

HOUSTON LABOR JOURNAL

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TO ADVERTISERS

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An advertisement placed in the Houston Labor Journal reaches the homes of more than 5000 wage earners in Houston and vicinity. These readers are distributed in more than fifty unions among the factories, mills, railroads, farms and oil fields. It is their official organ, and they are a part of it.

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The Houston Labor Journal in its issue of May 18, 1918, had the following editorial notice:

HOUSTON, TEXAS, MAY 18, 1918.

(EDITORIAL)

A FLANKING DRIVE FOR SUFFRAGE

We have been told so often, until a few of us have begun to believe it, that Governor William Pettus Hobby is primarily responsible for the conferring of partial suffrage on the women of Texas; and while we have no desire or wish to detract in anywise from the part Governor Hobby played in this partial enfranchisement of the women of Texas, it would seem, from an illuminative article in the Literary Digest of May 11, that there are others equally entitled to credit for the granting of this priceless boon to Texas womankind.

According to the Literary Digest, by the execution of a "flank movement as brilliant as Stonewall Jackson or Bedford Forrest ever conceived," to quote the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, women have secured a voice in the political affairs of two conservative Southern States which are still reluctant to grant Constitutional equal suffrage. Women now vote in the Arkansas primaries and will exercise the same right for the first time in the Texas primaries in July of this year, by virtue of the law recently passed by the Legislature at Austin and signed by Governor Hobby. Thus, the women gain practically what they wish by mere majority vote of their Legislatures without raising issues which have hitherto blocked the suffrage cause in Southern States, and are now in the position of being able to dictate to the male voters who shall hold public office in the said States. This seems to be good strategy to Judge Clark, presiding justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, who, in a letter to a suffrage worker in Texas, expresses the belief that the same move would win in other Southern States. As he says:

"It is like Columbus standing the egg on end. We all wonder why we

did not think of it before our Legislature had adjourned. If we had thought of this measure I think we could have got it through. They could not have urged against it the cry of 'nigger' and 'unconstitutional,' with which a certain element always prevents progress."

Still, the "special session" route was and is open to the forward-looking men and women of North Carolina; and Mrs. Minnie Fisher Cunningham, of Galveston, should put the women of North Carolina "wise" to the situation as it existed in Arkansas and Texas, prior to the enactment of the suffrage laws emancipating women.

Judge Clark's curiosity as to the origin of the "brilliant idea," has been shared by the Arkansas Gazette, and the Little Rock Daily has thereby gathered the history of the "primary suffrage" movement—by writing for it.

We are told that the news that Texas had enfranchised women in that manner, came even to suffrage workers in the North as something of a surprise, accustomed as they have been to great campaigns which have stirred up many States and accomplished nothing in the way of progress. About two years ago, according to the Arkansas Gazette, Judge William Hodges of Texarkana, Texas, suggested the plan to a member of the Texas Senate—Senator Lattimore of Fort Worth. He had realized the improbability of the success of a constitutional suffrage amendment in Arkansas, because of the legal limit to the number of amendments to be submitted in any one year, and the difficulty of getting two-thirds of the Texas Legislature to vote for constitutional suffrage. As Judge Hodges tells the inquiring editor:

"It was while meditating on that situation that the idea occurred of conferring suffrage on women as far

as that could be done by a statutory enactment. The friends of suffrage had reason to believe that they could depend on a majority in both legislatures. We knew that in both States the result of the primaries practically settled the selection of all State and county officers, and that the qualifications of those who participated in the primaries were prescribed by statute alone. It was logical to infer that if women were permitted to take part in the primaries they could so influence the selection of future members of the legislature as to make the submission of the desired amendments a certainty two years hence."

When introduced by Senator Lattimore, in 1917, the bill giving women the right to vote in primary elections and nominating conventions was defeated in the Texas Legislature. But the friends of equal suffrage in the adjoining State of Arkansas were quick to see the advantages of the plan, telegraphed for a copy of the Lattimore bill, and secured the passage of a similar bill, through the Arkansas Legislature in 1917. Thus, Arkansas stole a march on Texas. This year the Texas Legislature adopted the plan at the recent special session of that body.

As the Labor Journal has already stated, it does not wish to detract in anywise or manner from the part Governor Hobby played in the placing of this measure in the State (election) Statutes, and it is not objecting; but it insists that the prime author of the measure should be given full credit for the part he played in the drawing of the bill and its final passage through the Legislature. To this much credit, at least, is Judge Hodges of Texarkana entitled, in view of the fact that leading newspapers supporting Mr. Hobby for governor, opposed the passage of the bill to the very last.