

BRITISH WOMEN M.P.s.

BY

D. M. NORTHCROFT.



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PAMPHLET

THE WOMEN M.P.s PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE TERRACE
OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, JANUARY 21ST, 1924

Printed by PAGE & PRATT, LTD., 151 2 Gt. Saffron Hill, E.C.1; and Published by the
WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE, 144, High Holborn, W.C.1.

PRICE 4d.

923.

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Pres. A.M. Pierotti

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LADY ASTOR, M.P.

Constituency : SUTTON (PLYMOUTH). (16,114 Votes.) Politics : CONSERVATIVE.



VISCOUNTESS ASTOR, an American by birth, was the first woman to sit in the British House of Commons, being chosen to succeed her husband, then Mr. Waldorf Astor, on his succession to the Peerage. She has represented Plymouth (Sutton Division) in the Unionist interests since 1919.

The Women's Cause has always had a sympathetic adherent and staunch champion in Lady Astor. From the first she ranged herself on the side of the progressives, and has promoted a great deal of legislation on women's interests and needs. The Consultative Committee, which she founded soon after her election to Parliament, and which now consists of representatives of over sixty large women's organisations, for the monthly discussion of any women's or social question which is before Parliament at the time, or which ought to be brought up, has proved extremely valuable as a direct link between women and Parliament, whilst the informal At Homes which she frequently holds at her London home have served to bring M.P.s of all Parties, Members of the Government, and social and political workers, into friendly relationship with one another.

Herself the mother of six children, Lady Astor keeps a warm corner in her heart for the girls and boys of less sheltered surroundings. She was one of those mostly concerned in securing the setting-up of Juvenile Employment Centres, to keep young people who are out of work off the streets; and, when they were closed at the end of the summer of 1923, she led the successful agitation for getting them opened again during the winter. Both Lord and Lady Astor have shown their practical interest in education in Plymouth by the gift of a playing-field for organised games for elementary school children, and by scholarship grants. The chief Borstal institution for girls owes much to her help and interest, and it was largely owing to her fighting speeches that the Bill setting up Children's Courts in London, with women magistrates, got successfully through Parliament in an unaltered form.

Ever since her maiden speech on this subject, Lady Astor has made Temperance a live issue in Parliament. In 1922, she introduced a Bill for Local Option, whilst that popular measure known as "Lady Astor's Bill," framed to protect young people under 18 against the liquor traffic, passed the House of Commons with only ten votes against it. Her practical interest in Housing has recently been manifested by the establishment of a Housing Trust in Plymouth, which is generously financed by both Lord and Lady Astor.

The forces of progress in this country owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Lady Astor, not only for the immense services which she has rendered to the Women's Movement ever since she entered public life, but to her invariable fearlessness in persistently attacking low standards of morality, and lifting legislation on to a more ethical plane. The first woman to be returned to the House of Commons, single-handed she broke down age-long barriers of prejudice in an exclusively masculine assembly, and valiantly held her own in Parliament until the process of time brought other women Members to join her. Her rapier thrusts of repartee, and lightning flashes of wit, have enormously added to the gaiety of nations, not only in the House of Commons, but in the home and foreign Press.

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THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL, M.P.

Constituency : WEST PERTH AND KINROSS. (9,235 Votes.) Politics : CONSERVATIVE.



THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL is the first Scotswoman, and the first Dame of the British Empire, to win a seat in the House of Commons, where she represents a constituency of vast distances, West Perth and Kinross. Like Mrs. Wintringham, she gained a practical acquaintance with politics before entering upon a Parliamentary career, when she helped her husband, who, as Marquis of Tullibardine, represented the same constituency from 1910 to 1917. For many years she was President of the Perthshire Women's Unionist Association.

In addition to politics, her Grace has done a great deal of work in her county in connection with Red Cross and Education. Prior to the war, she was actively engaged in organising the V.A.D. movement, and, after 1914, she organised Red Cross work in Perthshire, and collected comforts for the Scottish Horse Brigade, and for other Highland regiments, at Lord Kitchener's request. From 1915-1916,

she organised entertainments for the troops in Egypt, and, after turning her home, Blair Castle, into a War Hospital, she acted as its War Commandant from 1917-1919. She has always been deeply interested in the subject of Education, and for many years was a member of the Perthshire Education Society. She acted as the Convener of its Religious and Moral Instruction Committee from 1919-1922, and of its Higher Education Committee from 1922-1924. She has also acted as Vice-President of the Association of Education Authorities in Scotland, and as Convener of its Committee on Child Welfare. Her educational activities, however, and much of her Red Cross work, have now had to be given up, owing to the pressure of her Parliamentary work.

Her Grace comes of a family distinguished by its academic attainments. Her father, Sir James Ramsay, of Banff, Perthshire, is the leading authority on Plantagenet, Lancastrian, and Yorkist England; her aunt Gilbert was the authority on Tacitus; and her half-sister was Senior Classic in 1887, marrying "Butler of Trinity." The Duchess herself has the degree of LL.D., and is an author of no mean repute. Some years ago, she edited a "Military History of Perthshire," in two volumes, which ran into nearly a thousand pages, the major portion of which she contributed, and containing over 900 illustrations.

The Duchess is a practised and effective speaker, and her admirable maiden speech in the House of Commons created a new departure in this line of oratory. While not ashamed to speak from a woman's point of view on various matters mentioned in the King's Speech—Juvenile Employment Centres, Separation and Maintenance Orders Bill, the promise of legislation to legitimate children born out of wedlock whose parents subsequently marry—her speech showed a general grasp of politics, and ability to take part in them. Though she was never a Feminist, her Grace holds very sound views upon the right relationship between the sexes. Her witty little thrust, at a complimentary luncheon in Edinburgh shortly after her return to Parliament, that forty years ago "the ideal wife was the one who said Amen to her husband whenever he opened his mouth," has been much quoted. She welcomes the modern ideal of comradeship, which reaches a far higher plane, and means to carry this out as harmoniously as possible in her relationship with men Members in the House of Commons.

MISS MARGARET BONDFIELD, M.P.

Constituency : NORTHAMPTON. (15,556 Votes.) Politics : LABOUR.



THROUGHOUT the civilised world, wherever women workers are struggling for emancipation and enlightenment, the name of Margaret Bondfield is respected and loved. Beginning her working life at 14 as a shop assistant apprentice, she early became filled with a passionate desire to alleviate the evils and tyranny of the "living in" system, and at 21 became an active member of the Shop Assistants' Union. Her campaigns against long hours in shops, and against sweating in the worst paid trades, were rewarded with a measure of success by the passing of the Shop Hours Act, and of the Trade Boards Act. For over twenty years she has been a leader in the Trade Union Movement at home and abroad. At one time she was the late Miss Mary MacArthur's right hand at the headquarters of the National Federation of Women Workers, and when the Federation became the Women's Section of the National Union of General Workers, in 1921, Miss Bondfield was appointed

Chief Woman Officer. As an organiser she is without equal among women trade unionists, and her fund of sound knowledge on the position and needs of the workers often astonished Cabinet Ministers to whom she led deputations in the old days.

In 1899, she was elected as the first woman delegate to the Trade Union Congress, and subsequently, as a member of the Parliamentary Committee, she took part in many of the workers' international conferences, and three times acted as an adviser to the workers' delegates at the Conferences of the International Labour Office. Since her election to Parliament she has acted as British Government representative to the 21st session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. Her standing in the international world of labour may be gauged by these various appointments, and also from the fact that she was elected as one of the members of the British Labour Delegation to Russia in 1920. She also represented the women of this country as delegate to the French Federation Générale du Travail, and to the American Federation of Labour.

In 1923, Miss Bondfield was elected Chairman of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the highest elective office in the Trades Union Movement; but she resigned this position on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour. During her brief tenure of office, she took a leading and successful part in the settlement of the boilermakers' strike, which had lasted seven months and involved 70,000 workers.

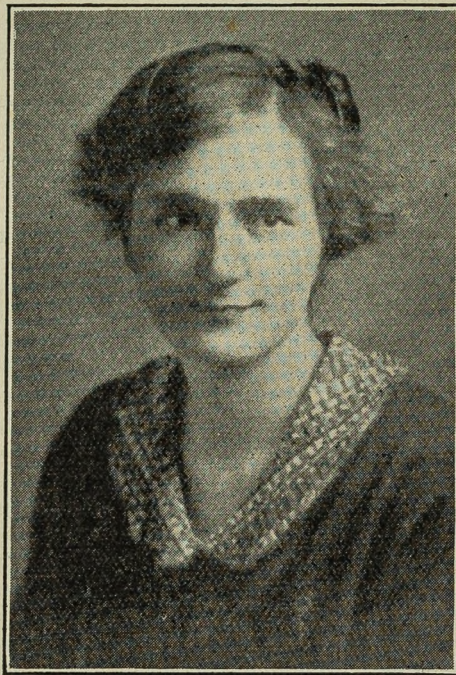
Miss Bondfield's election to Parliament as Labour Member for Northampton, after three attempts, and subsequent appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, added fresh laurels to her magnificent record of public work. But the increasing honours which now strew her path do not render her forgetful of her own early struggles, and those of her contemporaries whom she is out to help. She once put it on record that the most vivid of all her memories of youth was the period when she first came to London, and tramped its unfriendly streets for three months, looking for work; so it was a characteristic action on her part to convert her maiden speech in the House of Commons into reminding Members of a section of the community for the most part still unenfranchised—unemployed women.

MISS DOROTHY JEWSON, M.P.

Constituency : NORWICH.

(19,304 Votes.)

Politics : LABOUR.



MISS JEWSON served a long and faithful apprenticeship to the Labour Movement before she became elected to Parliament as a representative of the ancient city of Norwich, already famous in the annals of the Woman's Movement by its possession of the only woman Lord Mayor in the land. Miss Jewson polled over 19,000 votes at Norwich, higher than any other woman M.P., and a remarkable triumph both for Labour and women.

While still at Girton, where she took the Classical Tripos, Miss Jewson joined the Fabian Society, and then, returning to her home at Norwich, began her first public work by a careful inquiry into the payment of out-relief by the local Guardians. She was helped in this work by her brother, the late Major W. H. Jewson, with whom she stood for a constituency at the ensuing election of Guardians. Such terrible distress among the destitute was revealed in their report, that as a result the scale of out-relief was materially raised.

At the outbreak of war, when unemployment was rife among the silk weavers and other women workers of Norwich, Miss Jewson trained a number of local women to feed the depleted toy market, and ran a toy factory with marked success, until the development of the aeroplane industry absorbed all surplus woman labour.

In 1916, she accepted an invitation from the late Miss Mary Macarthur to join her in organising ill-paid women in trade unions, and for six years she acted as Chief of the Organising Department of the National Federation of Women Workers. Later she worked as a colleague of Miss Bondfield's in the Women's Section of the National Union of General Workers. In consequence of the bad reports received during this period as to the conditions under which servants worked in hotels, Miss Jewson once entered herself voluntarily for three weeks as a housemaid at a well-known hotel, in order to test the truth of these statements. The three weeks was amply sufficient to satisfy her that the criticisms were by no means overstated.

Miss Jewson was an ardent supporter of the suffrage agitation when this was at its height, and, now that she is in Parliament, she intends to leave no stone unturned to press for the equal enfranchisement of women with men in this country. Her maiden speech was on this subject when, in a clear and well-planned speech, she seconded Mr. Adamson's motion for the Second Reading of the Representation of the People Act (1919) Amendment Bill. The chief thing that impressed her during her Election campaign was the numbers of young women who came to their doors, often with two or three little ones clinging to their skirts, and demanding pathetically, "Why have I not a vote?"

She is also deeply interested in unemployment, housing, maternity, and child welfare, and, amongst other reforms, would like to see the adoption by the Labour Party of more direct action than has hitherto been practised in Parliamentary and State affairs, so as to save much time and work. She has put it on record that what impresses her most about the House of Commons is its frightful waste of time and want of proportion! At the beginning of her Parliamentary career, she publicly rebuked the Press for its over-emphasis on feminine dress details in connection with the women M.P.s.

MISS SUSAN LAWRENCE, M.P.

Constituency : NORTH EAST HAM.

(8,727 Votes.)

Politics : LABOUR.



A MEMBER of a well-known legal family, Miss Susan Lawrence has inherited the family type of mind, her legal outlook and mastery of detail having made her an expert in the various subjects in which she is particularly interested. Closely connected for many years with the struggle to abolish sweating, and the administration of the Trade Boards Act, she is an outstanding authority on Local Government, Housing, and Education.

Educated at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she took mathematical honours in her B.A. degree, she began her public life in 1900 as a member of the London School Board. Ten years later, Marylebone elected her to the London County Council, of which she was the first woman member. In 1912, she forsook her former Conservative principles, and joined the Labour Party, and the following year was elected L.C.C. member for Poplar

as a Labour representative, having dissociated herself from the Moderate Party, which she had previously represented. Her change of politics was due to actual experience of municipal waste, and to the growing conviction that the measures of the Conservative Party were merely palliative.

In 1919, she was made an Alderman of the Borough Council of Poplar, a very poor London district, and, with other Councillors, she refused to levy a rate on the district, which, they maintained, the people were too poor to pay. For six weeks she and her fellow-Councillors were imprisoned, until the Government gave way. Part of Miss Lawrence's time in her cell at Holloway was occupied in writing a brochure on local taxation.

Under the old National Federation of Women Workers, Miss Lawrence became an organiser of factory girls. She has represented the Women's Section of the National Union of General Workers on a number of Trade Boards, and has been a leader in other organisations of the Women's Trade Union Movement. She was a member of the Special Arbitration Tribunal on women's wages from 1916-1919.

Miss Lawrence is a member of the Executive of the National Labour Party, and was the first London woman M.P. to be returned to the House of Commons. She contested her present constituency once before being finally elected. Soon after the formation of the Labour Government, at the beginning of 1924, she was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to the President of the Board of Education. She was the first woman M.P. to speak in the new Parliament, when she made her maiden speech, regretting the absence of any mention of Education in the King's Speech, and asking the Board of Education whether they were satisfied as to the legality of their action in cutting down expenditure on the feeding of necessitous children, sanctioned by Parliament. Her very able speech made an excellent impression on the House, and she was warmly congratulated by Members of other Parties who followed her.

MRS. HILTON PHILIPSON, M.P.

Constituency : BERWICK.

(10,636 Votes.)

Politics : CONSERVATIVE.



MRS. HILTON PHILIPSON was no stranger to the public when she first entered on a political career. At an early age, left an orphan with a brother and sister, she entered the theatrical profession. Being under contract to Mr. George Edwardes, she played, as "Mabel Russell," in many musical plays in Daly's Theatre, the Prince of Wales' Theatre, and the Gaiety—"Cingalee," "See See," "The Merry Widow," "Les Merveilleuses," "Havana," "The Girls of Gothenburg," and "The Dollar Princess." She also understudied Adeline Genée, one of our greatest dancers. By sheer hard work—for she had no influence in those days—she fought her way up the ladder of success, through many hardships and much struggle. Perhaps her greatest successes were on the legitimate stage as "Aggie Lynch," in "Within the Law," at the Haymarket, and as leading lady at Wyndham's Theatre, with Sir Gerald du Maurier, as "Cherry," in "London Pride."

In 1911, she married Mr. Stanley Rhodes, a member of a well-known family, but was widowed six months after, her husband being killed in a motor accident, and she herself being badly injured. She returned to the stage in "Gipsy Love," at Daly's Theatre. Her popularity among her fellow-artists was unbounded, and she was adored not only by everyone in the theatre, from call-boy and chorus-girl to manager and principal, but by the humblest members of the public. She was a great loss to the stage when she married, in 1917, Captain Hilton Philipson, of the Scots Guards. She is greatly interested in farming matters, and at her home in Esher has a model farm stocked with pigs and pedigree cattle.

Captain Philipson won Berwick-on-Tweed as a National Liberal at the General Election in 1922, but was unseated on petition in April of the following year, when his wife was adopted as Conservative candidate, and eventually headed the poll at the Berwick-on-Tweed by-election with 12,000 votes, and a majority of 6,142 over her Liberal opponent, and 8,034 over the Labour candidate. She was again triumphantly returned for the same constituency at the General Election in December, 1923.

A mother herself, with two sons and one daughter, Mrs. Philipson takes a deep interest in the needs of women and children less fortunate, and has openly avowed that she stands specially in these interests in the House of Commons. She was placed on the Joint Select Committee for the Guardianship of Infants Bill. Mrs. Philipson also serves on the House of Commons Agricultural Committee, the Kitchen Committee, the Commercial Committee, and the Air Committee, and is a member of Standing Committee B on Education (Institution children). Her maiden speech, made on the last day of her first Parliamentary Session, was well received, for, though she spoke from a Party angle in defence of Mr. Baldwin (the then Prime Minister), she made an excellent contribution to the Debate on the Vote of Censure on His Majesty's Government for neglecting to deal with the pressing needs of the unemployed. She did not forget that she and her two women colleagues were the sole representatives of the women of the country, when she referred to the hardships of unemployment on women and children.

LADY TERRINGTON, M.P.

Constituency : WYCOMBE (BUCKS).

(14,910 Votes.)

Politics : LIBERAL.



LADY TERRINGTON is the daughter of Mr. H. G. Bousher, and was educated abroad. In 1918, she married the Hon. J. S. Woodhouse, eldest son of the first Lord Terrington. Her election to the House of Commons was achieved after two attempts, and a stiff three-cornered fight, to win a constituency which had been almost continuously Conservative since 1886. She deserves the gratitude of women for a splendid contest against a Member whose attitude on women's questions had been far from satisfactory.

Like Mrs. Wintringham and the Duchess of Atholl, Lady Terrington represents a rural constituency, and many of her interests are in the direction of an open-air life. She is a keen farmer and agriculturist, and is desirous of seeing a more consistent policy carried out with regard to agricultural legislation. She believes in giving a free hand to agriculture, as to other trades, and is in favour of credit facilities for the farmer. She would like to see the system of co-operative market-

ing, with Government assistance, applied to this country, and the introduction of legislation whereby on reasonable terms the actual cultivator can become the owner of the land he cultivates. She wants to see the agricultural labourer adequately remunerated, and his standard of life raised.

Lady Terrington is a notable horsewoman (though she never hunts), and conducted a large part of her Election campaign on horseback. She and her husband take an active interest in the welfare of the South Bucks inhabitants, and Lady Terrington holds the somewhat unique position of first woman President of the Marlow Football Club, and is also Vice-President of the Bucks Lace Association. She is Vice-President of the Y.M.C.A. (Slough Branch), Vice-President of the Bucks R.S.P.C.A., Vice-President of the Bucks Branch of Holloway Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, Vice-President of the Bucks Amateur Athletic Association, Bucks Agricultural Association, Marlow Cottage Hospital, and Patron of the 4th Balham Troop of British Boy Scouts, which is known as "Lady Terrington's Own." She has a genuine love of the lower creation, and is a fierce opponent of measures calculated to inflict needless suffering on dumb creatures, such as the Worn-Out Horse Traffic, Vivisection, etc. She is a member of Our Dumb Friends' League. The housing problem is very dear to her heart; she is a Director of more than one flourishing Housing Company, and intends to press for more adequate housing provisions in legislation.

In regard to Politics, Lady Terrington holds very sound views upon the necessity for legal and economic equality between the sexes, and is strongly in favour of equal rights and responsibilities of mothers and fathers with regard to the guardianship and education of their children. She worked with her husband on behalf of this last reform, when Lord Terrington was a member of the Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament set up to deal with the subject. She believes that the present system of Old Age Pensions is calculated to reduce thrift, and not to encourage it. Her maiden speech in the House of Commons consisted in seconding a motion for better Old Age Pensions conditions; her second speech was on Cruelty to Animals.

MRS. WINTRINGHAM, M.P.

Constituency : LOUTH (LINCOLNSHIRE). (12,104 Votes.) Politics : LIBERAL.



MRS. WINTRINGHAM had a unique preparation for Parliamentary life, for she was closely associated with her late husband, Mr. Tom Wintringham, in all his activities, when he stood as Liberal Member for Louth (Lincolnshire). Her own public work in pre-Parliamentary days also forms no mean record. A leaflet which was issued to the Louth electors in 1921, when she was first returned to Parliament, pointed out that Mrs. Wintringham had acted, and was acting, on over twenty public bodies, and closed with the query: "Can any man beat this?"

Louth is famous for its sturdy Non-conformity, coupled with a genuine regard for Temperance, and both these characteristics are faithfully reflected in its woman Member. Mrs. Wintringham is Vice-President of the Lincolnshire Total Abstinence Association. She is an ardent supporter of equality between the sexes, and stands unflinchingly for the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women on equal

terms with men, and opportunities for men and women, whether married or single, in the professional and industrial world. Questions of world peace, disarmament, and support of the League of Nations also find a prominent place on her programme.

The first Englishwoman by birth to be elected to the House of Commons, Mrs. Wintringham reflects the best racial characteristics of the nation by her balanced judgment and wholesome sanity of outlook, whilst an enumeration of some of the measures she has supported in Parliament reveals the catholicity of her political interests—Housing, Agriculture, Education, Widows' Pensions, the Budget, Local Option, Legitimacy, Women's Enfranchisement, League of Nations, Adoption of Children, Child Assault, Penal Reform, and Capital Punishment. An eminently practical housewife herself, working-women will always remember with gratitude how Mrs. Wintringham boldly attacked Mr. Baldwin's Budget in 1923 as "one-sided," and pleaded for the reduction of the duties on tea and sugar, in preference to the cheapening of beer. Her sympathy for the ordinary working housewife, "one of the most heavily taxed people in the country," was clearly shown, as also on another occasion, when she created a diversion in the House by measuring the Speaker's table with a foot-rule, in order to prove to the Minister of Health that it would be impossible to get a bed into the suggested compass of one of the bedrooms scheduled on the Government's housing plans.

Though she shoulders her responsibilities at Westminster with due seriousness, Mrs. Wintringham is essentially a devotee of country life, and loves to escape at intervals from "affairs of State" to her beloved Lincolnshire constituents. The improvement of conditions in country life is very dear to her heart. She sits on an important Parliamentary Committee for Agriculture. She is also a whole-hearted supporter of the Women's Institutes Movement, which has done so much to brighten village life.

Her profound interest in the everyday lives and pursuits of the Louth agriculturists has endeared Mrs. Wintringham to every man, woman, and child in her constituency, a mutual affection which deepened steadily during the Louth flood of 1920, when she personally organised and carried on for many months an improvised camp for 150 homeless people.

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