

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

(Incorporated)

Organised 1885

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"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

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The White Ribbon.

"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

WELLINGTON, SEPTEMBER 1, 1946.

THE FRANCHISE

By Katharine Mercer

Several years ago Mrs. Pankhurst's daughter declared that had she known how little women would do with the vote, she would not have helped fight to get it. I remember her white face as she held to the back of her chair to stand to say only a few words at an Albert Hall meeting to welcome her mother and five others just out from prison after a hunger strike. All were white and thin; all emphatic that they would CARRY ON. My aunt stood up in the audience to tell how New Zealand women already had the franchise. She was the only woman in that big hall who had ever voted. Mrs. Pankhurst, who was so weak that she had kept her seat while speaking, stood up to declare that Englishwomen would show themselves to be on an equal footing with New Zealanders.

Forty years later gives space to look back and ask, "What good has Women's Franchise done, here and there?"

A New Zealander, well-known in his time, said to me that it would take several centuries to overcome the mistake Gladstone made over votes for men. Comparatively few were ready for it; and it would need its use by several generations to form bulk to value it justly and to use it wisely.

"However," he added, "that would have been so at any period of history when a combined privilege and responsibility was given wholesale, instead of being earned."

It seems to me that both opinions are shown to be right by the proportion of voters on any local issue. It is not a question of intellectual compari-

son; yet all who work in civic affairs know that men consider public matters more than women do, simply because to make a living they have had to consider and discuss how to get jobs done that affect their community. Women, on the other hand, have done their share in contributing to the community's need by child-bearing, and specialising in domestic crafts.

Now we are learning, or must learn, wider home-making in local and national affairs; and the first step in the attainment of this is for women to learn to understand civic problems; and how to co-operate with men in facing them. That does not mean that ALL men share the responsibilities that go with the privileges. In every local election here, as in the U.S.A., when Prohibition was lost through such an amazing number of NON-VOTERS, a surprisingly small number of votes are cast; and of women's votes, fewer than of men's, except in an issue in which they have a personal interest, such as Party Politics.

What interest do the majority of women take in civic affairs? How many women members are there on local administrative bodies such as Hospital, Harbour, Education Boards, Juries? How many women try to fit themselves to take their place in such, if only by newspaper reading and active discussion? It is only by conscientious study we can learn to be worthy of our privilege of voting—not as a separate body from men, but in useful and valued co-operation with them.

This month we celebrate Franchise Day. What right have we to the Vote? What have we done with it? Let us answer these questions to ourselves.

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ALCOHOL AND CRIME

Cut out the beer in Sydney for a month and there would be few criminal acts. An investigation shows that many of the alleged assaults occurred in brawls between men who had been drinking together." This statement from a Sydney "police spokesman" as an explanation of the reported crime wave in that city gives emphasis to the oft reported claim made by Temperance advocates that alcohol and crime are closely connected. The facts, of course, are clear enough, but they seldom receive such emphatic confirmation from such a source. It is a curious commentary on human nature that even when the truth is so clear, there is a lack of willingness to face its implications because a social custom is involved. A great proportion of crime in New Zealand would be eliminated if our people had the common-sense to act realistically upon the obvious evidence.—From "The Outlook," July 24th, 1946.

IMPORTANT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominations for Dominion Officers:

Unions are reminded that nominations for Dominion Officers for 1947 must be in the hands of the Recording Secretary, Mrs. V. Underhill, Lakings Road, Yelverton, Blenheim, by November 30th.

District Conventions:

South Auckland—September 19th (Thursday), Presbyterian Hall, Te Awamutu.

Auckland—September 22nd to 25th, Presbyterian Hall, Edinburgh Street, Newton, Auckland.

Temperance Examinations: September 28th.

Temperance Sunday: September 15th. A grand opportunity for organised Pledge-signing Campaigns, Youth Rallies, etc.

Correction: In answer to a request from our Gore Union, we publish the following correction. In the new Handbook, Gore is stated to have 37 members. This should read 67. Sixty-seven members' subscriptions were received in 1945.