

SUFFRAGETTES AND PRESIDENT—Writer Takes Post to Task

To The Post.

Your attitude on what you are pleased to term the suff. flurry in Washington is perhaps the popular one taken throughout the country, but by no means an entirely just or reasonable one.

In the first place, you are totally wrong when you say that "the" president is totally without power to do anything for the cause of woman "suffrage." Certainly the submission of the matter to State legislatures lies in the hands of congress, but equally certainly congress lies in the hands of the president. Congress may not have wanted to pass the Panama matter, or the reserve bank, or the food dictatorship or perhaps even the conscription matter. But the president wanted them passed, and they were passed.

If Mr. Taft, for instance, was president, I do not believe the women's party would pursue these tactics. They would realize that his influence could not sway congress. But they realize that President Wilson's influence can sway congress, and they want it swayed.

The women who are running this picketing affair are neither disorderly, lawless, immodest or foolish. They are, most of them, women of affairs in business as well as social life. They realize fully that the country, and more particularly congress, and even more particularly the president, is engaged in a war. They realize also that "in a time like this the president is overburdened with the cares and anxieties of war," and that "so much of vital import to the life of the nation is pressing upon the attention" of congress.

But, and this is the point of departure from the accepted attitude, they believe with all the deep rooted faith and purpose of all radicals and iconoclasts who have ever furnished material for dignified editorials in the New York Times and The Houston Post—they believe absolutely that there is nothing of more vital import to the life of the nation at this crucial moment than the enfranchisement of its women.

It is true—and none will admit it more readily than they—that the women of this country might, like their brave and entirely admirable sisters of England and France and, if the censor will permit it, Germany, put their essential egos in the background, and take whatever orders are issued to them, and remain contented, believing that their's not to make reply, nor to reason why, but to do and—live, in this case. Then, after the war was over, they might still remain in this ladylike attitude of self sacrificing effacement, while the remains, in both senses, of the army came back to decide what should be their, the women's future place in the industrial scheme which they had been running all this time, how they should be corrected, how they should be commended. And then, after an entirely proper period of time had elapsed, and they had continued to behave nicely and prettily, they would, with a vast show of generosity and patronage on the part of their loving lords and masters, be permitted to vote. Perhaps not all at once, it might unbalance the country; perhaps just the gray eyed blondes first, and then the blue eyed brunettes, etc. At least, personally, we hope the gray eyed blondes come first.

Although we seem to treat this possible attitude lightly, we regard it with the utmost seriousness. Its psychology is not bad, but it is the psychology of yesterday, that of the ancient sex diplomacy, where women cajoled because they could not demand, and men refused unless they were flattered. Today women will not longer cajole because they are able, intellectually and economically, to demand. Men must learn to assent without being coaxed. Sex diplomacy in its time was ugly, a sham and a lie. Today it is unpardonable—it is stupid. If this is a war for democracy, and women no less than men are called upon to fight, then sex diplomacy no less than state diplomacy must be eliminated.

"The most effective and expeditious way to proceed is to conduct their campaign among the States." Which means, principally, lobbying members of State assemblies. Apparently harmless, even pleasant pastime. Actually, drudgery of the most galling sort. It amounts to this: A woman of the highest intellectual class, as all suffrage leaders are, a woman who has studied her politics with Beard perhaps, or her economics with Seligman, must plead for the privilege of visiting a mediocre—in nine cases out of ten—small town, narrow visioned politician, then plead with him to listen to her, to permit her to argue with him, plead with him to consider the matter, and plead with him to allow her the privilege of pleading with him on a second occasion.

Altogether it is a most humiliating spectacle. Only men who blindly put women on a pedestal to be worshipped can so blindly force her to such indignities.

Not but that the women carry it through with the utmost good nature and even eclat, ready and willing to make any sacrifices—the poor dears!

Rather naturally enough, the women's party leaders became tired of kowtowing to little men. It had ceased to be amusing—it was even boring—and it brought no, or very slow, results. And they wanted results. Fifty years to bring suffrage into 12 States was slow work. They wanted a sure, quick method, not incompatible with their dignity—dignity not as pedestaled ladies, but as women who had the intellectual and economic right to demand what they believed was owing to them.

So they are picketing the White House. Time will show the wisdom of their choice, etc., but in President Wilson, at least, they have a foeman worthy of their steel. Their creed is a compliment to his powers, but it is an intellectual one. They believe that on the day the president says, "Let there be woman suffrage," there will be woman suffrage.

Perhaps their logic will seem illogical to other logical persons. This is the interesting nature of things. But even these must agree that they are at least courageous women, good sports with plenty of second wind, and as for being women of business—think of the columns and columns of free publicity for the cause—publicity, today the shaper of the destinies of men and nations! And grant them that.

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