

SOURCE 5

A letter from NUWSS leader Millicent Fawcett to Liberal government minister David Lloyd George, 1912

(PRO ref: T 172/968b)

HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about the relationship between the Suffragists and the Suffragettes and how this affected the campaign for the vote. You should consider:

ASK YOURSELF:

- What is the main purpose of this letter?
- How does the letter criticise the Suffragettes?
- What differences are there between Suffragists and Suffragettes, according to the letter?
- Is this a reliable view of the relationship between the Suffragists and Suffragettes?

SOURCE 5

Dear Sir,

In view of the most deplorable proceedings of the Militant Suffragists belonging to the Women's Social & Political Union and the consequent harm which may result to the whole Suffrage Movement, may we beg to remind you of the following facts :-

(1) That those guilty of the disturbances of Friday and Monday last are a small and decreasing minority among Suffragists. The lists of those appearing before the Magistrates shew the same names repeated again and again. There cannot in our judgment be more than a few hundred in all who have put themselves under the leadership of the Social & Political Union for the commission of lawless actions.

(2) The great bulk of organised Suffragists throughout the country have conducted their campaign in a strictly law-abiding and constitutional manner.

(3) The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies have not only conducted their own work on law-abiding lines, they have emphatically and repeatedly protested against the use of violence in any form. These protests have appeared in the press in November 1908, October 1909, and so recently as December 9th 1911. They were repeated at a meeting in London on March 5th 1912 and they are thoroughly and cordially endorsed by our whole organisation.

(4) The lawless section of the suffragists have since November last lost no opportunity of attacking and decrying the Conciliation Bill which all other great National Women's Suffrage Organisations support. A weakening in the support of the Conciliation Bill would be welcome to that small section of Suffragists who have lately made themselves conspicuous by wilful attacks upon private property.

We, therefore, make a strong personal appeal to you not to punish the great mass of law-abiding suffragists for the faults of the small section of law-breakers; and above all not to back the policy of these law-breakers by withholding your support from the Conciliation Bill.

We are, on behalf of the Committee,
Yours faithfully,

MILLICENT G. FAWCETT - President
EDITH PALLISER - Hon. Parl. Secretary
K. D. COURTNEY - Hon. Secretary
FRANCES STERLING - Treasurer (pro tem)