

ALICE PAUL

Members of the Press.

I am Alice Paul. I was born on January 11, 1885 in Mt. Laurel New Jersey. Being raised a Quaker; the principles of gender equality and working for the betterment of society were of the utmost importance. In keeping with these values I was able, unlike other women of my time, to nurture my education. My graduation from Swarthmore College in 1905 with a degree in biology was followed by a Masters' degree in sociology and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania.

My allegiance to women's right to vote began early in my life. As a young girl, I attended local women suffrage meetings with my mother, a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. It wasn't until I was in England studying social work, however, that I was transformed from a reserved idealist to a militant suffragist. In England, I learned that public awareness required more than prayers and patience. "Deeds not words" was the path that led to English suffragette success.

When I returned to America in 1910, I was determined to reshape the voting rights campaign for women in this country. Instead of efforts limited to gaining rights within each state, my goal was a national amendment guaranteeing women's equal right to vote. I must admit, my methods in obtaining this goal were controversial even among some of my fellow suffragettes. Unlike the National Women's Association who endorsed President Wilson and worked with the Democratic party, my goal was to hold the political system responsible and to gain attention through picketing and boldly worded banners directed at the President. My strategy led to my being arrested and imprisoned when our picketing of President Wilson continued during the Great War.

While in prison I, along with other suffragettes, was brutally treated – we were beaten and held in cold, unsanitary, rat infested cells. I led hunger strikes which resulted in the authorities bringing me to a sanitarium in the hopes of having me declared insane. Eventually, the public became aware of our conditions and their outcry led President Wilson to change his position and support a suffrage amendment. The 19th Amendment to our Constitution was passed by both the Senate and House of Representatives and was ratified in the summer of 1920. The seventy-two year battle for women's right to vote has been won.

I will now answer any questions.