



Centennial Moment #17

Famous British suffragette (votes for women) Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst was our club's speaker on Dec. 4, 1922. The room was packed (95% attendance!).

Mrs. Pankhurst devoted years of her life fighting for women's rights, especially the right to vote. She led the British suffragette movement, founding the Women's Social & Political Union (WSPU), whose motto was "Deeds not words". (She was even immortalized in the song "Sisters Suffragette" in Disney's *Mary Poppins*.)

She often found herself thrown in jail for her militant efforts. She promptly went on a hunger strike, which resulted in her release. Multiple incarcerations resulted in multiple hunger strikes, which took a severe toll on her health.

A renowned, powerful speaker, she visited many countries, including Canada, giving talks. In 1922, she had been hired by the Canadian Social Hygiene Council to deliver a strong social hygiene message.

In Canada, women had received the right to vote in 1918 (federal elections), and in all provinces except Quebec by 1922. Women finally won the vote in Quebec only in 1940!

Mrs. Pankhurst died June 14, 1928, at the age of 69, just 6 years after addressing our Club. The U.K. gave women the right to vote less than 1 month after her death, on July 2, 1928.

From Frances' ongoing research in the Examiner archives comes the following article. The headlines, especially the first one, are solely those of the Examiner.

From *The Evening Examiner*, Peterborough, Monday, December 4, 1922:

MRS.PANKHURST AROUSES ROTARY WITH ADDRESS

Double Standard of Morality Must Be Wiped Out, She Declares, in Endorsing Social Hygiene

GIVE CHILD A CHANCE

Members of the Peterborough Rotary Club heard an impressive and straightforward address upon a subject of vital importance at their luncheon at the Empress Hotel today, when Mrs. Emmeline

Pankhurst explained the aims and objects of the **Canadian Social Hygiene Council**, and urged the co-operation of Rotarians on behalf of the local branch of the organization. It was an eloquent and frank talk upon a topic that is too frequently ignored by Canadians, and the members of the club were deeply impressed by her able exposition.

Mrs. Pankhurst outlined the principal object of the Hygiene Council as a crusade to create a race of citizens worthy of their heritage, a heritage won for them by the heroism of the pioneer residents of Canada, and preserved for them by the sacrifices of the Great War. The movement aimed at securing for each child the triple birthrights that should be his, a physical, mental and moral birth-rate, and could only succeed when **the double standard of morality** was wiped out of existence.

The eloquent speaker startled her hearers by declaring that last year over 29,000 Canadian infants died within their first year. Canada, she said, was concerned with its immigration problems, realizing that immigrants of the right calibre were needed to develop the resources of this country, and yet each year over 20,000 voting Canadians died. We had not yet got to the stage when we paid as much attention to the preservation of human beings, as we did to the preservation and repairing of machinery.

In frank language, Mrs. Pankhurst discussed the terrible effects of the double standard, **the awful results of the false theory that young men must sow their wild oats**. The ravages caused by the spread of venereal diseases were pointed out by the speaker, who, in a few vivid sentences, showed the extent to which the scourge had developed in Canada, and pleaded with the Rotary Club to lend its support to the Hygiene Council and to appoint a representative on the Executive of the local branch.

The situation had resolved itself, she declared in conclusion, when either the women would have to level their standard down to that accepted as are right for men, and that would mean the destruction of the race, or the men would have to level their standard up to that of the women. On all other respects the two sexes were equal, and there could no longer be two standards of morality.

There was a ninety-five per cent attendance of the Rotary members, with President John Crane in the chair, and among the visitors present were: Mrs. W. R. Morris, Dr. MacDougall, acting head of the local branch of the Canadian Social Hygiene Council; Dr. T. N. Greer, Rev. Robt. Pogue, Rev. Mr. Langford, Trinity Church; E. A. Peck, W. R. Richardson and Rotarian Adjutant Buntin, Ottawa.

Rotarian Dr. A. W. McPherson, in moving a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs. Pankhurst, as a medical man, endorsed the work of the Hygiene Council. The preservation of child life was one of the greatest problems of the day, he said, not only in Canada but throughout the world.