

MARYLAND SUFFRAGE NEWS

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A PUBLIC DUTY

A shrug of the shoulders, a somewhat grudging nod, a half-smile, and then, "Oh, yes; I know it's coming!" This is quite the worst sort of rebuff that suffragists have to put up with nowadays. Everybody, even the liquor dealers and other anti-suffragists, admit that suffrage is coming. That granted, the MARYLAND SUFFRAGE NEWS asks what will the women of Maryland do with the franchise when the victory is won?

Most women are as ignorant as most men are with regard to the social and economic conditions amid which they live. They do not even realize the potential power of government in relation to living conditions. They do not know that in New Zealand, Australasia and in some of our Western States social legislation is in effect, which, if adopted here, would relieve the people of some of their most disheartening burdens. We ask our readers how much they themselves know of social insurance, the minimum wage, city government by commission or old-age pensions? What States boast of a mothers' pension law and what is the consensus of opinion with regard to the value of such legislation? These are questions which all suffragists should be able to answer if they are to do their share toward achieving the fulfillment of democracy. In order to enable our readers to become thoroughly informed with regard to the potential economic powers of government, each issue of the MARYLAND SUFFRAGE NEWS for the next two months will contain a leading article devoted to some phase of advanced social legislation. A bibliography will be appended to each article in order to facilitate further study.

With Miss Rankin's article in this issue on the Minimum Wage the series begins.

Next week the question of the commission form of government for cities will be presented.

WELCOME TO HEADQUARTERS

One of the most interesting features of the work of the Just Government League this winter will be the Tuesday Teas at Headquarters. Those who are interested in social and economic problems will find these meetings excellent opportunities for increasing their store of knowledge. The committee in charge of the meetings is to be congratulated upon securing Miss Mildred Rankin as the first speaker. She has made a very thorough study of the Minimum Wage Law, which will be her topic for discussion on Tuesday afternoon. Those who are interested in this reform should make a point of being present at the meeting.

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DEMOCRACY'S REPLY

In spite of the current attitude towards Germans and Germany, almost everyone, in discussing the European situation, finally brings up with the admission that the Germans are at least efficient. This sentiment often ushers in a discussion of the comparative merits of aristocratic and democratic forms of government. "To live in, ah, yes, give me America, even if the government is not so efficiently administered as Kaiser Wilhelm's." It is quite taken for granted that democracy predicates a certain measure of inefficiency. Graft, waste, political appointments, the wrong man in the wrong place, a lack of responsibility on the part of officials—all of these untoward conditions are supposed to be the inevitable outcome of democracy, and until the people become aroused, so they are, for democracy, being a government of the people, represents the attitude of mind of the people, and gives back to the voters just about what it has received from them. The fountain of eternal youth was hardly more sought after in America's youth than "something for nothing" is today. The voter wishes to get a well-administered popular government without at the same time contributing his own share of intellect and attention. The man who fails to vote on primary election day and who takes no interest in the passage of progressive legislation deserves as much as he gets in the way of poorly administered government. The trouble is not with democracy, but with the electorate. Universal suffrage, which is generally confused with democracy, is nothing more nor less than the starting point of true democracy. The initiative and referendum, the right of recall, the commission form of government for cities, the short ballot, and various other devices for securing the right of self-government to the voters must be adopted before democracy will be deserving of the name.

At the present time in Maryland we have an oligarchy, and not a democracy, and although the oligarchy is re-elected once in so often, it does not change its essential nature. The difficulty in the way of improving conditions lies mainly in the fact that the politicians are practically the only people in the State who realize vividly that there is anything to be got out of government. It is a pitiful and disheartening thing to see the manner in which the average politician sets his sails to the wind. He is perfectly aware that so far as actual support is concerned there is more to be hoped for from the vicious elements in the community than from the virtuous elements. This is because the virtuous elements, so called, are complacently salving their consciences with philanthropy and trying to fulfill their duty toward their fellow-men by occasionally dropping a copper into an empty cup.

People in comfortable circumstances forget that a proper adjustment of the laws will at one and the same time relieve them of burdensome philanthropic obligations and some of the evils of democracy as well.

With a proper minimum-wage law on our statute-books, and with an efficient bureau for its administration, much waste effort in the way of reforming young girls could be done away with. Our cartoon this week pictures a situation which is, alas! only too frequently met with in Baltimore city. When the average wage of the working girl is less than a living wage, what shall the community do about the matter? To overlook the problem is not to assist in its solution, and yet this is precisely the course which most of the well-meaning people of Maryland are following at the present time.

In the West and in certain advanced States in the East where the function of government is more broadly comprehended an answer to the working girl's problem has been found in the minimum-wage law. In our leading article this week the merits of legislation of this nature are thoroughly discussed with the inevitable inference that a minimum-wage law is one of the crying needs of Maryland.

A REFORMATION

Suffragists, realizing, as they do, the value of time and money, view the recent activities of the anti-suffragists with sincere pleasure. The transformation of the anti-suffrage headquarters from a bleak and dismal room into a well-stocked clothing shop is matter for general congratulation.

It is far more wholesome for women to demonstrate their efficiency by materially assisting the Red Cross Society than for them to reiterate the anti-suffrage doctrine that women are too useless to be worthy of the franchise.

There is an ancient proverb which states that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Possibly now that the anti-suffragists' hands are so well occupied, they will refrain from trying to demolish Democracy.