WHY SUFFRAGE FIGHT TOOK 50 YEARS

Leader Tells of Hindenburg Line of Germans Broken in West, Gives Political Sidelights, and Finds Causes for Victory's Delay

By CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

The passage of the Federal suffrage amendment by the United States Congress on June 4 should be credited to no man or woman, or group of men or women, or to any one political party. It should be credited to no particular method or form of campaign, nor even to our own generation. The long road to this result, in the belief that the credit belongs to American and world history. The passage of this amendment is the result of fifty years or more of concerted, never-ceasing effort.

Some pronounce it evolution. True, it has been evolution. But behind the evolution there have been evolutions hundreds, thousands of them, who, in order to push woman suffrage forward, gave every possible opportunity to their lives to the cause. All that they had and all they were they went to the service of woman's emancipation. Although women were the tools of workers, there have been men who, like the women, lived in strictest economy so that there should be more to give to the woman's cause. A long line of such noble souls rises in memory as one looks backward over the years; women whose names had the vision of the rightness of the equality of rights between the sexes, men who dare to express a disputed sex.

The victory at Washington is, therefore, no sudden development, no unexpected event. On the contrary, it the long-overdue climax.

The Federal suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress in 1878, forty years ago, by the National Woman Suffrage Association, and has been pending seven years, since each new session witnessed its early introduction, while with weary watching and watching the years have succeeded each other.

The Constitution of the United States is not an easy instrument to change, but it has been amended three times between 1878 and 1919. Had the Federal suffrage amendment been introduced when it was first introduced, it would have been the Sixteenth Amendment. As it stands, it will be the Twenty-sixth, when ratified, amendments that provide for an elective Senate, and prohibition having successfully displaced it.

The impatient reformer newcomer to the movement has justifiably failed to understand the delay. One not closely acquainted with the entire sequence of the movement, and especially our political psychology, could not do otherwise.

(1) In the beginning of the movement the demand for woman suffrage, including women, believed confidently that women were naturally, physically, morally, and culturally superior to men, and believed incapable of education, capacities too rudimentary to permit them even to vote for their own property, bodies too feeble to perform the simplest tasks for which men were created.

(2) The littlester, undeveloped man held the view of the cave man that the woman was the weaker sex and needed protection. She existed for him to dominate. In the refined, educated man this view is still with us, but it has become more subtle, surer, more insidious. He articles, high-minded spirit of protection. Between these extremes lies the view that women have the right to be seen and not heard, that women, as possibly

(3) They very suggestion that woman should control her own property served as a reflection upon man's honesty or integrity.

(4) A woman to want education implied that man was incapable of doing the thinking for the feamales of his family.

To provoke that women should speak in public implied that they had ideas which could not be expressed by their natural protectors.

To ask for a vote was equivalent to declaring the government of men a failure, because it connoted that a dependent class was so disestablished with it as to demand a share in remaking it.

All of these primitive prejudices and resentments involved in these various implications have been the most difficult to overcome.

(3) The third cause belongs in the realm of "pure politics." The form of our Constitutions, Federal and State, is such that it is necessary that the members of a Legislature or Congress voting to amend an amendment which aims to enfranchise a class are obliged to pass the amendment or to the election, before the class to be enfranchised has

Mrs. Stan Wood Park, Chairman of the Congressional Committee of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Organizer of the Woman Super Party, President and Founder of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.


received its vote. Legislators are deprived of the support of grateful voters, newly enfranchised, while forced to meet the condemnation of that part of the existing electorate which does not approve an extension of the suffrage. An intimate account of the history of the suffrage legislation reveals the fact that this has probably been the most prolific source of delay.

and a slow period of education and organization was ushered in.

It is a well-known psychological fact that every great war has been followed by a period of liberty, succeeded soon by one of tremendous reaction. Our own country was no exception to the rule; and the years between 1899 and 1890 gave small hospitality to any proposal of change in our institutions. Meanwhile, the leaders of the movement learned two lessons and learned them well. Many men in Congress would not vote for the enactment of any law mere,

because it appealed to them as right, just, or for the benefit of the future of the country. Ours is a representative government, and legislators do not forget their constitutuencies at home who may not agree as to the importance of such legislation. It was clear that popular sentiment behind Congressmen was not strong enough before it would be possible to secure the suffrage by Federal means.

The National Suffrage Association had been organized in 1850 for the express purpose of concentrating on the effort to secure suffrage by Federal amend.

Yet the workers of that early day were promptly confronted with the fact that their demands on Congressmen re

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Why Suffrage Fight Took 50 Years

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Y. F. Kirby

Miss Mary Garrett Hay, Chairman of the Woman Suffrage Party of New York City and Member of the Congressional Committee, Who Was a Leading Asset in the Last Laps of the Campaign for the Federal Amendment.

interests have been known to contribute and to lend their mighty influences to the defeat of woman suffrage. Twenty-five years ago we knew that the woman suffrage cause was won, so far as the masses of intelligent people of the country were concerned, and that our struggle had narrowed down to securing the co-operation and the indoctrination of the political parties. How to meet this responsibility has been a problem much discussed, and the discussion has never resulted in a single answer. In the long run, popular sentiment controls in this country. Voters may be bought and evil influences may round up such voters and make them the agents of the hundred dollars in money to control any election through these illiterate voters. That was repetition of the debate in the same obscured. The result was, and is, the movement to carry the suffrage amendment at the polls. On the contrary, these political parties as a usual thing lend their machinery to these opponents. The opposition was not, as is ordinarily supposed, the little group of women who do not wish to vote themselves, and who have no opinion of their sex that they contend the entire sex is too inferior to have a vote in politics; instead, it has been, and is, great interests which believe they have something to lose through the disfranchisement of women.

The most hostile and effective opponent of woman suffrage has been the business interests of the country. The National American Woman Suffrage Association, which for fifty years has moved forward consistently under its own banner, "Political Equality for Women," has never expressed an official opinion on this question, and has declared neither for nor against prohibition. Nevertheless, the liquor dealers reasoned that, since women make the manufacturers of liquor or the consumers of liquor, but were the greatest sufferers from its evils, a larger proportionate number could be depended upon to vote for prohibition than men.

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