



Elizabeth Robins:

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The following pages are from the Spender volume. Spender also includes a profile of Robins (pages 46-51) as one of the magazine's regular contributors and friend of founder Margaret Haig, Lady Rhondda. The images of the *Time and Tide* masthead and list of six points are taken from website that commemorates the original magazine, <https://www.timeandtidemagazine.org/>



19 JANUARY 1923

**SIX POINT GROUP SUPPLEMENT INTRODUCTORY
NUMBER**

The Six Points and their Common Centre

By Elizabeth Robins

1. Satisfactory legislation on child assault.
2. Satisfactory legislation for the widowed mother.
3. Satisfactory legislation for the unmarried mother and her child.
4. Equal guardianship.
5. Equality of pay for men and women teachers.
6. Equality of pay and opportunity for men and women in the Civil Service.

The Six Point Group is young but it has already a history of considerable importance.

The first page was written on February 17, 1921, when a little group of women framed a programme of social betterment which should appeal in two ways to people of practical mind. (1) It offered a non-party rallying ground for much previous dispersed (and therefore less effectual) effort. (2) It was a political instrument to hasten the ends desired, by the only sure means, *i.e.*, the Government measure.

In order to fulfil the preliminary qualifications it was necessary to confine the programme to questions which by their easily understood urgency should invite general response, and by their fundamental character should enlist the support of organised bodies.

This last essential was achieved by the foresight of the framers. They had chosen out of all the reforms necessary to put men and women on an equal footing, politically and economically, those measures on which public opinion is most ripe for legislation.

This was proved (1) by instantaneous success in adding individual names to the group membership.

(2) By the steadily growing number of societies desiring to co-operate with the group.

In a list of twenty-four, occurs: The British Federation of University Women, the Federation of Women Civil Servants,

and the National Union of Women Teachers, along with Co-operative Guilds, Women Citizens' Associations, and others.

On August 26, 1921, the Six Point Group was affiliated to the Consultative Committee which meets under the chairmanship of Lady Astor.

Apart from the work which led up to this widespread ratification of policy, what in the interval have been the Six Point activities and what their success?

The list is overlong for newspaper review.

In their dealing with Point One it was found that women, who differ from one another on each other count, were ready to join hands to protect the child. How shall they do this?

The short way to protect the child is the short way to effect each of the other five reforms: By giving woman the opportunity – real instead of spurious – to take her place as citizen. In other words to make an honest act out of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act – that measure which by a sorry paradox has brought woman more closely acquainted with her 'sex-disability.'

In face of the discriminations against women on the ground of sex – discriminations maintained from the House of Lords down to the Police Court – the Six Point Group saw it was no use to press, for instance, for an equal moral standard for men and women. But a political organisation could work for amendment of the Criminal Law.

Till the end of the summer session in August, 1921, the Group concentrated chiefly on bringing pressure to bear on the Government to adopt the *Bishop of London's Criminal Law Amendment Bill*, introduced in the House of Lords on February 23, 1921. This bill contained two very important clauses, the raising of the age of consent to indecent assault from thirteen to sixteen, and the abolition of 'reasonable cause to believe' as a defence. Members of Parliament were circularised from headquarters, individual members of the Group urged their local representatives to support the Bill and a great deal of publicity was obtained in the Press. The Government finally gave 'facilities' for the Bill, but would not definitely adopt it. At the last moment it was wrecked – an example of the ineffective character of private members' bills.

At a meeting of the Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations on October 11, Lady Rhondda, on behalf of the

Group, moved the following resolution:-

'That . . . women's societies demand that the Government shall bring forward a Criminal Law Amendment Bill on the lines of the one introduced by the Bishop of London last March and pass it through all its stages this session.'

The resolution received the support of thirty-four societies.

During the few days of the sitting in December, the Group organised a public luncheon at the Hyde Park Hotel to call attention to the situation, urging the Government to introduce and pass through all its stages a Bill on the lines of that fathered by the Bishop of London. The Bishop of London, Lady Rhondda, Miss Clemence Dane, Mr. Raper, M.P., Sir James Greig, M.P., and Miss Lena Ashwell were the speakers. On February 7, 1922, Parliament met for the new session and the King's Speech contained the following words:-

'Among the measures which will be presented for your consideration the following Bills will be submitted. . . . A Bill to amend the Criminal Law Amendment Acts, 1885 to 1912.' The Bill was introduced on February 8, 1922. Its chief clauses are as follows:-

It raises the age of consent to indecent assault from thirteen to sixteen years.

It abolishes 'reasonable cause to believe' as a defence.

It increases penalties against brothel-keepers and repeals Section V. of the Punishment of Incest Act, 1908 (which requires that all proceedings under that act are to be held *in camera*).

On March 14, a mass meeting of women was held by the Group at the Queen's Hall. The following resolution proposed by Lady Rhondda was passed with acclamation and forwarded to the members of the Cabinet.

'That this Mass Meeting of Women summoned by the Six Point Group having noted with satisfaction the inclusion of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill in the King's Speech and the introduction of the same into the House of Commons, now calls upon the Government to pass it into law without delay.'

A Government measure is also the means clearly indicated for dealing with Points 5 and 6. The Government cannot pass a law forcing employers to pay both sexes equally for the same work, but the Government can be expected to lead the way by itself doing so. Private employers are hardly likely to institute this piece of justice till the Government sets the example in the Civil Service, and the Board of Education.

As to other activities, 119 meetings have been held. Among pamphlets published by the Group are *Facts* (dealing with child assault), by Miss Clemence Dane, and *The Unmarried Mother*, by Mrs. H.A.L. Fisher.

One material advantage the Six Point Group had from its inception. A participating newspaper behind it.

Few woman-inspired enterprises receive active and steadfast co-operation from the Press. Such activities are as a consequence crippled from lack of means of exposition, of timely rejoinder, of appeal, of attack, and (not least in value), of record. It is here that the policy behind the Six Points will gain most in the long run by having an ally in the Press.

It was useful to be reminded of the fear inspired in the most obdurate by the idea of Record. There appears to be something singularly unnerving in this foreshadowing of the Judgement Day.

A masterly use of the power inherent in faithful Record was responsible for the most effective piece of political team work done by women in the General Election. It was the cause of legitimate preenings over the White List (issued by the Six Point Group) and the ground of anger and outcry against the Black List. Its sponsors were remonstrated with by letter, denounced from platforms, and threatened with libel action. But eventually silence fell. Likewise some of the largest majorities. Even certain seats, considered safe, fell to White List candidates.

Why? — since charges against the opponent are the chaff which the public expects to find blowing about political meetings, in committee rooms and newspaper offices.

The Six Point Lists had to stand tests seldom applied rigidly to unofficial pronouncements in an election. Women take these things seriously. Their questions poured in by telephone, post, and personal interview.

Demands for chapter and verse revealed the fact that these Lists, framed with skill and patient labour, were of invulnerable accuracy. The faith they inspired spread throughout the electorate. 92 Victoria Street became a Bureau of documented information. Not the personal opinion of the Black Listers' opponents — his own past bewrayed him.

Never was a fairer weapon forged and never one of surer aim.

Readers of TIME AND TIDE have not only an opportunity to follow the progress and the checks to Six Point policy. They will

be able to trace clearly that likeness in history of the various Points – the central fact common to them all: that these reforms could be pressed home without delay if disqualification on account of sex were not still a governing influence in social life.

To get the truth into women's heads would be worth much to this world – among other ways, in the early granting of the Six Points.



JOIN THE SIX POINT GROUP

AND HELP TO SECURE
SATISFACTORY LEGISLATION

FOR

1. CHILD ASSAULT.
 2. THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD.
 3. THE WIDOWED MOTHER.
 4. THE GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS
- AND
5. EQUALITY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.
 6. EQUALITY OF TEACHERS' PAY.

FOR ALL PARTICULARS APPLY TO—

Miss Haythorne, Hon. Secretary,
THE SIX POINT GROUP. 92, VICTORIA ST., LONDON, S.W. 1.