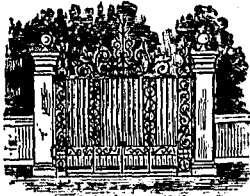


## Outside the Gates.

### THE CIVIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN.



The National Convention in Defence of the Civic Rights of Women held on Friday last week at the Holborn Town Hall was an occasion to be remembered, for it seemed as if earnestness of purpose and the determination to pursue a forceful

policy pervaded the large gathering, and was its dominant note.

We have only space in this issue to give an account of the morning's meeting, and to record the following Resolution, which was enthusiastically carried in the afternoon at the close of the proceedings. We hope to report the afternoon session next week.

#### RESOLUTION.

"This Convention records its conviction that, in view of the present political and industrial situation, there is an urgent and ever-growing need for the better protection of the interests of women in national life. The question of fiscal policy, affecting though it does in a vital way the position of vast numbers of women workers, will, under present conditions, be decided upon without regard to their opinion or interests.

"The recent changes in Local Government have unjustly deprived women of useful positions occupied by them with marked success, and undermined their influence in local affairs. In the industrial world their position is crippled and their wages are depressed by the denial of those rights of citizenship which have done so much to better the condition of the men workers. This Convention, therefore, urges the Government to take these facts into consideration, and to remove these grievances by conferring on women the protection of the Parliamentary franchise.

"It also urges women to refuse to work for any Parliamentary candidate unless he pledges himself to work and vote for the enfranchisement of women."

#### THE MORNING SESSION.

The chair at the morning session was taken by Mrs. Eva McLaren, one of the most courageous workers in the suffrage movement. She pointed out that the present was a critical moment to the cause, for all who were interested must admit that women were not gaining, but losing, ground. The time had come to speak out if they would guard against the withdrawal of further rights and gain fresh ones. Not only women, but the whole community, suffered injustice in the exclusion of women from Local Government.

The opening speakers in the morning were Mrs. McIlquham (Poor Law Guardian, Tewkesbury), Miss Annie Leigh Browne (Hon. Secretary of the Women's Local Government Society), Miss Bertha Mason (Poor Law Guardian, Ashton-under-Lyne), and Mrs. Morgan Dockrell (Delegated, Board Mistresses' Union).

#### MRS. McILQUHAM

pointed out that if women wished to maintain the civic rights they already possessed, and to get more, they must secure the Parliamentary franchise, and showed

how, under four important Acts passed within recent years to improve Local Government, women had suffered ten disfranchisements. After enumerating these in detail, ending with the "shameful Education Act of last year," and referring also to the need of women in positions equivalent to that of Justice of the Peace in order that the mental condition of women previous to their incarceration in asylums may be attested by a member of their own sex, Mrs. McIlquham said that women who, like herself, were getting into years felt the degradation of suing year after year for justice. She never intended to say that men were just to women until they granted them equal civic rights and the Parliamentary franchise. Where was the justice of Englishmen who let women go on year after year asking for these elementary rights in vain?

#### MISS LEIGH BROWNE

referred to the County and Borough Councils (Qualifications of Women) Bill introduced into the House of Commons on August 4th by Mr. Channing, which, if passed, would remedy the deficiencies caused by the non-representation of women. Parliament was year by year granting increased powers of Local Government, and not only women, but the community, suffered deprivation by the narrowing of the field of selection.

The present terrible condition of the housing of the poor was well known. The remedy, she believed, was to elect women on to the bodies charged with the administration of the Acts dealing with this important question. She pointed to the work of Miss Jane Escombe in connection with rural housing; of Miss Copeland, who was on the Advisory Housing Committee to the House of Commons; and to the fact that while Miss Cons was a member of the London County Council she did such valuable work in this connection that when her office was terminated the Housing Committee asked for her assistance as a visitor. County Councils were entrusted with the supervision of midwives, of inebriate homes, with the charge of lunatic asylums. The latest returns showed 44,783 female patients in the asylums under London and Borough Councils, while over 1,000 women attendants were under the control of the London County Council. We were told that the asylums had of recent years been brought up to date. From the details made public in connection with the disastrous fire at Colney Hatch it scarcely appeared so.

It was lately alleged, in connection with Lord Monkswell's Bill to provide for the reception of alleged lunatics—an admittedly desirable measure—that it was very difficult to get the Bill through because the House of Commons did not care for non-party politics on behalf of persons who had no influence or vote; the same argument must be applied to all measures on behalf of women, including that for Women's Suffrage.

#### MISS BERTHA MASON

pointed out that for thirty years women had had the privilege of direct election to Boards of Guardians, and had given invaluable service, especially in relation to the sick poor and to children. The Education Act deprived them of direct representation on educational bodies, and there was nothing whatever to prevent the application of the same principle to women Poor Law Guardians, for there was a tendency—she might almost say a mania—to bring all Local Government under one centralised local authority—the County Council, working

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