

132. Marriage under Capitalism

Adela Pankhurst Walsh, youngest daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, first gained notoriety in Australia as a feminist and socialist. After her marriage, she moved steadily to the right and founded the Australian Women's Guild of Empire. In her public addresses and in the columns of the *Guild of Empire Gazette*, she promoted marriage and family as women's proper and most rewarding sphere. She was interned during the Second World War because of her admiration for fascism, and particularly for the Japanese. The following extract from the *Working Woman* is typical of the attacks communist feminists made on Adela Pankhurst Walsh, for her celebration of marriage and motherhood and her neglect of the material difficulties that faced working-class wives and mothers.

Comrade Editor,

Mrs Adela Pankhurst Walsh, who used to pose as a revolutionary, has been recently telling the people what she thinks about marriage and children.

She starts out by saying that human beings are possessed of a selective power which works through a warm and passionate love for a mate and affection for their offspring. She continues in this strain, and paints marriage under capitalism in the most idealistic way. Not a mention does she make of the basis of marriage under capitalism, of the restricted circle in which the workers are forced to live, and of the slave conditions which force the women of our class to seek marriage, merely as a way out. She forgets all about her former beliefs that women under capitalism are the slaves of slaves, and of course, she fails to urge the women in her audience to organise to fight for better conditions, for themselves and their class.

In answer to the question as to whether women should produce children, whether they desired them or not, she stated, "It is the will of God". As one who has three, I say it is a pity what when God was "willing" the children, the means of feeding and clothing them was not "willed" at the same time.

"Sob-stuff Artist; Mrs Walsh on Children", by "A.E.A. of Rozelle", *Working Woman*, January 1932.