

Franchise Day

September 15

As so many Unions will have their September meetings before the "White Ribbon" for that month reaches them, we publish the following article from "The Union Signal" in the hope that it may be of service in making plans for the "Franchise" meeting. The meeting should be regarded as special and important. Collection should be for N.Z. Fund.

UNITED ACTION BY WOMEN COULD MAKE WAR IMPOSSIBLE

The call for women to make politics their serious business spotlights the tragic failure of women to use the vote as they should. The role of women in politics is not a new thing in America; **without the vote** pioneer women accomplished more than women of today are doing **with it**. We need refresher courses in our early history to revive our faith in women and stir our courage into action.

Perhaps the first woman politician was Margaret Brent of Maryland. Her kinsman, Leonard Calvert, first Governor of Maryland, appointed her guardian of his children and executor of his unique will ("Take all and pay all"). After his death the young colony was threatened with disaster. Calvert had hired soldiers from Virginia to defend the Maryland territory in a bitter boundary dispute. His death prevented his paying the soldiers whose demands grew more and more insistent.

Mistress Brent appeased the men by acknowledging their claims as just and sending to them what food she could from her own and the late Governor's funds. The **all** that she took fell far short of paying completely, however, and the disrupted little colony was at the mercy of angry, hungry soldiers. Margaret recognised the situation as a crisis. She knew that one more raid would mean destruction to the colony.

Governor Green, Calvert's successor, offered no help. Margaret thought her way through. She was executrix for Calvert and he had been administrator for Lord Baltimore. As yet no one had been appointed in Calvert's place. If she could be made attorney for Lord Baltimore, she could use his funds. The Assembly agreed that "the executrix of Leonard Calvert should be looked upon as his Lordship's attorney," and thus Margaret paid the soldiers out of Lord Baltimore's funds, and the colony was saved.

Later in the same month, January 21, 1648—300 years ago—Margaret Brent, land-owner, lawyer, executrix, the woman who had saved the colony, appeared in court and "requested to have voice in the House and vote

also." While the Assembly expressed appreciation for her services, the Governor denied her the right to vote. After all, there were no women in the English Parliament.

When word reached Lord Baltimore that Margaret had dipped into his funds, his wrath burst on her in full force. She was crushed with his ingratitude, but later heartened by one of the most magnificent demonstrations of chivalry and fair play recorded in the annals of politics. The story is best told in the words of the gallant Assembly:

"As for Mistress Brent's undertaking and meddling with your Lordship's estate here . . . we do verily believe and in conscience report that it was better for the colony in her hands than in any man's else in the whole province after your brother's death, for the soldiers would never have treated any other with the civility and respect."

The Assembly must have been inspired with courage, for that body ventured a little advice to his Lordship: "We conceive . . . she rather deserves favour and thanks from your honour for her so much concurring to the public safety than to be justly liable to those bitter invectives you have been pleased to express against her."

"Women rush in where diplomats fear to tread and do a lot to make this world a better place to live in," declared the late Dr. Mary Woolley, former President of Mt. Holyoke College.

Margaret Brent's act of statesmanship illustrates woman's spirit of daring that is a **must** in political life today. Long-drawn-out quibbling must give place to life-saving action. We need women in politics because they are more willing than men to take the all-important one step at a time.

The loyalty of that early Assembly demonstrates how nobly men co-operate, once women take the lead. Years later, all over the country, men stood by their women in the crusade against saloons and gambling houses. The absence of women in politics today is not the fault of men; women refuse to make the sacrifices required. They have lost faith in their own power and so do not stand together. Yet they outnumber men and they live longer than men. They could draft and elect their own candidates without a single male vote. Women, united, could make war impossible. Rehabilitated with the courage and faith of the colonial women who helped to build America, women can become—even in this late hour—such a power for peace that the forces of militarism cannot prevail against it.

—From "Union Signal."

EDITOR'S LETTER BOX

The Editor, Dear Madam,—

I am asked to find out why the "blood test" is not used in New Zealand as it is in several other countries and American States in all cases of motor collisions where drunkenness is alleged.

Surely it should not be difficult to move public opinion and demand the use of the test. Ask your Minister to bring up the matter at the next meeting of their body, to make enquiries of the doctors they know as to the attitude of the B.M.A. Consider that the large Youth Associations, such as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, all teach abstinence from liquor for physical and social benefit. All the Nonconformist Churches are officially on the side of Temperance, and the two great denominations that leave the question for individual decision have many of their clergy teaching it consistently. All schools are supposed to have regular lessons on its benefits.

This test would simplify the work of both Police and Court Magistrates. It should not be too difficult, with all this weight, to rouse public opinion enough to bombard every M.P. to ask why the "blood test" is not used.

Why not organise your own members to besiege the local newspapers with letters to the Editor asking this question whenever a collision in which drinking is alleged or disputed as the cause? And why not try to find out yourselves more about what the "blood test" is? Ask for a discussion on it at your next meeting.

Here is an old text: "And so they builded the walls of Jerusalem because **THE PEOPLE HAD A MIND TO WORK.**" Believe me, we can build up strong walls of public opinion and so do definite work for our cause if each of us as part of the people has a mind to work.

Yours faithfully,

KATHARINE MERCER.

"HE IS A KILLER"

from Mrs. Day, Wanganui East

"He is a killer," said Commissioner of Transport, Mr. G. L. Laurenson, when addressing the Road Safety Council. "We have got to be ruthless with the drunken driver" was his opinion. But how? Simply by cancelling his licence? By fining him £10? By sending him to gaol for a month after several offences? None of these steps is enough to prevent killers of this kind pursuing their evil courses. Only a long term of imprisonment will act as a deterrent to drunken drivers: that is proved by their persistent existence over several decades.

It used to be fashionable to emphasise the fact that the drunkard had lost his sense of self criticism. Now that is disposed of as "preaching," which is, of course, a very improper occupation at any time. It is,