

# ABERDEEN WOMEN'S LIBERAL ASSOCIATION.

## ADDRESS BY MR ESSELMONT.

### CRITICISM OF SOCIALISM.

The annual business meeting of the women's branch of the Aberdeen Liberal Association was held in the Music Hall Buildings yesterday afternoon. Mrs Black, president of the association, presided, and there was a large attendance of members.

After the annual report was adopted, the following office-bearers were elected:—Hon. vice-president, Hon. Mrs Pirie; president, Mrs Black; vice-president, Mrs G. B. Esslemont; hon. secretary, Mrs John Allan. Committee—Mrs Findlay, Mrs Flett, Mrs H. D. Esslemont, Mrs Forbes, Mrs Henderson, Mrs M'Lean, Mrs Leith, Mrs Milne, Mrs Murray Scott, Mrs Stoddart, Mrs J. Skinner, Mrs J. A. Smith, Mrs White, Mrs Knight, Mrs John Keir, Mrs Robertson, Miss Marr, Miss Ward, Miss Iverach.

At the close of the business meeting, Mr Esslemont, Liberal candidate for South Aberdeen, and Mrs Watson ("Deas Cromarty"), Dundee, addressed the meeting.

### MR ESSELMONT'S ADDRESS.

Mr Esslemont, who was cordially received, said he had been greatly cheered and comforted by the assurances he had received from so many women in Aberdeen that they were to give their hearty support to him at this election. (Applause.) He did not claim that he deserved that mark of appreciation and goodwill, but still it was very stimulating. How he wished they all had votes. (Laughter.) He had always been a woman suffragist. (Applause.) He was glad that the women had a voice in the election of public administrative boards, and he considered it a privilege to go on the platform and support the candidature of women for representation on those boards. Probably they were keeping that in view when they were acting so generously towards him on the present occasion. He felt that having such a large body of intelligent women in his favour his case was by no means a hopeless one. (Applause.) He confessed he was a little disappointed although not dismayed at the attitude of the ladies who were in Aberdeen advocating the cause of the women's suffrage. Their action was a little unreasonable and impracticable. He (Mr Esslemont) had not made a death-bed repentance. He had been in favour of that movement for years, but was it to be supposed that he could secure from the Prime Minister and his Government, a pledge that women's suffrages would be an accomplished fact in the ensuing session of Parliament. All he could say was that so far as his influence would go, he was prepared to direct it in favour of this reform. He would do what he could to induce the Prime Minister and his Government to legislate on those lines. (Applause.) Having repeated his views on the education question, Mr Esslemont touched on the question of temperance. He was not to enter upon a wholesale denunciation of those engaged in the liquor trade. He had occasion to travel up and down the country for many years, and he knew how difficult a "trade" it was to regulate. He had always been impressed with the desire on the part of the majority of the men and women who held licences to conduct them decently and acceptably to all concerned. But the "trade" must be controlled by the people, and in no case should the "trade" be allowed to control the people. (Applause.)

### SOCIALISM: A MINISTER CRITICISED.

He felt that there was no Liberal worthy of the name who had not a strain of Socialism in him. (Applause.) What was the great object of the Liberals? Was it not to get rid of privileges and monopoly? Was it not that the views of the majority of the people should prevail? (Applause.) Why it was the very essence of Liberalism that there should be a strain of Socialism in it. Socialism must be accepted in the interests of the people, but beyond that he was not a Socialist. (Applause.) He confessed he was very greatly shocked when he read some of the opinions stated at the Socialists' meeting on Friday night. They knew it was the object of their public health authorities to endeavour to reduce the death-rate. As convener of the Public Health Committee of the Aberdeen Town Council he had the privilege to announce to the public that the death-rate in Aberdeen last year was the lowest on record. That was due to the work of the sanitary inspector, and the medical officer of health, and to other causes, but yet the mortality among children was very high. In addition to that they had been doing all in their power by means of benevolent institutions, to put a stop to this very sad state of matters. What was said at this meeting the other night? He was sorry to have observed that a minister of the Gospel (Rev. Charles Mackie, Drumoak) had stated that it was better that these infants should have died, because they would only enter into competition with those who survived. He asked them—mothers of Aberdeen—what they thought of a gospel like that? Better that infants should die! Was that what Socialism was to bring them to? May God preserve them from it if it was. (Loud applause.) He confessed he had never read anything so revolting, so blasphemous as that expression of opinion. He did not believe for a moment the views of that man would commend a Socialist candidate to the electors of South Aberdeen. (Loud applause.) In conclusion, Mr Esslemont asked for the support of the women Liberals.

### ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

"That this meeting of the Women's Branch of the Aberdeen Liberal Association expresses its unabated loyalty to and confidence in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his Government, and pledges itself to do all in its power to secure the return of Mr G. B. Esslemont as member for South Aberdeen."

"That this meeting of the Women's Branch of the Aberdeen Liberal Association trust that in view of the acknowledged services rendered to the cause of Liberalism by women, especially during the recent general election, the Government will, as soon as possible, introduce a bill for the enfranchisement of tax-paying women, and the meeting is further strongly of opinion that such a measure should have precedence of any further extension of the franchise to men."

### ADDRESS BY MRS WATSON, DUNDEE.

Mrs Watson, Dundee, at the outset referred to what had been done and was being done by the women suffragists, and said she was not prepared to admit that even martyrdom was better than good steady work, such as was done in this association. They claimed that they had there a stock of fuel and enthusiasm for Liberalism that would stand out a good many fights. (Applause.) There were several points that must be kept in mind in all political work, and especially in this matter of the suffragists. There were four points which they must keep in view in making any claim for the franchise for women. The first point was that they must be prepared to work vigorously, closely, and long; and the second was that they must be prepared to work in the right way and use the best methods. They must be prepared to reason things out, and put forward logical claims. They must not trust to emotional efforts. Women were taunted with not working logically, but since the men did not think the women were logical, it was for the women to show that they were, and that they were prepared to reason things out and to advance arguments which could not be refuted. (Applause.) Then again, they must also understand political questions, and they must be well informed, for there was no great movement in the world's history that had ever been carried through by people who were not well informed. Mere declamation was of no use, although it might carry the point for a time. Where good information was acquired, and good arguments used, and the whole thing put upon a groundwork of fact, they were bound to establish a sound position in the long run, although it might be that they did not seem to succeed nor make that success which the emotional party created for the time being. In conclusion, Mrs Watson argued that it would not be wise for the women to force the Government to go to the country on this question at the present time, but that they should rather work steadily for the cause of Liberalism, and, at the same time, continue to inform themselves on all subjects which would fit them to exercise the franchise, and no doubt their claim would be recognised in due course, for they knew that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the majority of the Government were in sympathy with the claim of the women. (Applause.)

On the motion of Mrs Milne, seconded by Mrs Fulton, Mrs Watson was accorded a vote of thanks for her address, after which the proceedings terminated.