

Emmeline Pankhurst

1858-1928

Brief Biography

Emmeline Pankhurst was born on 14 July 1858 in Moss Side, Manchester. Her family were very wealthy and her parents were both politically active. As she grew older, Emmeline noticed that women were treated differently to men and became motivated to help change that.

In 1903 she, along with her daughters Sylvia and Christabel, founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Emmeline Pankhurst is remembered for her hard work with the WSPU in the fight to help get British women the right to vote.

The WSPU was a group led by Emmeline Pankhurst. Their aim was to gain equal voting rights for women. Emmeline gave speeches encouraging women to take action in order to achieve this goal.

The WSPU, at the time, became known as a 'radical party,' which means they used extreme methods in order to get their message heard. Because these methods were sometimes violent, WSPU members became the first women labelled as 'suffragettes'. Members were known to smash windows, damage public property and even start fires. This got many women in trouble with the police and some even sentenced to time in prison, where they were treated very badly. When the stories of bad treatment reached the newspapers, it actually helped to increase support for the suffragette movement.

In 1914 the First World War began. Emmeline Pankhurst encouraged WSPU members to put their demonstrations on hold, in order to focus on the war effort. Emmeline asked women to take up roles in factories in support of the men fighting. In response, the government released all WSPU prisoners. When the war ended in 1918, the Representation of the People Act was introduced, giving women over the age of 30 who owned property, the right to vote.

Although Emmeline lived to see some women gain the right to vote, she died on 14 June 1928, just a few weeks before a law was passed giving all women over 21 years of age the right to vote.