

**SPEECH BY MANCHESTER COUNCILLOR MARGARET ASHTON (Played by JULIE WARD  
MEP and Lydia Meryll Manchester WILPF)**

Today, August 4<sup>nd</sup> 1914, in this great capital city and throughout the country people are gathering to bid our government stop this mad fooling with war.

On Saturday, vast crowds were gathering in Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park. Many notable voices, like the Keir Hardie MP, the great playwright George Bernard Shaw and the philosopher Bertrand Russell lent their voice to the cry to turn back from the brink before it is too late.

War has not yet taken place between France and Germany. There is yet time to stop England being dragged in. As women are still deprived from direct power to shape the destiny of this country, we must demand that our fellow men do their utmost to preserve peace and prevent the destruction of our communities. You are the only people who can prevent this crime from taking place. We are in contact with our sisters in Europe and America and we all believe that nothing can be gained from violence. We must appeal instead to reason and humanity.

Already food prices are rising. You are paying. The rich are buying up supplies. You cannot. You have no money. What prices you will pay if war breaks out, no-one can tell, for it is well known that available food supplies are of the scantiest description. It is women who will bear the brunt of these problems. Yet women have still to be given a voice in the running of this country.

Already there is a great financial panic. The Stock Exchange is closed and the authorities dare not re-open it because scores of men cannot pay their debts.

The government has responded by declaring two more Bank Holidays, for it is well known that if the banks open they cannot pay their way. Even your savings banks have closed and your hard earned savings are in peril. You cannot demand the money you have saved for your time of need.

If this was not bad enough, worse is to come. Trade is almost at a standstill. The docks and great warehouses and workshops will soon have no work, and unemployment will stalk the land.

Remember it is your husbands' sons and brothers who will do the fighting. It is their bodies that will be bruised and maimed. It is they who will pay with their lives and you who will be left to bear the burden which loss of husband or father brings. You are told Germany is your enemy. How can this be when you are asked to fight for a great Russian despot who is the worst enemy of mankind?

I urge you do more than demonstrate on the streets. Let your MP know you will fight against this. Get your Trade Union or other society to use their power. Get them to refuse to transport coal or troops. Do all in your power to passively resist this great crime. You have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Join us now in one supreme effort to stop England joining this fearful crime against humanity.

Thank you

Script written by Hazel Roy, adapted by Lydia Meryll

Research by Dr Ali Ronan

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