

Now the PHILIPPINE WOMEN want back the VOTE They GAVE AWAY



The Philippine "Joan of Arc" is Gabriela Silan who, 150 years ago, took up the cause of her murdered husband and led a revolt against the Spaniards. She was hanged.

By Rose McKee

MANILA.

MONEY to buy kindling, medicine for the baby, milk for the breakfast table is being handed out in a door-to-door canvass in the Philippines these days by suffragettes who are going after the ballot with open purses instead of parades.

The "social service" approach they call it, without batting an eye. But they don't protest when the Dorothy Parker of the Philippines, Colorado-born Yay Panlilio, comments in her daily column in the *Philippines Herald*:

"They weren't any too welcome before, but I hope the suffragettes come to my house now. There's the telephone bill and that unpaid sack of rice and a new curtain to be had for the shower."

There is less chat about ideals and the glorious emancipation of womanhood, as the young, good-looking, smooth, smart suffragettes go into the final weeks of reaching the heart through the stomach.

For more than two decades now, women of the Philippines have been slowly leading their Oriental sisters out of the traditional seclusion of the East. Having set an example for Indian and Chinese women who now have a measure of suffrage, they are going back to recapture for themselves the ballot—which, during the brief time they had it, they were coerced into using as a vote against future woman suffrage.

Unlike the American women's fight for the ballot on every front, Filipino suffragettes have gone forth to war not against men but against opponents among their own sex. Their men have already given in—have set a national plebiscite for April 30 at which women will vote on the suffrage question. Only 300,000 "yeses" are needed.

EASY? No. Indifference among women themselves is a great obstacle. Wives and daughters of the fabulously rich sugar plantation owners, who are beginning to fly to the United States by clipper to buy their clothes and see the shows, can't be bothered with such plebeian activities as voting.

Wives of the very poor plantation workers, huddled in their nipa (palm) thatched shacks built on stilts above the ground, are too concerned with the squealing pigs and chickens on the ground below them and the crying of

the undernourished babies in their arms to comprehend what suffrage is all about.

And the suffragettes are not trying to tell them. Instead, they are feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and clothing the naked, sometimes doing all three at a single nipa shack.

"There is no use arguing with these women," explains the executive secretary of the suffragettes, Mrs. Josefa Escoda, a Columbia University graduate who is as brainy as she is beautiful. "We give them medicine and food and they believe what we tell them. When we have made them happy, then we talk business."

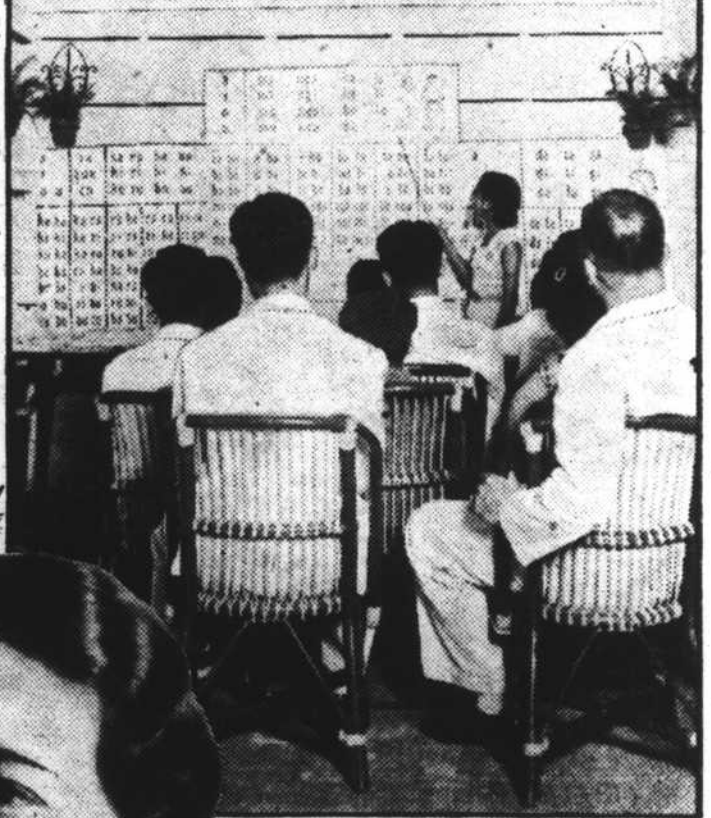
What relief is given depends on the energetic young woman supervisor assigned to a town or *barrio*. She may go to the prosperous Chinese milk dealer of the community and ask that free milk be left regularly at certain shacks. He may not like the idea but he prefers it to a boycott by members of the local women's club. For the same reason, physicians, as well as other merchants, see eye to eye with the suffragettes.

Cash, too, is being scattered among the women of the nipa hut class. When they were only warming up to their campaign last December, suffragettes said they would need at least 15,000 pesos (\$7500), but before April 30 they will have raised and given out much more than this sum. The money comes from the wealthy who are asked to sign on the dotted line, the numerals already having been filled in.

BUT all this is only a small part of the "social service" approach. At their national convention last November, the 600 Federated Women's Clubs of the islands, with a membership of about 6000, pledged themselves to win the plebiscite. Now they have opened hundreds of new nursery schools where little boys and girls are cared for while their parents are at work. The mothers, thankful for what is being done for their children, will gladly vote "Yes" on April 30.

At diet kitchens, thousands of other mothers learn about health and body-building food for their children and meanwhile digest large doses of suffrage slipped in on the side. Still other thousands, at maternal education centers which have sprung up in the last few months, get suffrage sugar-coated in the form of child guidance and home building.

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Men seem to hog the classes in the booths that the suffragettes have opened to reduce illiteracy and raise the vote at the coming plebiscite.

ment drive in the United States.

Daughters of long established families visited society women and social climbers. Girls of less distinction remained on their side of the town.

A PHILIPPINE Joan of Arc is figuratively leading the fight. After 150 years of neglect, she was "discovered" in the history books by a schoolgirl bent on winning a suffrage-sponsored oratorical contest. Now she has been pressed into service and publicized.

Thousands of women are hearing for the first time the stirring story of Mrs. Gabriela Silan. Her husband had been the soul of an early 18th century revolt against the Spaniards. His assassination so terrified his followers that they abandoned the struggle. But brave Mrs. Silan used the money her husband left her to recruit troops for another revolt, at the head of which she placed an uncle of her dead husband.

He was defeated and his forces routed, but courageous Gabriela Silan raised still another army and herself led an attack on the Spaniards. She was caught and hanged. Today she leads another "independence revolt," her sharp-edged *bolo* replaced by brightly colored posters.

In 1933 Filipino women won the vote. Michigan's Gov. Frank Murphy, then governor-general of the Philippines, signed the woman suffrage bill which had just been passed by the legislature after 20 years' agitation. Victory was sweet, but short. The new constitution which was to be submitted to the people at a plebiscite on May 14, 1935, provided for male suffrage only.

Filipinas were in a dilemma. If they voted yes on the constitution, they would cut their own throats. To vote no would be unpatriotic, of this they were assured on all sides of the controversy.

Organized womanhood met, chose to cut its own throat. Their vote on the constitution was their first and last, for it was in effect before a regular election rolled around. But 200,000 women had proved their patriotism.



Brains of the present suffrage drive is Mrs. Josefa Escoda, highly educated executive secretary of the National Federation of the Women's Clubs of the Philippines.

Even Mother's Day, which comes in December in the Philippines instead of the torrid month of May when schools are closed, was utilized.

If the suffragettes do not win on April 30, it will be at least a generation before they can have another opportunity. So they are taking no chances. To garner votes which otherwise they would not have, the suffragettes have shouldered the gargantuan task of wiping out the 30 per cent illiteracy of the Philippines!

Free literacy booths have been erected throughout the islands, in schools, churches, public buildings and homes. Volunteer teachers, working without pay, are teaching adults to read and write.

Not only women, although they alone can vote on April 30, are being taught. Men are equally welcome. Illiterate males are being as urgently induced to join the booths as are the females.

Co-eds, marshaled along with all organized Filipino womanhood, are among the most effective and tireless troopers. In thousands of colleges and high schools last December they rallied, took their cue from the New York society-sponsored repeal-the-eighteenth-amend-