

Speech to Bradford City Council meeting (Cllr Val Slater)

Lord Mayor, people of Bradford, I am Mrs Edith Priestman member of the Poor Law board and member of the Independent Labour Party. You will have noticed that there are no women allowed on this Council despite the best efforts of some of us. However in August of this year 1907, Parliament passed the Qualification of Women (county and Borough Councils Act) which gave women ratepayers the right to be elected to city and county councils and we heartily welcome that Act.

Since 1870 the women of Bradford have proved that we have the qualities that are needed to bring about change and improvement to this city by standing for and being elected to the school boards and as poor law guardians.

I refer you to the work done by the Bradford school board to vastly improve the health of children, this was driven by women such as Mrs Byles, Eva McClaren (although you drove her from the City) and above all my great friend Margaret McMillan. *I notice that Cllr Warburton in his speech actually took credit for the work she did .*

Similarly the women poor law guardians such as Mrs Florence Moser, Mrs Stott and my mother in law Mrs Alice Priestman have striven mightily to improve the lot of those without work or who for other reasons are thrown on the rates for their subsistence.

Woman are the main clients of local authority services, therefore the Council needs a woman's eye in their provision.

The work that these women have done over the last 37 years has been demanding, dirty and dangerous but needed to be done. It has not been easy, we have been resented and cold shouldered but we have not been deterred.

It takes courage to stand for election and then work enduring jibes and crude jokes and hostility from our male colleagues but we have done it and succeeded and in doing so have raised the reputation of this city throughout the land.

We have proved ourselves as able and we demand our right as ratepayers to be able to stand for election and we call upon you to dissolve this body and hold elections forthwith so we can take our rightful places on those hallowed seats.

Seats for women, votes for women! (repeated)