

Flat 3,
35 Shaw St.,
Petersham.
7/11/48.

Recd. 9 Nov " L.L.L.
Ans 10 " "

Dear Mrs. How-Martyn,

I can't thank you enough for sending on that material on women in parliament. It was most useful in the paper I gave on women in politics. I intended to write before I went away, but there was the usual last minute rush.

I feel that it was a most successful conference. We got a good press, which is important for our general publicity. There was the great benefit all delegates derived from meeting women from other States, and the feeling one got of the work going on all over Australia. I am enclosing the programme, in case you did not get one from Melbourne.

It was wonderful to have had the message from Mrs. Corbett Ashby. It came through very clearly and we all felt inspired by her greetings and her comments on the work of the Federation and the Alliance. A message of greeting from Judge Dorothy Kenyan had been recorded and was heard directly after Mrs. Corbett Ashby. These messages gave our delegates a link with feminists abroad and I know that enthusiasm will be deepened and bonds strengthened as a result.

There is one matter you might be able to clear up. When the New Zealand High Commissioner spoke he referred to N.Z. as the first country to grant women the right to vote. This was challenged by, I think, Mrs. Rapke, who with some other delegates, said that Finland was the first. I was at the back of the hall and could not gather on what they based this view. Now, I had read ~~xx~~ recently, an article on the feminist movement in Finland which said that last year, 1947 they celebrated the 40th anniversary of the granting of the suffrage to women, and that in that first election, 1907, 19 women were returned to Parliament. The article also referred to New Zealand as being the first country to grant the vote to women, but stated that Finland was the first country in Europe to do so, and that Finland in 1907 had gone one better than N.Z. and became the first country to grant women the right to stand for parliamentary election. It is there that the mistake may have arisen. I did not get a chance, subsequently, to speak to Mrs. Rapke, but would like to clear up the question, and thought you would probably know. One of the Victorian papers featured the incident, with a heading "Women put Him Right".

Do you keep figures of the percentage of women and men who avail themselves of the vote in countries where voting is non-compulsory? I am attending a class at the moment, organised by the Institute of Political Science. The subject is democracy, and in the notes under discussion there

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is a reference to women which I take as a reflection on their ability to think and vote intelligently. I won't go into details, as the particular statement won't come up for discussion, as we have moved on to other aspects. But I wanted to get some facts on women's proven interest in political affairs. The New Zealand High Commissioner said that at the last elections, under a non-compulsory voting system, ninety-one percent of those enrolled voted - and enrolment was compulsory. This seems a very high figure compared with America, for instance. Are women's percentages in other countries much lower than men's. Using facts such as these is the only possible way of countering general statements about women's political intelligence.

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the same

I think, if you are well enough, I should call and have a talk with you soon. Margo will always give me a ring and fix a day, but only if you feel up to it.

Again many thanks for your help,

Sincerely,

Eileen Powell