

MRS. MINNIE FISHER CUNNINGHAM

PRESIDENT TEXAS EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION

SPOKE IN SMITHVILLE

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1918.

Last Monday evening the City Hall was filled with what was probably as representative an audience of the intelligent and thinking element of Bastrop County as ever assembled at any County meeting.

Sponsors of the meeting felt that those who have long bitterly opposed suffrage for women, while at the same time they have posed as the political criterions of Bastrop County, would have acumen enough at least, to desire to get the "enemy's" perspective in order to judge her strength. It was thought that a large proportion of the misguided would prove themselves broadminded and tolerant enough, that their interest in a new responsibility of citizenship bearing upon the maintenance of American standards of government at a period of history when Germany is playing politics in America, would appeal strongly enough to every man and woman's conscience and patriotism to counterbalance any prejudices they may have entertained with

reference to votes for women. As a matter of courtesy that the delicate sensibilities of such might not be offended, the meeting was advertised as free from any personal political propaganda, and this assurance was made good. But alas for this courtesy! The anti suffragets were conspicuous by their absence. Very well. "Votes for Women" are here. And when these conspicuously absent "of-the-old-school political opportunists" awaken to the earnestness of women in this matter, and finally, as a matter of political expediency come "fawning 'round" they may rest assured that their indifference at the time that women need the experience, the advice and help of men in a matter that concerns them all, will be remembered. This is not a threat, but a tip. The men of Bastrop County are welcome to it for what it is worth.

Many of the women of June 1919 will not take active part in politics. This is not from indifference, but

because of their lack of knowledge. A member of the Literary Club of Smithville told the writer to-day: "The earnest and thinking women of Smithville are taking seriously their privilege of the ballot. We have already incorporated a course of political science particularly as pertains to Texas in our studies for this year. If men think that women are asleep upon their obligations and responsibilities as citizens, they have another guess coming". Elgin and Bastrop have 75 per cent of the women ready to take advantage of the ballot. Hence the indifference manifested by the absence of our former "spot-lighters" in politicaldom, looks like rather short-sighted politics on their parts. The meeting was opened by a piano duet by Mrs. A. R. Tabor and Mrs. E. C. Williams, followed by a piano solo by B. R. Cockrill. Mr. Cockrill responded to an encore with a number of his own composition so fine and beautiful as to bring to the minds of the lovers of music that Smithville has something of wonderful latent musical ability.

Mrs. W. T. Tippen, Chairman, introduced the speaker, Mrs. Minnie Fisher Cunningham, President for the fourth time, of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, and State Chairman of the Liberty Loan Campaign, a woman whose life has been devoted to the interests of women and children in Texas. If anyone came with the expectation of enjoy-

ing the caricatured prototype of the militant suffraget that enemies of the cause have used as a weapon, he was disappointed. Mrs. Cunningham is a type that personifies the best and noblest of femininity. A woman whose physical beauty is enhanced by extraordinary intelligence and culture. Mrs. Cunningham's ease as a speaker, her freedom from platform mannerisms and affectation, her spontaneity, wit and logic kept her audience spell-bound. Her theme was one bearing upon good government and woman's relations thereto. She stressed the point that under the statutes of Texas men donning khaki in the service of their country were disfranchised. Hence thousands of the most intelligent voters are eliminated in the political crises now confronting this commonwealth, and women have been called upon to fill this gap. "While thousands of our men are away facing death to make the world safe for Democracy, we at home must keep Democracy safe for them. The line in Texas is clearly drawn. On one side is arrayed the high standard of Americanism — on the other all the forces of evil, the greatest of which is the insidious German influence that seeks to work its propaganda through the statutes of this State. In every choice, the vote of woman will be the vote against the organized interests behind which pro Germanism in America is camouflaged."

At the close of Mrs. Cunningham's address, she invited questions from the audience, and many interesting facts were brought out. Mrs. Cunningham remarked at the close of the heckling "One thing is distressing me to death. Not once since the legislature conferred the right of suffrage upon women have been importuned with the once popular inquiry "WHAT will become of the home, while women vote?" A woman in the audience volunteered the information that mankind has found that the home runs on as of yore not withstanding the many outside duties which war conditions have brought upon women. The Red Cross calls for time away from home. Yet we have heard no man complaining, or seen no evidence of home standards lowered." The speaker laid great stress upon the importance of women registering while the attorney general has ruled that women in towns less than 10,000 need not register, still these will be tested by the Supreme Court, and the Attorney's General's ruling may be revoked. **To Be Safe Register.**

At the close of Mrs. Cunningham's talk, the audience stood and sang the national anthem. An informal reception was held, the delegations from various points of the County meeting Mrs. Cunningham and each other. Almost every precinct was represented, an especially large delegation from Bastrop.

Plans are being formulated at Galveston Headquarters for the organization of County units. As soon as plans of organization are received the women of Bastrop County will organize, and a campaign of political education for the woman voter be disseminated. Other speakers will be secured, and a lively interest encouraged.