

Anti-Suffrage Resource Packet

Lesson 3: *Mainers Speak Up*

Recreating a historic women's suffrage debate

What's in this packet?

This packet is meant to give you some insight into why there were women and men who did not think women should have the right to vote.

These are all PRIMARY SOURCES, meaning they were created in the time period that they talk about. It's as close as we can come to traveling back in time and talking to people who were alive during the women's suffrage movement.

Contents:

- “Why We Oppose Votes for Women” flyer
- Three anti-suffrage op-eds written to Maine newspapers in 1917 (transcribed into a word document so they're easier to read)
- Two political cartoons
- Anti-suffrage Campaign Manual

Unless otherwise noted, these resources are from the collection of the Maine State Museum.

WOMEN'S LONG ROAD

MAINE STATE MUSEUM TEACHER MATERIALS



Why We Oppose Votes for Women

BECAUSE suffrage is not a privilege to be enjoyed, but if imposed upon women it becomes a duty to be performed.

BECAUSE we believe the men of the State capable of conducting the government for the benefit of both men and women; their interests, generally speaking, being the same.

BECAUSE women are not suffering from any injustice which giving them the ballot would rectify.

BECAUSE political equality will eventually deprive women of many special privileges hitherto accorded to her by man-made law.

BECAUSE the ballot in the hands of men has not proved a cure-all for existing evils, and there is no reason to believe it would be more effectual in the hands of women. It has not been in the States where it exists. In Colorado after a test of twenty-two years the results show no gain in public and political morals over male suffrage States.

BECAUSE equality in character does not imply similarity in function, and the duties and life of men and women should be different in the State, as in the home. Man's service to the State through government is counterbalanced by woman's service in the home.

BECAUSE woman now stand outside of politics, and therefore are free to appeal to any party in matters of education, charity and reform. We believe it would be to the disadvantage of the State and of woman to put this non-partisan half of society into politics.

BECAUSE the woman suffrage movement is a backward step in the progress of civilization, in that it seeks to efface natural differentiation of function, and to produce identity instead of division of labor.

ISSUED BY

The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage

37 WEST 39TH STREET.
NEW YORK CITY.



Three anti-suffrage op-eds written to Maine newspapers in 1917

Transcribed articles from a scrapbook. Source: Maine State Museum 69.129.3.1

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 22 1917

LETTER BOX

ANTI-SUFFRAGE VIEW.

To the Editor of the Express-Advertiser:

The anti-suffragists realize that it is a sense of chivalry in men which prompts them to try and give to women whatever they desire, whether it is good for them or not. It is the same quality which prompts so many men to say, Oh, well, if women want to vote, why not let them try it?" They do not stop to reason out whether the ballot, put into the hands of women, will benefit or hurt the woman herself, the state, or the Country.

The suffragists have been organized for many years. They are loud and active in their cry for the vote." They take every opportunity to make themselves prominent, to be heard and seen. But now, the many women, the large majority of women, who do not want the vote, are also organizing, and working to show men that there are many more reasons why women should not vote than reasons why they should, and that the men should show their generosity by supporting the views of the majority of the women.

Do the men realize when they say that they might as well let the women vote, that they are being chivalrous to a small number of women, and by standing by these self-same women, are forcing something that is not wanted upon a far greater number.

Today, our Country, in fact, the whole world, is being torn and tortured by the greatest war ever known. The women who cry for the vote are pacifists, against conscription and preparedness, and are troubling and harassing our President almost beyond endurance by their treasonable banners and actions. It is such women as these who would run for office, not the same women who do not wish the vote, and yet who would cast the ballot because it is a duty, if it were forced upon them.

The suffragists say they cannot control the militant women in their organization. Neither will they be able to control them when they enter into office. And yet these suffragists who are asking to be paid for their war work by being given the vote, and who will not work wholeheartedly without it, tell the anti-suffragists that they need not use this privilege if they do not wish to. What good can such women do the State, when they have not yet learned the

first principles of good citizenship? The stay-at-home voter is a slacker of the blackest dye, and yet the suffragists recommend such a course, if you do not care to vote.

They also have figured out mathematically just how short a time it takes from a woman's other duties, to run to the polls and drop a ballot in the box. Of what use to State or Country is such a vote? How can politics be purified, reforms made, and things be bettered, by any such ignorant ballot as that, being cast? If women are to vote, they should spend much time for many years upon government, politics, rules, laws, etc., in order to force into their minds things they have never needed to know deeply about before.

Men have always been in politics, women, never, and it is going to take years of careful and serious study for women to catch up and go ahead of men, and that is what they must do if the suffragists think men, who have been in these things and known about them for years, run things so poorly that now women must enter the political circle and thrust in their hands, also.

And then, too, if equal suffrage is granted to women, there will be more political parties, for suffragists will run against anti-suffragists, and women will divide and sub-divide themselves into parties, just as men have done in times past. It will all be a serious experiment, and no one knows what disaster may come when these hysterical women politicians take the reins of government into their hands. And take them they will, if we can judge by their past and present actions.

The anti-suffragists believe in democracy, and does not our Democratic Government stand for the rule of the majority? And they appeal again to the men of Maine to be generous toward what is wanted by the majority of women, and to vote against woman suffrage on September 10th.

T. B. S.

PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT.

To the Editor of the Express-Advertiser:

When the men of this Country become so feeble minded that the women have to leave their household duties and attend to affairs of State; the Germans may as well come in and take possession, perhaps the Kaiser will have mind enough for all. It is a well known fact that conditions in Colorado have not been improved where women have voted for more than 20 years, and one particular vice which the women made no attempt to correct, the men who went to Congress becoming tired of having it thrown up at them had the law repealed. In that state women go up to the bars and call for drinks same as the men.

When a party of women went to President Roosevelt asking for his help on the suffrage question, he would have nothing to do with it; they went to President Taft on the same business, and he told them when all the women wanted to vote he would do the best he could to help it along. In President Wilson's first term, the same request was made; he told them it was not a Federal affair, but a state. In his last campaign they got some encouragement.

If the women who are so anxious to vote would go West where they can and stay there it would give this section a much needed rest. There must be a large amount of brass in their composition to survive so many rebuffs; brass is yellow, the color of their emblem, and blends with yellow covered literature, etc.

There has been enough said and written in the last 50 or 60 years to have made some impression on the minds of people, if they have not had the great privilege of voting. I cannot see that it has made anything better. People lived as well, had as good food, took as much comfort, and enjoyed life as well, if not better than at the present time. Taxes have more than doubled. Incendiary fires are more frequent, along with strikes, riots, robbery and murder. A divorce case was rare and the parties were looked down upon. Now they are very common and the daily papers have columns of the part that is printable. Appendicitis was unknown, along with other fashionable diseases, and there were not so many doctors and druggists. There were no abandoned farms; families were larger, and school houses and churches better filled. There are more high schools now, and longer terms in the common schools, but pupils at the same age do not rank as high in the solid branches.

The lyceum, singing school and spelling school have given place to the moving picture show, with a loss to health, morals and learning. There is more idleness, waste and extravagance, with less modesty and refinement, but that is to be expected when women enter politics. Hon. Elihu Root says "politics is modified war." There was hardly a farm for sale, now there are farms, in every direction. There are more ways of rapid transit, with greater loss of life. We hear and read much on economy and efficiency, but I see none when it takes a man and woman to do the same work a man can do better alone, being better fitted by nature, leaving the woman at home to do work of equal or greater importance. Marion Harland said "by admitting women to the polls we would double the quantity without bettering the quality of material." The very large majority of women doing their own work, have no time or taste for politics, and object to being forced into it by a few wealthy women who seem to find no better work than going about the Country holding suffrage meetings for the so-called "uplift of women" but really adding burdens and expense. One would think on reading some of the suffrage literature, that men and women were living under separate laws and women were being discriminated against.

It is to be supposed that the average man who has a home and family would make as good laws as possible, for his own sake being so closely connected with them. The coming election will cost the State \$75,000. If this sum and what the campaign will cost in time and money on both sides could be expended in road making it would do some good. That is all some women know or care about economy: no matter what the expense or who pays the bill, or if it's never paid, so long as they can have their own way. It is too much to expect that an evil disposed man or woman can be reformed over night by placing slips of paper in a ballot box to make a new law (there are laws enough now to make everyone in the world perfect if they were obeyed).

It requires a much longer process, and should begin with the child in its mother's arms and be continued until it becomes a good citizen. The few men who think a woman can purify politics and improve their manners can try it in the privacy of their own homes, better than in public places. If women assume the duties of men they must bear the extra expense. I am paying all the tax I want to now, and protest against being forced to pay a poll tax. In this hour of need and abundance of work, a woman who can find no better employment than picketing must be low down in the scale, and leads to the belief that she was not well instructed at home. If this picketing business and the Brunswick incident is a sample of petticoat government I have no use for it. Any woman with a grain of sense would know that the President has enough on his mind without attending any of their side shows. The latest and best definition I have heard for the whole thing "is a hen that wants to be a rooster."

The suffragists have much to say about democracy, but it's the rankest autocracy when a minority seeks to rule the majority. Some years ago the suffragists attacked the emblem of the antis, the American Beauty rose, said it was an aristocratic flower, and could not be obtained by the common people. 20 buds had to be removed to make one perfect rose, which sells for 25 cents. Imagine a florist making a living at that rate. I have grown the rose for years and find it easy as any. No rose will grow when the foliage is infested with red spiders and other pests. Years ago, when the suffragists seemed to preach temperance I felt some interest in the movement. but now they have changed to politics I feel only disgust. Ida Husted Harper, chairman National suffrage press committee, says, "The suffrage movement throughout the Country has always been kept entirely distinct from the prohibition movement." They are seeking "political rights for women." If she will kindly define them, she will oblige a large number as well as,

MISS MARY E. EDWARDS.

Freeport, Aug. 22, 1917.

MINORITY SHOULD NOT DECIDE GREAT QUESTION.

To the Editor of the Express-Advertiser:

A little pamphlet is being circulated by the Maine Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women which is full of such excellent and logical arguments on the woman suffrage question that it would be well if every voter could read it carefully before September 10 next.

Every man in the State will agree with the introductory statement that: "The question of amending our Constitution to permit women to vote at all elections will be decided by the voters of Maine at the special election September 10th next."

No more important question has ever appeared upon our ballot. It profoundly concerns the future of our State and of every man, woman and child' within it.

Do not forget that popular indifference is almost wholly responsible for the adoption of woman suffrage in certain states in the Union. Let it not be said that indifference was allowed to decide the question here.

Woman suffrage, in its final analysis, is a proposal to change what has always been regarded as the natural social order, and to establish to new principle as the basis of the State. No man can afford to be neutral on such a question.

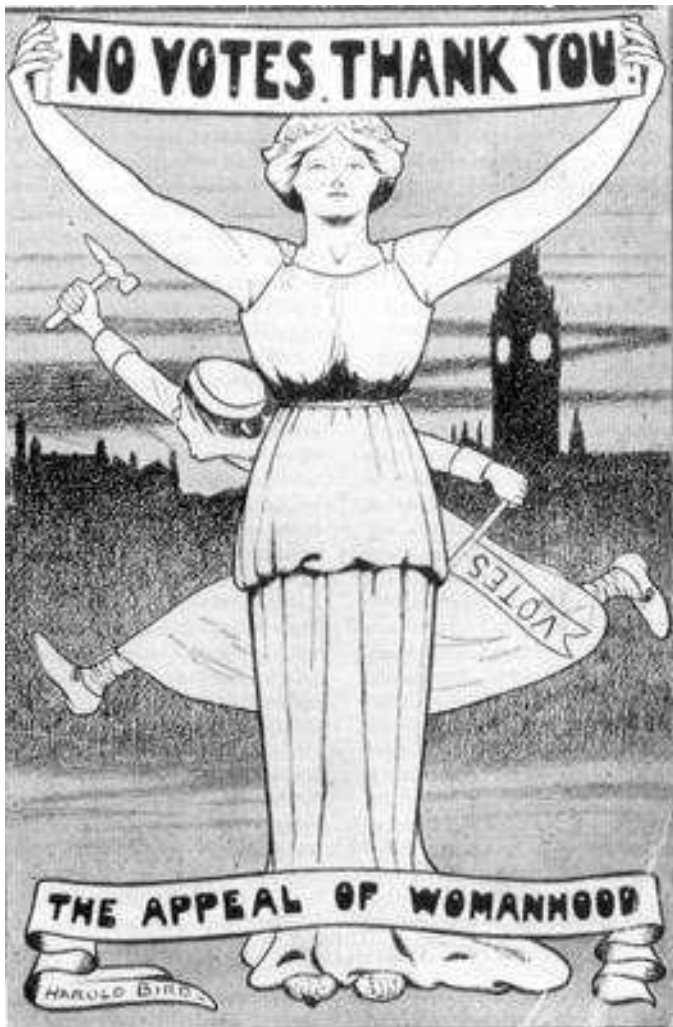
It touches every home and every family. It may affect the stability of State and Nation. We appeal, therefore, to the men of Maine to go to the polls on the tenth day of September next, and vote on the woman suffrage amendment.

The issue is too big, too vital to the interests of all the people to be determined by a minority.

Letter here for F. E. P.



Anti-suffrage political cartoons and illustrations:



Images courtesy of:

<https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/amerwomo5/suffrageart.html>

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/52207/12-cruel-anti-suffragette-cartoons>

ANTI-SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN MANUAL

...BY...

Mrs. ALBERT T. LEATHERBEE

ENDORSED BY

Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of Massachusetts

Mrs. JAMES M. CODMAN, President



PUBLISHED BY

Mrs. A. T. LEATHERBEE
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WHY?

"Why Should any Woman be an Anti-Suffragist?"

This question is often asked not only by the unthinking, who put it as a mere query of idle curiosity, but by the intelligent who do not exactly understand why women who do not want to vote are engaged in the earnest endeavor to prevent other women, who desire the franchise, from getting it. The following statements briefly explain the position of the Anti-Suffrage women and their reasons for opposing the movement:

First. The proportion of women actively engaged, or inactively supporting the suffrage movement is so small a minority of the adult female population as to conclusively prove that the great majority of women are either opposed or indifferent to the franchise.

Second. Of this large majority there is a certain portion which has given thought and consideration to the matter and, after due investigation and examination, has decided that women suffrage would be detrimental to the best interests of the State.

Third. These women, who constitute the active members of the Anti-Suffrage majority, have realized that strength lies in organization and, therefore, they have formed themselves into societies to engage in active preventative measures.

Fourth. The Anti-Suffrage women realize that if they remain indifferent or inactive in the expression of their views, they are liable to be misunderstood as acquiescing in the wishes of the suffrage minority and that, unless they protest against woman suffrage, it will be forced upon them by the belief of the voters that they desire it.

Fifth. They know that if suffrage be granted to women they will be forced, against their desires, opinions and beliefs, into active political life, for, unless they take up the full civic burdens so thrust upon them, they will be represented

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(or rather misrepresented) by the minority, constituted of the pro-suffrage voters.

Sixth. They appreciate fully the burden of the civic duties that will devolve upon them if woman suffrage be granted and they protest against the addition of this burden to those which Nature has imposed upon them in the characteristics of sex.

Seventh. They know that suffrage carries with it not only electoral duties but the responsibilities of office. They know that the right of the ballot entails the duty of public service in the three branches of government, and they appreciate that the biological characteristics of the female sex disqualify women from constant and continual performance of such service.

Eighth. They are firmly convinced that woman suffrage will be inexpedient and detrimental to the best interests of the community; that it will increase the expense of government, and raise the tax rate to meet this increase; that it will be an economic waste, as it will withdraw women from the specialized employments for which they are eminently fitted, and add to their labors those of political exertions; and that it will increase the dangers of unintelligent legislation through the more powerful organization of the least intelligent members of the voting body.

Ninth. They believe that the whole purpose of progress and evolution is that of differentiation and specialization, and see in the leveling of both sexes to the same activities of life nothing but retrogression.

Tenth. They believe that expression of desire by persons disqualified by Nature from enforcing the results of such expression is not only futile but dangerous.

Eleventh. And, as free-born and patriotic American citizens, they protest against being burdened with responsibilities they do not want, and which they are unfitted to support, merely to please a small minority of their sex, most of whom do not know why they wish the franchise, what they will do with it when they get it, nor whether it will be an agent for good or evil, if they do obtain it.

FUTILITY OF FEMALE FRANCHISE.

According to the last census there are in the United States 24,255,754 women twenty-one years of age and over, including 17,052,128 native born whites, 5,907,108 foreign born whites, 2,427,742 negroes, 60,000 Indians, and 8,607 Chinese, Japanese, and all other women not above classified. Roughly estimating the foreign born women who have not attained citizenship, the negroes that would be ineligible on account of election qualifications in southern states, and the Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and all others at a conservative figure of some 4,500,000, we have, approximately about 20,000,000 women in this country who would become voters in case woman suffrage were to become universal throughout the states. As some 3,000,000 of these women are already living within the borders of the so-called suffrage states, we have about 17,000,000 women for whom the suffragists are asking the ballot.

As the suffragist women, according to the figures given by their own national organization, number about 500,000, it is to be taken for granted that the remaining 16,500,000 women are either opposed to the further extension of the franchise to their sex, or remain indifferent as to whether it be granted them or not. It is a question of ethics, as well as of political expediency, whether these 16,500,000 opposed or indifferent females should have the right to vote thrust upon them against their inclinations or without their stated desire. But, leaving the ethical phase of the matter to the moralists, let us turn our attention to expediency.

The danger to stability of government in a republic lies, not with the vicious element of the electorate, led by the demagogue, nor with the fanatic, who would sacrifice every solid present benefit for the shadowy experiment of his idealistic and impracticable theories, nor with the ultra-conservative who scorns all innovation and fears all change—but with the large body of indifferent and apathetic voters.