

Women in the Campaign

By
Frances A. Kellor

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ALTHOUGH the battle lines of the recent presidential election are still confused, the women voters of the western states may very properly be accredited with being the decisive factor in Mr. Wilson's re-election, since ten of the twelve suffrage states went Democratic. One of these, California, must be judged separately, as the Progressives there avenged what they considered an insult to their governor and "favorite son," and no separate estimate can be made of the influence of the women's vote. In the other states, determining issues were the sentimental one—"He kept us out of war," and the material one of prosperity combined with a domestic reluctance to "swap horses in the middle of the stream."

This decisive alignment of the women's vote may turn the suffrage clock back in America, as the majority of states where suffrage will come to a vote in the near future are normally Republican and the Republican Party will be loath either to forget or to forgive the women voters of 1916. Since the Democratic Party is committed to the method of obtaining suffrage through the state, little help can be expected from this quarter. It is possible the east may feel the injustice of the west's having a double vote and may resent the way in which voting women represent their sex. This may hasten suffrage, but the odds are the other way at present.

The failure of the women to express a more decided appreciation of international issues, na-

tional policies, or clearly to demonstrate that they had a different point of view or higher ideals than holding to a full dinner pail and keeping husbands or sons out of the trenches, will dispose of a number of illusions regarding the elevation of politics by the women's vote. The extent to which the national ticket was "swapped" to save local tickets and petty office holders and seekers, and the extent to which women voters were parties to this, has not greatly strengthened public confidence in women's usefulness, courage, vision, or independence in political action.

Women's part in the election showed all the lack of co-operation, of team work, and of generalship which might have been expected from a group that has never had a full, vital interest in national public affairs and that has had little training for them. Agitation for the vote is no more preparation for voting than casting a ballot on election day is preparation for citizenship or fulfillment of it. Neither by itself develops a national consciousness or a public conscience.

The Woman's Party sought by negative action and sex appeal to defeat Mr. Wilson because he was against the Federal Amendment. It has served a useful purpose in American political life in showing that negative methods do not appeal to women, that women cannot yet be depended upon for group loyalty and team work, and that America in time of prosperity is not a one-issue country. It has demonstrated that any sex appeal in political life is impossible and unsound, and that the real need in American life is political education on all issues throughout the year *for men and women alike and together*. The Woman's Party really contributed to the election of Mr. Wilson. Its concentrated attack upon him, while working for no one else, aroused sympathy and drew many women together in organization, who believed that he was not getting a

square deal. The appearance of the widespread information that Mr. Wilson went all the way to New Jersey to vote for women's suffrage practically nullified the propaganda against him on the Federal Amendment.

The Republican women voted, but otherwise played an unimportant part in the campaign. The Republican Party did not think of these women voters as a vital factor in the campaign and obstinately to the last refused to consider them as an integral, vital, self-respecting part of the electorate to be dealt with in an intelligent, organized way. It opened a western headquarters in Chicago, but by putting in charge of it a man who had long been an anti-suffragist in his own state, affronted the voting women of the country. It appointed a belated women's campaign committee on September 21st, two months after it had been urged to take some action, and repeated its mistake of putting men in charge of the women's campaign committee. The little work done by the eastern section was along the lines followed by the Republican Party in the women's department for thirty years past, during which it had few women voters with whom to reckon.

Under these conditions, the Republican women were not and could not be organized. They were allowed to drift and were not prepared to meet the house-to-house Democratic canvassers on those two popular texts, "He kept us out of war" and "Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream." At no time were women given by the Republican organization the authority, the opportunity, the support, or the information which would have enabled them to combat Democratic doctrines and the Administration's record in order to carry their states for Mr. Hughes. At no point in the campaign did the Republican national organization back its women voters and

workers in a way calculated to enable them to win. The Republicans carried two suffrage States—Oregon and Illinois. In the former the Hughes Alliance was in charge of the state machinery and women were recognized equally with men; and in Illinois an eleventh-hour drive of education and organization rallied the women's vote. Illinois illustrates what might have been done throughout the country had the Republican women been organized and given resources with which to work.

What is true of the National Committee is equally true of state organizations. In one state the women reported that they did not have even an allowance for postage stamps to urge women to register. In another a woman was appointed state vice-chairman in charge of women voters and was told she was not expected to work and that the less she did the better the men would like it. Both of these states went Democratic. The attitude of the men towards women's participation in politics other than marking a ballot is well illustrated by these two incidents. In one state the governor wrote to the women that they had been largely responsible for his victory in the primaries. A week later he called a conference of sixty men to outline policies for the state. Not one woman was asked to attend. A county hospital was under course of construction, and some women thought a maternity ward would be important if the new institution were to rank with well-equipped hospitals everywhere. They presented their arguments to the county authorities who had the spending of the county money, and met with this amazing reply: "Now, look here, Mrs. M——, you women need not think that just because you vote you can butt into our affairs and run things that are none of your concern." A maternity ward in a hospital in a non-suffrage state is a civic matter; in a suffrage

state it is no concern of women. This state also went Democratic.

In spite of this, the big significant gain in women's national life came from the Republican Party in the election of Miss Jeanette Rankin ✓ to Congress, an event which has given American women a national political leader to represent their interests in Congress.

The Democratic Party did much better than this. It had learned in 1912 that a group of women is a very valuable addition in a campaign, and, a fact of equal importance, that when once a campaign is over, they can be set aside until they are needed again. They do not want office or representation or any recognition; in fact, they serve their party but have little interest in the country until the succeeding election. The Women's Bureau was therefore an eminently practical body, untroubled by traditions, little hampered by standards, absolved from post-election responsibilities, ready to take the blame for what went wrong and to have the men take credit for what went right. The "errand boys of the Democratic Party" did their work well, were admirably organized and supported with money and co-operation from the Democratic organization all along the line. The work of this contingent was concentrated in the suffrage states; it left such troublesome things as formulating issues, gathering facts and observing political etiquette to the men's department. It showed that it understood the women's vote and had few scruples about the means of reaching women's special interests. This organization has left a trail of misrepresentation, class hatred, race-prejudice, and questionable campaign methods which the country will be a long time overcoming. It was a model national feminine Tammany Hall, and its part in the election of Mr. Wilson will eventually cost the womanhood of

this country a heavy price. Because of it there is a little less than before of truth and honor and justice and fair play and courtesy and sincerity in the sum total of political life today.

This story would be incomplete without a statement of the part played by the Women's Committee of the National Hughes Alliance—that courageous little band of independent women of both Republican and Progressive faith who set out to capture the independent vote and to establish a sound, sane, efficient foundation in the Republican Party for women's political work. Here and there was a true union of the Progressive and Republican factions without prejudices, personalities, memories of old feuds, or petty jealousies and hatreds. These women contended for principles; they presented issues; they gathered facts and interpreted Hughes to the country through his record. They were for nationalism as against sectionalism; for Americanization as against hyphenism; for preparedness as against pacifism; for national honor as against weak surrender; for national housekeeping as against waste; for one American standard of living as against our dual system for aliens and Americans. They contended that it is better to strive to worship God on empty stomachs than to admit that prosperity from whatever source must come first for Americans and the fear of God second. These women sought to unite this nation and give it a sense of nationalism, knowing full well that a country cannot endure without it. They challenged the narrow provincialism of the western woman voter who believes that citizenship and civic interest and loyalty and desire to serve her country are wrapped up in the ballot, and contended that all women in America of whatever class, degree, station, position, irrespective of the vote, should participate in the national election. They put the burden of organ-

izing, financing, and managing the women's campaign on women themselves. For the first time in American politics women cheerfully assumed this responsibility and efficiently carried it out. This Committee did not elect its candidate, and, in the absence of co-operation by the Republican National Committee in organizing Republican women, could not do so, but it has established forever the women's movement in politics upon a self-respecting, efficient basis behind which there is no retreat. They have shown that women can play the national game in politics on a big scale, on an impersonal basis, and that they will become a steadily increasing and responsible factor in national life. They have shown that women are sectional in interest largely because of geographical difficulties and lack of opportunity, and that nationalism does not appeal to them. They have shown that there is no such thing as sex loyalty and that women approach politics from exactly the same human, individualistic angle as men and will vote for precisely the same reasons that men vote.

They have shown that women will not vote as they are told and need attention and organization. The Democrats won on the basis of much attention and organization. The eagerness of the women throughout the country in both suffrage and non-suffrage states, to be of service, to do political work, to carry the burdens of detail, to raise funds, to acquire a national point of view, to subordinate local to national interest, to receive information and use literature on real issues, demonstrates beyond question women's tremendous capacity for real work, and argues well for their future effectiveness in national political life.

When it became evident that this Women's Committee would have to carry the national burden of organizing the women, and reports of

its organizers from voting states revealed the serious conditions among women voters, the Hughes campaign train was sent through the country in an attempt to rally the voters. This was a big, courageous, national experiment bent upon a mission of nationalism, carrying neighbors and friends of Mr. Hughes to interpret his record to the United States. Its immediate vote-getting effect appears to have been small, not because the idea was not sound, but because it erroneously assumed that certain fundamental educational work had been done and certain co-operative principles had been adopted. This proved not to be the case.

The train encountered six great sources of opposition which, if there had been less organization and ability behind the enterprise, would have made it a failure. The first obstruction was an American press which instructed its correspondents to deal with the train as "society copy." It revealed the fact that the American press does not yet regard women as a real factor in its national political life. The train did much to change this attitude, for at the end of the trip the press was reporting the meetings from the political point of view.

The second great obstacle was the indifference of the Republican organization to its women voters. Everywhere the train went in equal suffrage states it found an almost total lack of interest, of organization, and of healthy political life and interest among women voters. It was impossible for a train remaining a day or two in a state, a few days or weeks before election, to do more than awaken the Republicans to the danger and to show the Democratic activity among them.

The third opposition was in the tendency to limit the train's activities to suffrage states and the inability of the Republican leaders to grasp

the idea that women can do campaign work without arguing for suffrage—that women have contributions of personality, facts, achievements, understanding of issues, and a citizenship not to be bounded by a struggle for the vote on north, south, east, and west. Women are supposed to have inalienable tendencies like prohibition and suffrage which they cannot keep out of politics, an error which the train refuted. All the non-suffrage states that the train was asked to keep out of for such reasons went Democratic.

The fourth big source of opposition that the train encountered was the able organization which the Democratic Party put behind its women leaders who pursued a highly personal, bitter campaign of insult and misrepresentation. In one place the train met advertising of the "millionaire train" so libelous and gross that it was recalled as soon as discovered; in another there was an attempt to drive Democratic motors through the crowds. In another town the train was faced by banners setting forth falsehoods; in another it was threatened with red paint and barbed wire for its reception at the station. Districts were organized ahead of the train and paid hecklers were common. This opposition was to be expected, and had it been promptly met by support of the train from the Republican organization throughout the country, it would have been the greatest single asset in the national campaign because every woman on the train had a record of achievement, and every woman had the kind of information and the kind of appeal that meant votes for Mr. Hughes.

The fifth big obstacle was the silent opposition of suffragists who can see only one way of winning the vote, by "non-partisanship", and the vociferous denunciation of the anti-suffragists who see in all political activity a mania for getting votes for women. The sixth opposition lay

in fear on the part of club women, particularly leaders who put club above country and club methods ahead of party, and who consider civic work as of a higher order than political work. These feared to give co-operation to any candidate, even national.

In the face of this notable opposition of narrowness, selfishness, cowardice, and sectionalism the train accomplished some notable things for the national political life of women.

First of all it carried a sincere disinterested impersonal interpretation of Hughes's record by his friends and neighbors to people who did not know it, and set a high standard in campaign speeches and methods. It opened a national political door to independence, self-respect, interest, resourcefulness, purpose and capacity in women. Nearly every one of the 328 meetings was organized, financed, and managed by women. This was often accomplished in the face of opposition from men who thought women could not run political meetings. Every meeting was run off on time, was well attended by both men and women. The average attendance was 3,500, but 6,000 was not unusual. In one place an orderly and interested crowd of 5,000 gathered at nine o'clock in the morning. And this was not exceptional. In one town in Illinois, a meeting of a thousand voters with a band and 25 motors was assembled between 9 p. m. and 10 a. m. In another instance a street meeting of 700 men was arranged between 2 a. m. and 11 a. m. The women gathered over 600,000 people together at the various meetings to greet the train.

The train minimized sectional lines and laid the basis for a conscious national spirit among women; it gathered women's committees up at certain towns and carried them to others; it took state committees and workers from one state to another. The chief topic of conversation on

these rides from city to city was national issues and American conditions. Time after time the visiting committees emphasized the importance of the stimulus it was to them to come thus, often for the first time, into contact with the exponents of national interests and national issues. "I am going back *to work* with a new sense of national service" was the gist of many a parting speech.

It disregarded class, racial, and religious lines. The greatest charge against the Democratic campaign is that it sought in every way to array class against class — Wall Street against the working man, Jew against Catholic, the German against the English, the rich against the poor. We shall be long in recovering from this arraignment. Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Poles, Germans, Irish, and English, rich and poor were among the speakers, audiences and guests of the train. In town after town they said that for the first time in its history, everybody was there — the club woman, the housewife, the society leader, the worker, the suffragist, and the anti-everything, and even people who because of personal differences hadn't spoken for years were all working together for a good meeting. Even the women voters who regarded the train at first as a presumption on the part of non-voters came to see that a non-voter may love her country quite as much and be willing to work quite as hard without the vote as with it, and may be the same kind of citizen. The train did much to abolish the "special privilege" feeling which many voting women have against their non-voting sisters.

The train meant for many women a real opportunity to serve their country by service, ideals, and contributions. It is a curious commentary upon our political life that in the non-suffrage states there is no political organization through which a woman can serve her country or through

which she can seek to obtain the civic improvement she wants except a suffrage or anti-suffrage party. Many thousands of women are of little service now because they do not regard getting or opposing suffrage as the chief end of existence and have no other entry into political activity.

The train was also of real service to men. It gave them a new point of view regarding women's powers of organization, resourcefulness and ability to do team work. It uncovered the Democratic opposition and activity which many of them had not even suspected. It put ginger and interest into a lifeless campaign. It cracked the surface of the selfish, material, wholly complacent issues of the campaign and restored to many a little of the faith and courage of the few who prefer a surrender of prosperity to a surrender of national honor and rights.

A more careful analysis of women's work and the women's vote in the recent election, where the returns are available, will strengthen the conclusion that women will become an increasingly important factor in national elections, and with nation-wide education and organization can be entrusted with full responsibilities of both counsel and leadership. The party that profits by the lesson of this campaign and proceeds intelligently and thoroughly to the organization and education of its women citizens, by inviting them to participate in its counsels, by utilizing their powers in outlining its policies, by consulting them in its nominations, by appointing them to office and entrusting them with the disbursement of public funds, by trusting them with leadership, will lay a sound foundation for success in 1920. Early recognition of this fact is a national duty by both political parties. And to organize the means of remedy is the first obligation of both.