

WHY WOMEN SHOULD VOTE

Address of Chief Justice Walter Clark Before W. C. T. U. Convention

I appreciate the honor of being asked to address this intelligent convention of an organization which has done so much for the betterment of temperance and for the betterment of conditions throughout the Union, and the world.

Your order began, as I understand, with the efforts of a few good women at Hillsboro, Ohio, in 1873. In 1874, just 41 years ago the first State organization was formed and from thence it has spread until it covers not only the entire Union, but many other countries. The first State organization in North Carolina was formed 12 years ago for this is your 33rd annual convention and you now number in this State 50 chapters and have been a powerful influence for good that is far more extensive than the mere membership of your order, for your views have been like a lump of leaven which leaveneth the whole body politic.

Among the planks adopted in your original platform the three most important were: 1. Total abstinence which was the pledge to be given by individuals. 2. Prohibition of the use of spirituous liquors by law which has now succeeded to the extent that in all States there is statewide prohibition, applying to certain territory therein, so that on the whole it is estimated that 70 per cent of the area of the Union and 60 per cent or more of our population are under prohibition by law. 3. The third important plank in your platform was equal suffrage. This last, like prohibition has had a wonderful growth and it is upon that subject that I have been invited to speak to you tonight.

Marvelous Growth.
The growth of equal suffrage has been almost as marvelous as that of prohibition. The two movements have grown because to a large extent, except in the South, they have had the same power behind them. Indeed they have the same great object in view of the betterment of the masses and of the condition of the people and it is very certain that they have met some great foe in the great opponent of equal suffrage, the element that furnishes the money that is fighting its progress is the same that has fought prohibition—that is the powerful liquor interests of the country who find their profit in debauching men and the vicious interests that find their profit in debauching women.

The National Federation of Labor and State and local organizations everywhere incessantly demand equal suffrage for women. At bottom the movement for equal suffrage is a demand for justice as to compensation for women who are now employed in every department of labor and for treatment of women who are now driven by restricting the hours of labor and an age limitation upon the exploitation of children. The United States Industrial Commission which has been working for two years past into the condition of labor has recommended as one of the most urgent and surest sources of relief suffrage for women who, they say, are now exploited by unjust wages and overworked because they are without the protection of the ballot.

There are a great many good men who oppose both measures, and with entire sincerity and without selfish interest. Such men must be reasoned with and not denounced because they differ from you. This has been the policy which has been pursued by your organization and by the Equal Suffrage League. The majority of men mean well and are honest and just and are for the best order of things because by temperament they are opposed to change or because they have not been informed as to the injustice of the existing status or by the actual trial of new measures elsewhere. To secure any betterment or any reform requires, therefore, long agitation and many campaigns of education. The majority at bottom mean well. How can they be formed unless it be shown? In 1871 a referendum in this State there was over 100,000 majority against prohibition. In 1903 on another referendum there was 44,000 majority for it.

Justifiably Rapid Extension.
The cause of equal suffrage has been justified by its rapid and irresistible extension. No reform movement can spread to new territory unless it has been tried and found to be an advantage to the communities in which it has been adopted. Equal suffrage can be judged by this standard for no great movement has been more irresistible in its sweep. It has long been adopted throughout the great continent of the world. There is a larger area than the United States, and in New Zealand which is as large as Great Britain and Ireland combined. It has been adopted in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and elsewhere. It has been repealed. In 12 States and 1 territory of the United States embracing 49 per cent of the area of this Union it has been adopted and 4,000,000 women are now enfranchised voters for Pres-

ident and for United States Senators and members of Congress. In 21 other States they have partial woman's suffrage, the women being eligible to vote either for schools or for bonds or measures of taxation, or have municipal suffrage. Throughout Canada they have this partial suffrage and the prime minister has announced that he will submit to the coming Parliament the measure of full suffrage for woman equally with men. The Queen of Holland who with rare ability has succeeded in keeping her country out of the vortex of war, brought influence on all sides and the warring nations of Germany, Belgium and England announced recently in a speech from the throne that the question of full suffrage would be submitted to this Parliament with her recommendation for its adoption. It is no wonder that she thinks other women competent to take a share in the government equally with men when she has been so successful in that line herself. In Italy there are conditions of similar order. Throughout Great Britain and Ireland women have had the municipal suffrage, the right to vote in city elections, for 30 years, and they have been shamefully postponed in achieving full suffrage by a Parliament which was set on a pledge to give them full suffrage and which has voted by a two-thirds vote 7 different times for the bill on its second reading only to be thwarted by great influences which are said to be largely in the interests of the great breweries of the kingdom.

Many Give Support.

There are other smaller localities and countries which have adopted equal suffrage in whole or in part. In this country it will be sufficient to look at the development in the last few years. The President of the United States has announced his adherence to equal suffrage and his belief that it will benefit the exercise of the suffrage by all. The Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Navy and other secretaries besides the personal secretary of the President, Mr. Tumulty, have made the same announcement. In fact so far as known, not a single member of the Cabinet opposes equal suffrage. Vice-President Marshall, Chief Justice Clark, the Speaker of the House (and Mr. Wilson's leading opponent for the nomination at Baltimore) favors suffrage as did one of his ablest predecessors, Thomas B. Reed. The Secretary of the Navy and Joseph G. Cannon, the ex-speaker of the House and a stand pat politician of the most pronounced order, have announced themselves for equal suffrage. The President of the United States and the leader of the Progressive party is also a pronounced advocate of this great measure of "equal rights to all."

In the last national campaign the Progressive party, the Labor party, the Prohibition party and the Socialists all placed in their platform a plank demanding equal suffrage. The Democratic and the old line Republican platforms were silent on the subject and every certain that either of these shall place a plank demanding equal suffrage in its platform at the next national convention the other will do the same. Archimedes the great engineer said that if he could find a fulcrum, a place at which to rest his lever, he could turn the world over. The women have found their fulcrum and their lever. They cast one half the votes already in 12 States which elect one-fourth of the members of the House of Representatives and one-fifth of the Presidential electors. There are 4,000,000 women who now have an equal right with men to vote for President, and it is beyond any question that no man can ever hereafter be the candidate of any party for President who is opposed to equal suffrage. No political party could afford to risk such a candidate with 4,000,000 women holding the balance of power.

Powerful Influences Against.

Besides this, 7 States are to vote in less than a month, upon the admission of women to the ballot box. Among these are such States as New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. No one can foresee how these States will go. We know the powerful influence of inertia and of opposition to change and the effect of the vast sums that will be spent by the liquor and other interests opposed to suffrage. But if any of these States should show a majority for the measure, or even a powerful vote in its favor, the effect will be enormous throughout the country. There is a constitutional amendment proposed to prohibit any discrimination by the States, by reason of sex, as to the suffrage. This measure obtained a majority in the last Senate and very nearly a majority in the House. The suffrage shows up strong in these States that are to vote shortly there can be little question that the constitutional amendment will receive the necessary two-thirds this winter in

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both houses of Congress. While we of the South do not favor Federal constitutional amendments affecting the suffrage the effect of the voting in the States named will probably command the necessary two-thirds vote in Congress. The National convention of W. C. T. U. passed a resolution in favor of equal suffrage in 1883 and has done so at every session since. The same has been done in nearly every State convention, though I do not believe this has been done by your State convention in North Carolina.

Having spoken of the irresistible progress of the movement and the strong proof thus afforded of the experience of the benefits of the measure wherever it has been adopted, it may be well to name briefly a few of the other reasons in favor of it.

Thomas Jefferson 100 years ago said: "It is incomprehensible that government should refuse the ballot to the best and most intelligent woman, but confer it on the most besotted and ignorant man."

Abraham Lincoln said: "Suffrage should be conferred upon all of sufficient age and intelligence—by no means omitting women."

Reduced to the last analysis the justice of the demand for equal suffrage, and therefore its success or failure depends upon the question whether women as a class have sufficient intelligence to vote. Stripped of all sham compliments and evasions by its opponents, this is the whole question.

The Mohammedans were unwilling to admit that women are the equals of men and therefore hold that they have no souls and can not go to Heaven when they die.

There are men among us who are unwilling to admit that women are the equals of men in intelligence and therefore they oppose granting them a share in the government by giving them a vote at the ballot box.

The Disqualifications.
In North Carolina the only two disqualifications for suffrage are lack of intelligence and lack of character. Children do not vote because they have not the requisite intelligence and an arbitrary line is drawn at 21 years of age. Idiots and lunatics are debarred because they are mental defectives. Convicts, because they are moral defectives. And then the only other class debarred are women.

We know that they are debarred as moral defectives because your jails and penitentiaries will show 20 men or more for every woman therein imprisoned. The only ground of disqualification therefore that can be assigned is that they are mentally incompetent.

Illiterates (if negroes) are disqualified because as a class they are not deemed mentally competent. Why should the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of the white men of North Carolina be disqualified from a share in the government by being placed with those disfranchised by the above reasons?

Taxation Without Representation.
We fought the great war for American independence because we were taxed that taxation without representation was tyranny. Men died for that principle and our independence was based upon its recognition. It is said that one-third of the property in North Carolina is owned by women and that more than one-half of the property in the great city of New York is owned by them. In last Sunday's issue of the New York Times appeared a list of over 500 persons who had been assessed for taxation on more than \$1,000,000 of personal property. Among the 6 names of the very wealthiest, 5 were women. Yet not one of them was deemed of sufficient intelligence to cast her vote as to how the taxes paid by her should be expended, or who should be assessed to expend them. A newspaper writer has depicted the scene at the last presidential election when Miss Helen Gould (who is now married) came down the street on election day in her auto. It was stated that she owned over \$40,000,000 of property; that she paid probably one half million dollars of taxes annually and that when the auto stopped near the voting booth her negro chauffeur got out and deposited his ballot for president and for all other offices. In the city while she who by her taxes contributed so largely to the support of the government was allowed no vote. Why? Solely because she was guilty of the atrocious crime of being a woman, and for no other reason. In intelligence, patriotism and personal character she was the equal of any man who put a ballot in the box that day, but she bore the stigma of being a woman and was held unworthy.

Therefore, to be taxed was discriminatory. Our immortal Declaration of Independence declares that "all men are born free and equal." This certainly embraces women as well as men. And our whole system of gov-

ernment demands "equal rights to all and special privileges to none." Why then this discrimination against one-half of the race?

Put Women With 6-Year Olds.
The answer is to be found in the unguarded statement of a well known public man who, when asked if he favored suffrage for women, replied: "Certainly I am in favor of women voting and children down to 6 years old." He thus stated frankly, what others conceal by unlimited compliment to the sex, that he believed that women had no more intelligence and were no more fitted for the suffrage than 6 year old children.

With the record that equal suffrage has made in the States and countries which have adopted it, and with the list I have already given of the leaders of all political parties from President Wilson and Vice-President Marshall down it is strange that any intelligent man can avow this belief. It is still more strange that any woman in the land can endorse such a statement.

Among the reasons for equal suffrage is the fact that women today are engaged in almost every industry as breadwinners and their active participation in public affairs means better government not only for them but for all, and a fair share in the disbursement of the funds to which they contribute so largely by taxation. In North Carolina I believe the women are nearly nine-tenths of the teachers and they receive on an average about one-half the rate of pay given to men, which last do not receive adequate compensation themselves. Certain it is that women do not receive in that calling or any other in this State "equal pay for equal services." They will not do so until they command respect and justice by casting the ballots which shall select public servants and shape just legislation.

In North Carolina women serve as clerks in public offices and in fact discharge official duties in some of our most important offices whose nominal officials are frequently absent from their post of duty. In our courts women have been deputy clerks for the Superior Court clerks and have taken probate of deeds. Competency to do this is not a matter of sex.

Under the Federal Constitution, women are not disqualified to hold any office from President down. Women have often been postmasters and filled other offices of honor and trust. Neither in England nor in any constitution of North Carolina has there ever been a requirement that the right of suffrage and the right to hold office should be the same. Nor was there any reason why they should be. Suffrage has been conferred necessarily on arbitrary lines as to age, or property owning, or otherwise, marking out certain large classes. But office holding is an individual matter requiring personal selection of individuals competent to fit the duties of the position.

In England many thousands of its office holders were always, and especially down to the recent extension of suffrage in that country, not qualified voters.

Change in Qualifications.
In this State for 60 years after our Constitution was adopted at Halifax no one could vote for Governor or for many other offices unless he was a qualified voter. The Legislature for 40 years no one was a qualified voter for the State Senate unless he owned 50

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acres of land; for 50 years no one was a qualified voter for other state offices than Governor or for judges unless he were a member of the Legislature. Yet during all these years it was never suggested that unless a man were a qualified voter, a particular office he was not eligible to hold it. A man could be chosen Governor or Judge without being a member of the Legislature. Under the present Constitution of 1868, as under previous ones, there are qualifications required for holding office which are not required for voters and qualifications for voters which are not required for office holders. The latter are public servants and there is no reason for preventing the public having the services of those competent to fill a position.

Beyond the constitutional restriction as to the age at which any one can become Governor or State Senator there is in our Constitution, as it is written, no restriction whatever as to holding office. The former restrictions requiring certain officials to own a certain number of acres of land but these have been repealed. The only restriction now in our Constitution besides those as to age of voters and as to holding office is prohibiting the Legislature from barring any voter from office unless such voter is disqualified as a convict.

Reason For Restriction.
The reason of this restriction was because when the Constitution was adopted in 1868 negroes for the first time were admitted to suffrage, and those then in power feared that the time would come when the opposite political party might seek to disqualify them from holding office. Yet such is the power of pre-conceived opinion that we now behold women debarred from holding an office whatever without any constitutional provision or Legislative act forbidding them and indeed contrary to express legislative authority enabling them to do so.

An examination of the law from the earliest time in England down to the present time in this country will show many most unjust discriminations against women in almost every respect, but it will show, also, that with scarcely an exception they have all been created by unjust laws and not by legislative enactment. Indeed the legislatures have been busy, from time to time removing these unjust discriminations created by judges. Women, however, cannot expect a removal of all unjust discriminations against them, which can be renewed by construction of some court as fast as legislatures remove them until they possess the power of the ballot. Now women have to beg and beseech for justice and an equal opportunity for holding office. They are in their hands they can command of legislatures and all others, justice for themselves.

There are no inequities greater than those caused by war. No suffering that compares to that inflicted by it. There are no horrors that compare to that which should attend upon war without a referendum to the ballot box there would be few wars and if the referendum were made to an electorate one-half of whom are women, upon whom chiefly falls the burden and misdeeds of war, the great evil that day for day would be the prophets of old "and there shall be no more war"—and not till then.

Arguments Against.
It may be well to notice a few of the arguments urged against this great act of justice to one-half of our people. Some are so trivial that they need not be mentioned. Mr. Taft, who is one of the few men of national importance who still avows his opposition to suffrage. In a recent article was fair enough to admit that the hoary argument that because women do not bear arms they should not have the vote has no validity for he frankly said that a very large proportion, more than half of the men who do vote, by reason of age, or physical debility are incompetent to be soldiers. He also frankly admitted that there are 10,000,000 women who are earning their own livelihood in this country and who were not voting through their husbands because 5 millions of them had no husbands or were widows and that in many cases the husbands did not wish or were opposed to the interests of the wife. Certainly the men who vote on the side of liquor could in very rare instances be said to represent the views of their wives.

Mr. Taft was driven as the last resort to the proposition that where equal suffrage had been granted, it had not brought about prophesied evils it had accomplished no good in particular. That position is utterly illogical because if the suffrage is a spher where it has been adopted how can it be a failure? It has not been adopted where it has not been adopted.

Would Not Be Compulsory.
The only other argument Mr. Taft could advance was that the women did not care for the suffrage. This is also illogical for how has it happened that the suffrage by the States can have been adopted it and that it is pending in so many more as in Italy, Holland, England and Canada besides the States of this Union which are to vote on the question in the next few days?

Surely some women would be in favor of the measure. It is true that all women do not want it but that is no reason why those who do wish it should be disqualified. There is no law requiring men to vote nor will there be any requiring women to do so. We know that in this State not more than 70 per cent of the white men entitled to vote go to the ballot box at any election. And that is the average in most of the States. Over three in Virginia believe only 40 per cent of the men vote in the polls. In Mississippi not more than 10 or 15 per cent voted. But no one would think of restricting male suffrage upon that ground. In States where the women vote about the same per cent of the men vote go to the polls. This is a complete answer to those who say that women do not wish to vote.

As To Woman's Sphere.
Then there is the triumphant argument that "the woman's sphere is at home" and that is the argument of those who at heart believe, like the Turks that every wife should be a prisoner in her husband's house. But there are some 10,000,000 women in this country whose daily sphere is not at home but in the great industrial and commercial centers of the country, helping to create its wealth to maintain the government and to alleviate suffering. Some time ago the women in New York proposed to test this question by getting every woman to remain at home 24 hours. The shock was immediate. The newspapers pointed out that if this was done the telephones would be silent. That in most homes where there were cooks who would not cook, there would be no meals that in many stores there would be no one to wait on customers; that the great factories in many lines of work would cease to move; that the children would find few teachers to receive them; that there would be no one to take care of the sick and to click; that courts would be without stenographers and hospitals without nurses and in short that the great metropolis would be paralyzed as by a danger to its heart. The argument that women should remain at home is thus completely dispelled.

Besides, if a woman's chief sphere is in her home, as it is with many of the brightest and most useful members of the sex, they are there doing a

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work for the race whose value can not be estimated in raising the youth of the country in ideas of truth and justice and morality. Why should they be discriminated against and denied all share in the government because they are thus employed in an indispensable work.

Need For Purer Laws.
That many women are thus engaged in their homes should not restrict them there and instead of being a disqualification is a reason why the State should ask and seek their aid and advice at the ballot box in selecting servants who shall shape legislation to give us purer and better laws, statutes for sanitation and against child labor and against liquor selling and other vices which abound largely because women who suffer from these ills can not vote. They should have a voice in selecting the public servants who will see that laws to cure these evils are put in force under fear of incurring the displeasure of so intelligent a part of the electorate, who will not brook or tolerate public servants who neglect their duty or chaffer, as some officials do now, with the vicious element.

The Negro Argument.
Finally as a special screamer to us southern men we are told that if women are allowed to vote it will jeopardize the disqualification of negroes. Whether negroes are qualified or disqualified for suffrage depends upon the 15th amendment and the federal statute for its enforcement which is a matter for the federal courts. The admission of women to the suffrage by the States can have no bearing whatever upon the suffrage for the colored race. That depends upon federal legislation and an amendment already adopted in all but 5 southern States the white women are more numerous than the

negro men and the negro women combined. Even in those 5 States the white men upon the actual ballot always heavily outvote the negro men and our chivalrous men will surely see to it that the white women in those States outvote the negro women. The suggestion that in some unintelligible way, if white women are permitted to vote this will permit negro men to vote who are now disqualified has as its counterpart the very lucid and logical statement that "the little negro boy tie the ostrich's leg to the cocoanut tree and that accounts for the milk in the cocoanut."

Omens of Success.
Those who demand that there shall be no special privileges for men which are not given equally to women, in sharing the control of government since there is no distinction in their bearing their share of the taxes to support government, and the women suffer even more than the men from the evils of bad government, have had a long and weary road to travel. But they have made great progress. These last few days have been full of omens of success. The next 30 days may give us proof that the hostile ranks are broken and there is before us the dawn of a brighter day.

In the language of the poet: "For now the deep dense plumes of Night are thinned Surely with glimmering of the winning snowing wind Whose feet are fledged with morning."

We know not the hour but the day is surely "on its way" when as the sun shall sink to rest in their rimmed west it shall throw back its rays upon a Union the last of whose states in the language of the gifted Irish orator, Curran, "shall stand forth redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled by the irrepressible night of universal emancipation"—in which women no longer victims of unjust discriminations shall share in the control of the government and not bear, as now an undue share of its burdens and "equal rights to all" shall be a fact and not a mere phrase. When that day shall come, it will take rank with that other historic day which announced a purer and better civilization, "When out of Egypt, forth from bondage, Israel came."

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