession situated within any electoral district of the value of twenty-five pounds, whether subject to incumbrances or not, and of or to which he has been seised or entitled either at law or in equity for at least six months next before the registration of his vote, and is not registered in respect of a freehold or residential qualification in the same or any other district, is entitled (subject to the provision of this Act) to be registered as an elector, and to vote at an election of members for such district for the House of Representatives; or,

“(Residential.) (2) Every person of the age of twenty-one years or upwards, who has resided for one year in the colony and in the electoral district for which he claims to vote during the three months immediately preceding the registration of his vote, and is not registered in respect of a freehold or residential qualification for the same or any other district, is entitled (subject to the provisions of this Act) to be registered as an elector, and to vote at the election of members for each district for the House of Representatives.

“(No person to be registered in more than one district.) (3) No person shall be entitled to be registered on more than one electoral roll within the colony, whatever the number or nature of the qualifications he may possess, or wherever they may be.

“(Women not qualified for election.) Clause 9.—No woman, although duly registered as an elector, shall be capable of being nominated as a candidate, or of being elected a member of the House of Representatives, or of being appointed to the Legislative Council, and every nomination paper of a woman as a candidate shall be absolutely void and of no effect, and shall be rejected by the returning officer without question.”

Separate provision is made for the Maori vote in Part V. of the Act.

## RECENT MEETINGS.

*In January.*—Meetings in connection with the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee took place at ROCHDALE, on 24th, in the Parish Room, when Mrs. Wilson presided; an address was given by Mrs. Sheldon Amos. At GORTON, on 25th, in the Old Endowed School, Mr. H. P. Ilderton presiding, and addressed by Mrs. Sheldon Amos and the Hon. Mrs. A. Lyttelton.

On the 30th a meeting was held in the Vestry Hall, St. George's, BLOOMSBURY, kindly lent by the Rev. A. B. Boyd Carpenter, who took the chair. The meeting, which was crowded, was addressed by Mrs. Fawcett.

Drawing Room Meetings took place in LONDON, on 13th, by invitation of Mrs. John Hollond, at Upper Berkeley Place, Mr. Hollond in the chair, when Mrs. Fawcett, Rev. J. C. Ridgway and Mrs. Holah, were the speakers; also on 25th, at Wilton Place, by invitation of Mrs. Algernon Joy, Mr. Joy presiding, addressed by Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Westlake.

*In February.*—A very numerous attended meeting took place on 8th, by kind permission of Miss Holland, at Niddry Lodge, CAMPDEN HILL, Mr. Richard Shore presiding. The Rev. E. A. Abbott, D.D., Mrs. Fawcett and Miss Mary Gurney addressed the meeting; while an overflow meeting, in an adjoining room, was presided over by Mrs. Sterling, and addressed by Miss Vernon, Mrs. Mallet and Miss Blackburn.

At WANDSWORTH, a numerous audience met on 13th, by invitation of Mrs. Shillington, Spencer Park, to hear an address from Mrs. Fawcett; Mr. Shillington in the chair. At HAVERSTOCK HILL, on 16th, by invitation of Mrs. St. Osyth Eustace Smith, a similar meeting was addressed by Miss Louisa Bigg and Miss Blackburn, Mr. E. K. Blyth presiding. Mrs. Henry Lawrence arranged a gathering at Alenho, WIMBLEDON, on 19th, which was addressed by Mrs. Fawcett. Mrs. Fawcett also spoke, on 26th, at a meeting at LEYTONSTONE, arranged by the Rev. W. Manning, who presided; and, on 28th, at a meeting held at the Skinners' School for Girls, STAMFORD HILL, arranged by Miss Page.

*In March.*—An influential meeting took place on 7th at IPSWICH, in the Public Hall, presided over by Captain Pretzman, who was supported on the platform by Mr. R. L. Everett, M.P., Dr. Elliston, Miss Patteson, Mrs. W. C. Owen, Rev. Canon and Mrs. Bulstrade, &c. Mrs. Fawcett and Mr. McLaren, M.P., spoke to a resolution that the time had now arrived when the Parliamentary Franchise should be extended to duly qualified women, and pledging the meeting to support the Appeal from women to the House of Commons. This was supported by Mr. R. L. Everett, M.P., who spoke of the "gathering of such diverse elements on that one subject as striking testimony to the good sense of the English people. Every enfranchisement had been followed by good, and the inclusion of women in the franchise would be a lift up in the life of the country."

On the 9th, a meeting, to which teachers were specially invited, was kindly arranged by Miss Franks, at 13, York Place, Baker Street, when Mrs. Fawcett gave an address. Mr. Francis Storr took the chair.

On the 12th, by kind permission of Miss Mallet, a numerous attended meeting was held at Anlaby House, Highbury New Park, Mrs. John Hullah presiding. Mrs. Benjamin Clarke, Miss Griffin and Miss Blackburn being the speakers.

At all these meetings books for the Appeal were disseminated; as also at numerous successful drawing-room meetings which have taken place in connection with the Parliament Street Committee. Influential meetings in connection with local associations have taken place at Wolverhampton and Birkenhead; and a series of lectures has been given by Mrs. Stopes in North Wales. Several meetings have been held in Scotland, in connection with the Appeal Committee in Edinburgh.

While the above notes show the work carried on since the New Year, it should be remembered that over fifty public meetings and lectures, and many drawing-room meetings and conferences of workers had been held in connection with the various Women's Suffrage Committees and other women's organisations in the autumn and early winter.

As this goes to press important meetings are taking place in Cheltenham and Bath, and several others are in prospect after Easter.

*The text of the Appeal is as follows:—*

AN APPEAL FROM WOMEN

OF ALL PARTIES AND ALL CLASSES.

*To the Members of the House of Commons.*

GENTLEMEN,

Many of the women who sign this appeal differ in opinion on other political questions, but all are of one mind that the continued denial of the franchise to women while it is at the same time being gradually extended amongst men is at once unjust and inexpedient.

In our homes it fosters the impression that women's opinion on questions of public interest is of no value to the nation, while the fact of women having no votes lessens the representative character of the House of Commons.

In the factory and workshop it places power to restrict women's work in the hands of men who are working along side of women whom they too often treat as rivals rather than as fellow-workers.

In Parliament it prevents men from realizing how one-sided are many of the laws affecting women.

We therefore earnestly beg you to support any well-considered measure for the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women.

All who have not yet signed should apply **AT ONCE** for forms for Signature.

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New

SPEECHES

AT A

GREAT MEETING IN SUPPORT OF THE  
POLITICAL ENFRANCHISEMENT  
OF WOMEN

HELD AT

QUEEN'S HALL, LANGHAM PLACE  
LONDON

ON JUNE 29TH, 1899

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