

# Suffrage's Cost High, Effect on Elections Nil

## Illinois, Only State with Accurate Records of Men and Women Voting Separately, Proves That Big Expense Leaves Results Unchanged

**I**F the right of suffrage were a natural right, then women should have it though the heavens fall," said Elihu Root, years ago, in an address to the Constitutional Convention.

"But," he added, "if there is any one thing settled in the long discussion of this subject, it is that suffrage is not a natural right, but simply a means of government; and the sole question to be discussed is whether government by the suffrage of men and women will be better government than by the suffrage of men alone."

Since then the discussion of woman suffrage has swung round the circle. An army of women, led by Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, contends that the subject of woman's right to vote is not settled; that women have a fundamental right to the elective franchise, "though the heavens fall."

"I believe in woman suffrage whether all women vote, or no women vote, whether all women vote right or all women vote wrong," wrote Dr. Shaw two years ago.

Another large group of women, led by Mrs. James W. Wadsworth, Jr., wife of New York's senior Senator, and Mrs. Robert Lansing, wife of the Secretary of State, opposes woman suffrage on the grounds that it is not a natural right, that it would weaken instead of strengthen the Government, that it would be a waste of woman's time and a waste of the taxpayers' money to double the electorate.

Between these opposing theories the men voters of New York will decide next Tuesday.

From the man voter is often heard the question: "How does it work where women vote?" To that question he receives nearly as many answers as there are personal opinions. The testimony is conflicting. Politicians of the States where women vote indorse suffrage and credit it with many improvements. On the other hand, the anti-suffragists say that States where women do not vote have just as good or better legislation "at a lower cost to the taxpayer."

The conflict of testimony is due principally to the fact that there is no very accurate means of estimating the effect of woman suffrage in the eleven States where they have full suffrage. The women's vote in these States is not kept separate from that of the men. It is impossible to tell just how the women vote. If a suffrage State goes dry suffragists say that "the women did it." If it defeats prohibition, the antis contend that the saloonkeepers were able to vote all their wives, cousins, aunts, and sisters, while the good women stayed home.

But there is one suffrage State in which the voting by women has an official record, where opinion is not based on theories. That State is Illinois. In Illinois women's votes are kept separate, as women have only partial suffrage. The effect of women's votes can be traced with accuracy in Illinois.

At the last election 566,937 Illinois men voted for President Wilson, and

693,334 men for Mr. Hughes. The women voted in almost the same ratio, 383,292 for President Wilson, and 459,215 for Mr. Hughes. In Chicago, the men gave Mr. Hughes a majority of 18,340, and the women a majority of 7,686. The difference between the plurality percentage of the men and women was only 1.6 per cent. At the election of Mayor Thompson in 1915 he received 249,713 Chicago men's votes and 148,825 women's votes—60.9 per cent. of the men voted for him,

of the women. Here we have again the difference in plurality 1.6 per cent., exactly the same as in the case of Mr. Hughes!

This would seem to indicate that women vote as their husbands do. In fact, since 80 per cent. of the adult women of the country are married, the result is the same, whether they vote with or against their husbands, as those who vote oppositely are paired off and these husbands and wives cancel each others' votes. The result is the belief in Illinois that there is no such thing as a "woman's vote" to be delivered for or against any candidate who attracts or repels certain women leaders of the "cause."

The Illinois records, in short, argue that it comes down to a question of whether women should have the ballot as a matter of natural right, regardless of the extra expense involved. For the purpose of discovering the actual effect of woman suffrage on election expenses, an interview was sought the other day with the man who is probably the best informed person in the country on that subject, Dennis J. Egan, Chief Clerk of the Board of Election Commissioners of Chicago.

"Every man in politics here says he's in favor of woman suffrage—but it has been an awful expense," said Mr. Egan. "It causes practically a duplication of our election machinery. We must provide separate voting booths, tally sheets, and ballots for the women. Our ballots a year ago were four feet long. Women's votes must be counted separately, and all this involves extra labor and expense."

"Do you mean that the women double the vote?" was asked.

"No, they don't double the vote. We have nearly 500,000 men on our rolls and about 265,000 women, or a little more than half as many, but we must provide election machinery to take care of the

women qualified to vote. There are nearly as many women qualified to register as men, but since the novelty of the thing has worn off, they don't vote, except on big issues or on some sentimental question."

"You find them more sentimental than the men?"

"Yes, a great deal more so. They voted pretty well for Mayor two years ago, and a lot of them voted for Presidential Electors last year, but as a general thing they

don't vote on the things that are of the most important concern to the taxpayers, such as bond issues and propositions. They will come out, though, on a question where their sentiment is aroused. They can vote for Aldermen, for School Trustee, for Mayor, and on all municipal propositions. They cannot vote for Governor or members of the Legislature or Congress, because Illinois has not full suffrage for women.

"The women who belong to clubs and organizations vote all right, but the women of the working class and the middleclass usually stay home. Both

parties have organizations of women, and they are about as good politicians as the men. In fact, they 'catch on' much more quickly.

"But there are certain things about voting that many women do not like, although we provide for their protection in every possible way. We have a woman member on every board, and try to reduce the smoking and tone up the polling places, but even at that they don't like it. Then take the question of telling their ages. A little woman will walk into a polling place and whisper that she is thirty-five.

"'Thirty-five, did you say?' a man will roar so that everybody can hear, and perhaps another will pass the remark, 'I didn't think Miss Jones was thirty-five, did you?'

"This sort of thing keeps women from the polls, and fellows who want to keep the women from voting are able to scare them away by such tricks. After it is done once a woman will stay at home."

The complete figures for the election expenses, Mr. Egan pointed out, were in his official report, from which the following is quoted:

"The principal causes contributing to the recent increased election expenses are:

"First: The Woman's Franchise act.

This act at once qualified a vast army of women to vote for a large number of offices and upon any and all questions submitted. There are at present on the registry books 284,533 names of qualified women voters. If this vote could be apportioned into precincts on the basis of 300 each, it would create 948 precincts. The total registered male vote is 491,246, which, on the same basis, would give 1,637 precincts, or a total of 2,585. But the board, by careful calculation, feels certain that it will be able to reduce this number by approximately 2,330, or about 830 precincts on account of the woman vote and 1,500 on account of the male vote. It is estimated that the total election expense due to the woman's vote alone will aggregate \$791,929."

This is an average expense of \$2.44 for each of the 283,932 women who voted. In the first year women voted election expenses increased \$737,651.97.

"The influence of the woman's vote may be clearly traced," continues the report. "In 1913 there was one primary and one election, in neither of which did the women participate, and the total cost was \$418,643.87. In 1914 there occurred a city primary, a city election, a Fall primary, and a Fall election, in all of which the woman voters participated, the cost leaping to \$1,156,295.84.

"In 1915, with one city primary and one city election and one county election, the expenditure reached \$828,065, or an increase of upward of a half million dollars. It is of course true that the woman vote is not entirely responsible for this great increase, but undoubtedly for a considerable percentage of it.

"Second: The statute requiring a precinct registration, revision, and canvass previous to each primary election. This is the law and must be enforced, though it is clearly apparent to the board that the results do not always justify the expense. There will be five registration periods next year, including the regular Spring registration in March and the general registration in October. The cost per precinct for the primary registrations will average about \$80, and in some precincts only eight, ten, or twelve persons will be registered, at a cost of \$8, \$10, or \$12 per head.

"Each precinct in Chicago will be canvassed by the clerks five separate times, necessitating the printing of 25,000 verification lists, 1,000,000 suspect notices, 600,000 envelopes, the purchase of 586,000 two-cent stamps, and the outlay of \$116,500 for salary of election clerks."

It is estimated that the election of 1916 cost Chicago \$2,500,000.

From the foregoing figures a careful calculation shows that the increase of election expenses, due to women's votes, will be about \$2,867,000 for New York, if the voters of the State indorse the "cause" next Tuesday. In other words, the taxpayers of this State would be subjected through suffrage to an extra expense equal to about three times the amount of money spent on the spectacular suffrage campaign, and an amount sufficient to buy 57,400,000 rounds of ammunition for our troops.



Dennis Egan, Who Keeps Illinois Election Records, Shows What It Costs to Let Women Vote.