

# Shall Men Vote?<sup>1</sup>

*Remarks of the Hon. Liberties of Justitia, Chairman of the Elections Committee in the Oligarchy of Women Sate at some time past or future, after hearing arguments from the leading men of the state urging the enfranchisement of men*

“Gentlemen, your arguments have been very entertaining. Never has your cause been more eloquently presented. We women will assure you that in due course of time and when the matter is reached on our calendars we will give the question of man suffrage our most respectful consideration.

“I suppose you men want a little further extension of your present limited school suffrage privileges. What! Not the whole suffrage? Not the suffrage for all men. Why not take things more gradually? This is so sudden! Be satisfied to take small steps at the beginning of your suffrage career.

“Really gentlemen, I have my doubts whether your sex as a whole has the intellectual strength necessary for voting. I once saw a man idiot. That, however, is not a universal condition. But taking your sex as a whole you never produced a Frances E. Willard, a Susan B. Anthony, a Jane Addams, an Ellen Terry, a Carrie Nation, a Madam Qui Vive or a Hefty Green. When you do this, it will be time for you to be begging the ballot.

“Do you object to being taxed without representation? Why, we women represent you. When I vote, I represent my brother, my father-in-law, my four brothers-in-law, my three sons and my one husband. Do you claim that men’s interests will be neglected if women alone vote? Just trust us to legislate better for you than you could for yourselves. Think how we let you vote now, for trustee of the state university. That is nice.

“Then you gentlemen must remember that you are not authorized to speak for your entire sex. There are only a mere handful of you here demanding the ballot. The men who do not come to the legislature asking the suffrage are really opposed or we count them opposed. Wait until all men everywhere united and constantly, day and night, clamor for it. We should not forcibly enfranchise the whole male sex while many are opposed or at least indifferent. Not indifferent, do you say? Let me prove it to you. Where the ballot has been granted to men they do not appreciate it and do not unanimously use it. In the far-famed city of Chicago at an ordinary election only about one-half of the men entitled to register and vote do so, and this in spite of the fact that the newspapers patriotically sandwich all their articles with brief reminders, the fervid orator begs the voter to go to the polls, the billboards notify him with gay posters, the postman carries him many exhorting letters from anxious candidates and the brass band tries to charm him. But most of this is thrown away. One-half the men generally stay at home. Qt the time of

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by Catharine Waugh McCulloch 1911 at various men’s club dinners, distributed as a pamphlet also.

judicial election it is even worse, when sometimes three-fourths of the men neglect to vote.

Do those people deserve to vote? Should we not punish all men, even those who do vote, because of the neglect of the indifferent?

"Then Mr. Chairman, a really great obstacle to men voting is that they are too emotional. I have observed it at football games and political conventions. Men of otherwise good character forgot it all at a convention. When they were unseated they howled like demons. Remember how, at the last national Republican convention, men cheered for 3-5 minutes at the name of the sporting editor of the Outlook.

"The Democrats, to go them one better, kept their lungs at work whooping, cheering and howling for the 'Peerless Leader' 1 hour, 21 minutes, 2-5 seconds of thereabouts.

"No woman's convention ever acted thus and I have seen the D.A.R.'s, and they are earnest, and I have been in session with the N.A.W.S.A. and they are not meek. But neither crowd of women was as emotional as men. When men can control their enthusiasms and their disgusts and act like perfect ladies then let them ask to vote.

"To let men vote would more than double the ignorant vote, for fewer men than women in Illinois can read and write. It would treble the foreign vote, for twice as many men as women come here from other lands and it would quadruple the criminal vote, yes, quintuple, sextuple and decentuple it, for there are more criminals among men than among women.

"Here is a sad objection. Men suffrage might make family trouble and cause divorces if a husband would not vote for his wife's party. Better let the women do all the voting and stop the strife. Or it would double the vote with double expenses and no change in results, for every husband would vote as his wife directed. What would be the use you say that this is inconsistent with the last objection, about spouses voting different tickets?

"Oh, well, who cares for consistency when opposing extensions of suffrage?

"There are a great many pairs of objections to man suffrage utterly inconsistent; but all time-honored.

"For example, men would pass blue laws and interfere with women's pet vices - gum chewing and hat pin wearing, and men would let women go their own evil way unmolested.

"Here is another pair: Men now, without the ballot, have the greatest power over women through their sweet influence on us women, and men deserve no power, because the order of creation was in the ascending scale and the last created creatures were the most perfect and should rule over those first created. Woman was created last.

"Here is another pair: Men are now so absorbed in business and family cares they would have no time to vote and its opposite- men would become so frantic about voting and so crazy for office they would forget their families and race suicide would result.

"Then we fear for men's health if they undertake the heavy labor of voting. 106 boy babies are born to 100 girl babies, but so few of the boys survive, that of centenarians there are only 70 men to 100 women. The sex which does all the heavy housework of the world and the bearing and rearing of children

can do this serious labor of voting for you. Be content in you man's sphere with your newspapers, banks, etc., and do not bother your handsome heads about voting. You are sweeter and dearer as you are. We women could not respect and love you if you tried to vote and to be womanly. Nature or we women have fixed your God-given sphere just outside of politics.

"Well, I must yield somewhat, and say that if all men were like you who are here tonight- intelligent, refined, law-abiding, and above all, so handsome - (yes, we women are often flattered about our looks to make us forget our rights) - if other men were as well dressed as you and as attractive to us women who decide this question, we women would let you vote. We dread the vote of the ignorant man, the bad man, and most horrible the vote of the man who has no tact and who lacks that indefinable thing, the highest earthly attribute of man, that is called charm.

"What are books, clothes, intelligence, morality, manners, family? Nothing to us, if a man's lacks charm! So as you men, or rather the other men, do not all have charm, they should not vote. Better think how you can be charming to us than to fritter your time away voting.

"Do you affirm that all these arguments against men voting are bosh? Well, that's what I have suspected for many years when they were used against me and my sister women. But if they are good enough to disfranchise women, why not to disfranchise men?

"But now, I will be serious. Do not feel so deeply grieved, dear men; I was only teasing you. Come now, let us reason together. Men can not be legislated for as wisely by women alone, as by men and women together. If only a few public-spirited men want to vote, those few ought to have the chance. You should not be reproached with having produced no Harriet Beecher Stowe or Florence Nightingale. You have had a Shakespeare, a John L. Sullivan and a Rockefeller, each eminent in his line. Even if you cannot be identical with woman and perform her every duty, you can at least be made politically equal. Identity and equality is not the same thing.

"You should not be governed without your consent, you should have a jury of your peers, not all women, and you should be represented if you are taxed. Then, when you men can vote as well as we women, we will have a government 'of the people, for the people and by the people.'

"So in spite of all my foolish objections at first, I shall answer your question, 'Shall men vote?' by saying emphatically, "Yes!"