

# The Woman Citizen

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*"We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government."*

## To Organize the Women Voters of the World

SO nearly is the struggle for woman suffrage over in the United States of America that the National American Woman Suffrage Association is already looking ahead to the day when it shall schedule itself to go out of business.

To this end the Association has voted to extend an invitation to the women voters of the fifteen states in which women are fully enfranchised to meet in conjunction with the Association's next Annual Convention, the date of which is to be announced later. The objects to be served by the meeting are:

1. The organization of a non-partisan National Council of Women Voters to take the place of the National American Woman Suffrage Association when its work is finished, in order that there may be an auxiliary from the United States to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

2. To discuss and adopt a national charter of Women's Civil Rights which, when written into the laws of the several states, will unify, correct, modernize and improve the laws which especially concern women.

3. To discuss and adopt a charter of Children's Rights which, when written into the laws of the several states, will unify and improve the laws which especially concern children.

4. To discuss and adopt a program of forward movements whereby women voters may aid effectively in improving and in unifying election methods, campaign usages, so-called Americanization work, and other lines of political action, as proposed.

Similar organizations will undoubtedly be effected in other countries wherein women have been enfranchised; and the International Alliance may see fit to

divide itself into similar sections. This international group of women voters, including, as it will, women of the United States, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Hungary, Austria, and probably France and Italy, will be able to wield an enormous influence in the establishment of woman suffrage in other European countries which are now struggling toward some form of representative government.

The women voters of the world have a unique opportunity at this time to render a signal and immortal service to the liberty and welfare of humanity. It is an opportunity which will not come their way again. The call comes for help from the distressed nationalities of middle Europe struggling forward to representative institutions over the obstacles of prejudice and tradition, upon the one hand, and conflicts for mastery between groups holding special theories, upon the other. It is not the first time this has happened. History is only repeating itself. If it continues to repeat itself, the promise of coming liberty for men and women may end in as sorrowful a disappointment as before. The opportunity now offered to women voters is the prevention of history's repeating itself.

When the Napoleonic World War came to an end, it was followed by a fine impulse to democracy. The masses of the people were straining under the burden of taxation to pay the bill for Napoleon's ill-fated ambitions. There were mutterings of discontent on all sides. Thrones tottered and universal suffrage for men became a possibility. It was already set up in Spain, and was a very probable institution in France and Italy. But there was no international organized group of sympathizers with democracy to extend either spiritual or

material comfort. On the other hand, the kings and aristocracies of Prussia, Austria, Russia and France, banded together and, entering into the secret Treaty of Verona, agreed to use their united influence to suppress representative institutions wherever they existed in Europe, and to prevent their establishment where they did not already exist. At the point of the bayonet, Europe was quieted, constitutions, suffrage privileges and the freedom of the press were suspended and leaders of democratic uprisings were beheaded or intimidated into silence. "The fruits of Waterloo," as Dr. Basset calls them, were lost.

A hundred years have passed and the world has moved forward far since that day. Yet, the autocracies, the Tories of every land, our own included, are as frightened of real democracy and as determined to prevent its establishment as ever they were. They may be fewer in number, today, but they still possess dangerous and unmeasured power. They still attempt unjust exclusions. Note, in illustration, the mental operation of the man who holds that God has equipped him with the ability to vote and blessed him with the right of self government, and yet believes that women have neither the ability nor the right to a voice in their own government. Such mental operation is only a modified form of that of the ex-Kaiser, who declared himself the instrument of God and that the rule of men was impossible. There can be no just, well-balanced, permanent representative government which leaves women out.

The women voters of the world, and they number millions, united, insistent, can do for the women of those struggling new republics what no men ever have done for them. The leaders among them may be encouraged and aided in unnumbered ways. From the experience of women voters, much may be contributed to embolden the timid, to convince the doubting and strengthen the morale of the entire movement.

If an intelligent, alert democracy is in truth the only safeguard against world war, and no one has suggested any other, women voters should know that their opportunity is more than an open door; it is a command to action.

**T**HERE is an obviously important national, as well as international, program for women voters. The great diversity of laws which concern women and children in our several states is a continual menace to the safety and welfare of the unfortunate and uninformed.

The average woman cannot be expected to know the peculiarities of the laws in forty-eight different states. She cannot be expected to know that the age of consent for her daughter is eighteen years in Wyoming and ten in Florida; that she will herself become possessed of half the estate of her intestate husband in California and one-third in New Jersey; that she is an equal guardian with her husband over her children in Illinois, but that she has no claim upon them at all in Louisiana. She cannot be expected to know that if her husband beats her, is disloyal, guilty of non-support, plus all other causes which in different countries and states are held as sufficient for divorce, she could not possibly secure one from him in South Carolina. She is not likely to know that in Colorado she may legally demand an eight-hour working day, but that she could be compelled to work sixteen hours in Alabama for her daily wage; that her children could not legally be employed under the laws of Oregon, but that no law will protect them in the event their father desires to hire them out in North Carolina.

She would not be apt to know that in Idaho, for example, the state is expending nearly fifty cents per \$100 of wealth to provide competent schools which are scattered over the state every two miles and that at the same time a compulsory educational law

will, in that state, compel her children to take advantage of the good schools provided; but that in Alabama only eighteen cents per \$100 of wealth is expended on public education which means that good schools are rare, and that no compulsory educational law would compel her children to attend any school. In the one case her children would grow up prepared to take their place in the world and in the other they might be mere illiterates. The average woman would not be apt to know that in every state where women vote there is a mother's pension for the widow left with children to support and without means of her own, whereas in a good many states no such provision is made.

**T**HE laws of the states could be unified and improvements added even in the states more liberal in their laws if women voters would agree upon a proper constructive program. It is a fact so obvious that it needs no demonstration that if one section of the country is much behind the times in education and legal protection to women and children, its civilization is bound to prove a deterrent influence over the whole nation. Therefore, it becomes the duty of all forward looking people to see that the laws of the whole nation are unified and that the standard by which to measure the proper program for each state is the code of laws of the most advanced states.

More, if the United States is to become the teacher of the world in applied democracy, it must wipe some blots from its own escutcheon. That votes are still bought upon occasion, ballot boxes stuffed and candidates and measures counted out, is well known. More careful attention to the selection of election officials and still more careful attention to their training would contribute the most important corrective agency. Women teachers, bookkeepers, clerks, and many stenographers have the especial training for this work. A skilled examination into the election and the corrupt practices laws would reveal many a loophole through which the unscrupulous may escape. A unification of these laws will go far to make elections respectable and respected, where neither condition is now the case.

Women voters should contribute more to their nation and to the world than they can do when acting from a localized viewpoint. "Those who live in the valley do not know what is to be seen from the mountain top." The opportunity to climb the mountain and to view all humanity in its struggle upward toward permanent democratic institutions and consequent permanent peace is here. The opportunity to extend a helping hand to those who are likely to find the path rough and thorny is here. The woman voter with the vision of coming freedom for the race in her soul will not hesitate to offer her service.

C. C. C.

## For Your Information

**T**HAT was a tremendous meeting held at the National Theatre in Washington last Sunday, December 8th, under the direction of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, for the purpose of paying tribute to American Women War Workers. And the war workers on their part made the meeting memorable as the occasion for an appeal to the United States Senate to "speed the coming of universal woman suffrage in this country by the immediate passage of the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment."

One effective feature of the meeting was the appearance of delegations of uniformed women, representing about every branch of war service. Mrs. McAdoo was there, representing the Liberty Loan Campaigners. Mrs. Josephus Daniels and Mrs. F. Louis Slade were there with their respectively brilliant records as Y. W. C. A. and Y. M. C. A. workers, to adorn a tale, the moral of which was, as Mrs. Daniels pointed out, to get the ballot