

VANGUARD TRACT No. 13.

An Appeal to Women FOR THE VAN.

By "COMRADE MARY."

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WHEN READ, PASS ON.

Every great cause has had its devoted women workers, so to women this appeal for the Ark of the Vanguard—our Van—is written. The text of the appeal is the brief chronicle of the Vanguard.

The Vanguard exists to firmly point out that if we, the workers, grafted sheepskins on our backs, the rich would shear us twice a year, and to teach that we can, by banding together and becoming stronger and wiser, use the shears on the rich instead, until all alike share the earth and its fruits.

This lesson of Co-operation the Vanguard has scattered over the State in 60,000 leaflets, and if one of these messengers has brought light to some groping human brain, we have not lived in vain.

The Vanguard has over five hundred members, a clubroom and library, a book depot, and, though still a luminous spot on the far horizon—a Van. To bring that Van nearer, to give it form and substance, we now ask women's sympathy and help,

Seven years ago, in England, Julia Dawson of the "Clarion" paper, appealed for subscriptions for a "Clarion" Van to spread the tidings of Socialism over the land, and in answer to that appeal two "Clarion" Vans now link together the scattered Socialists of England. These Vans are stocked with leaflets, and have cooking and sleeping accommodation. Socialist lecturers travel with them, addressing meetings, distributing leaflets, and sowing the seeds of Socialism at every halting-place. At elections the Vans swallow their philosophy, and fight the enemy with fire to secure the return of Socialist candidates, and wherever one goes it is prepared to sell its life dearly. Socialist women lecturers often take charge of a Van on short tours, and by the lack of compensation the work they accomplish will be remembered sooner than Judgment Day. 2877 2212

A Queensland Van will adopt the same mission. It will be a Socialist oasis in a wilderness of Capitalism, calculated to spread the light like wireless telegraphy, and to cost £100 for the Van, a pair of horses, and current expenses. Laden with Socialist literature, it will travel over the State, leaving a blessed stream of Fraternalism in its wake. The comrade in charge will address meetings wherever two or three are gathered together, and give away and sell Socialist books and literature. Now, chance decides if a leaflet of ours hits or misses a friend or enemy, but our Van will call around in the mornings with the milk, and fire at short range.

The Van Fund is open, subscription cards out, and WEEKLY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ONE PENNY UPWARDS ARE RECEIVED GRATEFULLY. The Women's Equal Franchise Association started the Fund with £4.12/-, and we have £13 in the bank. For many reasons we venture to hope that women will help in this work of spreading the light.

Socialism is for women a living, inspiring religion. Women in the past have done much for creeds that taught sex-slavery, and "contentment in that state of life to which we are called." Our religion, Socialism, teaches that EQUALITY IS THE ONLY MORAL RELATION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, that wrong must be attacked at the roots, and that by working for the progress of all, each woman will best be helped.

The doctrine of slavery and contentment, judged by its result, is its own condemnation. The great majority of us are at present household drudges and factory and shop wage-slaves, deeply grateful, in the fierce fight of competition, to be allowed to toil for bare shelter, food, and clothing, until we marry, when we sink deeper into the economic pit, and become straws in

the gale. A bride, in our station of life, ought always to be congratulated with reservations. A single woman in a factory or at service can at least ascend one rung of the industrial ladder by co-operating with her fellow-workers to form a Union to fix wages and prices, but a woman who marries under present conditions, when the dependence of a wife does not inspire a man with courage at a trade crisis but impels to submission, sets a period to her own emancipation and rivets her own fetters upon the daughters she brings into the world.

These grinding conditions are artificial, and CAN BE ALTERED if women will cease accentuating them by burying their talents under a cloud of domestic duties, and in a tangle of commonplace conversation. To be a good housewife is not the ideal status of womanhood, for domesticity means subjection, and the contented household drudge is only queen of the kitchen.

The brain has no sex, and there is no need for us to remain silent during an intelligent discussion, or make a foolish contribution to it, if we will but read and think a little. Co-operative kitchens and laundries are coming fast, and with few domestic duties to attend to, and better still, few to talk about, women in the homes will simply have to get out of the body to think, and then they will radiate like the tail of a comet.

The woman who reads a Vanguard leaflet for at least half-an-hour every day, and digs out one nugget of pure thought for herself, will create a centre-poise, a reserve force in herself that will sustain her through all the stress and storm of life, and prepare her for wider possibilities when tardy Justice bestows on us a vote, and equal pay for equal work, and throws open to us all trades and professions, and public bodies and legislatures.

Charlotte Stetson points out that physically woman belongs to a tall, vigorous, beautiful animal species capable of great and varied exertion, but that, through artificial delicacy, we have so far degenerated that we are now the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food. Happily this reproach does not apply so much to our class, but to idle rich women, for women wage-earners comprise over one-fifth of the adult population of this continent. To bridge the gap from the period when woman was equal with man in bodily and mental power, we need only to read books to make us think, and live, work, and take our pleasures in the open air as much as possible. The average man will seek to deter women from this course. He thinks it to his advantage to keep woman a household slave and fireside companion, but the race cannot progress with one half constantly dancing attendance on the other half.

Women are slow to realise that it is a fine thing to be a woman. Woman is the emotional sex, and humanity's highest expression is emotion. To us, as if in acknowledgment of this truth, Nature has given the exalted task of moulding the plastic minds of the future workers of the world. A socialist motherhood, teaching the children to fear no man, to resist tyrants, to despise riches, and to respect only men and women of moral worth, WOULD SOLVE THE INDUSTRIAL PROBLEM! But, "unwitting that we bear the ark of human hopes," poor mothers cultivate servility in their children towards the children of the rich, and rich mothers teach their children to expect and demand servility from the children of the poor, and out of Servility and Arrogance come un-ending generations of capitalists and captured workers. A thousand luminous sermons could be preached from the text that from an enlightened motherhood will come social salvation. Yet preachers ignore this wondrous theme!

Socialism, then, is the Light in the Darkness leading women out of a maze of confusion, and Vanguard leaflets teach women the gospel of co-operation and sex-equality, and that power degrades both subject and master, and that each is helped by helping all.

The Vanguard asks women to receive this Light, and help us to spread it to others through our Van. Vanguard members have limitations, and can only hope to raise the Standard of Socialism within 600-ee of the penny 'bus, but the Van will tackle the final outpost of civilisation. It will be a perambulating Vanguard on wheels, a power for good to all struggling, unhappy souls, and a rallying-point for all Socialists, slowly, but surely fulfilling its destiny of building up and regenerating human souls.

We value a good word for the Van from women as much as a small contribution, but we are confident that women will help to grease its wheels when they know that it will carry tidings of hope to brighten the lives of suffering men, women, and children. The seed sown by our Van may fall in stony places at times, but somewhere, sometime, it will take root and flourish.

Van donations received by Van trustees, Comrades "Mary" and "Eznuk" at 80a Queen Street, Brisbane.