

THE VOTE,
MARCH 16, 1917.
ONE PENNY.

St. Patrick's Day, March 17th.

Votes for Irish Women!

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1917

Edited by C. DESPARD.

OBJECT: To secure for Women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

IRELAND AND WOMEN: A Striking Parallel.

Extracts from House of Commons Debate on Home Rule for Ireland.
March 9, 1917.

IRELAND :

THE PRIME MINISTER says :—

"Centuries of ruthless and often brutal injustice—what is worse, when you are dealing with a high-spirited and sensitive **people**?—centuries of insolence and of insult—have driven hatred of **British** rule into the very marrow of the **Irish race**, the long record of oppression, proscription and expatriation, the greatest blot on the British fame for equity and common-sense in the realm of government."

"I wish in my heart that partnership could be established on a firm and solid basis, but with freedom for the whole of the people. Freedom means **freedom for all**, not merely for a section. Therefore I propose to insert: 'This House would welcome a settlement which would produce a better understanding between **Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom**, but considers it impossible to impose by force on any section or part of Ireland a form of government which has not their consent.'"

MR. JOHN REDMOND says :—

"The Right Hon. Gentleman (the Prime Minister) gave us, in the course of his speech, profuse assurances that he was in favour of **Home Rule, of the principle of Home Rule**. Those professions on his part are absolutely unnecessary. We have known the Right Hon. Gentleman for many years in this House, and in this country, and we know that he has never disguised the fact, that he has advocated **Home Rule**, and that he has always declared openly he was in favour of it. The position he is in to-day, however, is a position he was never in before. **To-day he is in the position of having the power, if he has the will and courage to use it, of putting those professions into practice.**"

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE :

WE say :—

"Centuries of ruthless and often brutal injustice—what is worse, when you are dealing with a high-spirited and sensitive **sex**?—centuries of insolence and of insult—have driven hatred of **masculine rule** into the very marrow of the **female sex**, the long record of oppression, proscription and expatriation, the greatest blot on the British fame for equity and common-sense in the realm of government."

"We wish in our hearts that partnership (between women and men) could be established on a firm and solid basis, but with freedom for the whole of the people. Freedom means **freedom for all**, not merely for **one sex**. Therefore we propose that **Parliament should immediately bring about a settlement** which would produce a better understanding between **women and men**, and we consider it impossible to impose by force on women a form of government which has not their consent."

WE say :—

"The Prime Minister has given us, in the course of his career, profuse assurances that he was in favour of **Women's Suffrage, of the principle of Women's Suffrage**. Those professions on his part are absolutely unnecessary. We have known the Prime Minister for many years, and we know that he has never disguised the fact, that he has advocated **Women's Suffrage**, and that he has always declared openly he was in favour of it. The position he is in to-day, however, is a position he was never in before. **To-day he is in the position of having the power, if he has the will and courage to use it, of putting those professions into practice.**"

MAJOR WILLIAM REDMOND says:—

"If anything could tend towards strengthening the resolve which is still strong in the **Irish troops** to do their duty, it would be the feeling that a better and a newer chapter with Great Britain was about to be opened, and that **their country** was about to be trusted with the rights and freedom of self-government."

WE say:—

"If anything could tend towards strengthening the resolve which is still strong in the **WOMEN** of the United Kingdom to do their duty, it would be the feeling that a better and a newer chapter was about to be opened, and that **THEIR SEX** was about to be trusted with the rights and freedom of self-government."

IRISH WOMEN DEMAND THE VOTE.

"*This does not apply to Ireland.*" We know the phrase. Sometimes it occurs in connection with measures of a controversial nature, such as the Military Service Act. More often it refers to proposals of a less contentious order, and frequently the public, British or Irish, is entirely ignorant of the "exclusion of Ireland." The most striking recent instance was the report of the Electoral Reform Conference, including the historic resolution approving the principle of woman suffrage. A less well-known case is the Treasury grant to enable free clinics to be set up for the treatment of venereal diseases. "*This does not apply to Ireland,*" and a special Act of Parliament would be required to render it applicable. Consequently, though there is a growing agitation in this country for some definite action in regard to the matter, nothing can be done.

Of equal seriousness is the failure of Irish M.P.s of either party to interest themselves in any matter outside the ordinary party rut. For instance, as far as is discoverable from the newspaper reports, no Irish M.P. is taking any part in the consideration of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. Yet venereal disease is not unknown in Ireland. A well-known Belfast doctor recently gave the proportion among women in the ordinary hospitals as one in six; I have not access to the figures for Dublin. Moreover, Irish girls go to Great Britain every year in hundreds. It is precisely country girls of their type, quite ignorant of city dangers, who are most likely to be caught in the toils. That so few are caught speaks much for home training. Once caught, there would be little hope of escape. Yet no Irish M.P. has raised his voice on their behalf, or made an effort to secure that raising of the age of consent which is the best legislative safeguard for the young and often ill-paid girl.

How long will Irish women endure this? They have worked, north and south, loyally for their party. Will they work now as devotedly for their fellow women? The political position is of extraordinary complexity and difficulty. Ministers vaguely suggest now a Royal Commission, now a reference to the forthcoming Imperial Conference, in the

Irish Suffragists' Message to the Prime Minister.

At a public meeting held under the auspices of the Irish Women's Franchise League in the Trades Hall, Dublin, recently, the following resolution was passed unanimously:—

"This meeting of Dublin citizens desires to express its profound dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister's refusal to receive a deputation from Irish Suffrage Societies. As the persistent denial of Irish women's claims to enfranchisement has become an intolerable offence against the principles of justice and right, this meeting cannot accept the Prime Minister's reply to their demand as final, and therefore earnestly urges him to accord an interview to the representatives of these societies before the Imperial Conference assemblies."

Franchise and Electoral Reform.

Sir J. D. REES, on March 6, asked the Prime Minister whether resolutions are being passed by public and political bodies to the effect that it is not expedient that proposals contained in Mr. Speaker's letter on electoral reform should be dealt with at the present time by a Parliament that is

Micawber-like hope that "something will turn up." May it be so, and that right soon! Women suffer longest and most severely from the harvest of strife, and there can be little wholesome fruit where seeds of bitterness are sown so closely. But the present political deadlock in Ireland is not of women's making, and the woman's question should not be postponed because the party issue presses so clamorously for attention. Should the Imperial Conference, or the suggested Royal Commission, deal with the Irish question, the enfranchisement of Irish women must be included in the terms of reference.

Even then there will be grave injustice, for if Lord Curzon's words in the House of Lords are to be taken as committing the Government, a Bill will be introduced very shortly embodying the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference. *These do not apply to Ireland.* There cannot surely be any doubt as to the enfranchisement of British women, but we in Ireland must still wait. The women of Ohio have won this right. The women of Ontario are now recognised as citizens. We are members of the same Empire, but we must wait—"persons" in the eye of the law as far as, for instance, the punitive clauses of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, but non-existent from the point of view of the returning officer.

Conference or Commission, or whatever it be, let it be understood that the enfranchisement of Irish women is one of the subjects which must come up for consideration in any settlement. On Wednesday, March 14, a combined meeting of representatives of nearly all Irish suffrage societies will be held in the Mansion House, Dublin, to voice this demand. It is impossible to include a report of the proceedings in this week's issue, as THE VOTE goes to press before the meeting, but I want to emphasise the fact that this meeting will represent women of all shades of political opinion. The Prime Minister, in his speech on the Irish question, spoke of the right to self-government. The Dublin meeting will demand this right for Irish women as well as Irish men. It must not be longer refused or delayed.

Dublin, March 10. DORA MELLONE.

practically moribund, and whose chief, if not only, duty is recognised to be the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion, and whether he will take into account such opinion and postpone the consideration of electoral reform, or confine it to ensuring that all our fighting men shall, as such, be enfranchised?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I think it would be better that the consideration of this subject should be postponed until it has been discussed in this House.

Sir W. BYLES, on March 12, asked whether the changes in our electoral law, recommended by the Report of the Conference lately presided over by Mr. Speaker, are to be made the subject of legislation by the present Government, or whether the labours of the Committee are to be abortive?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I can add nothing to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for East Nottinghamshire (Sir J. D. REES) on Tuesday last.

The National Union of Scottish Miners, meeting at Glasgow last week under the chairmanship of Mr. Robert Smillie, inserted the words "on the same basis as men" in the resolution to be submitted to the Labour Party and Trades Union Conference on Electoral Reform to be held in London on March 20; they are putting the amendment before the Miners' Federation with a view to having it submitted by the Federation at the Conference.

Women's Freedom League.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS: W.F.L. LONDON AND SUBURBS.

Saturday, March 17.—Political Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, W.C., 8.15 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Nevinson, on "The Work of a Poor Law Guardian," and Mrs. Corner, on "Our Hopes and Fears." Chair: Mrs. Despard.

Sunday, March 18.—Hackney Branch Meeting, 97, Upper Clapton-road, N.E. (by kind invitation of Mrs. C. M. Holmes), 4 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Mustard and Miss Le Croissette.

Wednesday, March 21.—Public Meeting, Caxton Hall, 3 p.m. Miss Margaret Hodge, "The Heroines of Shakespeare and Sheridan as Prototypes of Women of To-day," and Mrs. Mustard. Chair: Miss A. A. Smith.

Friday, March 23.—Croydon Branch Meeting, 32a, The Arcade, High-street, 3.30 p.m.

Saturday, March 24.—London Branches Council Drawing-room Meeting, 57, Hilmarton-road, Camden-road, N. (by kind invitation of Miss Bissett-Smith, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Miss Raleigh and Dr. Clark. Chair: Mrs. Mustard.

Wednesday, March 28.—Public Meeting, Caxton Hall, 3 p.m. Mrs. Kineton Parkes, "Women in Political Warfare," and Mrs. Despard. Chair: Miss F. A. Underwood.

Thursday, March 29.—At 144, High Holborn, London Branches Council Meeting, 6 p.m.

Friday, March 30.—"At Home," Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, W.C., 4.30 p.m.

PROVINCES.

Sunday, March 18.—Newcastle-on-Tyne. Liberal Thought Class, 3 p.m. Speaker: Miss Dorothy Evans.

Monday, March 19.—Newcastle-on-Tyne. Tipperary Club, 3 p.m. Speaker: Miss Dorothy Evans. I.L.P. Rooms, St. Andrews Chambers, Gallowgate, 7.30 p.m. Speaker: Miss Dorothy Evans. Middlesbrough Public Meeting, Suffrage Club, 7.30 p.m. Miss McCombie on "Women and International Law."

Wednesday, March 21.—Southsea Work Party, 17, Lombard-street, 3 to 7 p.m. Newcastle-on-Tyne, St. Anthony's, 3 p.m. Speaker: Miss Dorothy Evans.

Wednesday, March 28.—West Hartlepool. Joint Suffrage Meeting, I.L.P. Rooms, 3, Charles-street. Speakers: Mr. W. Candler (Sec. Railwaymen), Miss Dorothy Evans and Miss Auld, M.A.

Thursday, March 29.—Swansea. "At Home," 104, Walter-road, 7 p.m.

Stockton By-Election W.F.L. Campaign.—Daily, Open-Air Dinner-Hour Meetings at Factory Gates, and in the Market Place, 6.30 p.m.

MONTGOMERY BOROUGH CAMPAIGN.

Saturday, March 17.—Llanwchrair, Girls' Friendly Society, National Schools. Speaker: Miss Anna Munro. 3 p.m.

Wednesday, March 21.—Aberystwyth, Public Meeting, Buarth Hall. Speakers: Mrs. Despard, Miss Anna Munro. 7.30 p.m.

Friday, March 23.—Llanfyllin. "At Home," Town Hall. Mrs. Despard on Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," and Miss Anna Munro. Music and refreshments. 3.30-6.30 p.m.

Saturday, March 24.—Oswestry. Special Vote Sale Day. Welshpool, Public Meeting, Council Chamber, Town Hall. 7 p.m. Speaker: Miss Anna Munro. Subject, "The Social Evil."

Tuesday, March 27.—Newtown, Open-air Meeting, High-street. Speaker: Miss Anna Munro. Chair: Miss Alix M. Clark. 2 p.m.

We draw special attention to

Saturday, March 17.—Political Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, W.C., 8.15 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Nevinson and Mrs. Corner. Chair: Mrs. Despard.

Wednesday, March 21.—Public Meeting, Caxton Hall, 3 p.m. Speakers: Miss Margaret Hodge and Mrs. Mustard. Chair: Miss A. A. Smith.

IN REMEMBRANCE: Mrs. Harley.

To our President and all members of her family we offer sincere sympathy in the loss they have sustained by the death of Mrs. Harley on Active Service. The news that she had been killed by an enemy shell during an evening bombardment of Monastir, where she had been caring for the women and children, as well as the sick and wounded soldiers, came as a grievous shock to her many friends. In her devoted work for the Scottish Women's Hospitals she had come through so many difficulties and dangers that she seemed to bear a charmed life. Though she has passed out of sight the remembrance of her gracious personality and devoted service will remain with all who knew her, not the least with the wounded soldiers in France and in the Near East, who gained courage and inspiration from her welcome smile, sympathetic words, and ready help. General Sarrail, in command at Salonika, conferred on her last year the outward sign of recognition of her splendid service. The scene when her body was laid to rest on March 10 in the British cemetery at Salonika will not easily be forgotten by the immense crowds who witnessed it. "The coffin was preceded by British and Serbian bands and by a Serbian guard of honour. It was followed to the grave by Prince George of Serbia, General Milne and the whole of his staff, Lord Granville, British Diplomatic Agent at Salonika, the British Admiral commanding on this station, Admiral Troubridge, all the members of the Serbian General Staff, all the Serbian Ministers and high officials now at Salonika, and by an immense crowd of officers of the French, Russian, Italian, and Serbian Armies. A touching funeral oration was delivered over the grave by the Serbian Minister of the Interior, M. Yovanovitch." Mrs. Harley's two daughters, who shared her noble work, were present. Small wonder that "the Serbians are deeply affected by the loss of this heroic Englishwoman, whom they regarded as one of the greatest of foreign benefactors of their nation in this war." The name of another heroic woman is added to the nation's Roll of Honour in the war, one more who has laid down her life on Active Service. All her life she had been on active service for her country; she was an untiring worker for the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies, and one of the occasions on which she came into prominence was the famous Suffrage Pilgrimage to London. Readers of THE VOTE will be interested to hear that in a letter from Miss Nina Boyle, dated February 16, to Miss Underwood, which arrived this week, she gives the following vivid pen picture of Mrs. Harley:—

"I have seen Mrs. Harley several times. She came here hot-foot when she heard of my arrival to get news of Mrs. Despard. She has now gone up to Monastir with her daughter for relief work—most intrepid and more than useful. She stayed the night with us on her way up, and started off in a dreadful snowstorm, as unmoved by those sorts of conditions as Mrs. Despard herself! She was seen close to her destination that evening by a man who called here next day, so our anxiety about her journey was relieved. She looks in the pink of condition, and her uniform is most becoming to her. Tell Mrs. Despard that it was a real delight to see someone so like her, in person and in spirit."

A FEMINIST PLAY OF 2000 B.C.—Sir Rabindranath Tagore's play, "Chitra," the plot of which is taken from the ancient Hindu epic "The Mahabharata," will be given under the auspices of the Union of East and West at the Grafton Galleries, Dover-street, on March 16, at 5.30 p.m. Miss Edyth Goodall and Mr. William Stack will play the principal parts. Admission free to members only by ticket.

Monday, March 19.—British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union. Luncheon, Comedy Restaurant, 38, Pantom-street, Haymarket, 1 p.m., to meet Lady Denman. Chair: Miss Sheepshanks. Tickets, 2s. 3d., from Miss D. Pethick, 38, Meadway Court, N.W.

THE VOTE.

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FRIDAY, March 16th, 1917.

NOTICE.—Letters should be addressed as follows:—
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EDITORIAL.

The Editor is responsible for unsigned articles only. Articles, paragraphs, or cuttings dealing with matters of interest to women generally will be welcomed. Every effort will be made to return unsuitable MSS. if a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed, but the Editor cannot be responsible in case of loss.

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AGENTS.

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AMAZING IRRESPONSIBILITY.

As feminists and suffragists, it is continually impressed upon us that it is our duty to demand a voice in the government of the country, in order that we may defend the interests of women. Even without the vote, and with manacled hands, women have striven to voice the needs and the wrongs of women in industrial and social life—needs which are left ignored and unredressed by a man-driven government.

Women have also recognised their duty towards the future. They know that it is essential they should exercise a direct influence upon the legislation of the country, that the young may receive a full measure of life and health and well-being, from which, under existing conditions, so large a number are deprived. Suffragists have laid stress upon their need for the vote that they may do their own work under just conditions in the fields of industry, and that they may safeguard the citizens of the future. They have regarded themselves as reformers and specialists in certain departments of life. They have been willing to cultivate their own gardens, but have not set themselves to till the public fields. Possibly, because they have resented male domination in spheres which have been so clearly marked for their own, they have not shown themselves over anxious to enter those other spheres of political action, within which men have hitherto exercised exclusive control without either the assistance or the opposition of women. In the question, for instance, of the economic policy of the country, men have not been hampered by the demands made by women that their views should be ascertained before any decision is taken. The majority of women suffragists to-day would illustrate the need for the women's vote by a reference to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, with its clauses affecting the liberties of women, rather than by the consideration of the proposal to place a tariff of 7½ per cent. on cotton goods entering India—a proposal which is likely to affect prejudicially more women in this country than it will men. In the spheres of war, diplomacy and international relationships, women share with the bulk of the men of the nation an almost complete immunity from responsibility.

Irresponsibility, however, seems to be a characteristic of the modern electorate, who regard the filching of their constitutional rights with much apparent equanimity. Many voters argue that they have neither time nor opportunity to keep abreast of political questions, and consequently these pass more

and more into the hands of professional politicians. The elector shifts his responsibility on to his Member of Parliament, who, in his turn, is willing to allow the Cabinet to act without his assistance. In pre-war times the Cabinet was wont to delegate its authority to a smaller and inner Cabinet, consisting of the chief Secretaries of State, while, during the war, the ultimate authority has passed to a War Council, a Triumvirate, or Dictator, who may, or may not, represent a majority of the elected representatives of the people. This is the democratic machinery which the present electors have tacitly accepted. Broad-based, it may be, upon the will of the people, though the will of the people is apt to be somewhat unrecognisable under its weight. It is clear improved machinery is the need of the future in the fields of government as in those of agriculture. Women have not hitherto demanded a reform in the machinery of government. They have urged their right to cooperate in setting its rusty wheels and cumbrous levers to work and, when it is argued that the Parliamentary vote is of little use or importance to-day, they reply that, if the house is on fire, a defective fire-engine is better than none.

It might well have been supposed that the delegation of responsibility from wider to ever narrowing circles would have caused the weight to fall as an almost intolerable burden upon those in whose hands have rested the issues of the life or death of thousands. But, judging from the Report of the Dardanelles Commission, which has been given to the world since THE VOTE went to press last week, it cannot be said that the responsibility of being the keepers and guardians of their young brothers rested with undue weight upon these super-men. It has been urged that the excessive caution of women might operate unfavourably in national affairs, but it can scarcely be doubted that an admixture of this quality would have saved untold suffering and the fruitless sacrifice of thousands of lives. It is not impossible that an authority which held itself ultimately responsible to the women as well as to the men of the nation might have exhibited a keener sense of the real burden of Empire, more foresight, more purpose and more prudence. The Report shows errors of judgment for which excuses may well be found, unfortunate and unexpected conditions, which can be referred to the mass of impersonal evil for which individuals cannot be held responsible. It shows what the *New Statesman* terms "amazing irresponsibility." It certainly also illustrates the weakness of oligarchical government, even in those departments of national life, where the full application of the representative principle is clearly impossible. Dangers to the State may arise through the rule of the many. They have arisen also through the rule of the select few. A sense of individual responsibility is a prime necessity to the successful working of any form of government.

The supineness of men in having, to a large extent, shifted their responsibility in time of peace, and their neglect in the past to champion the women of the country, who were, apparently, alone sensible of the value of political liberty, have made it easy for politicians to deprive the people of constitutional rights in time of war. The male electorate have failed to recognise that they are the temporary guardians of the liberties of the people. It is hoped that the entrance into politics of an unenfranchised sex, the members of which are conscious of their responsibility to the whole community, may react favourably on the political freedom of the nation. War breeds carelessness not only of lives but of much which goes to make the worth of life. In the future women will do well to take all politics for their province. When once the vote is obtained they cannot limit their responsibility to questions relating to women, or to such social questions as temperance and education. When peace comes, new issues and new needs will arise, and conditions and institutions will

be judged through the medium of an altered perspective. Political ignorance is not confined to women who at least, like Portia, have shown they are not so dull but they can learn. As future voters women can perform no more useful task than that of preparing themselves to assume some share of responsibility in the building of the new world which will arise, like the phoenix, from the ashes of the world destroyed by the war. The postulate that Knowledge is Power is more particularly true in politics, and no improvement in political machinery can render democratic government effective without a more general diffusion of political education. E. M. N. C.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

The Committee held its second meeting on March 8. The seats allotted to the public were well filled, chiefly with women, and one could not help feeling that if the seats reserved for Committee members were also largely occupied by women, there might be more likelihood of good legislation on the subject under discussion. The more we hear of these committees, the more we are struck with the ignorance of men in regard to women's needs, and with the absolute futility of their attempting to make rules and regulations to bind us. If we had had any doubt as to the proposed new regulations pressing more hardly on women than on men, it would have been removed by the discussion on amendments, since hon. members, in speaking of restrictive and punitive parts of the Bill, quite openly and unashamedly talked of prostitutes as being the people affected, although, of course, if questioned on the subject, they would indignantly declare that the Bill would apply equally to women and men.

At the same time, it was pleasing to note that the fear of women's opinions had a certain restraining influence, for when it was proposed that sub-section 3 (containing the clauses for compulsory medical examination), which had been withdrawn by the Government, be restored to the Bill, Major Hills and other members pointed out that the women of the country would rise in revolt against such an outrage, and Mr. King stated that to introduce such legislation would be to revive that sex antagonism which existed before the war, and which now (thank God) was a dead dog. It will not be wise for these gentlemen to proceed far on that assumption.

Speaking on this same section, Mr. John Burns scathingly described its withdrawal as "the only sensible thing the Government had ever done," but Sir George Greenwood demanded its re-insertion, and declared that prostitutes would welcome medical examination, since they wanted to be cured (thereby confirming our suspicions that this clause would only be operable on that particular section). Is the object of this Bill, then, not to cure prostitutes, but to keep prostitutes physically healthy so that there may be no need for a moral cleansing of our nation? If men wish to avoid infection by prostitutes there is one obvious way—chastity. The slight attention given to this particular question (only one member mentioned it, in an aside) was proof enough, if any were needed, that men alone will always fail to get to the root of things, and that the only way to get any legislation worth having on this or any other question would be by a representative committee of women and men working together—and working seriously, since it is difficult to believe in the seriousness of men who chatter while speeches are being made on matters of vital importance, so that it is at times impossible to hear the speakers. Listening to these speeches we could not help feeling how much good might be done if Parliament could have the benefit of hearing such impressive speeches as those made by women at the Central Hall meeting held to protest against the reactionary clauses of the Bill.

This magnificent and enthusiastic meeting was ignored by the Press, with one or two honourable exceptions, including *The Nation*. We cannot urge too often and too strongly our opinion that no such legislation affecting women should be introduced except by a Parliament of women and men.

POLITICAL NOTES.

Electoral Reform.

The fate of the Speaker's Conference Report still seems to be trembling in the balance. On March 8, Lord Curzon stated in the House of Lords that in a week or two Parliament would have an opportunity of expressing an opinion on the Report, and on March 11 it was stated in the Press that a resolution would shortly be moved in the House of Commons proposing the discussion of the Report. "Nero fiddled while Rome was burning." Parliament fiddles with *our lives* while we are burning with impatience at their delay. Speaking on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, Mr. King stated that only the urgency of the matter led to such a controversial measure being introduced. We say, as we have so often said before, that no question is so urgent as women's suffrage, since no satisfactory legislation can be passed until women share with men in the government of the country.

Women Workers on the War Path.

With regard to women munition workers and wages, we hear from the Federation of Women Workers that "considerable dissatisfaction has been caused in munition works and shipyards throughout the country by the exclusion of women and girls from the general increase in wages just awarded in these trades by the Committee on Production. The Federation sent a request for representation of the women at the various conferences which were held, so that their claims might be considered; but no invitation was extended to them. It has now sent an application to the Ministry of Munitions for a general advance of 2d. per hour on all wages rates fixed for women and girls by Statutory Orders, and have been assured that the Ministry are giving careful consideration to the demand." We hope so.

One of our members, commenting on the Treasury Order of February 27, with regard to increases of pay for women in the Civil Service, which followed quickly after a speech by Lord Gainford (Mr. J. A. Pease), in the House of Lords, says:—

"We have had a great many resignations in all Departments amongst the women lately, owing to bad conditions and wages. Many in receipt of wages considerably over the 30s. standard rate have found more congenial employment. We are to have a tribunal to consider our claims as a class, but I strongly suspect that this new Order has been rushed through before the Commons can commence investigations, and to make the case less troublesome for the Treasury."

This procedure is the one usually followed by the Government in dealing with grievances amongst their employees. Their motto appears to be "No action until we are forced," with the result that when they do act, the resentment among the workers has grown so strong that small improvements do little or nothing to alleviate it. In all rates of pay the Civil Service compares very unfavourably with private employment, and Lord Gainford quoted, among other cases, that of a girl whose weekly expenditure is 18s. 6d., and weekly wage (including war bonus) 16s. 6d.! He went on to say: "It seems to me that the Government, when they are only offering a payment of that kind, are almost placing a premium on immorality. With the recent rise in prices the Government are exposing girls of this kind to temptations to which, I submit, they ought not to be subjected."

We know that in most of these cases the excuse given by the Government is that all, or nearly all, of these girls who are earning such small wages live at

FRIDAY,
MARCH 16,
1917.

THE VOTE

ONE
PENNY
WEEKLY.

Organ of the Women's Freedom League.

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