

National Women's Party Not for Labor

By VERA BUCH.

A campaign is being carried on by the National Women's Party to put through an "equal rights for women" amendment to the constitution in the 1928 elections. Since this party appeals for support to working women, making propaganda supposedly in their interest, it is important for the working class to know just what this party really is and what its equal rights amendment, if passed, would mean to the working class.

A Party of Idlers.

The National Women's Party may be accorded first prize place among the reactionary, anti-working class women's organizations. Its composition is of women of the upper and middle classes, ladies of leisure whose idle hours are spent, among other things, in congregating in club rooms and salons, there to talk about "equality," "women's rights," and so forth.

This party is essentially feminist, that is to say, it stands for women as a sex, fighting for their rights against men. In some respects it is the inheritor of the old suffragists, both in its ideology and leadership. It stands for equality in the abstract, on "principle." There is no class understanding in its propaganda, but as we know very well, classless arguments are much in favor with the employers, serving to cover up many crimes against the working class. Therefore it behoves us to look for the nigger in this woodpile also.

The equal rights amendment calls for putting men and women on an equal plane before the law. It would wipe out all laws which have a special reference to women. Let us look at this in two ways.

First, there are any number of laws in all states of the union which discriminate against women. These deal with various things such as inheritance, control of property, guardianship of children, divorce, etc.

Now we come to the other phase of this equal rights amendment, which is of much greater importance for the workers. This affects particularly women in industry. There are a few laws in some states of America which give special protection to working women. For example, eleven states have minimum wage laws applying to women and children. Hours of work are regulated and limited in some places. Women are prohibited from working at night in certain occupations by some states.

The equal rights amendment advocated by the National Women's Party would wipe out these laws completely and make it impossible in the future to pass such laws. Here we see this party plainly exposed as an enemy of the women workers and a real agent of the employers.

The laws of some states prohibiting night work for women seem to excite the dear ladies of the National Women's Party also. Women must be "free" to work at night. Down with any laws that would keep them from the great privilege of slaving ten or twelve hours a night in factory, laundry or restaurant! Let them be "free" to wear themselves out for a boss during the hours when nature demands that they have sleep and rest. Let us look into the question of night work. Do any women work at night out of choice? In places where night work for women is prevalent, for instance in Passaic, N. J.—a town where half the women work, where three-quarters of the women workers are married and where 900 of these have children under five years of age—there you may find women who choose the night shift in preference to the day. But what is their reason? Because they have small children at home to take care of. If they work by day they must worry all day what is becoming of their little ones who are left un-

cared for. The mother therefore "chooses" to be a slave for twenty-four hours a day, working in the mill at night, and in the home by day. How is the working class to solve this terrible problem which capitalism has created for working women? The Soviet Union has solved it, not by permitting night work, but by providing nurseries attached to the factories where the working mothers leave their babies under expert care while they work. So our women workers, instead of trying to keep night work with its terrible consequences for the health and its break up of the home, must raise a demand for nurseries maintained by the city government where they can leave their children during working hours. Such a proposition certainly does not occur to the elegant theorists, the feminists, who have never met the realities of the working woman's life sufficiently to know her needs.

The minimum wage, the eight hour law, need extending instead of wiping out. The forty hour week is what women should really demand. Women, most of them, have home duties which men do not have. Even unmarried women, due to low wages, must wash clothes and sew after working hours. Therefore they need shortening of the working day. Equal pay for the same job is another crying need. This, strange to say, is not included in the equality holler raised by the feminists.

Therefore it becomes plain that the amendment of the National Women's Party, under its surface appeal to working women's interests, is in reality against the interests of the working women and therefore at bottom an anti-working class measure. It fits in extremely well with the present anti-labor drives of both the employers and the government who are both cut hot and heavy after the workers.