



Mrs. Robert Gould Shaw, Daughter and Granddaughter. Mrs. Shaw Is a Niece of Agassiz, the Naturalist, and One of the Representative Women Suffragists Belonging to the National Association.

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 woman suffrage movement and because that fact is appreciated by virtually 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



Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt.
Photo by W. Burden Stage.

a new milestone shall be set from which to measure the distance to the end of our undertaking. When the convention adjourns one week from today, the nation at large will have awakened to a full realization of that fact, for a new and more powerful campaign will have started to has-

ten the day when every woman in this country shall have the ballot—and there will be no drones in the army mobilized to push it to a successful conclusion.

Neither the leaders in the movement nor the great majority of the rank and file are laboring under any delusions as to the true status of woman suffrage in this country today. Our victories this year in securing the indorsement of both the political parties have not blinded us to the fact that there is still a tremendous battle to be fought. To be sure, our cause has won all the really important factors of the country—the churches, the principal women's organizations, the chief men's organizations, and recognition by the leading political parties. Moreover, all the leading names in literature, art, philosophy, science, and business are enrolled on our side. But we have not won the illiterate. We have not won the powers of evil, and we all realize there must be one final battle between the forces of enlightenment and progress and the forces of ignorance, evil, and tradition. We realize, too, that the time has come for that battle, and that there is no room in our ranks for those who fear the conflict

or betray any evidence of showing the white feather.

In our convention next week we shall make over our entire plan of organization. We shall probably revolutionize our entire scheme of organization and work, for it will be necessary to employ new agencies to handle the greatly increased working force that the new campaign will demand.

In the past, our work has been nationwide, but it has never been conducted with the uniformity that is essential to the final success now within our reach. Our women have been working in hundreds and thousands of separate groups. The time has come now to gather these groups together and set them to work on a shoulder-to-shoulder basis, preserving all the non-partisanship that has characterized this association since its inception forty-six years ago, but giving its movement the additional weight and power of a more compact organization.

There will be renewed enthusiasm at our convention, because every move that is made will be a sign that victory is nearer. There is to be nothing "cut and dried" about the proceedings. Every phase of every subject which concerns our methods, our policies, and our organization will be reviewed and thoroughly discussed. No voice will be silenced, no opinion suppressed, and out of the discussion our organization will rise not only with a clearer understanding of its own powers and policies, but with a more exalted determination than ever to unite in the big drive toward final victory.

This is not a prophecy; it is a statement of fact, based upon the knowledge gathered first hand during the last six months from our workers in all parts of the country. Never before has the spirit of optimism been so contagious among our women, and never before has it been supported by such earnestness and determination. They know that after the long, hard years of struggle their hour has struck. It is as if a tremendous telepathic wave were sweeping the entire country bearing with it to every woman in every State the message that victory is at hand and within our reach.

For years we have been saying that suffrage is coming. We said it because we knew. Today we can say that it is here and that it remains only for our

women to make one last determined assault upon the opposition to make our victory definite.

Three courses of procedure lie before us. We can concentrate on the Federal amendment; we can drop the Federal amendment and confine our activities to State legislation, or we can continue the present policy of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and work for both State and Federal action. Because there is a difference of opinion among our women as to which of these modes of attack would be most effective we shall debate that matter on the opening day of the convention. The debate will be three cornered. Mrs. Ida Husted Harper of New York and Mrs. Glendower Evans of Massachusetts will lead the forces of those who believe in concentrating on Federal action; Miss Laura Clay of Kentucky and Miss Kate Gordon of Louisiana will champion the State campaign method of procedure, while Mrs. Raymond Brown of New York and Miss Florence Allen of Ohio will carry the standards of those who believe that we should continue our present policy and work both for State legislation and a Federal amendment. I will not anticipate the result of that discussion.

This three-cornered debate will decide the policy that we are to follow in the continuation of our campaigning, but it will not decide the plan of campaign, nor whether a definite election policy shall be adopted. That is a matter which will be worked out in the remaining sessions of the convention. We shall have the benefit of the best brains in the country in the new plans to be made, as the most representative women of the United States will be present at the convention. College Presidents, women in high positions, wives and daughters of eminent men, rich women, working women, will be factors in the great democratic gathering whose object it will be to determine the shortest route to political emancipation.

All of these women appreciate that we are passing through not only a national crisis but a world crisis. Already 3,500,000 lives have been lost in the world's cataclysm. The number becomes the more impressive when it is remembered that the entire population of the American colonies was little more than 3,500,000. These losses have been the lives of men within the age of economic produc-

tion. They have been taken abruptly from the normal business of the world, and every human activity, from that of the humblest unskilled labor to art, science, and literature, has been weakened by their loss. Millions of other men will go to their homes blind, crippled, and incapacitated to do the work they once performed. The stability of human institutions has never before suffered so tremendous a shock. Great men are trying to think out the consequences, but one and all proclaim that no imagination can find color or form vivid enough to paint the picture of the world after the war. British and Russian, German and Austrian, French and Italian agree that it will lead to social revolution throughout the entire world. Whatever comes, they agree that the war presages a total change of the status of woman. Meanwhile, women are taking the vacant places of men in every European country. Hundreds of thousands are making munitions in England and thousands are employed by the German railways.

It is not, however, in direct war work alone that the latent possibilities of women have been made manifest. In all the belligerent lands women have found their way to high posts of administration, where no woman would have been trusted two years ago, and the testimony is overwhelming that they have filled their posts to the entire satisfaction of the authorities.

Men have been frank to acknowledge the heroism and self-sacrifice of these women, but their endurance, their skill, the practicability of their service seem for the first time to have been recognized by Governments as "war powers." That fact has utterly changed the estimate public opinion has placed upon women's work and incidentally upon women themselves. It is reported that hundreds of prominent and influential men who bitterly opposed the enfranchisement of women before the war confess their complete conversion on account of the war services of women. Already three great Provinces of Canada—Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan—have given universal suffrage to their women in sheer generous appreciation of their war work. Even Mr. Asquith, almost as renowned for his immovable opposition to the Parliamentary suffrage for women as for his position as Prime Minister of Great Britain, has decidedly mellowed his attitude and some declare that he will no longer block the pass-

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 indifferently 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 amendment, 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 Presidential 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 others. 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 1875. 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 unalterably 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 responsible for the enfranchisement of the workman, 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 gratitude. It will be a temptation for some dominant party to enfranchise the women, 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, without obligation to any party. It is this bigger, more fundamental principle which warns me of the dangers of partisan action.

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 stubborn, narrow-minded, tradition-bound Republicans and Democrats who will block the amendment so long as they serve in Washington. I refuse to believe that party power, sordid as it undoubtedly is, has so far lapsed into autocracy that men of brains will bend the knee and vote the way the President orders. I give our lawmakers in Washington the credit of being, in the main, conscientious, intelligent men, not cringing party slaves. If I am right, then the nonpartisan appeal in the long run, though less spectacular, is more compelling, 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 criss-cross of diverse views on policies and tactics, will be relieved.

The emergency convention will pass into suffrage history as the starting point of the last lap in the long march to victory.

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