

SOURCE 3

A letter to the Minister of War from the NUWSS, January 1917

(PRO ref: NATS 1/1271)

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

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about how women's work in the Great War helped to achieve the vote for women in 1918. You should consider:

ASK YOURSELF:

- What is the attitude of the NUWSS to women serving in the army?
- What concerns do the NUWSS committee have?
- Would you say the NUWSS is criticising the government's plans?
- Is the NUWSS being helpful or unhelpful?
- How would the attitude of the NUWSS affect people's views towards female suffrage?

SOURCE 3

My Lord,

I am desired by the Women's Interests Committee of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies to write to you on the subject of the proposed employment of women in the non-combatant work of the Army. My Committee welcomes the proposal, which they believe to be one that has long been desired by the women of this country, as enabling them to take an even fuller share in the sustained effort of their country.

My Committee feel, however, that in the employment of women in such work, particularly in France, certain grave difficulties and dangers inevitably arise and that these can only be overcome by particular care in the selection of the women sent out, and in the conditions under which they work.

My Committee hold most strongly that for all employment of women with the Army the selection of women must be in the hands of women, and that a very large part of their control and discipline when employed must also be in the hands of women. They believe that a staff of women inspectors will be absolutely essential if the employment is to be on any large scale, and that without such control of women by women, discipline and regularity will not be obtained.

It is of the first importance to engage in advance the women officers who will be in charge. They therefore venture to suggest that a small board should be formed of women experienced in the management of large numbers of other women and that this board should have power to recommend for appointment all women officers needed at the outset for the scheme,

They suggest also that this board might advise as to the details of the employment of the women, such as terms of contract, health insurance, pay, grading, housing, uniform, etc., and that it should be formed strictly from among women with practical experience of similar work.

I am,

My Lord,

Your obedient Servant,

(sd) OLIVE A. JETLEY