

critical moment to push it forward. Another Reform Act was due. If manhood suffrage went through without women, it would be impossible to get the franchise question reopened for a long period: and the difficulty of getting the vote would be enormously increased. The Labour Party, now becoming a reality, must make the freedom of women "A Party Question."

She resolved to form a new organization to be called the "Women's Social and Political Union," taking as its slogan not "Women's Suffrage," as of yore, but the more vivid battle-cry, "*Votes for Women!*" It is curious to recall that the telling phrase was so tardily coined. On October 10th, 1903, she invited a few obscure women members of the I.L.P. to her home, and with them formed the new Union.

Then Keir Hardie appeared; he cordially welcomed the new movement and approved its tactics; a single-clause Bill to abolish the sex disability, leaving other franchise reforms to be dealt with subsequently; a new organization of women to push forward their own cause. Under his urge, the I.L.P. N.A.C.¹ agreed to support Dr. Pankhurst's original Bill admitting women to the Parliamentary vote on the same terms as men.

The difficulty facing those who desired to make Votes for Women popular with Labour people was the complicated and backward state of the electoral law. The poor man could qualify only as a householder; or perhaps as a lodger, if he occupied unfurnished rooms, the rateable value of which was not less than £10

¹ National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party.

a year. The man of property could vote, without restriction, wherever he could prove a qualification as householder, freholder, copy holder, £10 occupier, University graduate, and under other heads beside. If the vote were to be extended to women on the same terms, the working-class mother would not be able to qualify, for her husband, not she, would exercise the single vote open to them as householders. The ill-paid workwoman who was a lodger had seldom sticks to furnish a room even if it were rated high enough to carry a vote. On the other hand, the wives, daughters and mothers of the rich would easily provide themselves with the required qualification. To murmurs that Votes for Women on the existing terms would increase the power of wealth, Keir Hardie replied by inviting the I.L.P. branches to take a census of the women already voting in Local Government elections. Forty branches undertook the arduous task; they recorded that out of 59,920 women voters canvassed, 82.45 per cent. were of the working class. Here, it was claimed, was the evidence needed to silence opponents, who denounced what they termed the "Ladies Bill." The I.L.P. Annual Conference in Cardiff, at Easter 1904, showed its friendship to the cause of women by electing Mrs. Pankhurst to the N.A.C. and instructing it to sponsor the Women's Enfranchisement Bill. Keir Hardie immediately arranged for the measure to be formally introduced by the Labour Members of Parliament.

That autumn I went to London with a National Scholarship to the Royal College of Art, and took up lodgings at 45 Park Walk, Chelsea. In February 1905,