Crisis in Suffrage Movement, Says Mrs. Catt

Votes-for-Women Leader Tells Why Emergency Convention of National Woman Suffrage Association Will Meet Next Week

By Carrie Chapman Catt

BECAUSE a real crisis has been reached in the women suffrage movement, and that fact is appreciated by every suffragist in the country, the emergency-called convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association at Atlantic City next week will be the most important suffrage event which has taken place for many years. It is intended that a new million shall be set aside from what is known as the endowment fund and be turned over to the national fund to enable the organization to stand its own expenses and to give to the movement the additional weight and power of a more compact organization.

There will be reserved accommodations for delegates from our sister parties, and every delegate who is able to attend the convention should do so. The time is ripe for action, and the opportunity is there for making an appeal to all women in the country. The movement is at a crossroads, and it is up to every woman to decide which road she will take. The choice is between the path of courage and the path of cowardice. The former will lead to victory; the latter will lead to defeat.

The convention will be held at Atlantic City, New Jersey, from September 9th to September 14th. Delegates from all parts of the country will be present, and the proceedings will be conducted in a dignified and businesslike manner. The speakers will include some of the most prominent women of the country, and the agenda will cover all the important issues of the day.

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Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, will preside over the convention, and she will be assisted by a capable and experienced staff of secretaries and assistants. The convention will be a meeting of the women of the United States, and it is hoped that every woman will take an active part in it. The movement for women's suffrage is a movement of the people, and it is up to every woman to do her part in it.
age of a suffrage bill when the war ends.
The significance of the changed status
of women in Europe has not been lost
upon the men of our own country; nor
has the fact been lost upon our women
that a colony of the British Empire over
our northern border has given the vote
to women in a territory nearly as large
as that of our own land east of the
Mississippi. Americans are not so
ignorant of history nor so lacking in
national pride that they will indifferent-
ly permit the Republic to lag behind the
Empire in the spirit of democracy.
So it happens that there is a new star
in suffrage circles and a gladsome spirit
of coming victory.
In our own country the sentiment for
nation-wide suffrage grows stronger
daily. With this growth in sentiment
has come an increased demand for the
passage of the Federal suffrage amend-
ment, and because women throughout the
country are turning to that Federal
amendment for relief from their political
disabilities it enters into the political
campaign this year with an importance
it never had before.
The women of six States will vote for
President this year for the first time,
and those of six others have the Presi-
dential vote. One group of suffragists
has made bold claims that it will
persuade enough women within these
States to vote against the President,
because his party in Congress has blocked
the Federal amendment, to defeat him.
The audacity and novelty of these claims
have piqued the curiosity of some and
aroused the angry indignation of oth-
ers. The main body of suffragists have
yet to speak.
It was the National Woman Suffrage
Association which introduced the Federal
amendment, now discussed as though it
were a new discovery, and this was
done in 1878. It has been introduced in
each succeeding Congress, and ardently
supported. I do not wish to anticipate
the action of the coming convention, but
I may speak for myself. I am unalter-
ably opposed to any method which pro-
poses to enfranchise women by partisan
methods. The woman's vote should never
be mortgaged in advance by any political
party. It has been the experience in
most extensions of suffrage that the
Democrats were more largely responsi-
ble for the enfranchisement of the work-
ingman, and the Democratic Party has
held the workingmen in large degree ever
since. The Republicans enfranchised
the negroes, and appeal to them for
votes as proper expressions of grati-
tude. It will be a temptation for some
dominant party to enfranchise the wo-
men, in order to increase its own voting
strength. That is good policy for the
party, but bad for the new voters, who
should have the right of free choice, with-
out obligation to any party. It is this
bigger, more fundamental principle which
warns me of the dangers of partisan ac-
tion.
Nor, in my judgment, is it a quicker
route. There are splendid, sincere, big-
souled Democrats and Republicans in
Congress who want to put the Federal
amendment through, and there are stub-
born, narrow-minded, tradition-bound
Republicans and Democrats who will
block the amendment so long as they
serve in Washington. I refuse to be-
lieve that party power, sordid as it un-
doubtedly is, has so far lapsed into au-
tocracy that men of brains will bend
the knee and vote the way the President
orders. I give our lawmakers in Wash-
ington the credit of being, in the main,
conscientious, intelligent men, not cring-
ing party slaves. If I am right, then
the nonpartisan appeal in the long run,
though less spectacular, is more comp-
pelling, and quite as quick.
What the 'Atlantic City convention
will determine on these points remains
to be seen. One thing is certain: The
confusion, the cross-current of diver-
se views on policies and tactics, will be re-
lieved.
The emergency convention will pass
into suffrage history as the starting
point of the last lap in the long march
to victory.