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I.

The History of the Women Teachers' Demand for Equal Pay.

A comprehensive history of the demand for equal pay for work of equal value for men and women workers, and the organised efforts to implement this demand in England alone, let alone in the wider world, would fill several volumes. In a small and compact monograph such as this, too much detail would be out of place. The facts, if studied, would lend considerable support to the materialistic conception of history as the exploitation of one half of humanity, and the constant drag of custom on progress.

Looking backward, we study records of the efforts of Emma Patterson to found the Women's Trade Union League in 1877. Emma Patterson clearly saw the need for women to organise themselves in order to secure better conditions in the economic sphere. She lived in an age when the sun had but lately set upon the struggles of the workers to be permitted to organise themselves into trade unions because they believed that direct representatives of the workers would carry more weight with employers, and would be better able to state their own case than such benevolent aristocrats as Lord Shaftesbury. Emma Patterson felt that as women workers had been forced into a section by themselves because of differential treatment, they could establish their right to be treated on a level with male workers only by organising in women's unions and stating their own case.

In 1883 we find Clementina Black of the Women's Trades Council firmly asserting at the Trades Union Council that, "where women do the same work as men, they shall receive equal pay". She was seconded in her resolution by a delegate

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from the Midland Trades Federation, one Mrs. Juggins. This shows that even in its initial stage this agitation for equal pay was not the work of a group of academic and advanced thinkers in London, but was the expression of the needs of the millions of women who were being exploited in the rapidly developing midland and northern towns as a bad result of the Industrial Revolution.

EARLY HISTORY OF DEMAND FOR EQUAL PAY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.

On May 21st, 1908, the Annual Meeting of the Association of Post Office Women Clerks placed Equal Opportunity and Equal Pay on its programme. In 1910 the Civil Service (Women) Bill to give women equal pay and equal entry with men was introduced into the House of Commons twice in successive sessions, but in neither case did the Bill get beyond the second reading. As a result of the publicity gained for the subject by the activity of women civil servants from 1911 to 1913, equal pay was conceded to staffs under National Health Insurance and Unemployment Insurance Services. The Royal Commission on the Civil Service was appointed in 1912 and the Association of Post Office Women Clerks and of Women Clerks in the Board of Education gave evidence in support of their claim to equality. The Report of the Commission was published in 1914 and 16 of the 19 Commissioners expressed views in favour of Equal Pay. Active work for Equal Pay was suspended during the War. In 1920 the National Whitley Council for the Civil Service was set up. There is now an All-Service Programme (endorsed by the Whitley Council) which includes Equal Pay as one of the objects to be attained, there is also a Civil Service Equal Pay Committee which has done important work amongst members of the House of Commons.

EARLY HISTORY IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

In the teaching profession we have an equally good case for equal pay. Men and women teachers enter the profession having passed the same qualifying examinations, and having spent two or three years often at a mixed college before qualifying, they then emerge into the profession and often teach in adjacent classrooms in mixed schools. Here is a clear case of work of equal value.

In 1904, a group of men and women in the National Union of Teachers formed themselves into an Equal Pay League. The Secretary of the group was a Mr. Tate of Birmingham. The object of the group was to work generally for an improvement in teachers' salaries, and specifically for the immediate "adoption by the N.U.T. of a scale of salaries embodying the principle of equal pay for men and women teachers".

Equal pay first appeared on the Agenda of an N.U.T. Conference at Portsmouth in 1904, when the motion in its favour was lost by a large majority. Between then and 1914 many efforts were made to persuade the N.U.T. to work for this reform. At the N.U.T. Conference at Lowestoft in 1914, a motion in favour of equal pay was defeated. At the N.U.T. Conference in 1916 an amendment to incorporate equal pay in a proposed salary scale was lost. Finally, the matter was discussed at the N.U.T. Conference at Cambridge in 1918. As a result of this discussion it was decided to take a Referendum of members' views on this question.

The Referendum asked "Are you in favour of equal pay for men and women teachers of the same professional status?" and the voting took place between March 22nd and April 7th, 1919. The result was broadcast at the Cheltenham Conference in 1919. Figures were; For : 35,004; Against : 15,039; Majority For : 19,965.

This encouraging result made equal pay the official policy of the N.U.T., although this policy was contradicted by prominent officials in their contributions to "The Schoolmaster", the journal of the N.U.T. From 1919 until the acceptance of the Burnham Scales in 1922, equal pay was embodied in the model salary scales printed in "The Schoolmaster".

Meanwhile, in its struggles to do active work on behalf of Equal Pay, the Equal Pay League, which had by this time become the National Federation of Women Teachers, was drawing apart from the N.U.T. and becoming an independent women's organisation pledged to secure equality in the teaching profession. Finally in 1920, the year that saw the first Resolution in Parliament on the subject of equal pay, the Federation showed its independence at the Bath Conference by changing its name to the "National Union of Women Teachers".

The National Union of Teachers continued to keep equal pay as a paper policy only, but an increasing number of its members, learning the wisdom of working separately, joined the National Union of Women Teachers. Finally, the N.U.T. accepted the Burnham Scales which established unequal pay and from 1922 they have emphasised the fact that the Burnham Scales must be preserved at all costs, and that no demand must be made for equal pay, as the time is not yet ripe.

The National Union of Women Teachers has passed a Resolution in favour of equal pay at each of its annual conferences, and has given wide publicity to its Resolutions. The subject has been dealt with in successive Presidential addresses, public meetings in favour of equal pay have been held up and down the country, local deputations have been organised, election campaigns to test the feeling of candidates have been carried through, and the historic deputation composed of Members of Parliament, teachers, and members of the general public was received by the Board of Education. In these and many other ways the N.U.W.T. has shown the world that women in the teaching profession resent having their work under-valued as much as do enlightened women in many other professions. From 1920 to 1932 the N.U.W.T. made equal pay a topic of conversation among the general public, and it was fast becoming not a subject for humour, but a serious social question. Many thoughtful people were seeing the result of a supply of cheap female labour in the highly mechanised modern industry, and were feeling that, if men allowed women to be exploited, they themselves would be undercut, and eventually have their wages dragged down to the level of the women, or be driven out of industry.

RECENT HISTORY. A LESSON IN UNITY AND CO-OPERATION.

In 1932 the National Association of Women Civil Servants was formed by the amalgamation of two older associations, both of which had always stood firmly for Equality, and it placed amongst the foremost of its objects the securing of equal pay in the Civil Service.

The Executive of the National Association of Women Civil Servants convened a Conference of organisations of women outside the Civil Service to explore the possibility of concerted action. This Conference took place on Decem-

ber 13th, 1933, and representatives of thirteen societies attended and agreed without dissentients to support the women civil servants in any campaign that they might decide to launch, in favour of equal pay.

They also decided that the time was opportune to organise a public meeting in favour of this principle. A large public meeting was held in the Caxton Hall on March 12th, 1934, when equal pay was advocated by men and women speakers. Thirty supporting associations allowed their names to appear on the notices advertising this meeting. The National Union of Teachers was invited to allow its name to appear in support, but refused. The National Union of Women Teachers and the Incorporated Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools showed that women teachers did support the Civil Service demands.

Much quiet work followed. In the autumn of 1934 the Joint Committee on Women in the Civil Service met a group of eighty Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and discussed equal pay. The Joint Committee was composed of representatives of societies outside the Civil Service who were willing to help in the fight for equality. The N.U.W.T. was represented on this Joint Committee.

The National Union of Women Teachers was holding a series of public meetings up and down the country in order to mobilise public opinion before a revision of the Burnham Scales.

In 1935 a Parliamentary Committee, under the Chairmanship of Col. Clifton Brown, M.P., was formed.

In 1935 Col. Clifton Brown introduced the subject in the House of Commons, and opinion there was much more favourable than women's societies had hoped. This showed that all the preliminary work was having some effect.

In November 1935, an energetic election campaign was carried on to convert parliamentary candidates to the principle of equal pay.

On November 25th, the N.U.W.T. held a large public meeting in the Friends' House in favour of equal pay. There were men and women speakers, and a large number of supporting societies sent delegates and allowed their names to

appear on the notices. A very active press campaign was carried on in national and local papers, and meetings of other associations were offered speakers on equal pay.

The National Association of Women Civil Servants carried on the work and ran a meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, which was addressed by four Members of Parliament.

The Parliamentary Committee under the chairmanship of Col. Clifton Brown renewed its activity, and it was fortunately found possible for the "Staff Side's" Parliamentary group of Civil Service representatives to co-operate with this Committee, and thus the Civil Service presented a more united front on this question than the teachers' associations.

Miss Ellen Wilkinson won a place in the ballot for private members' motions on the Civil Estimates, and she courageously announced her intention of using her opportunity in the cause of equal pay.

Much preliminary work was done between her announcement and the debate in the House of Commons. On the eve of the debate, a well-attended meeting was held for M.P.s only, at which the position was explained by the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Women in the Civil Service and the President of the National Association of Women Civil Servants.

The result of this combined effort was seen in the result of the debate on April 1st, 1936. After four hours' discussion on the question of equal pay in the common classes of the Civil Service, the House divided and the vote went in favour of the motion; the Government, whose official spokesman opposed the motion, although it was supported by members of all parties, was defeated by eight votes in the presence of the Whips.

The Government refused to acknowledge its defeat, and the Prime Minister appealed for a vote of confidence, allowing a fresh debate for the purpose. As the discussion on this second occasion also related to urgent questions of foreign policy this clever piece of tactics succeeded; he secured a majority vote, and so evaded the issue. This method of evading the consequences of a democratic vote, by a quibble on a point of procedure, cannot obliterate the moral victory for equal pay, and leaves the Government with a discredited record.

It was interesting to note that at the House of Commons debate one N.U.T. member, Mr. Cove, was not present, and one, Mr. Morgan Jones, voted against the Government, but did not speak, apparently forgetting the Referendum of 1918 and all the women teachers whose case he could have put. Thus, throughout this campaign, it has been left to the N.U.W.T. to speak for teachers. Despite the defeat of the Government of the day, the N.U.T. still says it is not the time to ask for equal pay, and on 10th July, 1936, Mr. Ellis, the N.U.T. representative on the Kent Education Committee, opposed a resolution in favour of equal pay that was before this Committee, and his speech was reported in the "Dartford Chronicle", 10th July, 1936.

Thus we see that in the Civil Service the women's association led the way in effective demand for equal pay and secured last minute support from other Civil Service associations of both men and women. In the teaching profession, the N.U.W.T. and the Incorporated Association of Assistant Mistresses have been the only ones to raise a voice, and unity has not yet been achieved in advocating justice. In 1883, two women realized that women must organise to obtain Equal Pay. In 1936, the organised efforts of women defeated in the House of Commons the Government's opposition to equal pay. It is time the demand for equal pay itself became history and so really ended this chapter.

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