Women's Political Association
(NON-PARTY)

215 Latrobe Street
Melbourne

THE SOCIAL EVIL

WOMEN'S CONVENTION

May 6, 1916

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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 favoring 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.