

A historical illustration, likely a poster or a painting, depicting a group of women in early 20th-century attire. They are holding up large banners that read 'VOTES'. The central figure is a woman in a red dress, and to her right is a woman in a blue dress. The background is a textured, mottled blue-grey. The overall style is that of a vintage political poster.

The extension of suffrage

A virtual museum by
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this check to the suffrage movement, but it is at least an interesting coincidence that the active work of these suffragists in Massachusetts began in 1895-6, just before the tide turned in the matter of suffrage legislation.

CLASS DISTINCTIONS.

LAST year the suffragists in two states as widely separated as Massachusetts and Oregon devoted themselves to the principle of basing the right to vote upon the ownership of property. In Massachusetts they introduced a bill to confer full municipal suffrage upon women taxpayers. In Oregon they changed the form of their petition for the submission of a suffrage amendment to the constitution at the next election, so that, if the amendment were adopted, it would give full suffrage to taxpaying women.

There is some plausibility in the argument that, when questions involving the expenditure of money or the creation of debt are submitted to the vote of taxpayers as such, women as well as men who pay taxes should be allowed to vote.

But this is quite another thing from saying that a woman who pays taxes is on that account better qualified to vote for mayors and aldermen, as under the Massachusetts proposal, or for governors, congressmen, and presidents, as under the Oregon proposal, than women who do not pay taxes. A ballot which rests upon intelligence and provides an educational test can be defended. But a ballot which ignores intelligence and character and rests merely on the possession of wealth is alien to democratic principles, and it would create among women, if the Massachusetts and Oregon proposals were adopted, class distinctions which no state in the Union tolerates among men.

SHOULD A MINORITY RULE?

In a letter to the London *Times*, in reply to Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe writes, "In America most women are still indifferent on the question of suffrage."

This candid admission, by the accredited leader of the woman suffrage movement in the United States, should be taken together with the statement of the remonstrants. How small the suffrage minority is may be inferred from the fact that, when the opportunity was given to Massachusetts women of voting age, in 1895, to say by their votes on the pending referendum whether they were in favor of municipal suffrage, about nine per cent of them responded in the affirmative. There is no reason to believe that the proportion varies materially in other states.

In view of Mrs. Howe's admission, two questions may properly be considered by members of state legislatures before which suffrage proposals may come this year:

First, Ought the wishes of the four per cent of American women who want the ballot, or those of the ninety-six per cent who are either opposed or indifferent to it, to control the decision?

Second, Is there not already among men voters quite as much indifference to the ballot as is consistent with the public good without adding an enormous number of women voters who, on the testimony of the suffrage leaders themselves, are indifferent to it?

WHO WOULD PROFIT?

LEGISLATORS who are asked this year to vote for bills conferring municipal suffrage upon women may wisely consider the question, Who would be profited by the proposed legislation?

Would it be the women? Only a small minority of the women ask for the privilege. To the large majority it would come as an undesired burden. In what respect would either class, the minority or the majority, profit by the grant of municipal suffrage?

Would it be the community? To justify this assumption it must be held that the average woman would vote not only as wisely and unselfishly as the average man, but more wisely and unselfishly. But the average man, by the very nature of his ordinary employments, is familiar with the practical questions of local

government, questions of the care of the streets, lighting, policing, sewer construction, and the like. He is familiar also with the character, capacity, and records of men who are candidates for office. The average woman, on the other hand, is already overburdened with duties which she cannot escape and from which no one proposes to relieve her. If she is given the suffrage, it is an added duty. If she is called upon to perform a duty which lies outside of the ordinary employments of her life, she would do it more wisely than the average man? Would she not inevitably act hastily, impulsively, spasmodically? And, in that case, would not the community as well as she herself suffer by the change?

PRESIDENTIAL SUFFRAGE BILLS.

No legislature has yet been persuaded to take seriously the proposal to give presidential suffrage to women. It is true that, two years ago, one branch of the Rhode Island legislature voted favorably upon such a bill, but this was only in playful mood, to give the other branch the opportunity to defeat it. Last year the bill did not get out of the committee to which it was referred.

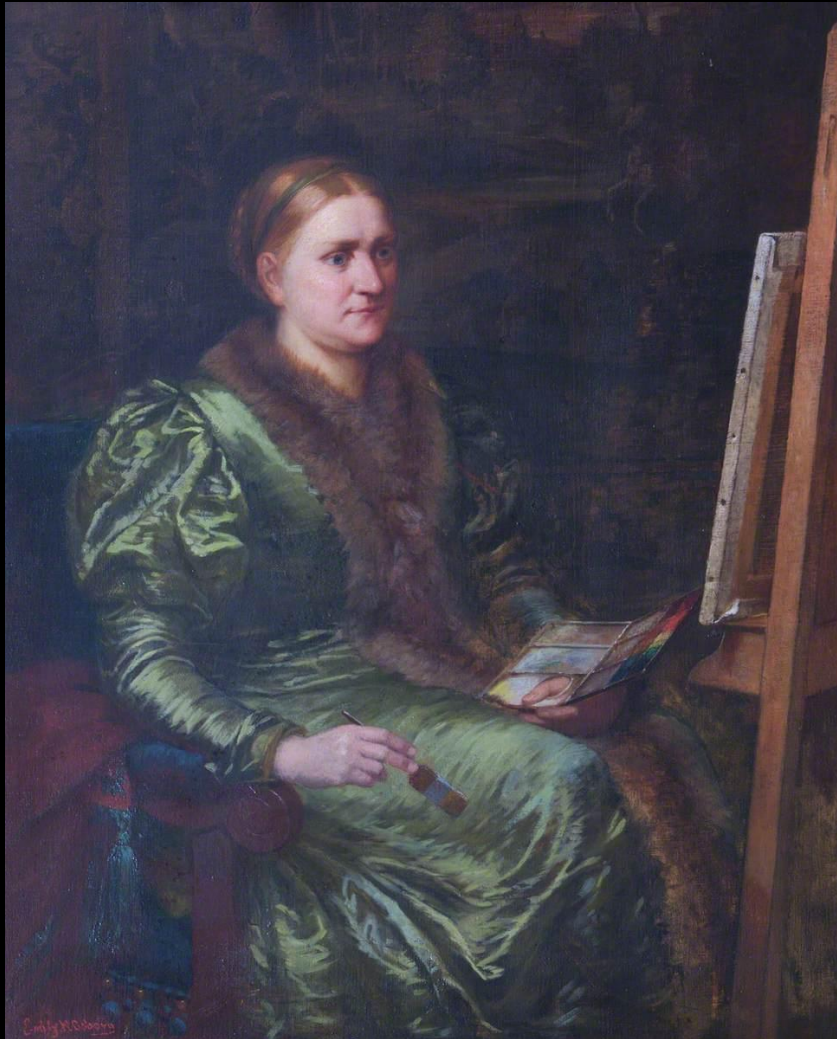
A sufficient objection to such bills is that they involve a high-handed usurpation of power. They are unblushingly urged by the suffragists as an expedient for avoiding the necessity of submitting the question to the people. But, if any principle is well established in American government, it is that radical changes in the fundamental law shall be submitted to the approval of the people. A proposal to double the electorate in the exercise of the highest form of suffrage is surely such a change.

Yet the suffragists urge a legislature which has no mandate from the people for such action to enact presidential suffrage without giving the people a chance to vote upon it, at any stage. It is not strange that the legislatures do not take the proposal seriously.

Welcome to my virtual museum!

This museum is about the extension of suffrage, women's rights and empowerment, I hope you enjoy it!

The Langham place group and Barbara Bodichon



Barbara Bodichon was the founder of the Langham place group, which she started in 1857 to campaign on issues that affected women, like their non-existent rights to do anything a man could. This group would try and find 'mens work' for women and made the issues known to all women through the 'English Woman's Journal', some of them being how women could not divorce and how quite a few laws included women being harmed.

Selina Cooper



From the age of 11, Selina had worked in a cotton mill and she had joined the NUWSS near her. She also previously worked in the Co-operative Guilds, and helped with the 1901 petition for women's suffrage. A very talented speaker and active in local politics, she quickly got invited to speak at rallies for NUWSS, and in 1910, was one of four women to present the women's suffrage case to the Prime Minister, and in time became the first ever woman elected to the Boards of Guardians!

Harriet Taylor Mill



Harriet Taylor Mill was an amazing writer, she wrote an anonymous essay called 'The enfranchisement of women'. (Her husband, John Stuart Mill, thought her ideas were phenomenal and wrote a similar pamphlet named 'The Subjection of Women') The main aim of this was to help women to get the power of voting, but mostly for women just to have equality in all of life, to prove that women are just as good as men. I want readers to understand about women's rights and how she helped fight to get them.

Millicent Fawcett



When Millicent Fawcett was 19, she heard a speech by Harriet Taylor Mill's husband, John Stuart Mill, which made a huge impression on her, making her become more actively involved in the fight for women's suffrage. Her sister, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, had a very hard time trying to qualify and practice as a doctor, not because of her talent, but her gender, which inspired her sister to help even more.

Lydia Becker



Lydia Becker was the first secretary for the 'Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage', and was particularly interested in the education of girls and women. The same year as the society started, a woman accidentally got put down on the list of people (all men) who had the right to vote in Manchester, and she helped the woman, went into the polling station with her and demanded she get a vote. After that, she went round the country helping other women to put their name down, and, after having a case in the high court, she was sadly unsuccessful, but this shows that she still wouldn't have got a win anyway, so it's always best to try, because if you don't try, you never know what could happen!

End of my museum!

I hope you enjoyed reading this museum, and I hope it got the message across that I wanted, it's not just men who can make a groundshaking difference to our world today and in the past!

