

FROM MRS. F. W. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

Ar/3478
87, Clement's Inn, W.C.

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Entrance 3 & 4, Clement's Inn.
Telephone: 1314 Holborn.
Telegrams: "Pethlawro—Estrand London."

Mrs Cavendish Bentinck,
78, Harley Street,
W.

Dear Mrs Cavendish Bentinck:-

How really magnificent you are. I congratulate you warmly on your resource and on your pluck. You will find a great deal of the information that you want in the Leading Article in "Votes for Women" this week. ^{which I send by post herewith} By the way the first part of that Article is due to you for calling my attention especially to Lord Justice Buckley's speech. The last part of the Article that which deals with the substitution of legal discretion for equal justice has been in my mind for a very long time and I think it is one of the most serious indications of the degradation of public opinion and public morality in this country.

Mr Lansbury and Sylvia Pankhurst were arrested for precisely the same offence and were subjected to precisely the same procedure. They were brought before the magistrate for making an inciting speech, they were not sentenced for the speech itself, but a demand was made upon them to bind themselves over to keep the peace. That demand they refused to comply with, they were sentenced each to three months imprisonment. They entered prison in the category of "unconvicted" prisoners, that is

to say, if either of them had given a pledge to abstain from any action likely to lead to a breach of the peace they could at any minute have left prison. Instead of giving the demanded promise they both adopted the hunger strike, they were both released under the Cat and Mouse Act, but Mr Lansbury has been left free and unmolested. He has addressed meetings, he has appeared on Sylvia's platform, he has repeated over and over again the precise formula of incitement for which he was originally arrested, but the Government think it better not to touch him. Sylvia has been again and again arrested. Sometimes an attempt to arrest her has been made before she has opened her lips, simply because she dares to appear on a public platform. Nothing could be more flagrant and utterly cynical than the distinction made between them.

The case of Annie Kenney does not lend itself to the same comparison, because she was arrested on the Conspiracy charge, and there is no doubt as a matter of argument she was concerned with the militant doings of the suffragettes. She is a bad case to argue on. But you stand on absolutely unshakeable ground if you take the case of Miss Agnes Lake. Miss Agnes Lake has never spoken in public, has never done any militant action whatsoever, she was a recent employee of the W.S.P.U., she was taken on as the Advertisement Manager of "The Suffragette". She did nothing but canvass for advertisements for that Paper, yet she has been arrested and imprisoned arrested again, and is now arrested for the third time. She is no more guilty of political offence or any other offence at all than is the advertisement manager of the Pall Mall Gazette which publishes openly incitement to rebellion in connection with the movement of

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cont

of Sir Edward Carson. Such a case as the imprisonment of an advertisement manager of a Paper is absolutely unheard of. Only less flagrant is the case of Miss Kerr who also had never made a speech, written an Article or taken part in militant action. She was simply the business head of the secretarial office.

Connolly, the leader of the Dublin Transport Union was released unconditionally upon adopting the Hunger Strike, Larkin was put in the First Division and released because of his influence upon electors. Miss Kerr was allowed to starve for nine days in prison and was rearrested the very first day she went back to the work which is her livelihood.

You cannot go wrong on these three cases. In my opinion you had much better not mention other names even if you deal generally with the cases. If McKenna can trip you up on facts, he will and in this way will get the last word. Of course, I will keep the whole matter absolutely private but I should like to hear afterwards how you get on.

Yours,

with warm greetings

E. Pettit Lawrence
