

Mrs. Catherine Green, Ex-M.L.C., says that WOMEN NEED NOT FAIL IN AUSTRALIAN Politics

HAVE women failed in politics? That depends on what aspect of politics we are considering, on whether we speak of women as representatives, as candidates, or as supporters.

The question, therefore, belongs only to the first of these, since politics, as such, begin when a woman becomes a legislator.

To the second, the question should be: "Are women candidates convincing?"

To the third: "Do women give to their own sex the support really due to them for election?"

Perhaps we should first of all consider the time that has elapsed since women have gained the franchise, and face the oft-repeated fact that woman has worked harder for the vote than she has with it. This is perhaps the worst aspect of the whole matter, but everything cannot be had at once. We should remember the long fight which man has had through history, first to get his vote, secondly to have true representation.

Representative and responsible Government is not so old in Australia that women should blush at their lethargy in comparison to man's.

At such a stage as this, I think it hardly fair to describe as failure the efforts of the very few women who have attained a seat in Parliament. And if in "politics" be included women's party activity, surely much of the Labor legislation in this State, known to be sponsored by women, refutes the suggestion that woman has failed.

Are women, then, unsuited to cam-

paigning? Do they inspire too little confidence in campaigns? Again, the very few examples hardly allow a sweeping and dogmatic pronouncement. Are women unsupported by their own sex?

This is the real question, and the answer will differ according to the circumstances. Can rejection by the electors in a constituency antagonistic to the party represented by the woman be called a failure on her part?

I think not.

Pre-selection

Then there is the matter of pre-selection. We must remember that we are in a machine age, politically as well as industrially.

It is useless to stand for Parliament unless selected by a party and endorsed by its executive.

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by its executive.

How then, do women stand in the pre-selections?

It has been my experience that women are still victims to feminine jealousy. Parliamentary honors are still so rare as to make their possession, as such, overvalued. Women do not view the aspect in a very reasonable way.

The all-important thing is to get the

woman selected, and there can be no doubt that a division of forces at this stage is disastrous. Only the best woman is really fit to be selected, and there should be a "pre-pre-selection" by the women of the party at which this woman should be chosen according to her ability. Thereafter there should be a real and undivided effort by all to make their candidate's position thoroughly felt in the pre-selection.

Sex-Prejudice

Regarding the well-known "sex-prejudice," I believe that we have had too few opportunities of deciding to what degree this is a real factor. Some certainly exists, but I believe it can be overcome if women will organise, and this, of course, pre-supposes agree-



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ment in the camp of the candidate herself.

Unfortunately, abnormal conditions are sometimes artificially created. These are prone to inflame the sex-prejudice,

are sometimes arbitrarily created. These are prone to inflame the sex-prejudice, and so a fair idea cannot be had of the real conditions. Such a case occurred a few years ago. The male opponent to two selected women adopted as slogan: "Vote for a soldier and a man". A stampede resulted.

Believing this to be so, I consider that the women have little to be ashamed of, for it shows them less responsive to mere catch-cries than lacking in ability to think constructively. This may seem a negative result. I do not think so. Ability to think can be taught—it comes as a result of knowledge. The eradication of mob response to stimulus is far more difficult.

Women DO Support Women

Do women candidates get support from their own sex? From my observation, and speaking as a Labor woman, I say, "Yes."

Australian women, however, are politically backward, and as I have pointed out above, their loyalty to their own sex can be overcome by the arguments of their menfolk—but for one reason only, lack of knowledge.

To ascribe this political backwardness to the "economic comfort" of the Australian woman is surely to be very short-sighted. The political consciousness of the American woman, in spite of her economic conditions (among the best in the world), should quickly dispel this idea. The state of the Russian woman is not mentioned, only because it is so controversial.

It seems to me, then, that such sex-prejudice as does exist is among men alone. This is a big obstacle, and, considering the numerical strength of men, probably the biggest of all.

Duty of Women

Woman's place in a party is not that of a mere cipher, and the true representative of our sex must insist on this all the time.

Women should nominate for every electorate. Only in this way can a concerted experiment be made as to the solidarity of women voters towards representatives of their own sex.

This applies to both State and Federal politics, but, in my opinion, the amount of actual good to be achieved in State Parliaments is very small. Much has been done in the past, but we must face the fact that new conditions demand new methods.

State Parliaments to-day are superfluous—they are even futile. One Parliament with fuller representation is the thing for the future, and it behoves women to begin preparing for it now.