

The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 and gave women the right to vote. This female right, quite arguably, should have been included in the 15th Amendment, which was ratified in 1870 but only granted suffrage to black men.

In 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt became president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and led the final push for the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment. Nettie Rogers Shuler was a public speaker for NAWSA who gave countless lectures and even presented the case for the suffrage amendment to the state legislature in New York, the most populous state in the country. Following the ratification of the 19th Amendment, Catt and Shuler collaborated in writing a book that traced the history of the woman's suffrage movement in the United States. Below are excerpts from the book.

The Thorny Politics of Women's Suffrage

(*Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* by Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923.)

Foreword

...Throughout the suffrage struggle, America's history, her principles, her traditions stood forth to indicate the inevitability of woman suffrage, to suggest that she would normally be the first country in the world to give the vote to women. Yet the years went by, decade followed decade, and twenty-six other countries gave the vote to their women while America delayed. Why the delay?

Chapter 18, "The Fighting Forces"

In the struggle from which the final woman suffrage victory was now about to emerge four groups of fighting forces were engaged. They were the Suffragists, the Liquor Interests, the Anti-Suffragists and the Prohibitionists.

In the suffrage army more than two million women were enlisted. The parent body, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, directed the activities of the great mass of them, while the Woman's Party projected its entirely separate and often conflicting program for the group of militants. When victory finally perched upon the banners of the suffragists the National Suffrage Association had direct auxiliaries in 46 States of the Union and these far-reaching confederated bodies were functioning as one organ through its centralized national board. Extensive headquarters were maintained in both Washington and New York. In Washington congressional activities radiated from the great house at 1626 Rhode Island Avenue. In New York headquarters occupied two entire floors, equivalent to thirty large rooms, of a business building, 171 Madison Avenue. Between forty and fifty women were continuously retained on the clerical staff, and as many field workers were engaged in campaigns. A publishing company prepared and printed literature of various kinds. Publicity, organization, data and educational departments constituted branches of the general administration, and a weekly 32-page magazine, the *Woman Citizen*, was maintained as the Association's official organ and mouthpiece.

...The activities of the second group of the fighting forces in the suffrage struggle, i.e., the liquor interests, have been already fairly covered. When the federal investigation into the

political activities of the brewers brought out the minutes of the conferences where political campaigns were reported, it was discovered that the liquor interests' political committees, heavily financed, had directed all campaigns in the nation and that woman suffrage was uniformly included with temperance activities as equally invidious to the liquor traffic. These revelations made clear many a mystifying incident and squared with suffrage experiences that had been carefully filed away after each campaign. That the liquor forces regarded themselves as solely responsible for anti-suffrage campaigns was evident, since each member of liquor organizations, when reporting suffrage defeats in his State, said "we did it." In the closing years of the struggle, the trade added "allied interests and groups of foreign-born voters" as among those who "did it" but all were under the direction of the common master. The liquor organizations were the United States Brewers' Association, the Wholesale Distillers' Association and the Retail Dealers' Association, each with its auxiliary in each State. Collectively these organizations and their allies were designated as the "wets." [Those who favored prohibition were the "drys."]

The only other organized opposition to suffrage came from the group of women commonly called "the Antis." The name of their organization was the Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women. Its members were mainly well-to-do, carefully protected, and entertained the feeling of distrust of the people usual in their economic class. Their speeches indicated at times an anxious disturbance of mind lest the privileges they enjoyed might be lost in the rights to be gained. The first anti organization appeared in Boston some time before 1890 and was lengthily designated as "The Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women." It began its work by sending a male lawyer to protest in its name against having the vote thrust upon women, and it issued a small sheet called the Remonstrance which withheld the names of editor and publisher.

With the years these ladies grew bolder and made their own protests before committees. By and by similar groups were organized in other Eastern cities but the protestants gained no headway west of Ohio. Their uniform arguments were that the majority of women did not want the vote, therefore none should have it; that "woman's place was in the home," and that women were incompetent to vote...

Probably the worst damage that the women antis did was to give unscrupulous politicians a respectable excuse for opposing suffrage, and to confuse public thinking by standing conspicuously in the limelight while the potent enemy worked in darkness. The anti-suffragists were probably as neutral toward the prohibition vs. liquor campaign as were the suffragists, but there was this difference: the women antis and the liquor men worked for a common aim; the suffragists and the prohibitionists had two entirely different aims. The campaigns of the anti women and the liquor men supplemented each other; the campaigns of the prohibitionists and suffragists were often in conflict and each regarded the other in those instances as a decided handicap. Very many persons accused the women antis and liquor opponents of collusion; suffrage field workers had the habit of sending affidavits in support of such a contention to headquarters. In the closing years, well known counsel for the liquor forces appeared at hearings in several States with the anti women, and not only spoke for but sat with them and wore their red rose insignia.

...Throughout the suffrage campaign suffragists were constantly making accusation that votes were being bought and returns were being juggled. They did not, however, accuse the women antis even of possessing knowledge that these things were being done, yet the antis were continually diverting public attention from the guilty men to themselves, to the complete bewilderment of the public. Again and again when suffragists attempted to tell the people what they knew and to announce some new evidence of the criminal nature of liquor opposition, the lady antis would "rise to explain." Such public defense of the entire opposition was as exasperating to suffragists as it must have been gratifying to the liquor trade. This interpretation of the situation became so general that cartoonists found a fruitful theme in picturing ladies with widely spread skirts concealing the real anti-suffragists hiding behind.

The last group in the fighting forces, the Prohibitionists, included the Prohibition party and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The Anti-Saloon League, non-partisan and as strictly neutral on all other questions as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, assumed and held the leadership of the fight for prohibition during the decade preceding the ratification of the prohibition amendment...

Yet the woman suffrage struggle was vastly complicated by the prohibition struggle. Men indifferent to suffrage but hostile to prohibition were rendered impervious to the suffrage appeal, and men hostile to prohibition but in favor of suffrage were frightened by the continual insistence of liquor workers that woman suffrage meant the speedier coming of prohibition.

...Had there been no prohibition movement in the United States, the women would have been enfranchised two generations before they were. Had that movement not won its victory [with the ratification of the 18th Amendment], they would have struggled on for another generation.

Chapter 32, "Conclusion"

We have brought together the evidence that the answer to our question in the foreword to this book is—politics. The evidence that it was politics that made America, the cradle of democracy, 27th instead of first on the list of countries democratic enough to extend the right of self-government to both halves of their respective populations.

That evidence tends to make clear, too, how slowly men as a whole retreated from the "divine right of men to rule over women" idea, and how slowly women rose to assume their equal right with men to rule over both. Long after men's reason convinced them that woman suffrage was right and inevitable the impulse to male supremacy persuaded them that the step would be "inexpedient." The lower types of men have always frankly resented any threatened infringement of the rights of the male and although the higher classes of male intelligence defined the feeling toward woman suffrage in other terms, at source the highest and lowest were actuated by the same traditional instinct.

Men believed what they wanted to believe in believing that women did not desire the vote. In 1916, 38,000 women of Maine signed petitions to the electors asking for the vote; but

when the question was put to the men voters at the election, only 20,000 responded with "aye." In 1917, 1,030,000 women in New York said, over their signatures, that they wanted to vote; but only 703,000 men voted affirmatively on the question at election time. These examples, were there no others, bring into high relief the fact that in the suffrage struggle there were more women who wanted to vote than there were men who were willing to grant them the privilege.

Superimposed upon this biological foundation of male resistance to female aggrandizement was the failure of political leaders to recognize the inescapable logic of woman suffrage in a land professing universal suffrage. On top of this, and as a consequence of it, lay the party inaction which gave opportunity to men who were far from inactive on the suffrage question, because they feared that their personal interests would suffer should the evolution of democracy take its normal course.

Had not the Republican party enfranchised the Negro by whip and bayonet it would have been easier for women to gain their enfranchisement without party endorsement, but suffragists, left to make their own appeal to majorities accustomed to be told how to vote, found that the lack of political endorsement was as effective as a mandate to vote against. Lax election laws and methods often opened doors for corruption, and by, and with, the assistance of party officials, suffrage elections were stolen.

The damage thus wrought to the woman suffrage cause, and the nation's record, was far more insidious than the loss of any election would imply. The alleged rejection of suffrage became to the unknowing public an indication of an adverse public sentiment, and tended to create rather than correct indifference, for the average man and woman move with the current of popular opinion. The inaction of the public gave a mandate for further political evasion of the question to party leaders, some of whom were certainly cognizant of and others working factors in the criminal schemes which produced the misleading result. Around and around the vicious circle went the suffrage question. "Get another State," said President [Theodore] Roosevelt, excusing national inaction. "Congress has given no indication that it wants woman suffrage," said Governor Pierce of Dakota, as he vetoed the Territorial Bill which would grant suffrage to women. The Congress looked to the States for its cue, the States to Congress, both to the parties and the parties to the various financial interests, which in turn were responsible for the election of a picked list of members of Congress, of Legislatures and of the party leadership.

Had more statesmen and fewer politicians directed the policies of parties, women would have been enfranchised in the years between 1865 and 1880 and American history, along many lines, would have changed its course. Party suffrage endorsement was won in the United States after forty-eight years of unceasing effort, but when the final victory came women were alternately indignant that it had been so long in coming, and amazed that it had come at all. Many men expressed disappointment that women did not at once enter the party campaigns with the same zeal and consecration they had shown in the struggle for the vote. These men forgot that the dominant political parties blocked the normal progress of woman suffrage for half a century. The women remembered.

The Republicans found that the Negro fresh from slavery knew too little to play the "game of politics." All parties may find in the years to come a still more formidable problem in the woman vote, but for a different reason. If women do not make docile partisans, it will be because through the long weary struggle they have learned to know too much. "Wars are not paid for in war time, the bills come afterwards," said Franklin, and so it may be said of the cost of political blunders. American women who know the history of their country will always resent the fact that American men chose to enfranchise Negroes fresh from slavery before enfranchising American wives and mothers, and allowed hordes of European immigrants totally unfamiliar with the traditions and ideals of American government to be enfranchised in all States after naturalization, and in fifteen States without it, and be thus qualified to pass upon the question of the enfranchisement of American women.

The knowledge that elections can be controlled and manipulated, that a purchasable vote and men with money and motives to buy can appear upon occasion, that an election may be turned with "unerring accuracy" by a bloc of the least understanding voters, that conditions produce many politicians but few statesmen, began long ago to modify for Americans the fine pride in political liberty still the boast upon the 4th of July. That this knowledge should have made conservative types of men and women hesitant to extend the suffrage is not strange, nor is it to be held against conscientious men that they had to struggle with real doubts as to the wisdom of adding women to the electorate.

On the other hand, in spite of all weaknesses of the American government, no conscientious man or woman should ever have lost sight of four counter facts, (1) The United States will never go back to government by kings, nobilities or favored classes. (2) It must go forward to a safe and progressive government by the people; there is no other alternative. (3) Women have had a corrective influence in department after department of society and the only one pronounced "a filthy mire" is politics where they have not been. (4) The problem of leading government by majorities through the mire to the ideal which certainly lies ahead is one which women should share with men.

Looking backward, however, it is not resentment at the long scroll of men's biological inhibitions and political blunders unrolled in the suffrage struggle that is, for suffragists, the final picture. The final picture fills with the men and the groups of men, Republican men, Democratic men, with a vision of real democracy luring their souls, who in the political arena fought the good fight for and with suffragists. Their faith in and loyalty to the suffrage cause, their Herculean efforts, their brilliant achievements, their personal sacrifices, leap out from the record compellingly, riding down all else.

On the outside of politics women fought one of the strongest, bravest battles recorded in history, but to these men inside politics, some Republicans, some Democrats, and some members of minority parties, the women of the United States owe their enfranchisement.

And if we have made here a case for our assertion that American politics was an age-long trap for woman suffrage, we hope that we have not failed to make, as well, a case for these higher-grade American politicians who rescued woman suffrage from that trap and urged it forward to its goal.