

Parody *The Women's Rights Activist* (1912)

Abstract

The precursor of the radio play, the *Hörbild* was a recorded dramatized scene with added sound effects. (Similarly, early films whose sound was played synchronously from a record were called *Tonbild*.) Commercial *Hörbild* recordings included dramatizations of famous speeches and monologues, battle scenes (such as the fictional scene from the war against the Herero also included in this volume), and comedic sketches. This 1912 recording titled *Die Frauenrechtlerin* [The Women's Rights Activist] parodies the women's movement and its protagonists as man-hating, militant, and pseudo-intellectual. The author of this scene is unknown. It takes place at the meeting of a local women's club, whose mission it was "to fight against male oppression and to promote female beauty. For beauty is the only weapon against the beast called 'man.'" The chairwoman is voiced by actress Clara Berger while high-pitched male voices are used for the female audience members. Several heckling men in the audience constantly interrupt the meeting. The chairwoman then announces a lecture by one of the club's members named "Fräulein Ohnewas" [Miss Gotnothin'] on a nonsensical topic involving skirts, giant hats, and cosmetics. Finally, she announces that women would no longer remain silent in their fight for emancipation but instead keep speaking up "until the men's eyes pop out!"

While the women's movement had seen strong growth in the early twentieth century, this also gave rise to organized political efforts to fight against women's emancipation. One of the main demands of women's movements during this period was for women's suffrage. In the 1912 national elections the SPD, who advocated for women's right to vote, gained a significant number of votes. That same year, a "German Alliance to Fight Women's Emancipation" [Deutscher Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation] was founded, whose members belonged mainly to the urban, Protestant, professional middle classes – and a quarter of them were women. In addition to conservative arguments about women's emancipation threatening traditional marital and family patterns, the opponents of women's suffrage feared that it might lead to universal suffrage, empowering the workers, and thereby spelling the end of the German monarchy.

Source

My dear sisters,

I hereby open today's meeting of the local women's club and would like to remind you, my dear sisters, that this meeting takes place once a month in our women's club. The purpose of the club is to fight against male oppression and to promote female beauty. For beauty is the only weapon against the beast called "man."

If the few men who are present at our meeting today do not behave themselves properly, they will be thrown out!

[Interjections]: Take it easy! [Bell] Take it easy!

The first speaker is Miss Ohnewas from Mönchen-Gladbach. Miss Ohnewas will speak on the topic "The rumpled skirt in its symmetrical relationship to the diagonal system of the giant hat covered with decorative roses, as well as the influence of modern clothing on the nervous system, with special consideration of hygrodermatological cosmetics."

[Interjections]: What? Quiet!

My dear sisters, before I give the floor to Miss Ohnewas, I would like to say a few words to you. We have been told that women's liberation is a stillborn child that will come to nothing. Ha! Is there anything more stupid than this assertion? My dear sisters, it is obvious that we will finally gain the upper hand! Seven times more girls are born every year than boys.

[Interjections]: Very true! Bravo, bravo, bravo!

People always talk about the weakness of women. But, dear sisters, our weakness is our strength.

[Interjections]: Bravo, bravo, bravo! Very true!

And yet we women can endure more than men. I only wish that nature would see reason and let men become mothers for once, so that they would have some idea of what it's like!

Bravo! Very true!

[Interjections from men]: Ha ha ha! We'll do it, we'll do it!

Dear sisters, women must completely emancipate themselves from men. We don't need men!

[Interjections]: Now, now, now! Quiet, quiet, quiet!

Men only marry for money. They only strive for our fortune and its usufruct. And when they've used it up, they sneer at us!

Bravo, bravo, bravo!

Yes, my dear sisters, we have remained silent until now.

[Interjections from men]. Quiet, quiet!

But now the spell is broken and we will not stop talking. We shall talk until the men's eyes pop out! Yes, my dear sisters, we no longer want to be slaves to men. We no longer want to be tyrannized and pushed around. We want to strike back! We must come out on top in this just struggle! Certainly, we have already come a long way. But we must, under all circumstances, ensure that the pants are worn exclusively by us!

Therefore, dear sisters, through struggle to victory! Join me in the call: long live the international women's movement!

Source: *Die Frauenrechtlerin*, author unknown, voice: Clara Berger, 1912. Stiftung Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv

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