



NEW ZEALAND INTRODUCES WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE: "Female suffrage has made much greater headway in New Zealand than at home. Not only did the women exercise their new right at the recent general elections, but a member of the fair sex has been elected Mayor of Onehunga. The women at the Borough Council Chambers exhibited unmistakable signs of triumph during the morning's Poll, for in working hours they were in possession of the whole field."

A print dated 1894, showing women voting in Auckland: from the Centennial Collection in the Turnbull Library

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world in giving women equality with men. No, we have nothing to celebrate, but we are moving slowly in the right direction."

"Important As A Symbol"

"I DON'T know that the vote matters politically at all," said a professional woman, when questioned by *The Listener*. "To my way of thinking it is important as a symbol of democracy and of the emancipation of women. It is not that the vote is much good in itself, but even if I never used the vote I would nevertheless fight for it tooth and nail, because I think that women should have the rights and responsibilities as citizens that men have if we are to have a better world in the future. Do I think the vote in itself has been important? Well, I think an English suffragette who was recently out here on a visit just about summed up the New Zealand position when she said, 'If the vote were removed from New Zealand women, there would be no public outcry!'"

"Nothing to Vote For"

"I DON'T think women should have a vote at all," one woman confessed. She was, she said, from the country, and women there had too many other things to think about to bother their heads about politics. "It would, of course, be different if we owned our own farms, but we don't, and there is no reason for votes if you have nothing to vote for."

"You mean," we suggested, "no property to vote for?"

"Exactly. That is what votes are for, isn't it?"

We didn't think it was, and remarked that it was odd to find a woman taking such a view in 1943. But she thought we were odd. "Votes for women who own nothing are like music for people who have no pianos. I just duplicate my husband's vote."

"Sometimes They Are Interested"

"WHEN matters come up that directly concern women, I think they do value the vote," said a woman in the city. "It's perfectly true that politics

concern men more than they concern women, for instance when taxes are the issue; but as soon as questions arise that affect a woman's life, she is quite ready to examine them and record her decision. For instance, I think every housewife is interested in price stabilisation, or the work of the Internal Marketing Department; if she isn't the least bit interested in trade unions and arbitration, it isn't necessarily true to say that she is not interested in the administration of the country."

"You'll Think Me Old-Fashioned"

"WELL," said one, "I'm over 70, so I must have been here when the vote was first given to us. But I don't remember any excitement. I suppose I missed the first vote and took the second as a matter of course. But I don't think it has made much difference one way or the other. I have lived about half my life in the country and half in the town, and I think I have always exercised my privilege of voting. But it is not more women in Parliament I want to see: it is more and better women in the home. Yes, you will think me old-fashioned, but my opinion is that if women stayed at home more than they do, and looked after their husbands better, we would not require so many laws. If we are not satisfied to-day to leave Parliament to our husbands, it is because we are not sure what they will do to us. We know what we deserve when we neglect our duties, and we are afraid we may get it."

Wanted—A Joan of Arc

"BASIC social changes do not get very far in 50 years," said Mr. F. L. Combs, an authority on education and social reform. "In that time, in spite of the franchise, women have entered and occupied all too small a part of what is still a man-ruled world. Of course their task has not been easy, for men in my experience are by no means chivalrous when it comes to conceding to women a due share of the solid advantages of social influence and political power. Could women then by more judicious tactics have done more? I think so. They could have concentrated on their special province: children. Yet they are

little in evidence in the main department of that special province, education. Their interest in it is comparatively small and, of that small interest, only a still smaller percentage is enlightened.

"Yet it is in the schools that they could begin a crusade for a real, as distinguished from a rhetorical New Order. It is at this point that the hand that rocks the cradle should begin to rule the world, but it has failed to do so.

"In part the failure is due to older women's interests being too wholly restricted to their domestic affairs and their own limited personal social circle. In the case of younger women, who, one admits, nowadays do well their full share of the world's work, leisure is, it seems to me, too exclusively devoted to passing social distractions and to an excessive concern for the arts, often factitious, of personal adornment.

"A 'Joan of Arc' would be timely—one who realised that given educational means as good as they easily could be, we should live to see a new world, more remarkable and likeable than that of science, being made by a new order of beings who had fulfilled all their possibilities during the vitally important growing stages."

"It's Different in England"

"THERE is one difference between England and New Zealand which must have some bearing on the effectiveness of the women's franchise," said an Englishwoman who now lives in this country.

"In England where the women outnumber the men so much, there is what you might call a spinster group, more or less upper middle-class, consisting of educated women who are not tied up by domestic duties, and there is a tendency for that group to lead women's political interests. Here, where the population is more evenly balanced, there is no equivalent for that large English group which provides women with a wide choice of leaders."

"I Remember When . . ."

"I CAN remember a good deal that was entertaining in those days when we were trying to get the vote," said Miss A. Kirk, who with her sisters and mother all worked with the Women's Christian Temperance Union for the vote for women in New Zealand. "Though I did not actually go round collecting signatures, I heard a lot about it, and I can remember many of the stories that we used to laugh over. For instance, there is this one about Mrs. Taylor. She was the wife of T. E. Taylor, who was something of a fire-brand and an out-and-out prohibitionist. One day Mrs. Taylor was taking the children out in the pram and she decided that she might at the same time collect a few signatures to the petition. She called at one house and was met by a forbidding lady. No, she said, she didn't believe in women having the vote. Men were bad enough, but a woman ruled by women would be worse, and so on. As Mrs. Taylor was leaving, the woman called out, 'If I had the vote could I vote against that scamp T. E. Taylor?'"

"Of course," said Mrs. Taylor, and got her signature.

"I don't remember any real disturbances, but there was quite a lot of barracking at the first poll. Yes, we had a lot of fun, and many women worked very hard, but I don't know that women here have done all that they might with the vote."



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