

Women's Political Association

(NON-PARTY)

215 Latrobe Street

Melbourne

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THE SOCIAL EVIL

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WOMEN'S  
CONVENTION

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# THE SOCIAL EVIL

## WOMEN'S CONVENTION

Dear Friend,

The State Government proposes to introduce a Health Bill which is expected to contain provisions for the State Regulation of Vice, by means of compulsory examination and detention of prostitutes, &c. As this is a matter vitally affecting the public morality of Australia, we are calling a Convention to discuss this question in all its bearings. Some men and women favor State Regulation on the ground that though the civil rights of women are thereby abrogated, and a traffic in human bodies is legalised, this sacrifice is required for the sake of the Empire. This view is generally taken only by women who are removed by their comfortable circumstances from any danger of coming under the regulations for providing safe immorality for young men, and by men whose daughters are protected from danger.

The National Council of Women is discussing this proposal, but we wish to point out that this body has of late made a practice of excluding from affiliation bodies of women with whose politics a majority of the Council does not agree. The National Council has accepted the Women's National League, and refused the Women's Socialist League, and in view of this fact it can only be said to represent the opinions of a section of women.

We therefore consider an extra Conference necessary and shall ask your organisation to appoint two Delegates *or proxies* to represent it at the Convention. The resolutions adopted by the Convention will be forwarded to the members of Parliament. The matter is urgent for it affects the future happiness of thousands of men, women and children.

Yours truly,

VIDA GOLDSTEIN, President.  
CECILIA JOHN, Secretary.  
ADELA PANKHURST, Organiser.

The Convention will be held at the Women's Hall, 215 Latrobe Street, Saturday, May 6—Afternoon session, 3 to 6; Evening session, 8 to 10. Tea will be served free to delegates from 6 to 7; a charge of 1/- will be made to non-delegates.

## Resolutions to be submitted to the Convention

**WHEREAS** this Women's Convention, representing Organised Women, Labour and Democracy, expresses its determined opposition to any form of Compulsion in dealing with vice—

**BECAUSE** it purports to make immorality for men and consequent degradation of women a safe and respectable practice, and while past experience has proved that it fails to reduce disease, it encourages young men who might lead moral lives through fear of consequences to indulge in vice.

**BECAUSE** all forms of State Regulation, including compulsory notification of venereal disease, with compulsory treatment and detention, involve sex and class legislation of a most pernicious kind. They can only be enforced against women and against men of the poorer classes—the chief victims being wage-earning girls and women. They abrogate the civil rights of women and give the police a dangerous power over them, unchecked by the publicity of the courts. State Regulation of prostitution, in whatever form it is introduced, legalises a trade in human bodies and acknowledges that **Women** must be sacrificed to the worst passions of men.

**BECAUSE** it is the opinion of this Convention that these evils spring mainly from lack of proper education, a disrespect for womanhood inculcated by the press, the theatre, and other agencies, and the growth of militarism, which is built up upon the degradation of womanhood; from the social conditions which stunt the intelligence of men, rob children of the protection of a home, and compel millions of young girls and women to earn a living in unhealthy conditions and at a wage which is insufficient to provide the necessities and reasonable comforts of life.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED—**

1. That education, showing the physical, moral and spiritual value of purity of thought, word, and deed, should be the chief agent in combating venereal disease.
2. That men and women suffering from venereal disease shall not be treated as criminals, but as patients, for whom free and adequate treatment shall be provided.

3. That boys and girls be protected to the age of 21 against the vicious and depraved.
4. That equal pay for men and women be made law.
5. That women magistrates and women police, to act with men in all offences dealing with sexual relationships be appointed.
6. That special powers be given to arrest without warrant, the keeper of a house of ill-fame, and the men found on the premises, who, if proved guilty, shall be sentenced to heavy penalties or to imprisonment without the option of a fine.
7. That upon the keeper of a house of ill-fame shall be placed the onus of proving that the young people of both sexes found on such premises are over 21.
8. That a commission composed of men and women to inquire into the causes and extent of venereal disease and White Slave Traffic be appointed.
9. That a seduced girl under 21 be given the rights of a legitimate wife, and if the man be already married that he shall be prosecuted for bigamy.
10. That cheap but attractive lodging houses for girls and women be established by the Government.
11. That relief works for unemployed women be provided.
12. That Citizen Schools for delinquent boys and girls on the enlightened principles of the George Junior Republics in America be established.
13. That adequate protection for girls arriving or departing by train or ship be provided.
14. That the provisions of the Police Offences Act for suppressing houses of ill-fame, prosecuting newspaper proprietors and others who advertise vice shall be enforced.
15. That this Convention, while favouring the palliative measures outlined above, pledges itself to forward all movements, social, industrial, and political, which aim at the emancipation of the workers as a fundamental method of producing a happy and truly moral community.
16. That this Convention also pledges itself to oppose every form of Militarism, which is founded on the degradation of womanhood.