

Florence Bayard, ce "diable à quatre", élève de la première promotion de Chestnut-Hill (1879-80) n'a pas démenti sa réputation :

Quand Florence Bayard Hilles de Wilmington entendit Mabel Vernon parler du vote des femmes, elle réalisa qu'elle disait "ce en quoi je croyais et pour lequel je ne faisais rien". À partir de cet instant Mrs Hilles fut totalement engagée. Elle donna son temps, son argent, son engagement pour la cause "du vote des femmes". Elle et Mabel Vernon initièrent l'association "Congressional Union" au Delaware. Elle fut une des suffragettes "sentinelles silencieuses" autour de la Maison Blanche, et fut arrêtée en juillet 1917, jugée et condamnée à deux mois de prison. Après trois jours de geôle, elle fut graciée par le Président Wilson.

Fille du sénateur Thomas F. Bayard, Mrs Hilles vient d'une famille de politiciens du Delaware. En 1898, elle épousa William S. Hilles, avocat. Outre son action de suffragette, Mrs Hilles participa à de nombreuses associations communautaires du Delaware.

Le journal "The Suffragist" publia son discours lors du procès:

The Suffragist, Saturday, July 21, 1917, p. 8

MRS. FLORENCE BAYARD HILLES, one of the most brilliant figures in the suffrage movement, said: "For generations the men of my family have given their services to their country. For myself, my training from childhood has been with a father who believed in democracy and who belonged to the Democratic party. By inheritance and conviction I am a Democrat, and to a Democratic President I went with my appeal. What a spectacle it must be to the thinking- people of this country to see us urged to go to war for democracy in a foreign land, and to see women thrown into prison who plead for that same cause at home.

"I stand here to affirm my innocence of the charge against me. This court has not proved that I obstructed traffic. My presence at the White House gate was under the constitutional right of petitioning the government for freedom, or for any other cause. During the months of January, February, March, April, and May picketing, such as we have been doing, has been held legal. During the month of June it apparently

becomes illegal.

"We have every right to believe that we may continue our course-since under arbitrary ruling the precedent has been established, though not yet definitely established, that during certain months picketing is legal under the act of Congress, and during certain other months is illegal.

"My services as an American woman are being conscripted by order of the President of the United States to help win his world war for democracy 'that the right of those who submit to authority shall have a voice in their own government.' I shall continue to plead for the political liberty of American women-and especially do I plead to the President, since he is the one person who by a suggestion can end the struggles of American women to take their proper places in a true democracy."