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NATIONAL UNION OF
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
SOCIETIES

NORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE
SOCIETY

1st ANNUAL
REPORT
1909 — 1910

PRESIDENT:
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF LYTTON.

VICE-PRESIDENTS:
SIR GEORGE FORDHAM. MISS HOPE REA.
MRS. GREG. MISS TUKE.
MRS. H. D. PEARSALL. MRS. WEBB.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
CHAIRMAN:
MRS. G. P. NOWERS.
JOINT HON. SECRETARIES:
MRS. EDWARD SMITHSON, 42, Tilehouse St., Hitchin.
MISS. VILLIERS, Julians Road, Stevenage.

HON. TREASURER:
MRS. WATHEN, The Rectory, Welwyn.
MISS BLANCH, B.A.
MRS. E. O. FORDHAM.
MRS. W. A. FORDHAM.
MISS KING.
G. P. NOWERS, ESQ., M.A.
E. W. SMITHSON, ESQ.
MISS M. SUGDEN, Hon. Secretary for Letchworth.
R. W. TABOR, ESQ.
MISS A. VILLIERS.
MISS G. WEBB.
MISS E. WILKINSON.

THE OBJECT OF THE SOCIETY

Is to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for Women on the same conditions as it is or may be granted to Men. The Society seeks to achieve this object by holding meetings in the towns and villages of the district, and by acting as a centre for the collection and diffusion of information with regard to the progress of the movement in all parts of the country.

Methods—Constitutional, Educational, and Non-Party.

RULES.

- 1.—Approval of the objects and methods of the Society, and an annual subscription of not less than one shilling, shall constitute Membership.
- 2.—Those in sympathy with the objects of the Society may become Associates on paying one penny annually for Report.
- 3.—The affairs of the Society shall be managed by the Executive Committee and the Honorary Officers, five to form a quorum, with power to fill up casual vacancies during the year.
- 4.—The Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held within a month of the close of the financial year to receive the report and statement of accounts, and appoint the Executive Committee and Officers. Nominations for the above, and proposed alterations of Rules, shall be sent to the Hon. Secretary at least one fortnight before the date of the Annual Meeting. Members only shall have the right of voting. Subscriptions to become payable on 1st March.
- 5.—A Special General Meeting of the Society may be called at any time by the Committee, or at the written request of five members of the Society by the Honorary Secretary, subject to eight days' notice to members.

Report, 1909.

In the autumn of 1908 a few women of Hitchin, Letchworth, and Stevenage, met together to discuss how the Women's Suffrage cause might best be furthered in this district. Other informal gatherings were held, and the movement took definite shape at a private meeting at Stevenage, on February 16th, 1909, when it was resolved to form a Women's Suffrage Society for the North Hertfordshire parliamentary division, and to affiliate it to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, with 25 members as a beginning. It may be well to mention here that the Society now numbers 186 members.

The inaugural meeting, convened by invitation, and presided over by Mr. T. T. Greg, was attended by about 200 people from the surrounding district. The chief speaker was Miss Sterling, of the N.U.W.S.S., whose eloquent and convincing address was listened to with much appreciation, the resolution being carried with only three dissentients. Interesting speeches followed from Lady Constance Lytton, Mrs. E. O. Fordham, and Mrs. Wathen, and tea, during which opportunity was given for discussion, was then served by the kind arrangement of Stevenage friends.

A general meeting of members was held on March 12th, in the Workmen's Hall, Hitchin, when Mrs. E. O. Fordham took the chair. A constitution and rules were adopted, committee and honorary officers appointed, Mrs. Edward Smithson and Miss Villiers as Hon. Secretaries, Mrs. Wathen as Hon. Treasurer.

Since then, your Committee has met 10 times, and Sub-Committees 3 times.

During the year the following meetings were held:—

June 23rd.—LETCHWORTH. Drawing Room Meeting, Glaed Hame, (Mrs. H. D. Pearsall). Chair: Mrs. Nowers. Speaker: The Hon. Mrs. Bertrand Russell.

June 24th.—LETCHWORTH. Public Meeting, Howard Hall. Chair: Dr. Hector Munro. Speakers: The Hon. Mrs. Bertrand Russell, Mr. Wing, Mrs. Peters, Mr. Wickstead.

November 1st.—LETCHWORTH. Drawing Room Meeting, Overhill. Chair, Miss Hope Rea. Speaker: Miss Clementina Black.

Public Meeting, Howard Hall. Chair: Mr. J. Wickstead. Speakers: Miss Clementina Black, Mr. Bond Holding, Mrs. E. O. Fordham, Mr. Gilbert Smith (in opposition).

November 11.—HITCHIN. Public Meeting, Old Town Hall. Chair: Rev. J. Frome Wilkinson. Speakers: Lady Gibb, Mrs. Rackham.

December 2nd.—ASHWELL. Public Meeting, Chair: Mr. Wolverley A. Fordham. Speaker: Mrs. E. O. Fordham.

December 3rd.—LETCHWORTH. Women's Meeting, Co-operative Hall. Chair: Mrs. E. A. Hunter. Speaker: Miss Helga Gill.

December 6th.—ASHWELL BURY. Drawing Room Meeting. Speaker: Miss Helga Gill.

December 6th.—ODSEY. Public Meeting. Chair: Mrs. E. O. Fordham. Speakers: Miss Helga Gill, Mrs. Wolverley Fordham.

December 8th.—ROYSTON. Public Meeting, Town Hall. Chair: Mrs. E. O. Fordham. Speakers: The Hon. Mrs. D. A. Bevan, Rev. H. Moulson and Miss H. Gill.

December 10th.—HITCHIN. Drawing Room Meeting, 42, Tilehouse St. Chair: Mrs. Edward Smithson. Speaker: Miss Helga Gill.

December 11.—OLD KNEBWORTH. Public Meeting, The Hall. Chair: Mrs. Edward Smithson. Speaker: Miss Helga Gill.

December 11th.—STEVENAGE. Meeting by invitation of the Misses Villiers. Speaker: Miss H. Gill.

December 13.—STEVENAGE. Invitation Meeting, The Rookery, (Mrs. Douglas Joy). Chair: Mrs. E. Smithson. Speaker: Miss Helga Gill.

At all these meetings the Resolution in favour of Women's Suffrage was carried either unanimously, or with a very few dissentients, and from the Letchworth public meeting on Nov. 1st, a largely signed petition was sent to parliament. At the Hitchin and Ashwell meetings considerable disturbance was caused, with annoyance both to speakers and audience by a band of unruly young men and boys. It is intended to take careful measures to prevent such interruptions in future.

ORGANIZATION.

The supply of organizers from the National Union is by no means equal to the demand; hence we were unable to obtain such help till December last, when Miss Helga Gill, a young Norwegian lady, spent a fortnight in the district, and addressed several meetings, her fresh and original style of speaking being much appreciated. This year we hope to obtain the services of an experienced organizer during the early summer, as this is by far the most favourable time for work in country places.

The need of such quiet educational work can be understood only by those who, having canvassed for the voters' petition during the election, have come to realise the mixture of ignorance and misapprehension about our question which prevails among a large part of the public.

The Quarterly Council of the N.U.W.S.S. held at Nottingham on July 4th, was attended by Mrs. Edward

Smithson, Hon. Secretary, as delegate from this Society. The Professional and Industrial Women's Suffrage Demonstration held in London, at Queen's Hall, on July 7th, was attended by Miss S. A. Villiers, as Delegate, and on December 6th, Mrs. Nowers and Miss Annie Villiers, attended the Special Council Meeting of the N.U.W.S.S. called to determine the General Election policy of the Union.

In October last your Committee were requested by the Council of the N.U.W.S.S. to state publicly their agreement with two resolutions passed at the Council's Quarterly Meeting at Cardiff. The following were accordingly published in five local newspapers:—

1. That the Council of the N.U.W.S.S. strongly condemns the use of violence in political propaganda, and, being convinced that the true way of advancing the cause of Women's Suffrage is by energetic law-abiding propaganda, re-affirms its adherence to constitutional principles, and instructs the Executive Committee and the Societies to communicate this resolution to the press.

2. That, while condemning methods of violence, the Council of the N.U.W.S.S. also protests most earnestly against the manner in which the whole agitation has been handled by the responsible Government.

GENERAL ELECTION AND PETITION FROM ELECTORS.

In July last your Committee addressed letters to Dr. Hillier and Mr. Fox-Pitt, the adopted candidates for this division, enquiring their views upon our question. Dr. Hillier expressed himself as opposed to the extension of the franchise to women, Mr. Fox-Pitt as not opposed to the principle, but declining to give any sort of pledge in favour, practically on account of his objection to the action of the "Militant" party. Dr. Hillier's election address contained no allusion whatever to Women's Suffrage, while Mr. Fox-Pitt, though "broadly speaking, in favour of removing sex-disabilities, reserved to himself a perfectly free hand." In accordance with the policy of the National Union in the case of candidates who decline to give a specific pledge, your Committee decided to limit themselves to propaganda work, and to procuring signatures to the electors' petition in favour of Women's Suffrage.

Recognising the fact that our cause cannot be won till the majority of the present masculine electorate is convinced of its justice, the National Union has, through its 114 societies, made this petition its chief business during the Election. The North Hertfordshire Society being still in its infancy, it was found impracticable to find workers on polling day for more than 3 of the 37 polling stations in the division, these being Ashwell, Letchworth and Stevenage, but there was much private canvassing for signatures beforehand. At

Stevenage the polling station was "manned" during the greater part of the day, and at Letchworth the whole day by a band of energetic workers, ably organised by Miss Marie Sugden. Four Letchworth workers were drafted off to help at Ashwell. The moral and physical discomfort of the work is great, but great also is its educational value for those who work as well as for those who sign.

The number of signatures is as follows:—

Ashwell.....	67
Hitchin.....	82
Stevenage.....	160
Letchworth	403
Other places.....	25

Total 737

The only Bill dealing with Women's Suffrage, which was brought before parliament in 1909, was the Hon. Geoffrey Howard's Adult Suffrage Bill, read for the second time on March 19th. The numbers and analysis of voting are as follows:—

For 159, Against 124. Majority in favour, 35.

MAJORITY.		MINORITY.	
Liberal	108	Liberal	46
Labour	32	Nationalist	2
Nationalist	19	Conservative & Unionist	74

No further progress was made with the Bill. It is interesting to compare these numbers with those voting in 1908, for Mr. Stanger's Bill removing the disability of sex and marriage, and enfranchising women on the same terms as men. Then the Ayes were 271, the Noes 92, majority in favour 179.

It would obviously be improper for a Society like ours to take either side on a party question like Adult Suffrage. But we may fairly point out how much larger a measure of parliamentary support was given to the so-called "limited" bill of 1908 (Mr. Stanger's), than to the Adult Suffrage Bill of 1909. And no one can be surprised at this result who realises the complication of issues involved in tacking on to the removal of a sex disability the highly controversial question of an enormous increase of the male electorate.

While holding a very decided opinion as to the procedure likely to be most advantageous to our cause, we nevertheless, render earnest thanks to those who honestly advocate the removal of sex disabilities, on any lines whatever.

The following statistics we believe to be approximately accurate, though we do not guarantee them:

Number of candidates who mentioned Women's Suffrage

favourably in their election addresses, 208. Of these 26 are described as "Adult only," or "weak."

Number of Members of Parliament who have expressed themselves in favour: 374. Of these:—

201 are Liberals.
112 „ Conservative or Unionists.
39 „ Labour.
22 „ Nationalists.

We believe there is much ground for hope in these figures. But we need a combination of wise tactics with unceasing work, if Women's enfranchisement is to be accomplished in our time. Especially desirable is it that the more politically minded among us should exercise self-control. Women who demand the franchise are naturally women who care much about social and political questions. Without the vote they cannot put their opinions in practice with decisiveness and effect, for they desire to influence Members of Parliament directly, and are not satisfied with representation at second-hand. To such women we appeal to stand steadfast *now* in placing the claims of Suffrage before those of Party. As one of our leaders has said "The real lever which lies to the hand, is that women of all political parties should abstain from working politically for those who, individually or as a party, refuse to consider this reform in the range of practical politics."

BALANCE SHEET, 1909-1910.

RECEIPTS.			EXPENDITURE.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Subscriptions & Donations	19	10 0	Affiliation Fees (N.U. W.S.S.)	1	17 6
Collections at Meetings...	9	11 5½	Hire of Halls, Speakers' Expenses, etc.	11	3 3
Sale of Literature		12 5	Literature	3	3 0½
Special Effort (Donation to N.U.W.S.S.)	3	0 0	Printing and Stationery...	8	6 8½
Special Grant from N.U.W.S.S.	5	0 0	Postage.....	1	12 4½
			Organiser's Expenses ...	1	10 0
			Special Effort	3	0 0
			General Election Expenses	4	2 6
			Cheque Book		2 6
				34	17 10½
			Balance in hand.....	2	16 0
				£37	13 10½
				£37	13 10½

EDITH I. WATHEN,
Hon. Treasurer.

Examined and found correct,
JOHN H. DEARDS.
Feb. 19th, 1910.

Treasurer's Report.

The first year of a new Society is always an anxious one, financially and otherwise. Those who study the Report will, I think, agree that, considering the amount of work done during the past year, we have managed well to come out with a balance, however small, in our favour. There are several causes for this. Speakers at our meetings have been most kind in only asking for their expenses; I believe that in no case has a fee been paid.

The salary of the Organiser, Miss Helga Gill, was paid by the National Union, and her expenses amounted to little, owing to the kind hospitality of several members of the Committee.

People have been very good in lending their houses for the purposes of drawing-room meetings, thus saving the Society much expense. Donations have been made on several occasions by members and others towards the expenses of special meetings.

There is no outlay over what one may call "office expenses." The charges incidental to committee meetings, etc., have been personally defrayed by the Committee.

The National Union gave us a generous grant of £5 towards our expenses connected with the General Election. Without it the work would necessarily have been much curtailed.

So in several ways we have been fortunate during the past year.

I suppose, however, that it would be quite unorthodox for a Treasurer's Report to conclude without an appeal for more funds. Naturally, the more money we have, the more work we can do. But the way in which we should like more money to come is by enrolling more members. We feel sure that any who can afford to contribute more than the minimum 1/- subscription will do so, but if every member will become a missionary and bring another member along, that is what will do most good to the Society. For we must not depend on the energy and proselytising efforts of a few, but on the sympathetic co-operation of all.

MEMBERS' NAMES & SUBSCRIPTIONS.

NOTE.—The names of all persons who have joined this Society up to the last week of February, 1910, are included in the following list. Some have been asked not to pay their Subscriptions till after March 1st, 1910, and the Subscriptions of some who have joined late in the financial year will hold good for 1910.

ASHWELL.

s. d.		s. d.	
Bailey, Mrs.	1 0	Frost, Mrs. G.	1 0
Chambers, Miss	1 0	Frost, Miss	1 0
Copping, Mrs.	1 0	Huggins, Mrs.	1 0
Dukes, Mrs.	1 0	Pack, Miss S.	1 0
Edwards, Miss	1 0	Titterton, Miss	1 0
Fordham, Mrs. E. O.	5 0	Woodforde, Mrs.	1 0
Fordham, Mrs. W. A.	5 0		

HITCHIN.

s. d.		£ s. d.	
Abbott, Miss	2 6	Payne, Mrs.	1 0
Bixley, Miss	1 0	Pepper, Miss	1 0
Brown, Miss Johnson	1 0	Smithson, Mr. E.	10 0
Gatward, Miss	2 6	Smithson, Mrs. E.	1 0 0
Hatch, Mr. H. F.	1 0	Taylor, Mrs. F.	5 0
Hatch, Mrs.	1 0	Vobes, Miss.	1 0
Henderson, Mrs.	1 0	Webb, Mrs.	1 1 0
Impey, Mrs.	1 0	Webb, Miss.	5 0
Kelly, Miss	1 0	Webb, Miss G.	5 0
King, Miss	1 0	Wigfull, Miss	1 0
Lucas, Miss Mariana	1 0		

KNEBWORTH.

s. d.		s. d.	
Avery, Miss.		Staines, Mrs.	1 0
Hughes, Mrs. St. John.	1 0	Staines, Mrs. Howard	1 0
Masson, Miss	2 0	Welland, Miss	1 0
Muirhead, Mrs.		Welland, Miss L.	1 0
Muirhead, Miss		Williams, Mrs.	2 0
Muirhead, Miss E.			

LETCHWORTH.

s. d.		s. d.	
Armstrong, Miss.	1 0	Layard, Mrs.	1 0
Bates, Miss	2 0	Lee, Miss.	1 0
Binns, Mrs. H. B.	1 0	Lloyd, Miss	1 0
Blair, Miss	1 0	Mackie, Miss	2 0
Blair, Miss F.	1 0	Marsh, Mrs.	1 0
Blanch, Miss	1 0	Martin, Mrs. G.	1 0
Booth, Miss.	1 0	Martin, Mrs. H.	1 0
Borissow, Miss	2 0	McVitie, Miss.	1 0
Boyd, Miss	1 0	Munro, Dr. H.	5 0
Branson, Mrs.	2 0	Napier, Miss	1 0
Briggs, Mr. J.	1 0	Nowers, Mr. G. P.	2 6
Brown, Miss	1 0	Nowers, Mrs.	2 6
Bullock, Miss	1 0	Parker, Mrs. B.	1 0
Burlingham, Mrs.	1 0	Parker, Mrs. C.	1 0
Burlingham, Miss	1 0	Parker, Mrs. S.	1 0
Bush, Miss	2 0	Pearsall, Mr. H. D.	1 0
Clapham, Mrs.	5 0	Pearsall, Mrs.	1 0
Colebrook, Miss.	1 0	Pearson, Mrs.	1 0
Cowlishaw, Mrs.	1 0	Peters, Mrs.	1 0
Craven, Miss	1 0	Pittuck, Mr. W. E.	1 0
Deakin, Miss	1 0	Platts, Rev. C.	1 0
Dent, Mrs. H.	1 0	Rea, Miss Hope	2 6
Dickins, Mr. A.	1 0	Reckitt, Miss	10 0
Docker, Mrs.	1 0	Reynolds, Mrs.	1 0
Firth, Mrs.	1 0	Rogers, Mrs.	1 0
Firth, Miss	1 0	Russell, Mr. J.	2 6
Foxley, Mrs. A.	1 0	Russell, Mrs.	2 6
Foxley, Miss	1 0	Schofield, Miss	1 0
Gardner, Mrs. (A)	1	Starr, Miss	1 0
Gilford, Dr. Marion	5 0	Stevens, Miss	1 0
Grundy, Mrs. (A)	1	Stibbard, Miss	1 0
Harben, Mrs.	2 6	Sugden, Mrs.	2 6
Harben, Miss	1 0	Sugden, Miss E.	1 0
Heath, Miss.	1 0	Sugden, Miss M.	1 0
Heazell, Miss	1 0	Sugden, Miss M. K.	1 0
Holding, Mr. H. Bond.	2 0	Sumner, Miss	1 0
Holding, Mrs.	2 0	Tabor, Mr. R. W.	2 6
Holding, Miss.	1 0	Tabor, Mrs.	1 0
Howard, Mrs. E.	1 0	Tillyard, Miss.	1 0
Howard, Miss.	1 0	Tillyard, Miss A.	1 0
Hungerford, Miss	1 0	Todhunter, Miss.	1 0
Hunt, Miss (A)	1	Trengrouse, Miss	1 0
Hunter, Mr. E. A.	1 0	Waddington, Mrs.	1 0
Hunter, Mrs.	1 0	Wicksteed, Mr. J. H.	1 0
James, Mr. J. D.	1 0	Wicksteed, Mrs.	1 0
Jenner, Mrs.	1 0	Wilkinson, Miss.	2 6
King, Mr. L.	1 0	Wilkinson, Miss E.	1 0
Kitson, Mrs.		Wilks, Miss.	2 0
Knight, Mrs.	1 0	Wing, Mr. E.	2 0

STEVENAGE.

s. d.		s. d.	
Apted, Mrs.....	1 0	King, Miss H.....	2 6
Beaver, Miss	1 0	Mare, Mrs.....	1 0
Bertram, Mrs. J.....	5 0	Mullis, Mrs.....	6 0
Carling, Mrs.	3 0	Oldham, Miss.....	2 6
Collinson, Mrs.	1 0	Scrivener, Mrs.	1 0
Collinson, Miss	2 0	Snook, Mrs.....	1 0
Drayson, Mrs.....	1 0	Villiers, Miss	10 6
Dunn, Mrs. G. B.	3 0	Villiers, Miss A.....	10 6
Dyson, Mrs.....	2 0	Villiers, Miss S. A.....	1 0
Gare, Mrs.	1 0	Warner, Mrs.....	2 0
Jowitt, Miss L.....	3 6	Wurr, Mr. P.	1 0
Joy, Mrs. Douglas	1 0		

WELWYN.

s. d.		s. d.	
Chambers, Miss	1 0	Parr, Mrs. Cecil.....	10 0
Filmore, Mr. S.		Shaw, Mrs. Bernard	
Filmore, Mrs. S.....		Thomas, Mrs. Beach.....	2 6
Holden, Mr. A.		Wathen, Rev. P. M.....	1 0
Holden, Mr. C.		Wathen, Mrs.....	5 0
Holden, Mrs.			

OTHER PLACES.

s. d.		s. d.	
Balfour, Lady Betty		Greg, Mrs. T. T.....	1 0
WOKING.		BUNTINGFORD.	
Bevan, Hon. Mrs.	10 6	Wilkinson, Rev. J. Frome	1 0
ROYSTON.		BARLEY.	
Edgell, Mrs.....	1 0		
BALDOCK.			

DONATIONS.

s. d.		s. d.	
Anon.....	10 0	Lytton, Lady C.....	1 0 0
Binns-Smith, Mrs. W. ...	15 0	Smithson, Mrs. E.....	6 6
Fordham, Mrs. W. A. ...	1 0 0		