

to advise the electors to vote Labour, stating that so long as votes were cast against the Government they cared not to whom they went! The resentment displayed itself at the next Labour Party Conference;<sup>1</sup> a motion to support the Women's Enfranchisement Bill was overwhelmingly defeated by 605,000 votes to 268,000 in favour of accepting nothing short of Adult Suffrage. Keir Hardie, with poignant emotion, announced that if the resolution were intended to bind the action of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, he would consider very seriously whether to remain a member of it.

"The Party is largely my own child; I cannot part with it lightly or without pain. . . . If it is necessary for me to separate myself from my life's work, I do so in order to remove the stigma resting upon our wives, mothers and sisters of being accounted unfit for citizenship."

The Conference was shocked; many delegates would have reversed their votes if they could, but none of the leaders supported him. Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson were emphatic that after so decisive a vote the Party could no longer sponsor the Women's Enfranchisement Bill! Mrs. Pankhurst was silent; she would not advise Keir Hardie to leave the Party, fearing he would be reduced to powerless isolation. She still hoped he would be able to induce the Party to push Votes for Women as a vital issue. Faced with his threat to resign, the Party Executive decided to leave its members free to choose between Adult Suffrage and Votes for Women on the existing terms.

<sup>1</sup> Belfast, January 1907.

This meant the Party itself would take no action at all. Keir Hardie accepted the solution as the best he could get. He told me that but for his stand, the Party would have instructed its members to oppose the Women's Enfranchisement Bill. I sadly predicted to him that in the end the Suffragettes would be opposing the Labour Party as well as the Liberals. The W.S.P.U. appeared in great force at the I.L.P. Conference, in Derby, that Easter. The resolution defeated at Belfast was brought up; Keir Hardie told the I.L.P. it must choose whether or not it would retain "some of its most valuable women members." If he were a woman and this resolution were lost, he would be ashamed to belong to a Party which had turned its back on him. It was carried by a tremendous majority. An attempt to censure the I.L.P. members of the W.S.P.U. for publicly dissociating themselves from support of Labour candidates was swept aside. Mrs. Pankhurst, with that great emotional appeal which gave her command of popular audiences, averred that till women were enfranchised she would never abandon the independent election policy; rather she would reluctantly surrender her I.L.P. membership, though she pleaded she had been "loyal to Socialism on every other point." A resolution congratulating the Suffragette prisoners<sup>1</sup> was opposed by Ramsay MacDonald and by the defeated Labour candidate of Huddersfield, but Keir Hardie drove it through by 180 votes to 60.

It seemed for the next five years that of all the

<sup>1</sup> Twenty more women had been hustled into jail for demonstrating in and around Westminster before the close of 1906.