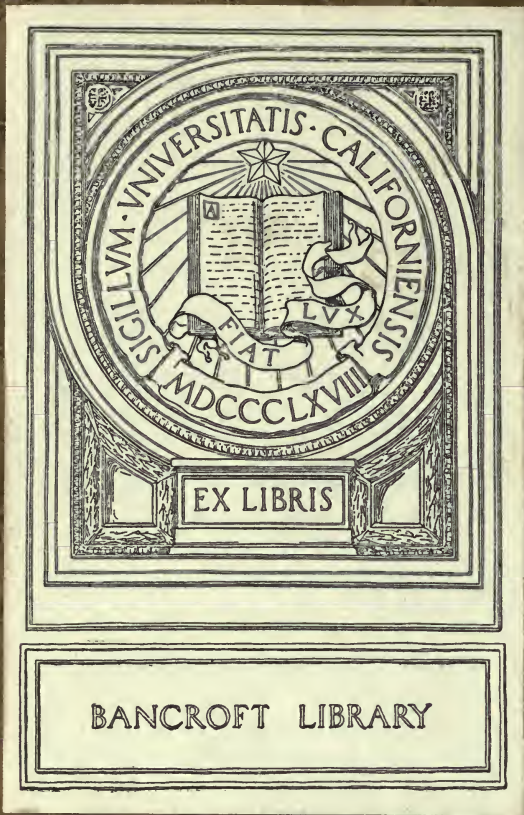


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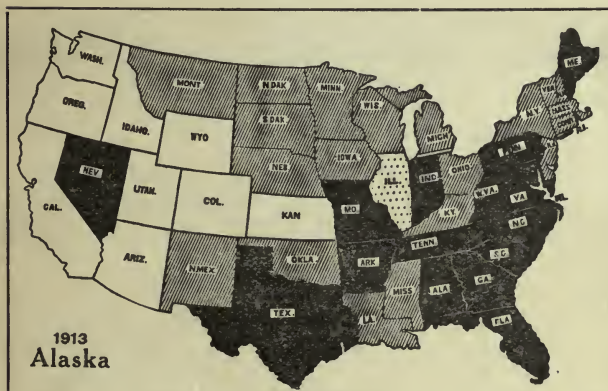
SUFFRAGE AND GOVERNMENT

The Modern Idea of Government by Consent and Woman's
Place in it, with special reference to Nevada
and other Western States

By *(Purlier)*
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SUFFRAGE AND GOVERNMENT

By MARY AUSTIN and ANNE MARTIN

In the beginning of the woman suffrage movement the objection most obstinately, and in most cases honestly, entertained against it was one derived from the idea of government as an extraneous force. The stick wielded by the strong kept men in order. This was an idea which rooted very far back in racial history, in the time when combat was the chief business of life; and those who used it forgot, or never knew, that women were originally exempted from fighting, not on account of incompetence but because of their importance to the tribe. That primitive women can fight as ferociously and successfully as any female animal when occasion arises, is a fact that is surprisingly forced upon us even yet, when the outposts of civilization come in contact with the wild tribes. But man's objection to seeing them risk their most precious quality, their potential maternity, in a fight, is so widespread that it amounts to a taboo. For women to be obliged to use force means racial disaster. So long then as government in the popular estimate meant the use of force, this was a valid objection to women having any voice in it.

But the rapid sweep of democracy in the past two centuries has brought us around to a new view of government as an affair of social consent. The more gen-

eral this consent the less the compulsion needed to bring it into effect. All the newest devices of popular government, the initiative, referendum and recall, are means of making this social consent more direct and immediate.

This new conception of government as social consent, cuts two ways in favor of woman suffrage. By resting the right to participation in government on the ability to consent, rather than on fighting capacity, it disposes forever of the ancient argument that women ought not to vote because it is not desirable that they should go to battle.

What women are asking for is the right to consent to the laws under which they live. Wherever the ballot, which is the official means of such consent, is denied them, women are still in respect to their social rights under the regime of force, and society goes limping along with one member rejoicing in the freedom of democracy and the other still swathed in the restraints of feudalism.

GOVERNMENT AS A MEANS

But the experiment of democracy has proved more than anything else the fallacy of that other anti-suffrage bogie, the idea of government as a function. Government is a means of getting the business of society done expeditiously. The vote is merely the approved instrument for registering social consent. So long as government is regarded simply as the administration of the affairs of the people, there can logically be no governing class or sex. The people as a whole can have no affairs to which all the people are not equal. The ballot, either written or oral, is the most ancient means of expediting

business. It is present in the pow-wow of the aboriginal tribes and the folk-moot of the ancient Saxons. It is present today in large bodies, composed exclusively of women, who meet in convention, conduct important financial operations and make laws for the control of widely separated organizations. Women vote. The only question before the public today is whether they shall be permitted to vote in the matters that most immediately concern them.

It is the use of the ballot in the less important issues of society that has taught women its value as an instrument in the field of human achievement. In nothing do they show their fitness for it so much as in the quickness with which they have grasped the use of it as the outgrowth of the human instinct for expedience and efficiency. For centuries men have been regarding participation in public business as a kind of divine right, a privilege of wealth or birth or sex, and in as many years women have seized upon it as a means of getting something done, a new broom with which to make a cleaner sweep of their business.

THE BUSINESS OF WOMEN

The chief business of women is mothering. This includes the co-related and equally important activities of reproduction and conservation. It means not only bearing children but looking after their food and clothing and housing, their bodily safety and the welfare of impressionable minds. The woman of today who wishes to do her business well, finds herself in a serious predicament.

For today the greater part of all the activities upon

which the successful bringing up of a family depends are carried on outside the home. In order, in the disfranchised states, to exercise any control over the food, the education, and the industrial conditions which environ her children, the mother must attend a vast number of public meetings, town council, board and committee meetings, armed with the ancient and ineffectual instrument of "indirect influence." The very word "indirect" is a confession of inefficiency. The business of women is of such importance to the state as to demand the most direct and immediate means. It is only with the ballot that woman can stay at home to nurse one child and yet follow the other to school, to the shop, the factory, the place of amusement. With this white winged messenger of her mothering thought she can to some degree overshadow and protect him.

THE BALLOT FOR WOMEN MEANS FREEDOM FOR MEN

But it is not only to enable her to do her work in the world that man must restore to woman her natural control of those departments of life which make for stable conditions. It is in order that he may do his own work more efficiently. True maleness is the exercise of initiative, exploration, experimentation, the breaking of new lands, the extension of the frontiers of thought. Man under modern conditions has so overloaded himself with women's work of conservation that he can scarcely do his own. By attempting to constitute himself the sole center of woman's activities he has overleaped his capacity. Much of the modern industrial revolt is all unconsciously a reaction against the excessive burdening of man with the whole business of society.

Man is an individualist; his instinct is to compete rather than to co-operate. Woman is essentially social, the center of the family group. It is her instinct to make things comfortable, the natural outreach of the mothering impulse. And a good half of the business of government is just that; it is neither a duty nor a privilege but an efficacious way of making us all comfortable together.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICING

If the recent discovery of democracy, that government does not necessarily imply fighting, is a reason for giving women a part in it, a much greater one exists in the fact that government does still incidentally involve the chances of war. The old idea implied a state of society in which war was inevitable and always imminent. The original exclusion of women from council was due to the fact that ancient councils were seldom about anything else but fighting.

The real question is not whether women can fight or not, but whether their interests are affected by the fighting which men do. The strong opposition to the vote of women in some quarters comes from their known genius for pacification. The work of women, the continuance of the race, is so seriously affected by war that it isn't considered safe to let them hold a deciding voice upon the question of a particular war. The fact that women are excluded from voting on declarations of war because of the likelihood of their voting against it is one of the best reasons why war should not be. That which destroys the labor of one half of society can not be good for the whole of it.

It is this resistance of man to any curtailing of his ancient habit of combat which has animated much of the objection to women interfering in the small private wars of theft, arson, assault and rape which men declare on one another and on women. It has been said that women ought not to vote because they could not be police. Women having already become police in Denmark, in Norway and Sweden, in Canada, in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Tacoma, Seattle and half a dozen other American cities, it is discovered that a large part of police-duty is concerned with prevention rather than punishment, and with the conservation of social forces and the stoppage of social waste. And this sort of policing is seen very easily to derive nothing from force, and not to depend upon it. It is based primarily on our social consent to the introduction of the mother element in all departments of life.

The woman policeman would be as great an absurdity as the anti-suffragist of a generation ago believed her, if it were not for this general consent to the propriety of women going wherever children must go, and going clothed with authority. It is the latest and best evidence that men are moving concertedly to release to women the opportunity to do their work in the world and the means of doing it efficaciously.

THE WITNESS OF THE WEST

While society needs the operation of the conservative mother-thought in all its departments, there has been especial demand for it in the West because of the unduly high percentage of male population. It is notable that

the answer of the men of the West to this social need has been the ballot in the hands of the women.

That Western men have been more responsive to women's demand for the right to perform their work for society is no doubt due to an instinctive desire on man's part to give back to woman her proper share in a society which more nearly conforms to a primitive division of labor than do the older and more artificial eastern communities. Men in the West have been so much occupied with the natural male activities of breaking new ground, organizing new enterprises, general exploration and experimentation, that women have regained much of their original social importance to the community. The granting of woman suffrage in the Western states is part of the subconscious response of men to a great social need.

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There are left only three Western or Rocky Mountain states which have not enacted equal suffrage laws: Montana, Nevada and New Mexico; of these states Nevada is the only one which has no form whatever of suffrage for women, Montana having tax-paying and school suffrage and New Mexico having school suffrage. Nevada appears on the white map of the Western states as a big black spot entirely surrounded by the white suffrage states—California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona, with Washington, Wyoming, Colorado and Kansas contiguous, and Montana and New Mexico colored grey, indicating the partial suffrage in operation there. The territory of Alaska recently granted woman suffrage, one of the chief reasons being the desire on the part of the men to bring in more women, as the male population is greatly preponderant there.

EXCESSIVE MALE POPULATIONS FAVOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

The fact that the woman suffrage amendment has passed the two successive sessions of 1911 and 1913 of the Nevada legislature by large majorities, and has likewise been submitted in Montana and in North and South Dakota, indicates that the men there are alive, like the men of Alaska, to the need for more women. Nevada, of all states of the Union, has not only the largest male population in proportion to women, but has the largest male transient population, which can vote by conforming to a six months' residence qualification. Nevada, then, is the state where woman's influence is least effective because she is in so great a minority, is most largely dominated by "man-made" law, a state which is most nearly the expression of man's mind, a male society.

We find the law-making power of the whole people concentrated, not only in the hands of men, but to some extent in the hands of a male transient population, which simply cannot have the permanent interests of the state at heart; at the same time the conserving powers of women, who constitute a more stable element in the state's population, are ineffective for the good of the community. Can these conditions be good for any commonwealth? The answer is that Nevada, too, is preparing to enfranchise her women.

In the total population of the state there are 52,551 males to 29,324 females, or 179.2 males to 100 females, according to the census of 1910. The following table shows sex distribution in the eleven states having the highest percentages of male population:

According to the Census of 1910*

Nevada has, to every 100 females	179.2	males
Wyoming “ “ 	168.8	“
Montana “ “ 	152.1	“
Arizona “ “ 	138.2	“
Washington “ “ 	136.3	“
Oregon “ “ 	133.2	“
Idaho “ “ 	132.5	“
California “ “ 	125.5	“
North Dakota “ “ 	122.4	“
South Dakota “ “ 	118.9	“
Colorado “ “ 	116.9	“

It is significant that these eleven states, with the exception of Nevada, Montana, and North and South Dakota, have woman suffrage. Each with its large male population has felt the desirability of increasing woman's direct influence by enfranchisement, or by taking the necessary steps, as have Montana, Nevada and the two Dakotas. These figures show that states where male population is excessive have felt the need and value of women sooner than others; that communities where men are most and women are fewest have been the first to recognize woman's social value, have been quick to register this knowledge and make effective her power for social good by full enfranchisement. These figures show also that Nevada of all states of the Union needs woman's help the most. In 1900 the Wyoming ratio was the highest, 169 to 100, while Nevada was second at 153 to 100, instead of 179.2 as it is now, showing that male influence

*New Mexico is the twelfth highest, with a proportion of 115 males to every 100 females.

has increased in Nevada over 26 per cent in the last ten years.*

MALE TRANSIENT POPULATION A NEVADA PROBLEM

Of the population 15 years of age and over 51.3 per cent of Nevada males are single and 21 per cent of the females, indicating in connection with other figures a largely unmarried male transient population. Over 15 years of age the percentage of married is 41.4 for males and 67.1 for females, showing that women having family and home interests in the state through marriage are over 25 per cent in excess of men having the same interests. (The statistics for widowed persons, etc., are not given.) As a result of exclusive male domination in a state developing under conditions of frontier life, we find that the percentage of adult and juvenile crime and delinquency, of resorts licensed for immoral purposes or for the sale of liquor, is unduly high. Moreover, Nevada's uncertain political and legislative history, shaped as it has been time after time by selfish and corrupt influences easily dominant through the indifferent or purchasable portion of the "floating vote," is a sufficient answer to the question whether exclusive male control has been good for the community. The large floating vote is an acknowledged problem in Nevada's political and social life, it is the chief factor in the unstable character of the state's legislative history. This transient vote is by no means all mercenary: a part of it is composed of intelligent and incorruptible men, but the irresponsible element has too often held the balance of

*The figures given refer to total population: Over 21 years of age there are 220 men to each 100 women in Nevada, 40,026 men and 18,140 women, census of 1910.

power; and it is desirable for every community to have its destinies controlled by the class which best understands its needs and will vote for its permanent interests, the home keeping men and women. At the close of a former legislature fourteen members left the state, having no permanent residence nor interests in Nevada. Legislation has too frequently shown that the majority of legislators have not the vital home interests of the people at heart. When a former special session was called its members had scattered so far in the intervening year that they had to be summoned, not only from several other states of the Union, but from countries as remote as Alaska, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. Contests frequently waged in the past to use Nevada for licensing evils repudiated by her neighbors will be impossible when the unstable vote is overcome by increasing the power of the stable population, of which women compose a large proportion.*

THE WEST RECOGNIZES WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTIVE POWERS

Women will do for Nevada, Montana and the Dakotas what they have already done and are doing for Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, California, Oregon, Arizona and Kansas, for Alaska and Illinois. They have always promptly enacted humanitarian and conservation laws since they were first of all enfranchised in Wyoming in 1869. A most significant historical fact is that the first law ever introduced into a legislative body by a woman legislator, in the history of the world, was the law raising the age of protection for girls in Colorado to eighteen years. Laws equalizing

*It is estimated that 50 per cent. of the male vote is transient, while only 20 per cent. of the woman vote would be.

the personal and property rights of men and women; to protect children and give them better schools, juvenile courts, state homes or farms for girls and dependent or delinquent children; humane and sanitation laws; mother's pensions; the minimum wage scale; systems to decrease economic and social waste by the enlightened administration of prisons; laws to abolish restricted districts; the prompt recall of a judge who did not protect injured girls are all embodiments in the enfranchised states of women's ideals of service for the people. Women using the vote are merely carrying on their natural functions of conservation of health and life and are, therefore, an invaluable constructive and complementary force in the world's work.

The men of Nevada, like those of Alaska and the free states of the West, are beginning to realize the necessity of making the state more desirable as a dwelling place for women, and are taking the preliminary step by providing the opportunity for their full enfranchisement at the general election of November, 1914. The enfranchisement of Nevada's women will complete a solid block of Western states which have given women back their work. As conditions now are, with Nevada absolutely surrounded by woman suffrage states, no woman can leave its boundaries without being thereby potentially enfranchised, no woman can enter it from any neighboring state without being thereby disfranchised. The tendency of this condition is to draw the best class of woman settlers away from Nevada to the woman suffrage states by which it is surrounded. Until woman suffrage is established a premium is actually placed on the emigration of Nevada's women to the bordering free states.

Similar conditions prevail in Montana, North and South Dakota, where woman suffrage is also to be voted on in November, 1914, and in New Mexico. The men of these states are, like Nevada men, yielding instinctively to what is the modern, no less than the primitive, necessity of all communities: the free opportunity for women to do their special work, to use their mothering, their conserving powers for the good of the home, the town, the state.

CONNECT YOURSELF WITH THE MOVEMENT NOW

Fill in this coupon and mail it to the Secretary of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society, 153 N. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada.

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I believe in suffrage for women and wish to add my voice to the demand for a woman suffrage amendment to the Nevada State constitution and to become enrolled in the Nevada Equal Franchise Society with the understanding that this entails no dues and no duties and does not interfere with any of my existing party affiliations.

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