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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

GIVEN BY

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AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE WISCONSIN WOMAN'S
SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION, MADISON, WEDNESDAY
AFTERNOON, JANUARY 17, 1917.

"The woman's hour has struck," declared the president of the National American Suffrage association to the suffrage workers of the country assembled at Atlantic City in annual convention last September. And upon that theme, "The woman's hour has struck," she developed a wonderful survey of all the great forces, the world forces, which are uniting to free woman from the bonds with which society has bound her, giving her that political freedom by means of which alone she may ultimately succeed to the full measure of her powers and the greatest destiny that is hers.

We believe that the woman's hour has struck. We believe that victory is in sight. But we realize that before we grasp that victory, even though it be in view, we must make the greatest effort of which we are capable. We must make a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together.

I have recently been collecting dollars for woman suffrage in my home city. Nearly everyone I asked gave the dollar cheerfully, some of them even enthusiastically. One man did not give anything. He said he could not see that any money was necessary, that woman suffrage ~~was~~ coming anyway.

Danger to Our Cause.

The opinion of this man, a friend of woman suffrage, represents a real danger to the suffrage cause, because he is not alone in his opinion. Many people say easily that woman suffrage is coming, just as they say easily that temperance is coming, without the least understanding of the forces that will bring woman suffrage, that will bring temperance, to come to pass. Is temperance in the air? Not spontaneously, the least bit in the world. It is in the hearts of people, who believe that intemperance is so great an evil that they are willing to give their time, their money, their energy, all they have, to abolish it. I learned only lately of the wonderful organization which the temperance forces had in South Dakota. They had organizers in a given locality, not weeks or months, but years, actually two or three years, one man working for temperance in a certain district. That fact explains why temperance won in South Dakota and the lack of it explains why woman suffrage lost in South Dakota.

Great Effort Necessary.

Woman suffrage is coming, but it is not coming as the light follows the darkness or the summer follows the winter. It is coming as the harvest follows the patient, laborious, unremitting toil of the husbandman. We must realize this truth with our deepest convictions. We must realize the need of work, of more work and again of more work. We must realize the need of OUR work, our individual efforts. If we want woman suffrage we must give ourselves to secure woman suffrage. Remember that wonderful line from Emerson: "What do you want, says God. Pay for it and take it." We cannot take it without paying for it.

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Most Productive Year.

It is a good time to enter the campaign; a good time to press the campaign—now. We have just closed the most prosperous year that our cause has ever known. Four great Canadian provinces have within a twelve-month enfranchised their women, three of them by parliamentary action, the fourth by a referendum of the voters. Canada is at war. These four western provinces have sent thousands of their sons to fight in the British army. The death-rate of Canadian boys has been terrific. While they are fighting and dying, their mothers are given the ballot. Could these provinces have announced in clearer terms that they find the voice of women necessary in a national crisis?

Denmark has given its women the ballot during the past year, Denmark, which is every moment in danger of being drawn into the combat. Does not Denmark also believe that the government needs the help of all its people, women as well as men, when its hour of trial comes?

The women of the war-stricken countries have been promoting the welfare of all women by their devoted service and the wonderful efficiency they have shown in practical affairs. If there was anything left of that old notion, I cannot dignify it by calling it an argument, that because a woman cannot fight she should not vote, it has been dissipated by the splendid service of British women, French women, German women, service which is recognized by their respective governments as of supreme importance to the national welfare. All women will profit because of what the women of these countries have done during this terrible war. Can we say as much concerning what men have done during this terrible war?

Our Political Advance.

In these United States the great events of our cause, as of the whole country, have centered around the political campaign and the election. One year ago if I had assured you that all the political parties would go into the campaign with an endorsement of woman suffrage in their platforms, how much credence would you have given that statement?

I had the honor of appearing before the Wisconsin delegation to the Democratic convention in St. Louis. The audience was most attentive. Many members said pleasant things to me after the close of the brief address. Several of them were suffragists. Not one of them even pretended he intended to stand for woman suffrage at the national convention. Senator Hastings, at that time an anti-suffragist, was the Wisconsin member of the resolutions committee. And yet the Democratic platform recommended woman suffrage by states and every Wisconsin member voted for it on the floor of the convention.

The Republican plank also has its bit of interesting history if we had time to consider it. We may only note now that few of us believed there was any reasonable chance of our securing these political endorsements. We did not believe we could reach our goal and yet we pressed forward with all our might toward that goal. The lesson was worth learning.

We do not need to go into the motives behind these political endorsements. Motives are apt to be complicated and often ill-defined even in the mind which engenders them. The great fact for us to consider is that all political parties have declared in favor of the principle of equal suffrage and that every man elected to office at the recent election stood on some one of those platforms.

In State Campaign.

This is of enormous importance in state campaigns. We expect to have a legislative campaign in Wisconsin this winter. To every man in this legislature we may say: "Sir, your national party stands squarely for woman

suffrage in the states. You were elected on that platform. Do you not feel yourself bound by that platform to vote for woman suffrage?"

To Democrats we may add that their state platform and their candidates' platform endorsed without qualification the national platform. Are not the Democratic assemblyman, the Democratic senator, twice, thrice, bound to support the woman suffrage cause?

We may remind the Republican legislator that his national standard-bearer took the most advanced stand possible in favor of our cause, that is favoring a federal amendment, and that that standard-bearer received a majority of 23,000 popular votes in this state. It is not necessary to say anything to the Socialists, because we find them without exception, as far as we know, in a friendly attitude—a situation which we deeply appreciate.

Other facts in the recent election are highly important for us to know and to use in the legislative and congressional campaigns. In our congressional delegation from Wisconsin there are three avowed suffragists, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Fear and Mr. Lenroot. All of them were re-elected by greatly increased majorities. Here are the figures; those of 1914 taken from the Blue Book, those of 1916 from The Milwaukee Sentinel:

	1914	1916
Nelson	4,249	10,355
Fear	6,061	13,862
Lenroot	9,688	14,041

A fourth congressman, Mr. Cooper, gave out an interview following Mr. Hughes' nomination strongly supporting his position. Mr. Cooper was re-elected by a large majority. In 1914 he received 6,536 votes and in 1916, 12,230.

Senator Robert M. LaFollette, all his life a devoted suffragist, was re-elected by a majority of 113,000 votes, much the largest accorded any candidate. Is it not about time to abolish that tradition, that notion, that legend, that the man who stands for justice for women in Wisconsin is bound to be politically slain by his constituents?

Republicans and States' Rights.

The Democratic and Republican platforms support woman suffrage by states. This complicates the situation in our national representation but it is to my mind by no means hopeless. We may with perfect consistency ask our members to stand by the principles of woman suffrage, as endorsed by their platforms, and to use their own judgment and sense of fairness as to the methods of bringing about woman suffrage, by state or national legislation. We have eight Republicans in our delegation now, we shall have a solid Republican delegation after March 4. Is it logical, is it reasonable for Republicans to stand for state's rights when the whole history of the party from the beginning is opposed to that position. When this same Republican party conceived and passed the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the constitution of the United States, enfranchising the negro?

We are reminded that the constitution of the state of Wisconsin provides for the addition of new classes of voters by a referendum. True, but I cannot see that the constitution of the state of Wisconsin is any more sacred than the constitution of the United States, which permits our enfranchisement in another way. If either of these documents is worthy of the esteem and veneration of mankind more than the other, we can hardly deny that it is the older and more inclusive one, the constitution of the United States.

Justice of Federal Amendment.

I believe with increasing faith every day in a federal amendment for woman suffrage—not only in its expediency but in its essential justice. If woman suffrage is right then woman suffrage should be brought about in the simplest and most direct way. That is no sincere and honest democracy which insists that one-half the people shall be permitted to keep the ballot from the hands of the other half as long as they wish, permanently, if they

are so inclined. In other lands suffrage has been given to both men and women, with very few exceptions, by parliamentary action, and not by referendum of the voters. I understand that three-fourths of the voters of this country have been enfranchised by naturalization. In Wisconsin the percentage is probably much larger. Foreigners do not have to appeal to the voters but secure their enfranchisement in a very simple and easy manner through their own effort. No man in Wisconsin, so far as I know, has even been obliged to ask his neighbor man whether or not he could have the privilege of voting. Only women are obliged to seek their enfranchisement in that infinitely difficult way.

The women of one Canadian province had their political fate settled by voters of the province. I know of no other instance outside of this country where referendum of the voter has been considered necessary to give women a fair chance for enfranchisement.

The National association, all the state associations represented at the Atlantic City convention except two from the unreconstructed South, our own state board, have declared in favor of the federal amendment. I think there is no question in the mind of any woman here that the federal amendment represents our highest and greatest ambition.

We must not imagine, however, that our responsibility in the states is in any way lessened by this fact. What is to bring about the passage of the federal amendment by congress and its ratification by the necessary states? Public opinion, nothing but public opinion. A man of decided convictions and strong character may vote for a measure of which he believes his constituents do not approve. But the average congressman is going to ask how the people at home feel and is going to govern his vote accordingly.

Constituencies Must Be Won.

The best and safest way, often the only way, to secure the vote of Mr. Blank in congress for the suffrage amendment is to convert Mr. Blank's constituents to the justice of Woman suffrage and then let Mr. Blank know that they are converted.

We had two votes from Wisconsin when the federal amendment came to a vote in the House of Representatives in January, 1915. We have seven men in our delegation who declare they believe in woman suffrage. Some of them have decided leanings in our direction. One of them said some weeks ago to our Mrs. Hooper, who has been lobbying in Congress, that he had not one word from home in favor of the woman suffrage measure. You may be sure the people who oppose our cause have not been too bashful to tell him what they want. They have probably told him early and often and emphatically. We are now beginning to tell him what we want, and if we do not weary in the well-doing there is chance of results of value to us.

Of course, the vote in Wisconsin in 1912 is still quoted against us but we are getting out from under the shadow of that catastrophe. Conditions have changed so radically since that vote was taken that it can no longer be quoted fairly against us, at least with anything like so much force as immediately after the election.

We should have clear realization that our chance for more votes from the Wisconsin delegation in congress depends largely upon this fact, that the election in this state took place four years ago and conditions have greatly changed since then.

Be Fair, Reasonable, Courteous.

I have spoken at some length of certain political aspects of our cause and I should like to speak at length of other political aspects, because success, when it comes, by whatever route, must come through political agencies. More and more we must press our cause on those in political life. And to do this successfully we must be well equipped, equipped with knowledge of political conditions, knowledge of the character and connections and tastes of our representatives, knowledge of those qualities which are successful in

influencing the minds of others. I recommend to you with great urgency that you improve every opportunity to learn of our national and state political life, that you study this psychological problem of influencing the political mind so that it will right about face and turn toward the rising sun of justice and progress. In political undertakings, as in all undertakings, I am convinced that fairness, reasonableness, courtesy, are always most effective in the long run.

Year in Wisconsin.

The year in Wisconsin has been fairly profitable. We look back to the congressional conference in Milwaukee in March, with Mrs. Catt and Mrs. Trumbull as guests of honor and chief speakers. The state was more generally represented at that conference than at any previous suffrage convention I have attended. We had a dozen women at the Mississippi Valley conference at Minneapolis in May and several of them had place on the program. One hundred Wisconsin women marched in the Chicago parade in the pouring rain at the time of the Republican convention. They wore Wisconsin tunics, they were escorted by their own drum corps and they made up the tragedy, and we were sure the most effective delegation outside of Illinois. A suffrage week at Tower Hill in August was interesting and profitable to the little group present. A good delegation attended the annual convention of the National American Woman's Suffrage association in Atlantic City in September. A district convention was held in Delavan early in October. Early in October also we moved and are now comfortably and happily at home at 423 Jefferson St., Milwaukee. Early in October Mrs. McDowell began her work as organizer, of which she has just given so satisfactory report.

Activities at Headquarters.

These are some of the special activities of the year, each of which absorbed most of the time and energy of headquarters for some days or weeks. Headquarters, you know, is essentially a promoter of each and every special activity which may help our cause. Headquarters is a clearing house for information, for advice, for general assistance to individuals and organizations. Headquarters is a center of newspaper publicity. Headquarters is a letter factory to whose continually grinding axis there is no end. My letters go out to you in a constant stream. I am sure you think sometimes in an overwhelming stream. Yours come in to me a tiny trickle, often undiscernible to the naked eye. What would you think of sending out one hundred letters to women supposed to be interested in woman suffrage, upon a subject that is of pressing importance, if you received one, three, five replies? I do not think I receive anything like one reply to every ten letters which go out under my name. Put yourself in my place. Could you keep your courage, your enthusiasm, under the circumstances?

It is still early enough in the year to turn over the new leaf. I beg you, I implore you, I conjure you to answer my letters. If you cannot do what you are asked to do, let us know, so that we may not depend upon you. If you can do it, let us know, for the comfort and help that knowledge may be to us, and the possible assistance we may be to you.

Million Dollar Fund.

You have heard of the launching of the Million Dollar fund for woman suffrage by the National American Woman Suffrage association, at the convention in Atlantic City last September. By a lucky coincidence the portion of this great sum assigned Wisconsin, \$25,000 was exactly the same amount which the chairman of the finance committee of Wisconsin, Miss Harriet Bain, had already decided upon for a really worth-while suffrage year in Wisconsin. You have all had letters from Miss Bain, she is almost as tireless a letter-writer as I am. You know the big democratic dollar campaign which she inaugurated and prosecuted with so much vigor. You are to have a full report of that campaign and of other financial undertakings which she has in

mind. I prophesy that no part of this convention will be more absorbingly interesting than the plain, everyday, hard topic of money, as Miss Bain presents it.

Nine tenths of the money raised in Wisconsin for woman suffrage work, in connection with this great National campaign, is to be kept and expended in Wisconsin. One tenth of it is to go to the National. We desire that every bit of money expended for suffrage in Wisconsin shall be counted toward the \$25,000 pledge. If local associations are willing to allow their money to go through our treasury we should welcome the opportunity of increasing our total in that way. When local associations prefer to keep their money in their own treasury, we ask them to send to us a statement of amounts actually expended, such statements sworn to before the proper authorities. Then these also may help to swell the grand total. As all suffrage expenditures in Wisconsin may count toward the Wisconsin pledge, so all sums paid into the National treasury from Wisconsin count on the ten per cent due from this state. Thus four hundred dollars were pledged by individuals from this state at the Atlantic City convention, which relieves us from the payment of ten per cent of our first \$4,000.

Raising money is rather a bugaboo to some women but I think that is because they have not approached the matter from a properly scientific standpoint. Raising money is a question of applied psychology of the most absorbing kind. Given on one side plenty of money in the pockets of intelligent fair-minded people, and on the other side the yawning treasury of the best cause in the world, what magic may be used to bring these two, evidently made for each other, together? However, I must not encroach on the finance chairman's preserves. I need only to remind you that the finance problem is fundamental, that the amount and the quality of the work which we shall do will depend almost entirely upon the amount of money we have to invest in that work.

More Help Needed.

The suffrage headquarters in Milwaukee represent the joint undertaking of the state suffrage association and the Milwaukee County association. We have only one paid employe, who has general charge, receives visitors, answers the telephone, takes dictation, writes letters, runs the mimeograph, sends out literature and does a thousand other things. We have had excellent volunteer assistance, but we need more regular clerical help. Remember, our secretary belongs partly to the Milwaukee association. I have not figured the exact percentage of woman whose services we have, but whatever it is we need more.

Organization.

For a number of years we have been talking suffrage organization in Wisconsin, now we have seriously begun suffrage organization. Our organizer, Mrs. McDowell, has given you an interesting account of her work. We must have other organizers. The great state of Wisconsin, with its two million inhabitants and its 54,000 square miles is too large a field for any one woman to till. I think it is best for us to face the situation as it exists in this state. Rather more than half of our seventy-two counties are listed in our files as organized.

In some instances the only sign of life about these organizations is that letters addressed to their alleged officers are not returned to us. So we are permitted to continue to think that such officers do actually exist. You may guess, however, that they are not greatly helpful or inspiring.

Of course one organization in a county does not mean necessarily that that county is organized. The organization may be, and I think usually is, only an urban organization, without much influence in the surrounding county.

The thorough organization of a state for woman suffrage or any other cause is a matter of sustained effort, by trained and efficient workers, for several years, involving the expenditure of a large amount of money. Miss

Edna Wright, home for the holidays from her work as organizer in New York, related that the Utica district, where she has been employed for a long period of time— I should think two years, has two organizers now and will soon have four; similar situation prevailing, I understand, in all the districts of that state.

Everywhere the failure of referendum elections in the different states is accredited to lack of organization. A state decides upon impulse to go into campaign, makes a mad rush at organization for a few months and of course fails. Failure is foreordained under such circumstances. The people who know most about woman suffrage campaigning are absolutely united in the opinion that, in whatever fashion you may desire to bring about woman suffrage, organization is absolutely necessary, more necessary than anything else.

I was much impressed by the detail of work in New York, as explained by Miss Wright. An organization once effected is not left to work out its own salvation, possibly to droop and die, but the state association is constantly extending a helping hand, keeping in close correspondence with the new recruit, sending a speaker if necessary, supporting and nursing and cheering. If material is there for good working organization, a good working organization results.

The expenses of an organizer vary of course with salary and living conditions. An average of perhaps \$150 per month in Wisconsin may be expected. An organizer's expenses may be greatly reduced if she can receive hospitality. The woman who takes care of a suffrage worker is helping the cause in a very direct and practical way. Some women are able to do this who are not able to help in other ways.

Publicity.

Publicity work during the year has gone on as usual. The weekly letter is sent to about 100 state papers. Milwaukee papers have given us a fair amount of publicity since we moved to Milwaukee. Since the newspaper work has the services of only about one-tenth of a woman it is frankly not all that it should be. I look forward to the time when we shall have a whole woman and a capable one devoting the major part of her time to the publicity work. In this state where there is so large a foreign-speaking population we should make special efforts to reach the non-English press. Mrs. Gudden has been doing wonderful work in the German papers. She wants assistance so that this work may be increased. Will any woman here who writes in German and is willing to undertake this work, please give me her name. We want a Scandinavian woman, a Polish woman, to provide suffrage contributions regularly for papers in the Scandinavian and Polish languages.

Suffrage editions of newspapers is to be the special feature of the National program for February. Wisconsin should join heartily in this undertaking. Can we have a suffrage newspaper edition in every county in the state the last of February? We can if we try and I believe the effort will be very productive. A committee should be appointed to have charge of this undertaking and to provide definite plans for working it out.

Before I went to New York to take part in the campaign, I was willing enough to accept the frequent dictum that Wisconsin is the hardest state in the Union in which to do suffrage work. I am not so sure about that now. The eastern states have a rock-ribbed, Plymouth rock-ribbed conservatism, that we middle westerners can with difficulty imagine. I think the political boss is stronger there than here with general political conditions less satisfactory. Vested capital is, I believe, more actively opposed to us. And, although it is a reflection on the intelligence of the cultured East, there are actually people there who take the anti seriously.

In our last legislative campaign, the German-American Alliance offered the only public opposition to our bill. We are convinced that the bill was defeated by the liquor lobby, a dangerous enemy, with organization, a treasury that is supposed to be bottomless and with all the ability its money can buy. But after all do not imagine this enemy bars the way to our enfranchisement. Even now its dominion weakens. It can be scattered as Pharaoh's host was

scattered at the Red Sea if the women who have faith will show their faith by their works. You here are the responsive women, the responsible women, but I must speak to the women of the state through you. I must cry in the words of the prophet: "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech."

This is your duty, your responsibility. True you have other calls. We are all busy, the apparently idle ones, if you take their word for it, the busiest of all.

Life is a question of relative values. If we would have any weight or force, we must choose the more important, and let go the less important things. The family, the home, the daily work, there can be no question that these claims come first. After them can any claim be stronger, to the mind of the thoughtful, earnest woman, than the claim of a great cause, whose success will promote the usefulness and happiness of all women, and through them of all the race?

I heard a minister in his pulpit say recently that a man is only half a man who has no share in the community life about him. Of course the statement is true. The community life becomes every day more important, more interesting. We must bear our share in it if we are to reach the full stature of our womanhood. We must have our share in it and we cannot have our share in it until this barrier of disfranchisement is passed.

Oh, women, if you believe in women, if you have faith in their minds, their hearts, if you see need of their voices in the world around you, then dedicate yourselves anew to this crusade. Drop little things for a time, they can well wait. Do the big thing, the thing which cannot wait, now. "Women for women," cried the resolute young soul which went out into the darkness, because it had dedicated itself to the cause of freedom too ardently. It is a noble call. "Women for women." Shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, all for each and each for all, FORWARD!