

## PARLIAMENT OF 1892

Although bills were introduced by private members at each of the three sessions of the parliament of 1892, not one was allowed to come to a division. In 1893 the measure was crowded out by the rating of machinery bill; in 1894 the only chance that offered was as an instruction<sup>39</sup> to the government's registration bill, which never reached committee stage; and in 1895 a resolution was set down for a date that afterwards proved to be hopeless.<sup>40</sup>

## PARLIAMENT OF 1896

The parliament of 1896 was Conservative, with Lord Salisbury again prime minister. Mr. Begg introduced a bill in 1896 and secured May 20 for a second reading, but all dates were absorbed by the government and it was lost. The following year Mr. Begg again drew the best date<sup>41</sup> and for the third time the house passed the bill on the second reading—228 to 157. Those who voted in favor, it is most significant to note, formed a majority of the voting members of each party in the house, and 109 supporters were absent.<sup>42</sup> But the opposition again manipulated the rules of the house to crowd the bill out. It was set down for the committee stage June 23, but this date was absorbed by the queen's jubilee celebration and it stood over to the last day open for private members' bills—July 7. The Whitsuntide rule required the discussion of two other bills first—one of them dealing with the problem of the cleansing of "verminous persons." This was deliberately extended for hours to the closing time and the overwhelming majority of the house in favor of suffrage was again thwarted.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> An instruction is a direction by the house to the committee in charge of a bill to add certain provisions.

<sup>40</sup> Blackburn, *op. cit.*, chart opposite p. 168. Also pp. 201-203.

<sup>41</sup> Members had by this time begun the custom of syndicating their ballots. All the members in favor of the bill would ballot for a day and the one securing the best place would put it down for that date.

<sup>42</sup> 45 *Parl. Deb.*, *op. cit.*, 1173-1239; Blackburn, *op. cit.*, p. 210; Fawcett, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> 50 *Parl. Deb.*, *op. cit.*, 1298-1331; Blackburn, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

In 1898 the suffrage bill was crowded out, and in 1899 and 1900 the days on which resolutions were set down were taken by the government.<sup>44</sup>

#### PARLIAMENT OF 1900

In 1901 no day was obtained for the bill but a resolution was set down for the 19th of March. This day was later taken by the government.<sup>45</sup> In 1902 a bill was introduced, but for some reason withdrawn before the second reading. The following year a bill was introduced but no day was secured for second reading. In 1904 came the first opportunity for a debate. The occasion was a resolution made in the evening sitting of March 16 by Sir Charles McLaren. Again, and in unmistakable terms, 182 to 68, the house went on record in favor of suffrage.<sup>46</sup> Relying on this approval the suffrage workers persuaded Mr. Slack in 1905 to use his place on the ballot for a second reading of the bill. It was set down for the 12th of May. The vehicles' lights bill had precedence according to the rules of the house, however, and the opposition succeeded in squeezing the suffrage measure out between much irresponsible talk and the closing hour. It did not even come to vote.<sup>47</sup>

#### PARLIAMENT OF 1906

There is a strong color of evidence to show that in the parliament of 1906 a clear majority of the membership was pledged to vote for suffrage. On the 7th of November Mr. Keir Hardie rose in the house and asked leave to bring in a woman suffrage bill. He stated that "in the present Parliament there were 420 (out of 670) members who were pledged to vote for the political enfranchisement of women," and that "the refusal of the government to deal with the question during the life of the

<sup>44</sup> Blackburn, *op. cit.*, chart opposite p. 168.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> For 1902, 111 *Parl. Deb.*, *op. cit.*, 1327; for 1903, 120 *ibid.*, 181; for 1904, 131 *ibid.*, 1331-1367.

<sup>47</sup> E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette*, pp. 12-15; E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, pp. 41-43; 146 *Parl. Deb.*, *op. cit.*, 218-235.