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M.P. FOR MID-CANTERBURY Farming Is Her Chief Concern

THOUGH she is the fourth woman M.P. in the history of New Zealand, Mrs. A. N. Grigg is the first to represent an agricultural electorate. A large proportion of her maiden speech was devoted to wheat-growing problems, and in a recent interview with *The Listener* she spoke earnestly of the farmer's difficulties at a time when there is a demand for increased production and at the same time a shortage of labour and oil fuel. And then there are the farmers' wives.

"The position doesn't seem to be so bad in my own electorate of Mid-Canterbury, where the farmers are mainly sheep or wheat, and where when the husband leaves for camp there is usually a competent man to look after the place. But I am concerned with the problem of labour for dairy farms. In so many cases there's nothing for it but a return to the bad old days when the women and children got up at four and worked till breakfast in the milking sheds."

Mrs. Grigg expressed her disappointment at the fact that relatively few women had enrolled in the Women's Land Army. "Special courses at Lincoln and Massey Agricultural Colleges were offered to girls who wanted to take up farm work," she said, "but as only one application was received the scheme had to be abandoned. Yet a strong Women's Land Army would go half-way to solving our problem of increased production."

For Soldiers' Wives

After farming Mrs. Grigg's chief parliamentary interests are housing, health and education. She is especially concerned with housing as it affects soldiers' wives with children. "Women who are living on very small allotments cannot afford to pay the rent asked for a Government house even if there were Government houses available," she explained. "Yet they've got to live somewhere. At present I'm trying to see if it would be possible to recondition older houses on a large scale and make them available at a low rental. Of course they wouldn't be nearly as nice as new houses, but they might do till after the war when large scale building would again be possible."

In unison with Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Dreaver, Mrs. Grigg recently raised her voice in the House in support of uniforms for women police. We asked if this was a proof of the party truce or proof of the fact that there is such a thing as the Woman's Point of View.

"All three of us were from the beginning enthusiastic over the idea of Women Police," said Mrs. Grigg. "It was understood when the first candidates were appointed that their work would be concerned chiefly with the welfare of women and children, and I think most of the women's organisations in New Zealand were agreed that there was need for such a force. But the original idea was that they should be used for the prevention of crime rather than for its detection, and it seems to us a waste of talents to use these women for such work as the detection of shop-lifters. There is so much other work to be done by women police in war time, and therefore we women in Parliament feel strongly, first, that the number of women police should be substantially increased, and secondly that women police should be provided with uniforms so that they could be used more effectively in the work for which they were originally intended."

The Woman's Viewpoint

"But of course it's obvious that there isn't a separate woman's point of view on every question," Mrs. Grigg added. "Most of the matters discussed in the House affect men and women equally, and if I speak on a subject such as agriculture I'm no more giving a woman's point of view than a man, speaking on the same subject, can be said to be giving the man's point of view, and since I've been a member I've realised that unless it is brought to their notice the men members of the House seem to be completely unaware of its existence. We

Women and the Home



Spencer Digby photograph
MRS. A. N. GRIGG, M.P.
Her family approves

certainly need women in Parliament; we need a great many more women in Parliament."

The difficulty, however, as Mrs. Grigg pointed out, is that being an M.P. involves a lot of work and that a woman with young children cannot spare the time for it. "First of all it means being away from home for a large part of the year," said Mrs. Grigg. "Then when you are home there are lots of things to do, functions to open, and meetings to attend. And both during the session and the recess there's business to attend to and correspondence to be dealt with. Fortunately my children are more or less able to look after themselves now. My elder son is in a territorial camp, I have a seventeen-year-old daughter at Canterbury College, and a thirteen-year-old son at a preparatory school."

Politically-Minded

"What did they think of your going into Parliament?" we asked.

"They approved," said Mrs. Grigg. "They're all very politically-minded. But they all suggested that I should be careful at the conclusion of my maiden speech."

We went on to talk of Mrs. Grigg's grandfather, Sir John Hall, at one time Prime Minister of New Zealand. "The family felt very proud of his sangfroid during the earthquake," said Mrs. Grigg. "He stayed on his pedestal and kept his head, which is more than Richard John Seddon did."

"I don't think that my grandfather had anything to do with my interest in politics, however. I wasn't brought up in a political atmosphere at all, because by the time I was old enough to take notice of things my grandfather had retired from politics. I never had any political ambitions. When I left school I did V.A.D. work in the last war, and immediately after the war I married. It wasn't till my husband stood for Parliament that I began to get interested."