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CONSTITUTION
OF THE
National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

RULES AND POLICY
As Amended at the Annual Council Meeting, held on
March 19th, 1910.

Offices:—

PARLIAMENT CHAMBERS,
GT. SMITH STREET,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.

RULES.

I. TITLE.

The title shall be the NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES.

II. OBJECT.

To obtain the Parliamentary franchise for women on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men.

III. METHODS.

(A) The promotion of the claim of women to the Parliamentary Vote by united action in Parliament and by all constitutional methods of agitation in the country.

(B) The organisation of Women's Suffrage Societies on a non-party basis.

IV. CONSTITUTION.

The Policy of the Union shall be decided by the General Council, which shall also annually elect the Executive Committee to manage the affairs of the Union.

V. AFFILIATION.

1. All non-party Societies which have Women's Suffrage for their sole object and signify their adherence to the object, methods, policy, and constitution of the Union shall be eligible to join the Union as Affiliated Societies.

2. An annual levy at the rate of threepence per member (with a minimum levy of five shillings for twenty members) due upon joining the Union and in January of each year, shall be made upon each Society in the Union.

VI. ASSOCIATE SOCIETIES.

1. All Societies adopting Women's Suffrage (as defined in Rule II.) as one of their principles, may join the Union as Associate Societies.

2. An annual fee of five shillings shall be paid by each Associate Society.

3. Each Associate Society shall receive a specimen copy of all literature issued by the Union and the services of a speaker when possible.

VII. GENERAL COUNCIL.

1. The General Council shall consist of the Executive Committee for the time being, and of duly elected representatives of the Societies which are affiliated to the Union.

2. Each of such Societies shall be entitled to send representatives to the Council, as follows:—

From 20 to 50 members .. 1 representative.

From 51 to 100 members .. 2 representatives.

And an additional representative for every subsequent completed 50 members.

3. The names and addresses of such representatives shall be sent to the Secretary of the Union by the Secretaries of the Societies, seven days before each meeting of the Council.

4. The General Council shall meet twice a year, once in January in London, and once in some other large town in the United Kingdom.

The Meeting in January shall be the Annual Meeting, and shall be called—

(A) To receive and adopt, if approved, the Report and Balance Sheet for the year.

(B) To elect by ballot the Officers of the Union and the Executive Committee.

(C) To elect the Vice-Presidents.

(D) To transact other business of which 21 days' notice has been given to the Secretary of the Union, and 14 days' notice by her to the Secretaries of the Societies. Business for which urgency is voted may also be considered.

At the half-yearly meeting business under (D) only shall be considered.

5. Special meetings of the General Council may be called by the Executive Committee, and shall be called at any time at the request of not less than one-twentieth of the Societies affiliated to the Union.

6. At such meetings of which 21 days' notice must be given to the Secretary of the Union and 14 days' notice to each Society, no other business shall be taken except that specified in the notice calling the meeting, unless urgency be voted.

VIII.

FEDERATIONS.

1. Federations shall be formed of the Affiliated Societies in defined areas, such areas to be arranged by the local Societies with the approval of the Executive Committee.

2. Each Federation shall appoint a Committee consisting of representatives from each Affiliated Society within its area, and of at least one member of the Executive Committee of the National Union, such member or members to have no vote on the Federation Committee unless representing a Society in the area.

3. The work of each Federation shall be :—

- (A) To promote the formation of new Societies in its area.
- (B) To perfect existing organisation.
- (C) To arrange joint meetings, and generally to secure co-operation among Societies in its area.

4. A Provincial Council shall be formed, consisting of the Executive Committee of the National Union and two members elected yearly by each Federation. This Council shall meet twice a year in the intervals between meetings of the General Council, and shall possess the same powers and functions with the exception of the power to change the policy of the National Union.

IX.

NOMINATIONS.

1. Candidates for election as Honorary Officers of the Union, or as members of the Executive Committee, must be nominated by a Society in the Union, such candidates being members of

some Society within the Union, and being pledged to put the interests of suffrage before party considerations, and to adhere solely to legal and constitutional methods of agitation. Such nominations, with the consent of the candidate nominated, shall be sent to the Secretary at least 28 days before the Annual Council Meeting.

2. Nomination papers, giving the attendances made by Officers and other members of the retiring Executive Committee willing to stand for re-election, together with the names, addresses and proposers of new candidates, shall be sent to each Society in the Union at least 21 days before the Annual Meeting.

X. OFFICERS.

The Honorary Officers of the Union shall be a President, Treasurer, and an Honorary Secretary or Secretaries.

XI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, the Treasurer, the Honorary Secretary or Secretaries, and 21 other members.

2. At its first meeting after election, the Executive Committee shall elect a Chairman for the year.

3. The Executive Committee shall, from time to time make its own by-laws, and shall have power to fill up any vacancies which may occur during its term of office.

4. The Executive Committee shall also appoint the paid Officers of the Union.

XII. ACCOUNTS.

The accounts shall be audited annually by an Auditor or Auditors appointed by the Council.

XIII. ALTERATION OF RULES.

No alteration shall be made in the rules except at the Annual Meeting or a Special Meeting of the Union, of which due notice has been given.

POLICY.

The Policy of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies is briefly contained in Rules II., III., IV., V., and VIII :—

To promote the claim of Women to the Parliamentary Vote on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men, by means of the organisation of Women's Suffrage Societies on a non-party basis.

To affiliate these Societies in one Union which shall bring the pressure of united action to bear in Parliament; and to organise them in Federations which shall be continually forming new Societies and which shall carry on the agitation throughout the country by every constitutional means within their power.

With regard to the Policy of one method of agitation—the work at Parliamentary Elections—the Council has from time to time given detailed instructions, and the present policy as laid down by them is as follows :—

(1) The National Union either runs a Women's Suffrage Candidate of its own; or,

(2) it supports the Candidate who declares himself the best friend to the cause of Women's Suffrage; or,

(3) where all the Candidates are equally favourable or unfavourable, it takes no side; but does propaganda work in the constituency throughout the Election.

It is laid down for general guidance regarding election work :—

(a) That no Candidate (except as provided in *c* below) be supported who has not given a satisfactory answer to the three questions asked of Parliamentary Candidates (see page 8), and made a satisfactory reference to Women's Suffrage in his Election Address.

(b) That in deciding which of rival Candidates, otherwise on an apparent equality as regards Women's Suffrage, shall be supported, account be taken not only of their election pledges, but of their previous record, especially in supporting or opposing Women's Suffrage.

(c) That very prominent opponents may be opposed, even if the other Candidate or Candidates are not completely satisfactory, and that noted supporters may be supported, even when the other Candidate has given satisfactory answers to these questions, provided such other Candidate is not known to be an equally warm friend of Women's Suffrage.

When the neutral, or what is called the "propaganda" attitude, is decided upon, the whole efforts of the workers are concentrated on advocating Women's Suffrage, the aim being so to press the subject upon the electors and upon the Candidates, that the latter shall consider they have received a mandate from their constituents to support any measure for the Enfranchisement of Women. In short, the Union's workers appeal to the electors to exact a *public* pledge from the Candidates, thereby making the new Member of Parliament feel that his constituents are at his back on this question.

When one of the Candidates is actively supported by the National Union, every effort is, of course, made to persuade the voters to vote for him *because he is the best friend of the Women's cause*—and this quite irrespective of his party views.

When a Candidate is actively opposed by the National Union because he is a known opponent of Women's Suffrage, the Union, in order to do their utmost to secure his defeat will support the best of the other Candidates—see par. c for general guidance. They consider that opposition to one Candidate is deprived of its full value unless at the same time another Candidate is actively supported.

In order to carry out the first proposal, *i.e.*, the running of Women's Suffrage Candidates, more effectively and generally than has hitherto been done, the Council passed on March 19th, 1910, the following three resolutions.

I. That it be an instruction to the National Union Executive and to the Affiliated Societies immediately to consider the possibility of running Women's Suffrage Candidates in suitable constituencies and to prepare the ground.

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- II. That the National Union at the next GENERAL ELECTION shall run Women's Suffrage Candidates in certain constituencies where the majority—Government or otherwise—is a narrow one and in constituencies otherwise suitable, these candidates pledging themselves to put Women's Suffrage before any other issue.
- III. That the BYE-ELECTION Policy of the N.U. shall include the running of Women's Suffrage Candidates in certain constituencies where the majority—Government or otherwise—is a narrow one; these Candidates to pledge themselves to put Women's Suffrage before any other issue.

Further to render the Election work more efficient the following resolutions were also passed:—

- IV. That in the opinion of this Council it is desirable that N.U. speakers should appear upon the platforms of Candidates who have answered the official questions in the affirmative and that the attendance of representatives of the N.U. at party meetings be organised to ensure the putting of a question on Women's Suffrage at question time either by an elector or by the representative herself.
- V. That the Voters' Petition no longer form part of the BYE-ELECTION work of the N.U., except in constituencies where it has not been already worked.
- VI. That instructions be given to organisers to arrange, if possible, a deputation of people of standing in the neighbourhood, to interview the Candidates and to put the questions, and that the deputation include a member of the Executive for the Federation in that area.
- VII. That the questions asked of Parliamentary Candidates at BYE-ELECTIONS shall be:—
- (1) "Will you declare yourself in your Election Address to be in favour of Women's Suffrage on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men?"
 - (2) "Will you pledge yourself to vote for a bill removing the political disability of sex?"
 - (3) "Will you oppose any further extension of the franchise to men unless it includes the extension of the franchise to women?"