

The Suffragette movement was being driven underground. Meetings were more difficult to hold; opposition was more brutal, numbers of capable speakers in prison; W.S.P.U. headquarters declared destructive militancy alone of value; the public, converted as far as it ever could be, must be terrorized into compelling the Government to give the vote. Yet, on the contrary, propaganda was more than ever imperative; only because a wide public supported the militants and their cause was Suffragette destruction embarrassing to the Government. Despite all difficulties and the mood of indifference towards propaganda, I had stirred the autonomous local branches of the W.S.P.U. to organize campaigns throughout the country, and another monster meeting in Hyde Park; but that was not enough. A mass movement, manifesting urgent popular impatience, was both necessary and possible. Vast crowds must be mustered, not merely to watch the exploits of a few hundred brave women, but to vigorous hostile action. I chose the East End, that great reservoir of work and poverty, from which thousands could march to Parliament, as the core of this new movement.

Its beginning coincided with the attack which, stimulated by the W.S.P.U., George Lansbury was making on the official policy of the Labour Party. Keir Hardie, from the time of his re-election to Parliament when the Liberals had come into power, had opposed any change in the franchise which did not admit women. On this ground, unsupported by the rest of his Party, he had voted in every division against the Government Bill to abolish Plural Voting. He

had done the same on the Reform Bill, and had continually urged the Labour Party to adopt this policy officially. Labour Party Opposition could not defeat the Reform Bill, but it would have a great moral effect. Balfour was pleading that the Party should at least pledge itself to vote against the Third Reading, if women were not included before that stage.

Christabel, to whom Mrs. Pankhurst generally left such shades of policy, declared that neither Keir Hardie's plan nor that of Balfour were of any use; the Government must be opposed in every division on every question until it would introduce a Government measure for Women's Suffrage. Lansbury adopted the W.S.P.U. plan, not only because he was enthusiastic about Votes for Women, but also because of his rooted objection to the National Health and Unemployment Insurance of Lloyd George. He circularized the branches of the Labour movement, asking them to pass resolutions in support of the W.S.P.U. plan. It meant that the Labour Party must vote against Irish Home Rule and other Government measures it was pledged to support, even the Trade Union Bill which it had forced the Government to accept; also it meant voting for Conservative propositions the Party was pledged to oppose. Lansbury soon forgot that he had ever sponsored the plan. At that time he brought the proposition before the Party in militant style. When it was defeated, he denounced the Party as subservient to the Liberals, and forthwith resigned his Parliamentary seat to stand as an Independent candidate, making Votes for Women and opposition to the