

First Hand Account #2 Assistance

Learning Curve Education Service Workshops

The Suffragettes: Deeds not words

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Letter written by Emeline Pankhurst to members of WSPU, 10th January 1913, outlining the case for militancy.

VOTES FOR WOMEN The Women's Social and Political Union Mrs.Pankhurst, Hon. Treasurer OFFICE: LINCOLN'S INN HOUSE, KINGSWAY, W.C. Mrs. Mabel Tuke, Hon.Sec. All communications, Auditors: Messrs. Sayers & Wesson unless marked "private" will be opened Chartered Accountants, 19. Hanover Square, W. by the Hon. Secretary Telegraphic Address-WOSPOLU, LONDON Telephone 2724 Holborn (three lines)

January 10th, 1913

Private and Confidential Dear Friend,

The Prime Minister has announced that in the week beginning January 20th the Women's Amendments to the Manhood Suffrage Bill will be discussed and voted upon. This means that within a few short days the fate of these Amendments will be finally decided. The W.S.P.U. has from the first declined to call any truce on the strength of the Prime Minister's so-called pledge, and has refused to depend upon the Amendments in question, because the Government have not accepted the responsibility of getting them carried. There are, however, some Suffragists-and there many be some even in the ranks of the W.S.P.U.- who hope against hope that in spite of the Government's intrigues an unofficial Amendment may be carried. Feeling as they do, these Suffragists are tempted to hold their hand as far as militancy is concerned, until after the fate of the Amendments is known.

But every member of the W.S.P.U. recognises that the defeat of the Amendments will make militancy more a moral duty and more a political necessity than it has ever been before. We must prepare beforehand to deal with that situation!

There are degrees of militancy. Some women are able to go further than others in militant action and each woman is the judge of her own duty so far as that is concerned. To be militant in some way or other is, however, a moral obligation. It is a duty which every woman will owe to her own conscience and self-respect, to other women who are less fortunate than she herself is, and to all those who are to come after her. If any woman refrains from militant protest against the injury done by the Government and the House of Commons to women and to the race, she will share the responsibility for the crime. Submission under such circumstances will be itself a crime. I know that the defeat of the Amendments will prove to thousands of women that to rely only on peaceful, patient methods, is to court failure, and that militancy is inevitable.

We must, as I have said, prepare to meet the crisis before it arises. Will you therefore tell me (by letter, if it is not possible to do so by word of mouth), that you are ready to take your share in manifesting in a practical manner your indignation at the betrayal of our cause.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) E. Pankhurst