Steady pressure by the moderate Suffragists was the most important reason for the achievement of votes for women by 1918.” How accurate is this view?

MAKE SURE YOU ADOPT AN ANALYTICAL TONE THROUGHOUT & LINK BACK TO THE ESSAY TITLE. USE EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS YOUR ARGUMENT & TAKE A CONSISTENT & BALANCED LINE OR ARGUMENT.

INTRODUCTION

The enfranchisement of many women over 30 in 1918, and all women over 21 in 1928 was the culmination of a long arduous struggle by many to achieve greater equality for women by granting them the vote. The relentless, legitimate campaigning of the moderate Suffragists had undoubtedly made a great contribution to this achievement. However, debate still rages over the relative merits of this, as well as the actions of the militant Suffragettes and the changing attitudes brought about by the Great War. This essay will consider all these factors in order to assess whether or not it is accurate to state that the Suffragists played the most important role in women receiving the vote in 1918.

MAIN BODY OF ESSAY (named factor must deal with this first in main body of essay)

- NUWSS first national organisation to campaign for female suffrage.
- Examples of tactics and how received by public / press / politicians.
- Secured statements of ‘support in principle’ from many MPs.
- Very large membership of NUWSS (53,000 in 1914), including many defectors from WSPU during their ‘wild period’.
- Influence on Conciliation Bill in 1910 (obtain 280,000 signatures on a votes for women petition, forcing the Bill to be discussed)

LINK BACK TO QUESTION – does this evidence support or contradict the view?

MILITANT SUFFRAGETTES

- Formation of WSPU, due to frustrations at NUWSS lack of progress.
- Aim – maximum publicity - ‘Deeds Not Words’
- Examples of tactics and public / press / political reaction
- Brought issue to forefront -> politicians had to address it
- Greater sympathy / respect over force feeding and Cat & Mouse Act

LINK BACK TO QUESTION – does this evidence support or contradict the view?

THE GREAT WAR

- WSPU stopped campaigning to support the war effort. Received positive publicity and ‘support’ from government.
- Women keen to help -> ‘right to serve’ demonstration
- Examples of ‘men’s’ jobs, women’s armed services, military hospitals etc and how this was viewed.
- War acted as a catalyst to speed up the process of changing attitudes towards women.
1918 Representation of the People Act – mainly intended to ensure all MEN had the vote – women just ‘tacked on’.

BUT... 1918 Act only enfranchised middle-class women over 30, whereas most of the war workers would have been younger and working-class. Furthermore, some historians believe Government were afraid of suffragette campaign starting up again – 1918 act designed to prevent this.

LINK BACK TO QUESTION – does this evidence support or contradict the view?

OTHER FACTORS:
- Examples of other countries – New Zealand gave women the right to vote in 1893.
- Attitudes towards women had slowly been changing. They had greater access to education and more rights after marriage.
- No longer treated as second class citizens.
- Women had been allowed to vote in local council elections from 1869.
- Thus, it was perhaps inevitable that they would eventually receive the right to take part in national politics.

LINK BACK TO QUESTION – does this evidence support or contradict the view?

CONCLUSION:
- Summarise each of the four major themes.
- Ensure that your argument flows from the previous information presented.
- Answer the question directly.

Historians’ quotes and viewpoints (useful to add some of these to support argument)

Historian Martin Pugh goes as far to say that the growing numbers of women leaving the WSPU for the NUWSS in this period was ‘probably the one constructive contribution of the Pankhurst’s to winning the vote.'

Constance Rover, states that the Government’s fear of a resumption of militancy activities after the war by the WSPU was a major factor in the passing of the Representation of the People Act (1918).

“...it was the suffragettes who brought colour and drama to the movement. Whether one agreed or disagreed with militant tactics, they kept the suffrage campaign in the news. And more and more women flocked to join the cause”

Leah Leneman

“Women proved by their work in the First World War that they deserved the vote equally with men. Thus their war efforts succeeded where the Suffragette campaign had failed.”

John Ray