

WHY WE PICKET

For nearly seventy years women have worked for enfranchisement. They have held enormous mass meetings in large cities, and have addressed tiny groups in the remoter towns; they have held innumerable street meetings and many great processions; they have rolled up huge petitions to Congress, aggregating millions of names; they have sent to the President deputation after deputation of women representing every walk of life. The question of woman suffrage is probably better known and more widely approved than any political question which Congress has acted favorably upon for the past five years. Last January a deputation of women waited upon President Wilson, urging him to stop the waste of energy and life that was being expended in the long struggle to establish democracy for women. His reply was that women must "concert public opinion" in favor of their freedom.

Since that date women have realized that they needed to make a more constant, direct, and public appeal to the President, as head of the government, for justice. Every day since January 10 1917, through the cold of winter and the heat of summer, women have stood at the gates of the White House, holding in their hands their suffrage banners of purple, white, and gold.

For five months they were allowed to stand there in peace. But last month the District police began to arrest them for holding the same banners in the same place.

Please understand that there is no law against holding a banner at the gate of the White House. The charge brought by the District police against the suffragists is the technical charge of "obstructing traffic."

Everyone who has followed the history of the suffrage activity at the Capital knows that this charge is brought by the police to compel women to withdraw from the White House their demand for suffrage. The fact is that the appeal of women for democracy at this time is highly embarrassing to the Government. Politicians are asking the people to sacrifice everything and everybody "for democracy"; and many men and women are ready to sacrifice everything for democracy; but they are not willing to permit the Government to spend the life-blood of the nation for democracy somewhere in Europe while that same Government refuses to assist the peaceful and orderly establishment of democracy in our own country.

Women are not asking the Government to do the impossible. Congress could easily pass the suffrage amendment if the President gave his support. More than half the Senators and nearly half the House are already pledged to our amendment. Many Senators and Representatives oppose suffrage only because the President opposes it. If the President should declare for national suffrage he could undoubtedly influence enough votes to secure the passage of the amendment through Congress; and this victory for democracy could be accomplished without struggle or grief, without the loss of a single life, or any waste of national wealth.

But instead of assisting women to win freedom, the Government is trying to intimidate those who ask for freedom. And the women are determined to go on asking for it, knowing well that the very effort of the Government to suppress them is carrying their message all the more clearly to the whole people.

I expect to be present to picket the White House Saturday, September 1, at one o'clock.

Name.....

Address.....

Please sign slip and send to Miss Iris Calderhead, National Woman's Party, 21 Madison Place, Washington, D. C. (If you can not come for this picket, please state the week you could come.)