

The importance of political cartoons: sermons in stones and anti-suffrage salt

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In most cases, a cartoon speaks louder than a text, so that is why political cartoons are very important. Cartoons are highly valuable sources of history because it puts light on events that has taken place in the past, therefore cartoons are very helpful to people researching about the event, teachers, writers and or students. The most important part of a political cartoon is that without talking about the event, the cartoon itself displays points or ideas together that makes it so simple/easy for people that cannot read or write. Most of history books contain cartoons because cartoon in many cases reveals more than words can do as some people cannot easily read between lines of a written text, but they can visually evaluate better. These two cartoons (Sermons in Stones) and (Asquith's Anti-Suffrage Salt) so simply reveals so much that has happened during the suffrage movement in just two cartoons, if this was a written text, it might have created so many books because one cartoon is showing all the women did during the suffrage movement, how they promoted their campaigns both the suffragists and the suffragettes, one group violently breaking the windows, which we can see in the cartoon disturbing the peaceful and persuasive conversation of the other group. The other political cartoon conveys the difficulties that the suffrage movement has faced, Herbert Asquith who was extremely against the women suffrage and it also shows that vote for women was not more important to Asquith than having a bath.

Cartoon 1: Sermons in Stones

To begin with, the Punch was a magazine of humour and satire, which ran from 1841-2002. A British organization well known globally for its intelligence and irreverence, which was the main reason that helped it to be successful,

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it launched the term 'cartoon' as we know it today, that turned to be the most famous term of the period and its political & social cartoons affected the movement of governments, displaying life with great attention paid to the detail from the 19th and 20th centuries. These cartoons played a massive role in process of election and it also influenced society in many ways.

According to 1890-1939 (Heinemann Advanced History) book, by Rosemary Rees, the tactics used by the suffrage women in their early years of the movement included: campaigns, the traditional middle-class methods to persuade and convince people to support them, they held meetings and demonstrations to encourage other women and men to either join them or show sympathy, lobbying, and writing letters. Their overall tactic places like Glasgow, Bristol, Norwich, and Dublin were mainly used by both the Suffragist and the suffragette for raising funds, to disseminate propaganda, to promote the profile of their campaigns and to recruit more new members, their aim was to gain the vote, in order to have the vote, they needed a considerable number of people wanting the same.

They also were holding meetings in small groups in their own homes, churches, community halls and/or factory canteens. We can see this in the cartoon, where John Bull, an imagery man, who is a personification of England and he is displayed in cartoons, is meeting the woman in his office or study, as the books on the table, the cabinets and the one to one meeting table are presented, this shows the aims of the suffrage women (non-militant, suffragist) were to convince important politicians, to get to the main

people, politicians or non-politicians like writers and/or printers, whom could help them write and print as much as they can for their campaigns until their message is heard by the target audience. However, she is being distracted by the militants, suffragettes. On February 13th in 1907 the WSPU (The Women's Social and Political Union) successfully had their "first women's parliament" as a protest versus being band from the franchise, in Westminster. Millicent Fawcett was an important and active person in campaigning for university education for women and she was soon known as the president of NUWSS, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, she was the first woman to speak her mind and debate on the women's suffrage movement in 1908 in the Oxford Union, women were gradually achieving to gain their rights, however Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney worsen the situation by heckling Winston Churchill aggressively in Manchester at a liberal party meeting and then disrespected police officers, therefore they were both arrested as they refused to pay the fine, so they spent a short time imprisonment to attract publicity and they succeeded as they were the topic of media at the time. The cartoon brings this in picture by having breaks being thrown through the windows and the windows-banging women are disturbing and the suffrage group under the leadership of Christabel, however worked together with the independent Labour party, Christabel had created a group with militant nature that she could no longer control.

The above women: Christabel, studied law at Manchester university, but just because she was a woman, she wasn't given admission to Lincoln's Inn. She joined her mother (Emmeline Pankhurst) in 1903 to support and lead the

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WSPU, she also made an unsuccessful attempt to become an MP in 1918.) And Annie Kenney, who worked full-time since the age of thirteen and organised groups of women workers to support and improve the pay and conditions for women and she started speaking on behalf of the WSPU, taking part in events wearing a shawl and clogs, the only working-class woman who had a key position in the leadership of WSPU when the Pankhurst was in prison. The following were included the non-militant tactics by Christabel Pankhurst after 1909: pouring acid on golf greens, attacking the homes of prominent politicians and other important political buildings, and sitting lights to the content of pillar boxes, they were deliberately getting themselves arrested to get attention. The most important of all, the thing that is shown in the cartoon is that in 1912 the NUWSS attacked London, they smashed/banged the windows of all the shops, the Foreign Office, the Home Office, and basically all important government and civil services buildings. Some important painting galleries and some of the houses of famous people were demolished by the suffragettes because they thought that it was the only language that men understood. Their aim was to gain the vote for women forcibly and by being violent; they believed being soft will not take them anywhere, but we all know that having a persuasive and convincing conversation is more likely to achieve better than forcing one to do something for you, therefore they faced imprisonment for their criminal behaving.

Despite that all, in this cartoon we can see a non-militant suffragist who is sitting calmly in her seat, her hands and gestures conveys that she is having a very important and affective conversation with John Bull, however we see

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stones being thrown through the window, which distracts the conversation and we automatically think that those breaks are being thrown by the angry suffragette ladies (illegal tactics). According to Britain 1890-1939, the suffragette ladies were the aggressive ones whom were breaking the windows of shops and were attacking buildings of government and some important people to gain themselves the vote, so this cartoon is very useful in terms of aim and tactics because it encourages other ladies to calm down and work together, it also motivates the main men (politicians) to do something to stop those ladies from being violent and or to give them their rights as well as helping people evaluate how to gain something without making a disaster. Obviously, you cannot gain anything by being violent to your country.

And to consider the handbag, gloves, shoes, and the fur coat of the non-militant suffragist lady conveys that she is from upper-class, a rich, and educated woman. According to historical sources, in the 20th century wearing fur and white gloves were the signs of educated and rich upper-class women, white gloves that only being worn by the queen now. These women were not enfranchised, therefore they also started campaigning for their rights by either supporting the suffrage groups with supplies or joining them by themselves and participating in every activity and meeting.

Cartoon 2: Asquith's Anti-Suffragette Bath Slat

In the above political cartoon, we are mainly presented with the attitude of the liberal Party towards the Suffrage Movement, however we can say that this cartoon also includes the opposition of other political parties. The

Liberal, the leaders of the country could give the vote to women after their victory in 1906. Although, the government was expected to have the “women suffrage” on its most important things to do list. The second only to the (Prime minister), Herbert Asquith the chancellor of exchanged with a very powerful cabinet-level, who became the Prime Minister after the prime minister Campbell Bannerman serious illness and resigned from his office. Asquith was against the vote for women idea. The Irish nationalist, a political party also believed that men came first, so working-class men didn’t have the vote yet, no woman is to have the vote too, Asquith relied on the Irish nationalist and the labour MPs. Although many backbenches supported the women’s suffrage, the bill of women’s enfranchisement was repeatedly rejected by Asquith’s opposition in 1907 and 1908. However, in 1910 the property-owning women bill was carried, but unfortunately that also failed because the parliament had so many other more important things to give it the parliamentary time than vote for women, the Britain 1890-1939 states. Asquith said that “ he prefers to support the male suffrage than the women” in 1911, which brought a lot of more reasons to why cannot the upper-class or rich women have the vote, as male with no property could vote after the 1913 introduction of universal male suffrage because after that, it was not about how educated or rich society was, but it was about female and male, the majority of male could vote but no women were given the vote yet. After that women were largely supported by so many politicians and important people because the gender inequality was not acceptable to all men.

Furthermore, this political cartoon clearly says “ Anti-Suffragette Salt of Asquith” which implies that Asquith was the major problem for women’s vote

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who threw salt in the eyes of women repeatedly. This cartoon visually shows him against the vote for women. Asquith is taking a bath and telling the ladies that he cannot see them at the moment, implies that he did not consider women's suffrage movement as a considerable thing, he rather chose having a bath than talking about this issue to the ladies. According to history, he thought that women should not be given the vote because male are not equal to women-women should not be trusted for vote, they must be leaded by men because they mentally and physically are weaker and should stay away from political issues. This cartoon hiddenly includes sexual content as Asquith is having a bath and responds to women in a kind of comic way, like a joke or something, which is linked to the sexually assaulted women. according to the Britain 1890-1939 book, approximately 300 suffragettes got into a fight with the police in November 1910 while trying to storm the meeting room of the house of commons, when they were sexually and physically disrespected, in total 132 suffragettes' women's sworn statements were announced, therefore that day was known as " Black Friday". On the same black Friday, many arrests were made to scare women, so they will not come against the government and not protest again, those arrests included Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. And then in 1913 Emily Wilding Davison threw herself under the king's horse. All they did was for attention of public, women did everything just for not to be forgotten, but to make the leaders make a decision in favour of women.

However, we can say that the government played the women repeatedly, it is displayed in the cartoon as Asquith is being rude to the women, as after 1910 and 1911 bill the WSPU prevented all the militant-tasks just to show <https://assignbuster.com/the-importance-of-political-cartoons-sermons-in-stones-and-anti-suffrage-salt/>

that they did not want any other extra thing, except the vote, unfortunately the bill failed because it received so little support from the government, therefore WSPU increased their activities again. Shortly after the WSPU's start to militant campaigns again, the government strongly banned its members to participate in Liberal Party gatherings unless they had signed the tickets. Christabel Pankhurst was forced to fly to France, forbidden WSPU meetings and sued the printer that had created (the Suffragettes). The suffragettes in prisons were considered as political prisoners and they were handled as normal criminals in 1908. Hunger strikes were used in prisons by the prisoners in protests, however, to keep them alive the government decided to command to force-feed them to avoid a martyr's death. They were forcibly fed through their mouth, nostrils and sometimes through rectum and vagina. Again, women did this all to keep the issue of "vote for women" in media, which successfully turned many against the government.

On the other hand, Asquith was being womaniser as it is also shown in the cartoon, one of the evidence of women were being played by the government is the Cat and Mouse Act. In 1913, the "Cat and Mouse Act" was passed by the government which is given the comic name because it actually was to play with women like a cat plays with a mouse before it fully eat or kill the mouse, The "Cat and Mouse Act" allowed the women, whose health was affected by the hunger strike to be legally released for a short period of time, until they had recovered and gained their strengths to be imprisoned again. In 1913 Annie Kenney was imprisoned again and that is when she went under the "Cat and Mouse" Act.

Although, the Conservative Party is being displayed like it had a negative attitude towards the women's suffrage, with a few excluded things, the reality is not as easy as it looks, it is way more complicated, according to historical sources, for the attitude of conservatives on the suffrage was decidedly having mixed feeling, in fact they were not all opposed it. While it is unquestionably true that most Tories were the diehard opposed to enfranchising women, the party contained many passionate and enthusiastic supporters, whom played a big role in the achievement of it in 1918. They were the first party to support women in many fields like, encouraging women for political work through the Primrose League. Furthermore, an outstanding number of both men and women from the Conservatives members actively participated in the suffrage movement. The Conservative party's leaders, Disraeli and more have at least talked about limited female enfranchisement in favour of women, once or many times in important places, and at the very end, the enfranchisement was one of the works of the conservatives. It should be admitted that the vote was given to women under the conservatives leadership.

In addition, I am going to discuss the questionable attitude of Asquith. It seems like Asquith thought that women would stop their fighting for the vote because he treated the women as non-equal to men, he might believe the "different sphere", however when the Liberal government realised that women would fail them in elections, women were powerful enough to fight against men in political fighting, he changed his mind after failing many times in elections because of the massive support of NUWSS to the Liberal opponents in 1914. The evidence of his change of mind is believed to be the

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meeting of Sylvia Pankhurst, who has hinted that he had changed his mind and he is about ' to agree to vote for women, but unfortunately, everything ended before it started because the ww1 broke out in 1914, so the vote for women was no longer the most essential issue, neither to the women, nor to the government. Women also participated in the war and finally, after the war ended, it was obvious the enfranchisement of women was surely going to happen. As women took a large part in the war, it played an affective role in the change of minds of those against the vote for women. The reform for vote to women was discussed in 1916 in the speaker's conference to talk about a certain age that might be appropriate, 30 or 35. The most important issue that was largely discussed was that " which party will the women vote for" and which political party will be fully vanished because of the large group of women coming to vote, the Liberal or the Labour or even the Conservative? The Liberal and Labour believed that such a large group of women will not fail them because they will not necessarily vote Conservative. However, conservatives were sure that it was beneficial for them to agree to the enfranchisement. The government replaced many those MPs who were opposed to the idea of enfranchisement of women in 1916, when David Lloyd George replaced Asquith as a PM. The duration of the war encouraged many, including Asquith and gave them the opportunity to change their mind " without losing face", so Asquith changed and explained to the House of Commons in 1917, and that was the time when the " Act of Representation of people" finally allowed all women age 30 and all men age 21 to vote in 1918.

And lastly, I think historical cartoons are extremely useful because they first were drawn at the time of the event and we can also see the event in picture as well as the fact that are drawn to put light on one specific part of the event with loads of information and links to every small detail of the event. The usefulness of a political cartoon shows the attitude of the political parties or government towards the issue, it displays the influential fact and how it has affected the event. The Aim and Tactic cartoons reveals the positive and negative attitudes of the specific group because their aim was to STOP the bad things that was about to ruin their reputation. I think the cartoons sums it all up in only one picture, whereas it takes books to explain the things drawn in a cartoon.