

WOMAN'S REASON

(Speech delivered during the NFWC program broadcast over KZRM on the night of May 13 to celebrate the first anniversary of women's first exercise of suffrage.)

THE women of the Philippines have celebrated the first anniversary of that extraordinary visit to the polls, that semblance of what suffrage might be like—if ever there will be suffrage. I do not mean to sound pessimistic. In campaigns like this one for woman's suffrage, where the most important asset is enthusiasm, the last thing to show is pessimism. But, surely, one can talk and still be free of being called a kill-joy. One watches at the side-lines, looking at the parade as it goes by. A parade which is meant to be more than a show. Mine is a voice with a pointing finger—a bit impolite and contrary to etiquette, yes, but certainly not accusing.

It is a fact we suffragettes hardly care to admit, but which nevertheless is true—that the greatest set back to our movement is the apathy of the women themselves. This indifference, sometimes even called by the hard name of hostility, lies not only with the women who would be disqualified voters anyway, but also among the women of education, especially the women students. This last group is the only group within reach. So far, the practice has been to send out the frenzied appeals for cooperation. Eloquent speakers have gone out and also come back, not even realizing the futility of the speeches and the meetings. It takes more than gestures on a platform to convince, to engender a faith in any movement. Not because all the people we approach for signatures to a petition do attach their names at the bottom does it mean that the list we present contains real workers for the cause. A cause must have sincerity, not merely number. And sincerity is based on true knowledge. Let us, therefore, inform this distant group why it is that suffrage is a necessity. Or, is it really a necessity? Is it only something that the men have which we also wish to have? If it is not, why not? The question of whether the women are as capable as the men are is foolish. Capability is decided in an equal contest; and in such equal contests, feminine competence has been undisputed. We are left with the task of proving that woman's suffrage *must* be granted. Just as we believe this, so must we make this apathetic, lazy-thinking group believe. We must show them figures, facts, statements, give them examples, analogies, so they too may see. There must be organized information, not just wordy enthusiastic appeals to the emotion from plat-

forms gay with banners and flowers. Our movement has always been that of all leaders. There have to be followers, too, and followers feeling the same urge, being backed by the same faith in the work. There must be enthusiasm, yes, but an enthusiasm originating from way below the surface. Then will there be no wall strong enough to keep the tide in. A slow and expensive process, yes, but one with permanent results.

If we dare to call the women indifferent, we may as well call

the men cynical. To them, the suffragettes are creatures not exactly funny, but silly, which is worse. They want to wear the family pants. But the opinion of this type of men does not count. They have a perverted sense of humour, that is all. There is only one type that matters to the movement, the legislator type. He makes the laws, and it is important that he be made to see the correct side of the question. The correct side is *our* side, obviously. What does our lawmaker think of woman's suffrage?



MRS. KATIGBAK

Is it as funny to him as it is to other men? And why should it not be? Year in and year out, the question comes up for discussion. He looks forward to a merry time with the militant suffragettes, most of whom are very nice to talk to, and look at. He accepts all the invitations to teas, given by very innocent feminine leaders for what they think may end in convincing presentations of the eternal question. There are nice things to eat, and if nothing is achieved, "a merry time was had by all." It is any wonder that the movement lacks the dignity it should have, the dignity it has always had in other countries? We have behaved like little children in their teens asking for a box of chocolates, pouting beautifully, because, for all our prettiness, we were ignored. Let us change our methods. We are asking for a political right. Let us go around it as all other people asking for political rights have done. This is a question of intelligence against intelligence, not feminine appeal against masculine susceptibility. We have had no organized lobbying. There must be direction and method of approach. Is it because a leader speaks well and is willing to talk—too willing to talk—that she should come forward and be known as a representative of the movement? Should we not also find out how she is regarded by the community, how much her opinion counts with the legislative body? If we have failed to make an impression, it must all have been our fault. We cannot accuse the legislator of having been unwilling to listen. We have made mistakes. Who hasn't? The monstrosity is the repetition of the same mistakes over and over again.

From the side-lines, one sees many things, and hears many things, as I have. Other people see them too, but they do not bother to mention them. When one's heart is in a cause, one feels the right to say these things. My only prayer is that they have been taken well, and as the saying goes, "in the spirit in which they were given."



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