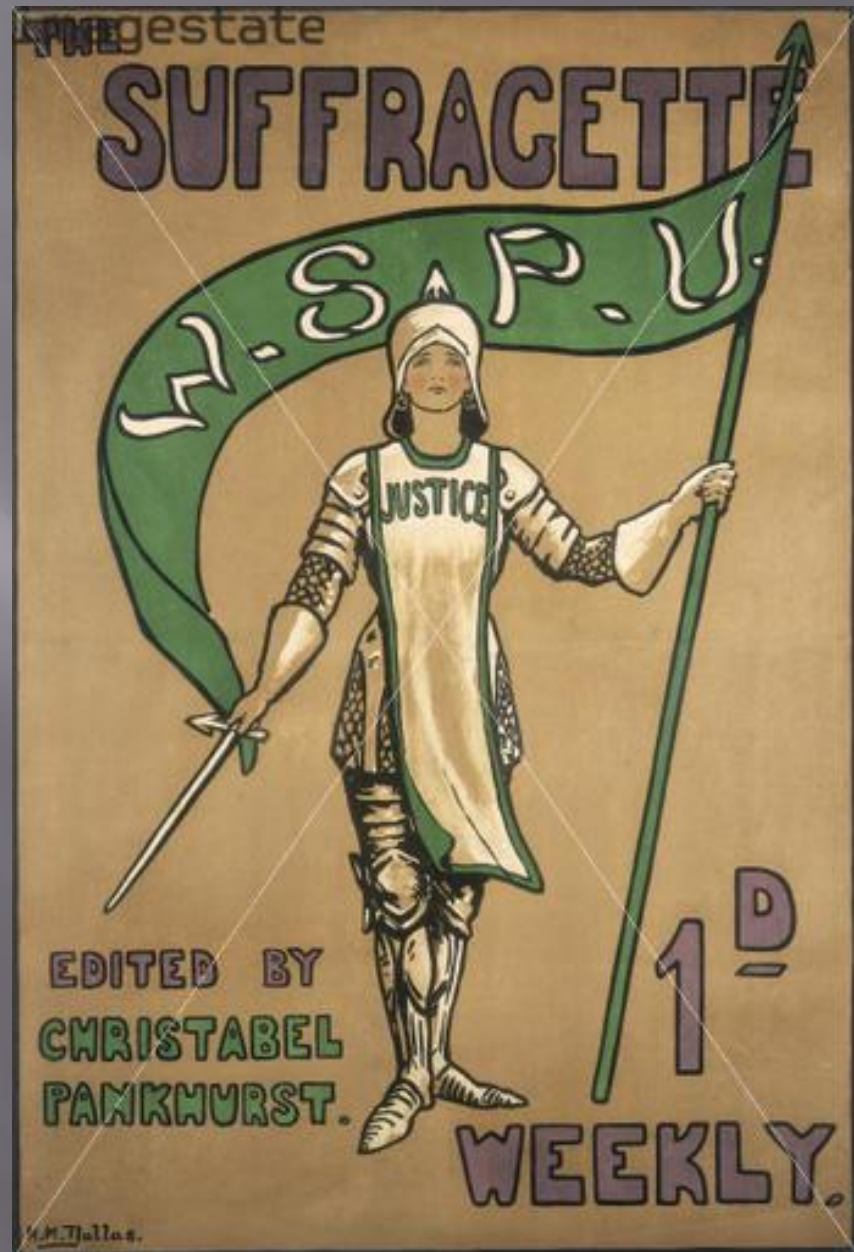


SUFFRAGETTES

Most men in Parliament believed that women simply would not understand how Parliament worked and therefore should not take part in the electoral process. This left many women angry and on 10 October 1903, the Women's Social and Political Union - founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia - held its inaugural meeting. They declared that the situation was so serious they would have to pursue extreme measures of civil disobedience. The Union's members were soon nicknamed the Suffragettes.





- In 1905 the organisation created a stir when Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney interrupted a political meeting in Manchester to ask two Liberal politicians (Winston Churchill and Sir Edward Grey) if they believed women should have the right to vote. Neither man replied. As a result, the two women got out a banner which had on it "Votes for Women" and shouted at the two politicians to answer their questions. Such actions were all but unheard of then when public speakers were usually heard in silence and listened to courteously even if you did not agree with them. Pankhurst and Kenney were thrown out of the meeting and arrested for causing an obstruction and a technical assault on a [police officer](#). Both women refused to pay a fine preferring to go to prison to highlight the injustice of the system as it was then.

- The government responded with the Cat and Mouse Act. When a Suffragette was sent to prison, it was assumed that she would go on hunger strike. The Act allowed the Suffragettes to go on a hunger strike and let them get weaker and weaker. When the Suffragette was very weak, they were released from prison. If they died out of prison, this was of no embarrassment to the government, however, some Suffragettes who were especially weak were force fed with tubes which went down their throats and into their stomach. This meant that none of those who were released died but they were so weak that they could take no part in violent Suffragette struggles. When those who had been arrested and released had regained their strength they were re-arrested for the most trivial of reasons and the whole process began again.

