

Suffrage Documents

Excerpts from the Constitutional Convention of North Dakota, July 4 -August 17, 1889

The Constitutional Convention met on July 4, 1889 to prepare the document that would provide the foundation for governance in the new state of North Dakota. The convention was presented a constitution that had been drawn up by Professor James Thayer of Harvard Law School, written at the request of Henry Villard, chairman of the board of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Few questioned that the railroad, which opposed both prohibition and woman suffrage, would have a strong influence in state government. Thayer's constitution was amended many times before the convention closed.

Woman suffrage was only one of many issues that were debated by the members of the convention. At this time, only the territory (soon to be state) of Wyoming had granted women full voting rights as well as the right to hold office. Other states and territories had offered women limited suffrage. Women had voted on school issues in Dakota Territory since 1883.

Excerpts from the debates were taken from *Official Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the First Constitutional Convention of North Dakota assembled in the city of Bismarck, July 4th to August 17th, 1889* (Bismarck: Tribune, State Printers and Binders, 1889)

Seventy-five members of the 1889 constitutional convention met in Bismarck from July 4 to August 17. The members of the convention were mostly Republicans and just nineteen Democrats. Fifty-two of the members were born in the United States. F. B. Fancher was elected President of the convention

On July 8, suffragist Henry B. Blackwell of Boston addressed the convention. From Blackwell's speech: "Give us woman suffrage in the body of the Constitution or a clause empowering the legislature to take that step when the judgement of the public will sustain it. . . . I trust you will give Woman Suffrage candid and earnest and enthusiastic support." (p. 41)

Members of the convention agreed that woman suffrage should be a matter for a future legislative session to decide.

Samuel H. Moer, a Republican lawyer from La Moure, moved that any woman suffrage bill passed by the legislature should be submitted to the people for a vote.

John W. Scott, a Republican lawyer from Valley City, agreed and said: "I believe that this is a matter of great importance – that the question as to whether or not there shall be woman suffrage is of equally as much importance as anything that will come before the people of this State." (p. 277)

Scott stated: "The question is not one that has been sufficiently thought of by the public, or demanded sufficiently by the public for us to take this step at this time. There has been no serious discussion of the question – it has only been agitated by a few, and so far as I am personally concerned I should be willing to leave it to the women of the State themselves, provided they would get out to vote – to leave it to them to say whether or not there should be woman suffrage." (p. 277)

Robert Pollock, a lawyer from Cass County, noted that the proposition to have suffrage before the legislature not in the constitution was favored by the franchise committee. However, Pollock did not

favor bringing the vote to the people because the voters who would vote on the issue would not include women. (p. 279)

Lorenzo Bartlett, from Ellendale, stated: “. . . in all my travels wherever I have been, if the question was put to a . . . crowd of ladies as to whether or not they wanted to vote, they have always said no. The answer to that made by the advocates of the theory [of woman suffrage] is that the ladies are enslaved. They have lived so many years and they don't know what they do want, simply because they are enslaved. I ask every gentleman here, and every woman here, if by their experience there is true happiness in those families where they are calling for female suffrage. What is your life's experience? Echo answers every time, that where two parties fight with one another in the same family, that happiness does not follow. . . . Three years ago in St. Paul, the women of America who believed in woman suffrage met in convention. . . . There were there 500 of the most talented women in America. I don't deny their talent and ability, but I do deny most emphatically that the principle they advocated would bring any happiness into the world. The lady who reported that meeting wrote me and, said she: 'In their countenances you could see intelligence, but you could also see sorrow and woe. They are anything but happy people, and their countenances show that their homes are not happy.' Show me one single individual family that is in favor of woman suffrage - I mean those who make a business of it - and how are their children? Do they raise a family equal to those who don't believe in it? No. That is life's experience of those who have noticed these things. . . . [A]nd unfortunately it will come in a great many cases, that very moment if the man is a republican the woman will become a democrat, or if the man is a democrat the woman will become a republican. Anything that brings discord and sorrow into the family is not for the best interests of the people.” (p. 280)

Mr. Moer offered an amendment to place the question of woman suffrage to the vote of the people. The amendment (to the suffrage clause) passed 35 to 25.

Ezra Turner, from Bottineau, offered another amendment that would allow legislatures to decide on woman suffrage, but deny women the right to hold elective office. Turner argued that if women were not happy when they asked for the franchise, it might be because they were “enslaved” and “persons who are enslaved are not usually very happy. . . . Is there any reason why these women should be happy when they are deprived of their just rights and privileges, and are compelled to obey laws in which they have no right to cast a vote or say whether these laws shall prevail? Is it not reasonable that these women should be unhappy when they see their sons dragged from their protection, under the influence of those who are following what they hold to be an unlawful business [saloons], dealing out that which destroys the manhood of their sons, and which curses and blights - [Turner was interrupted and reminded to stick to the subject.] (p. 283)

“Holding these views as I do, I am anxious that this amendment should pass, so that the right of the franchise may by the Legislature be extended to women, but not the right to hold office unless the voice of the people so declare.” (p. 284)

Turner's motion lost.

The clause concerning woman suffrage was approved by the constitutional convention on July 25. It read: “No law extending or restricting the right of suffrage shall be enforced until adopted by a majority of the electors of the State voting at a general election.”

On the forty-third day of the convention the question of school suffrage for women came forth for debate. Women had had the right to vote on all matters relating to school issues since 1883 under territorial law. The new constitution had a clause to continue the right of school suffrage for women. However, the details were subject to debate.

Lorenzo Bartlett offered an amendment to make the constitution limit school suffrage to "any single woman" instead of "any woman." (p. 573)

Rueben Stevens (R., Lisbon) opposed Bartlett's motion stating: "I hope this Convention will not offer a premium on old maids. . . . I haven't any use for them." (p. 573-4)

The limited school vote suggested some problems. Mr. Moer asked if the amendment meant that women could vote on school issues at the state level, such as state superintendent of schools, or would be limited to local school issues. (p. 574)

Eugene Rolfe (from Minnewaukan) asked if women would have to show their ballots to prove that they had voted only on school matters and not on other issues and offices before the voters. If so, their right to a secret ballot would be impaired. (p. 574)

William Rowe (from Monango) explained that "There can be a separate ballot box for the women, and it will not be necessary for them to exhibit their ballots." (p. 574.)

Reuben Stevens (of Lisbon) said that it would be "absurd to say that women are entitled to vote for school directors and not for school superintendent and other school officers. If they are entitled to vote for school director as they are now allowed to do under our territorial laws, it is on the principle that they are entitled to have something to say in the government of our common schools. . . . Whatever little education I have I owe to my mother, and not to my father. I say the women of this country are interested more in the subject of education than the men, and I say they should be entitled to vote on this question, and if they vote on any branch of it, they should vote on all of it." (p. 575)

The measure passed. Women were to have separate ballots and right to vote on state superintendent of schools.

THE DEAR WOMEN.

The female suffrage question was the chief of interest in the house yesterday afternoon. The bill, which was introduced by Mr. Pickler, came up for a second reading and reference. Mr. Pickler moved that it be referred to the special committee, to whom the petition had been referred, and Messrs. Blakemore and Runkle be added to the committee.

Mr. DeWoody caused the first bubbling of laughter by moving to amend by referring the bill to the committee on Indian affairs.

To their motion Mr. Pickler objected, saying that he enjoyed facetiousness, but he thought the gentlemen were carrying it altogether too far. He insisted on having the bill referred to the appropriate committee, and asked that Messrs. Blakemore and Runkle be added to the committee because he believed they were favorable to the measure.

Mr. Blakemore asked the gentlemen if they desired to insult the wives and mothers of Dakota, by thus ignoring and belittling their petitions.

Mr. Oliver asked Mr. Blakemore whether he objected to the gentlemen of the committee or the name, to which the latter gentleman replied: "the name."

A vote being taken, Mr. DeWoody's motion was lost, and the bill was referred to the special committee.

Before the reference was made, however, Mr. McCumber moved that the bill be referred to the appropriate committee, and in answer to the query what is the appropriate committee, some said "military," but it was decided that mines and mining would be still better.

Document 1, Transcription: *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, January 30, 1885

The Dear Women

The female suffrage question was the chief of interest in the house yesterday afternoon. The bill, which was introduced by Mr. Pickler, came up for a second reading and reference. Mr. Pickler moved that it be referred to the special committee, to whom the petition had been referred, and Messrs. [Misters] Blakemore and Runkle be added to the committee.

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*Note: This article is a report on the activities of the territorial House of Representatives. Mr. Pickler was a representative from Faulkton in the southern part of the territory (now South Dakota). Apparently, the bill originated as a petition to the legislature. Pickler's bill eventually passed both houses, but was vetoed by Governor Pierce.

The Woman's Suffrage Question to be
Discussed in the House This
Afternoon.

Twenty-fifth Day.

SHALL THEIR HAIR BE SHORT?

The question of women's suffrage with all its hereditaments and appurtenances, adjuncts and problematic attachments is the special order for this afternoon in the house. A word which has become offensive by use and unsightly by age, represents the short-haired women and long-haired men. Everybody knows what the word is—"eccentric" is a synonym, with all due respect to the champions of Dakota's bill, it must be said that the question under discussion is chief in the minds of this class. Now, then, as regards this woman's suffrage question, the scribe so unfortunate as to preside over these columns, wants to say a few words. And he says them knowing not but they will be in direct and fatal antagonism with the views of the prince imperial of the editorial page, the proprietor and editor in-chief of the sheet, and the managerial cap-sheaf of the business end of the institution. In fact he is rather inclined to repudiate sentiments expressed by some of the philanthropic ones of the house and go it wild, just for once—for luck, if nothing else. In talking with the ladies it is found that this woman's suffrage question is not of their own choosing altogether, nor do they appreciate the doubtful compliment paid them by the gallant gentleman so loud in their behalf. Now, here is a proposition, and it is given without a cent of charge, postage prepaid and a stamped envelope en-

closed if necessary. It is this. Let the ladies vote. Allow them to vote just once. And let woman's suffrage be the question upon which they may vote. Make the call for the special election about six months in advance. During that time the husbands and brothers may do the sewing, take care of the babies, and preside over the kitchen, that the wives and sisters may study politics and get a view of its workings and literature; chief among the political literature of the day might be that of the last campaign, especially concerning Mr. Cleveland; give the loving, tender hearted mothers and faithful wives a true foretaste of the new sphere, where the cold and heartless combination rules, and the schemer most artful is king of the realms; then ask them to vote on the woman's suffrage. This is the most rational way to settle the question. Every lady knows where she belongs; every mother knows her duties; every wife or sister, worthy of the name, needs no law to preserve those characteristics and graces which make her sacred and pure in the estimation of the man whose life she is intended to crown with happiness, and if woman could only be given a chance to say whether she would vote or not, you may lay down your last dust covered trade dollar that she would exclaim "no" by a grand, overwhelming majority. Of course, the ladies of temperance organizations want to vote. But

they forget the breadth and scope and filthy depth of public life in their consideration of this one issue. But don't you know that there are laws of nature that you cannot change by ballot? You can't vote away a man's appetite. No, indeed, but you can cultivate it, kind lady, take care of your own boy. Let every mother devote her reformatory labors to her home. Properly near her own boy, and she'll have enough to do without attempting to vote morality into others. That one mother will have more good influence over her boy, at home, than will seven thousand scrambling, hair pulling, female politicians in the mud and slop of a spring election day. Did you ever stop to consider that as a rule the women who are clamoring for the ballot box are those who have the unhappiest families? Whose lives have been embittered by divorce, poverty, or natural cursedness? Or else they have a superabundance of brains and take the lecture field, for 25c a ticket. Of course these

are exceptions. But if the ladies of Bismarck will only fill the hall this afternoon; take up every seat and make the janitor bring in more; and will be allowed or requested to vote on the question, the result of that vote will be a more eloquent and forcible argument than the grandest alchemical display of Dakota's proudest Cicero. If the vote should be taken early, it would have a tendency to shorten debate. For heaven's sake let's have some one to take care of the babies, churn the milk, wash the dishes, make home ring with sweet, welcoming music, (especially when you've been out to the lodge). There are some men left, thank heavens, who would rather plow than cook, and are not anxious to exchange work with their wives. At two o'clock this afternoon the suffrage question suffers.

Document 2, Transcription: *Bismarck Weekly Tribune* February 13, 1885

The Woman's Suffrage Question to be Discussed in the House this Afternoon

Twenty-fifth Day

SHALL THEIR HAIR BE SHORT?*

The question of woman suffrage . . . is the special order for this afternoon in the house. . . . Now, then, as regards this woman suffrage question, the scribe so unfortunate as to preside over these columns wants to say a few words. And he says them knowing not but that they will be . . . in antagonism with the views of the . . . proprietor and editor in-chief of the sheet. . . . In talking with the ladies it is found that this woman suffrage question is not of their own choosing altogether, nor do they appreciate the doubtful compliment paid them by the gallant gentlemen so loud in their behalf. Now here is a proposition It is this. Let the ladies vote. Allow them to vote just once. And let woman's suffrage be the question upon which they may vote. Make the call about six months in advance. During that time the husbands and brothers may do the sewing, take care of the babies, and preside over the kitchen, that the wives and sisters may study politics and get a view of its workings and literature; . . . give the loving tender hearted mothers and faithful wives a true foretaste of the new sphere where cold and heartless combination rules, and the schemer . . . is king. . . ; then ask them to vote on woman suffrage. This is the most rational way to settle the question. Every lady knows where she belongs; every mother knows her duties; every wife or sister worthy of the name, needs no law to preserve the characteristics and graces which make her sacred and pure in the estimation of the man whose life she is intended to crown with happiness, and if woman could only be given a chance to say whether she would vote or not, you may [believe] that she would exclaim "no" by a grand overwhelming majority. Of course, the ladies of temperance organizations want to vote. But they forget the breadth and scope and filthy depth of public life in their condition of this one issue. . . . Let every mother devote her reformatory labors to her home. Properly near her own boy and she'll have enough to do without attempting to vote morality into others. That one mother will have more influence over her boy, at home, than will seven thousand scrambling, hair pulling female politicians in the mud and slop of a spring election day. Did you ever stop to consider that as a rule the women who are clamoring for the ballot box are those who have the unhappiest families? Whose lives have been embittered by divorce, poverty, or natural cussedness? . . . But if the ladies of Bismarck will only fill the hall this afternoon; take up every seat and make the janitor to bring in more; and will be allowed or requested to vote on the question, the result of that vote will be a more eloquent and forcible argument than the grandest [speeches] of Dakota's proudest Cicero. . . . For heaven's sake, let's have some one to take care of the babies, churn the milk, wash the dishes, make the home ring with sweet welcoming music (especially when you have been out to the lodge). There are some men left, thank heavens, who would rather plow than cook, and are not anxious to exchange work with their wives. At two o'clock this afternoon, the suffrage question suffers.

*Note: this newspaper column has been edited to reduce the unnecessary words of the writer. If you wish to read them, they are present in the clipping of Document 12.

The word "temperance" refers to organizations that supported laws against the sale, manufacture, and consumption of alcohol.

Cicero (106 BCE – 43 BCE) was a famous Roman orator, politician, and philosopher.

Big Stone Herald: Some of our chicken hearted statesmen in the legislature think they over reach themselves and their generation when they voted for the woman suffrage bill and would now like to reconsider their vote. The council also is afraid to take hold of it in a manly way and desire to have the house take it back before they are forced to put themselves on record. What these gentlemen are afraid of is more than we can understand, unless they fear to give their wives, mothers and daughters equal rights with themselves and negroes. They must see that woman will elevate the moral and social tone of our politics; drive drunkenness, jobbery and profanity from the polls. It must be that they are ashamed to accord to women in public the same consideration they deal out to them at home. It is no argument to say that woman does or does not want the ballot. She has the right, but the question is, has she the privilege to protect herself and family against abuses licensed by the votes of men who in nine cases out of ten are less qualified to pass correct judgments on moral questions than she is. It is only on such occasions that she would care to vote and as this would be for the good of society and government is instituted solely for the good of society, she ought to have this share in the government.

Document 3, Transcription: *Bismarck Weekly Tribune*, February 27, 1885

Big Stone Herald: Some of our chicken-hearted statesmen in the legislature think they over reach themselves and their generation when they voted for the woman suffrage bill and would now like to reconsider their vote. The council is also afraid to take hold of it in a manly way and desire to have the house take it back before they are forced to put themselves on record. What these gentlemen are afraid of is more than we can understand, unless they fear to give their wives, mothers and daughters equal rights with themselves and negroes. They must see that a woman will elevate the moral and social tone of our politics; drive drunkenness, jobbery and profanity from the polls. It must be that they are ashamed to accord to women in public the same consideration they deal out to them at home. It is no argument to say that woman does or does not want the ballot. She has the right, but the question is, has she the privilege to protect her family and herself against abuses licensed by the votes of men who in nine cases out of ten are less qualified to pass correct judgements on moral questions than she is. It is only on such occasions that she would care to vote and as this would be for the good of society and government is instituted solely for the good of society, she ought to have this share in the government.*

*Note: This editorial first appeared in the Big Stone Herald, a newspaper published in the southern part of Dakota Territory (now South Dakota). The editors speak of themselves in the third person plural- "we." The editorial was reprinted in the Bismarck Weekly Tribune, a common practice of the day. The "council" is now called the Senate. The words "abuses licensed by the votes of men" refers to the political issue of prohibition—the legal restriction on the sale of intoxicating liquors.

HOUSE.

The house met pursuant to adjournment.
Prayer by the chaplain.

A large number of petitions for woman's suffrage were presented and placed on file.

The judiciary committee again reported unfavorably Mr. Patton's bill exempting \$200 personal property from taxation.

The privileges of the floor were extended to Gen. S. F. Hammond, department commander G. A. R., who is in the city in the interest of the soldiers' home.

Mr. ADAMS moved that all bills and memorials in relation to woman's suffrage be referred to the judiciary committee.
Ayes, 21; noes, 28.

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE.

Committee of the whole, Mr. Newman in the chair.

Mr. JONES moved to report the woman's

suffrage bill back with the recommendation that it do not pass.

Mr. ELLIOTT desired to have the author of the bill explain it.

Mr. VAN ETTEN: It doesn't need an explanation. Any man intelligent enough to sit here, or to be voted for to come here, knows just what this bill means. He had never seen a man intelligent enough to give any good reason why this bill should not pass. If there is one woman in America who wants this privilege she ought to have it no matter if ten thousand do not want it or do not ask it. This measure has passed through three stages. It first met with ridicule; then indifference and now opposition. It is now a reform measure and of course is opposed. It is opposed by men who do not know the multiplication table or who sign their name with a double cross and don't know enough to go home after voting, but the woman who is worth a million and capable of telling you of the movement of the stars even must stay at home to wash the dishes—she must not be allowed to leave her work for two minutes even to drop a ballot in the box. That's all of the time it takes. They say she will be compelled to mingle with the men. She mingles with the men at fairs and slaps her feet and stamps her hands with them at political meetings. She goes to the post office and puts her letters in the box, and it will not degrade her any more to drop a ballot. She is recognized as a citizen at the land office. She owns property and pays taxes. She may not want to vote. Then she can stay at home. Some do want to vote. We have got the woman on the floor and now it is proposed to sit down on her. A woman worth a million went to her stables on election day and asked her coachman if he intended to exercise the right of suffrage, and he wanted to know "which horse is that?" Yet he makes laws for her to obey and she has no voice. The women of this territory have asked us to grant to them the right of suffrage. I am here to champion their rights. I always champion the under dog. Four years ago we passed this bill. Governor Pierce vetoed it and lost the opportunity of his life to make for himself a name. He never will be heard from again. Now we want to give Governor Church a chance.

Mr. JONES: Women are the superiors of men. I would not bring them down to our level. The right of suffrage would not elevate them, no matter if Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Jones and 4,000 others have asked it, there are 20,000 others ready to protest against it, who remain at home, singing their quiet lullabys.

Mr. BERGMAN: The gentleman from Hyde talks about equal rights. What has he to say concerning equal duties.

Mr. VAN ETTEN: What do you mean by equal duties? If by what you mean the right of women to hold the plow and of men to wash the dishes, there are many of them in this territory who are doing these things now.

Mr. FLETCHER was called for from various parts of the house, but rebuked the members for their discourtesy in calling upon members to speak. It was his and their privilege to speak when they were disposed to do so and not theirs to call upon any member for remarks.

Mr. PRICE moved to make this a special order for Tuesday next. Lost.

Mr. KRITH moved to report progress and ask leave to sit again. Lost, 28 to 17.

The committee reported and their report was adopted. This practically kills the bill although it may come up again.

Mr. VAN ETTEN later said he had been informed that his remarks were harsh, especially in opening his explanation. He did not expect to speak when he did and did not make the remarks he intended to make. If he had injured the cause by his ill-timed talk he begged the pardon on both knees of both injured.

Bismarck Weekly Tribune February 1, 1889

Document 4, Transcription: *Bismarck Weekly Tribune*, February 1, 1889

House

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Woman Suffrage

Committee of the whole, Mr. Newman in the chair.

Mr. Jones moved to report the the woman's suffrage bill back with the recommendation that it do not pass.

Mr. Elliott desired to have the author of the bill explain it.

Mr. Van Etten: it doesn't need an explanation. Any man intelligent enough to sit here, or to be voted for to come here, knows just what this bill means. He had never seen a man intelligent enough to give any good reason why this bill should not pass. If there is one woman in America who wants this privilege she ought to have it no matter if ten thousand thousand do not want it or ask it. This measure has passed through three stages. It first met with ridicule; then indifference and now opposition. It is now a reform measure and of course is opposed. It is opposed by men who do not know the multiplication table or who sign their name with a double cross and don't know enough to go home after voting, but the woman who is worth a million and capable of telling you the movement of the stars even must stay at home to wash the dishes—she must not leave her work for two minutes even to drop a ballot in the box. That is all of the time it takes. They say she will be compelled to mingle with the men. She mingles with men at fairs and slaps her feet and stamps her hands with them at political meetings. She goes to the post office and puts her letters in the box, and it will not degrade her any more to drop a ballot. She is recognized as a citizen at the land office. She owns property and pays taxes. She may not want to vote. Then she can stay at home. Some do want to vote. We have got the woman on the floor and now it is proposed to sit down on her. A woman worth a million went to her stables on election day and asked her coachman [driver] if he intended to exercise the right of suffrage and he wanted to know "which horse is that?" Yet he makes laws for her to obey and she has no voice. The women of this territory have asked us to grant them the right of suffrage. I am here to champion their rights. I always champion the under dog. Four years ago we passed this bill. Governor Pierce vetoed it and lost the opportunity of his life to make for himself a name. He will never be heard from again. Now we want to give Governor Church a chance.

Mr. Jones: Women are the superiors of men. I would not bring them down to our level. The right of suffrage would not elevate them, no matter if Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Jones, and 4,000 others have asked it, there are 20,000 others ready to protest against it, who remain at home singing their quiet lullabys.

Mr. Bergman: The gentleman from Hyde talks about equal rights. What has he to say about equal duties.

Mr. Van Etten: What do you mean by equal duties? If by that you mean the right of women to hold the plow and of men to wash the dishes, there are many of them in this territory who are doing these things now.

Note: The remainder is about House business. The report (Do Not Pass) was adopted and the bill died.

EDITOR TRIBUNE: The day had actually arrived, and with the sunlight we were bestirring ourselves, for the new and extra duties incumbent upon us weighed somewhat heavily upon our minds, as we had not unfrequently heard of the awful responsibilities which woman suffrage would inevitably bring upon the shoulders of that gentle clinging vine, woman (or rather upon the poor husband), when we should be permitted to hold in our hand that trifling and mighty power, a small piece of white paper called a ballot, and I repeat, be permitted—yes, actually permitted by our brothers to deposit the same in a box along with theirs. Well, as we were going to state, for the benefit of the anti-woman suffragists we were unusually careful about our household duties in order that our husband need suffer no inconvenience either from dish-washing, taking care of the baby, or of having supper ready upon our return from the polls, supposing such a thing were possible that we might follow the example of some of our illustrious brother politicians and come back a trifle elated or despondent over the success of our favorite candidate. Brothers, give us another chance for we behaved beautifully, only that as we were unaccustomed to the proceedings we became embarrassed when about to hand over our ballot and almost forgot our name. But the thought which gave us most courage and came like an inspiration—~~was that we were wielding~~ a power for good or evil mightier than the pen or the sword. Yes, we voted for the best man and promise you we will every time. When we arrived at home after having been away one-half hour, we found our better half in the best of humor with ample time to vote, and the children not gone to ruin and rags. So endeth our first experience with woman suffrage.

Bismarck Daily Tribune June 18, 1890

Document 5, Transcription: Bismarck Daily Tribune, June 18, 1890

Editor Tribune: The day had actually arrived and with the sunlight we were bestirring ourselves, for the new and extra duties incumbent upon us weighed somewhat heavily upon our minds as we had not unfrequently heard of the awful responsibilities which woman suffrage would inevitably bring upon the shoulders of that gentle clinging vine, woman (or rather upon the poor husband) when we should be permitted to hold in our hand that telling and mighty power, a small piece of white paper called a ballot, and I repeat, be permitted—yes, actually permitted by our brothers to deposit the same in a box along with theirs. Well, as we were going to state, for the benefit of the anti-woman suffragists we were unusually careful about our household duties in order that our husband need suffer no inconvenience either from dishwashing, taking care of the baby, or of having supper ready upon our return from the polls supposing such a thing were possible that we might follow the example of some of our illustrious brother politicians and come back a trifle elated or despondent over the success of our favorite candidate. Brothers, give us another chance for we behaved beautifully, only that as we were unaccustomed to the proceedings we became embarrassed when about to hand over our ballot and almost forgot our name. But the thought that gave us most courage and came like an inspiration was that we were wielding a power for good or evil mightier than the pen or the sword. Yes, we voted for the best man and promise you we will every time. When we arrived home having been away one-half hour, we found our better half in the best of humor with ample time to vote, and the children not gone to ruin and rags. So endeth our first experience with woman suffrage.*

*Note: This letter to the editor of the Bismarck Tribune was written by a woman who voted in the first (primary) election after statehood. She refers to herself (as was common at the time) in the plural – “we” instead of “I.” She would have been voting only on school issues and her ballot would have been different from those used by men voters.

SOCIALISTS FOR THE ISSUE

ANALYSIS OF VOTE ON SUFFRAGE INDICATES THAT THIS PARTY VOTED SOLIDLY IN FAVOR.

HOW THE VOTE WAS CAST

Progressives Also Lined Up Strongly in Favor of Votes for Women in Late Election.

The North Dakota Association opposed to Woman Suffrage has just issued an interesting pamphlet in which the vote on suffrage cast at the fall election is analyzed. Especially interesting is the party attitude toward the issue.

Quoting from the analysis:

The attitude of the Socialists of the state, as a body, upon this question is set forth in the "Iconoclast" the official organ of that party in the following editorial appearing after election in the issue of Nov. 13, 1914, under the caption "Woman Suffrage." Woman suffrage was defeated. It failed to carry for the same reason that socialism failed to carry—prejudice and ignorance on the part of the majority and shrewd manipulators leading it astray in the interest of special privilege. The Socialists voted for woman suffrage in a body. Of all political parties it cast its many thousands of ballots as one vote, and while other parties were being led in several directions at the same time the Socialists had a well defined purpose and carried it out."

Stood With Socialists.

The Progressive party stood with the Socialist party for woman suffrage—definitely and specifically committed to it.

Now how did the four parties vote

upon the question at the Nov. 3rd election?

The Socialists and Progressives with few exceptions voted for it and not against it—that is reasonably certain.

The vote on woman suffrage was 49,000 for it, and 49,410 against it.

The party vote for governor (using the figures published as official) was as follows: Republican, 44,378; Democratic, 34,746; Socialist, 6,013; Progressive, 4,283.

The total Socialist and Progressive vote (and it was committed to suffrage) was 10,282.

The total Republican and Democratic vote which was unpledged, was 78,024.

The vote on suffrage (disregarding odd figures) was 49,000 for and 49,000 against.

The 49,000 votes against it were Republicans and Democrats, for the Socialists and Progressives were for it and not against it.

Followed Their Platform.

Of the 49,000 cast for woman suffrage, 10,000 came from the Socialists and Progressives, who as a body were for it. The other 39,000 which were cast for it were Republicans and Democrats.

The Socialists as a whole followed their platform. The vote of the unpledged rank and file of the Republican and Democratic parties was then 39,000 for woman suffrage and 49,000 against it. In other words the returns show that the members of the two old parties stood 38 per cent for and 62 per cent against woman suffrage.

That it had its united strength in the Socialist and Progressive parties, which declared for it, is shown by the returns.

For purposes of comparison we will use only the Socialist vote. In the first congressional district where only one county went for suffrage and the majority against it was 4,002, the Socialist vote was only 820, that is, only 2.8 per cent of the entire vote of the district.

In the second congressional district, where three counties went for suffrage and the majority against it was 5,062, the Socialist vote was 1,322 or 4.4 per cent of the entire vote of the district.

In the third congressional district, where eleven counties went for suffrage and it was defeated by only 337 votes the Socialist vote was 3,877 or 13.5 per cent of the total vote of the district.

Vote by Counties.

Fourteen per cent of the Socialist vote of the state was cast in the first district, 23 per cent in the second district and 63 per cent in the third district and these percentages quite accurately reflect the relative majorities for suffrage in the three districts.

The county votes show the same relation.

Williams County gave 596 majority for suffrage, and cast 716 Socialist votes for governor.

Ward County gave a suffrage majority of 584 and cast 561 Socialist votes.

Mourtrail gave a suffrage majority of 310 and cast 298 Socialist votes.

Golden Valley gave a suffrage majority of 258 and cast 217 Socialist votes.

Divide gave a suffrage majority of 258 and cast 217 Socialist votes.

Burke County gave suffrage a majority of 251 and cast 270 Socialist votes.

Bowman gave a suffrage majority of 200 and cast 136 Socialist votes.

Bottineau gave a majority of 123 and cast 169 Socialist votes.

Billings gave a suffrage majority of 135 and cast 149 Socialist votes.

In four of the 15 counties carried by the suffragists the Socialist vote exceeded their majorities and in five more the combined Socialist and Progressive vote exceeded the suffrage

majority. In Bowman the suffrage majority was 200 and the combined Socialist and Progressive vote was 199.

Document 6, Transcription: Bismarck Daily Tribune, December 27, 1914

SOCIALISTS FOR THE ISSUE

ANALYSIS OF VOTE ON SUFFRAGE INDICATES THAT THIS PARTY VOTED SOLIDLY IN FAVOR

HOW THE VOTE WAS CAST

Progressives Also Lined up Strongly in Favor of Votes for Women in Late Election

The North Dakota Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage has just issued an interesting pamphlet in which the vote on suffrage cast in the last election was analyzed. Especially interesting is the party attitude toward the issue.

Quoting from the analysis:

The attitude of the Socialists of the state, as a body, upon this question is set forth in the "Iconoclast" the official organ of that party in the following editorial appearing after election in the issue of Nov. 13, 1914, under the caption "Woman Suffrage." "Woman suffrage was defeated. It failed to carry for the same reason that socialism failed to carry—prejudice and ignorance on the part of the majority and shrewd manipulators leading it astray in the interest of special privilege. The Socialists voted for woman suffrage in a body. Of all political parties, it cast its many thousands of ballots as one vote, and while other parties were being led in several directions at the same time the Socialists had a well defined purpose and carried it out."

Stood with Socialists

The Progressive Party stood with the Socialist party for woman suffrage—definitely and specifically committed to it.

Now how did the four parties vote upon the question at the Nov. 3 election?

The Socialists and Progressives with few exceptions voted for it and not against it—that is reasonably certain.

The vote on woman suffrage was 40,000 for it, and 49,410 against it.

The party vote for governor (using figures published as official) was as follows: Republican, 44,278; Democratic, 34,746; Socialist, 6,015; Progressive, 4, 263.

The total Socialist and Progressive vote (and it was committed to suffrage) was 10,282.

The total Republican and Democratic vote which was unpledged, was 78,024.

The vote on suffrage (disregarding the odd figures) was 40,000 for and 49,000 against.

The 49,000 votes against it were Republicans and Democrats, for the Socialists and Progressives were for it.

Followed Their Platform

Of the 40,000 cast for woman suffrage, 10,000 came from the Socialists and Progressives, who as a body were for it. The other 30,000 which were cast for it were Republicans and Democrats.

The Socialists as a whole followed their platform. The vote of the unpledged rank and file of the Republican and Democratic parties was then 30,000 for woman suffrage and 49,000 against it. In other words, the returns show that the members of the two old parties stood 38 per cent for and 62 per cent against woman suffrage.

That it had its strength in the Socialist and Progressive parties, which declared for it, is shown by the returns.

For purposes of comparison we will use only the Socialist vote. In the first congressional district [North Dakota had three congressional districts at the time] where only one county went for suffrage and the majority [vote] against it was 4,002 the Socialist vote was only 820, that is only 2.6 per cent of the entire vote of the district.

In the second congressional district, where three counties went for suffrage and the majority [vote] against it was 5,062, the Socialist vote was 1,322 or 4.4 per cent of the entire vote of the district.

In the third congressional district where eleven counties went for suffrage, and it was defeated by only 337 votes, the Socialist vote was 3,877 or 13.5 per cent of the total vote of the district.

Vote by Counties

Fourteen per cent of the Socialist vote of the state was cast in the first district, 23 per cent in the second district and 63 per cent in the third district and these percentages quite accurately reflect the relative majorities for suffrage in the three districts.

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In four of the 15 counties carried by the suffragists, the Socialist vote exceeded their majorities and in five more the combined Socialist and Progressive vote exceeded the suffrage majority. In Bowman the suffrage majority was 200 and the combined Socialist and Progressive vote was 199.

Militant Suffragists Storm Senate Committee Which Has Measure Under Consideration

**NO ACTION TAKEN AFTER SOME LIVELY ORATORY BOTH
FOR AND AGAINST VOTES FOR WOMEN; MRS. ELIZA-
BETH PRESTON ANDERSON LEADS THE SUFFRAGE
COHORTS.**

With Elizabeth Preston Anderson leading the cohorts, a faithful band of suffragists descended last evening upon the senate committee on suffrage and urged a favorable report on the Bronson concurrent resolution providing for a submission of the issue at the next general election.

The arguments advanced were old ones long familiar to the voters of this state and repudiated by more than 9,000 at the polls last November.

Poole and Mrs. Anderson.

Thomas Poole and Mrs. Anderson cross questioned each other for three quarters of an hour. During that time both sides of the question were placed in a vigorous manner before the members of the committee of which Senator Trageton is chairman. Senator Hughes of Burleigh county is also a member.

The women urged that the vote taken at the polls in November did not represent the decision of a majority because many blank votes were cast. This, however, is not borne out by the facts. The total vote on governorship was 80,206 while the total expression on suffrage was 89,557. In other words more voters cast ballots on this issue than for governor, showing that the people were alive to the principles involved and that the vote at the November elections reflected the desire of the majority on this issue.

Figures Were Decisive.

It was clearly shown that the advocates of suffrage have no right to

ask that the question be submitted again in the face of these figures. Seldom in the history of the state, it was shown, has there been such a representative vote on any issue.

Mrs. Anderson was followed by Mrs. Darrow of Fargo, who has been in the city several days lobbying for the measure. In Cass county the home of Mrs. Darrow, 2,611 voted no and 2,001 yes. Stutsman county, the home of Mrs. Anderson, registered 1,615 votes against to only 563 for.

That these votes reflect the sentiment somewhat of the women of the state on the issue was pointed out. In answer to the argument that a majority of the women do not want the ballot, Mrs. Fanny Quain of Bismarck asked that if a certain number of women were in a room and because all of them or a majority did not want water to drink, should the others be denied the privilege?

Mrs. Jerry Stevens of Grand Forks, another advocate of equal suffrage, was present and urged a favorable report. The room was filled with sympathizers, most of them members of the local suffrage association.

The association opposed to suffrage was not represented and in order to hear both sides of the controversy, the members of the committee thought it best to lay the matter over before reporting the resolution out.

Document 7, Transcription: Document 7. Bismarck Tribune , January 23, 1915

Militant Suffragists Storm
Senate Committee Which Has
Measure Under Consideration

NO ACTION TAKEN AFTER SOME LIVELY ORATORY BOTH FOR AND AGAINST VOTES FOR WOMEN; MRS. ELIZABETH PRESTON ANDERSON LEADS THE SUFFRAGE COHORTS.

With Elizabeth Preston Anderson leading the cohorts, a faithful band of suffragists descended last evening upon the senate committee on suffrage and urged a favorable report on the Bronson concurrent resolution providing for a submission of the issue at the next general election.

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The women urged that the vote taken at the polls in November did not represent the decision of a majority because many blank votes were cast. This however, is not borne out by the facts. The total vote on governorship was 89,396 while the total expression on suffrage was 89,557. In other words, more voters cast votes on this issue than for governor, showing that the people were alive to the principles involved and that the vote at the November elections reflected the desire of the majority on this issue.

Figures Were Decisive

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That these votes reflect the sentiment somewhat of the women of the state was pointed out. In answer to the argument that a majority of women do not want the ballot, Mrs. Fanny Quain of Bismarck asked that if a certain number of women were in the room and because all of them or a majority did not want water to drink, should the others be denied the privilege?

Mrs. Jerry Stevens of Grand Forks, another advocate of equal suffrage, was present and urged a favorable report. The room was filled with sympathizers, most of them members of the local suffrage association.

The association opposed to suffrage was not represented and in order to hear both sides of the controversy, the members of the committee thought it best to lay the matter over before reporting the measure out.

*Note. A legislative committee usually has the responsibility of reporting to the entire House or Senate following their discussion and hearings on the bills assigned to that committee. The committee will typically report "Do Pass," or "Do Not Pass." The final vote is up to the entire House or Senate and a bill must be passed by both houses to become law. In the case of the Bronson concurrent resolution, the bill was not to become law, but to provide (if passed) for the woman suffrage measure to appear on the next general election ballot. Ultimately, the legislature did not pass the Bronson concurrent resolution and voters did not have another chance to vote on full suffrage for women.

White Ribbon, June, 1890

(published by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of ND)

LAKOTA, N. D.

EDITOR WHITE RIBBON:

With very few exceptions the women of this town and vicinity turned out to vote. There was no excitement, and as far as I am a judge they looked and appeared as if they might be going or coming from church. We have a very flourishing Union of twenty-one members, and most of them seem to be earnest in the work for God, for home, for native land.

A. M. CRAMOND.

N.D. - Con

A Woman's Business

The Family is the foundation of the State, and the **Family** is a Woman's Business. The **Children** of the **family** should be her first care.

First: To give children **good sound bodies**.

Women do not need to vote for pure, wholesome food. 75% of all food contamination takes place **in the home**.

A woman's business is to keep her own home clean and to see that the Board of Health looks after her unclean neighbor. This doesn't need a vote.

Second: To give children **good minds**.

In 36 states women **already have a vote** on school questions, and only 2% use it. Men have recognized that women can help in school matters, and they ought to do so.

But no vote is necessary to watch what children read, and to answer their questions. It is easier to vote than to do this, but a child's mind is its mother's chance. A man is a woman-made child—grown up.

Third: To give children **good morals**.

Women do not need a vote to keep their children off the streets. You can't vote evil entirely out, but you can take care of your own child, and a former Police Commissioner said, "I do not know how to control vice by law. The moral standard of the individual must be raised." **Then** every woman can work to clean up the morals of her town, without being dragged back by the votes of the ignorant women and the women who vote as the bad men tell them to, and the women who don't care.

A few sensible, moral women **without a vote**, and therefore without being a part of any political machine, can and ought to clean up every town in this country. It **hinders** to be a part of the machine.

Sound **family** life has always been the basis of this nation. If men to-day are too bad to be trusted it must be because they weren't brought up right. It is our business as women to **bring up the voters before they vote**, to teach them honor and honesty and a love of truth and justice. Then they can be trusted. David Harum says "Every hoss can do a thing better and spryer if he's been broke to it as a colt."

Training children, one by one is woman's business. Handpicked fruit is better than fruit from a shaken tree.

Guarding the family is handpicking the fruit.

Voting is shaking the tree.

NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE,

Fargo, North Dakota.

SUFFRAGE LAW WILL PROVE CONSTITUTIONAL

Opinion of Author of Limited Franchise Law Recently Passed.

Fargo, Mar. 6.—The limited woman's suffrage law enacted by the state legislature just adjourned, will stand the scrutiny of the courts and the tests of the state constitution, in the opinion of Attorney R. M. Pollock, who drew the bill. He bases his opinion on the constitution of the United States, and the interpretation of similar statutes by the supreme courts of other states.

"I gave this matter close study before I drew up this bill," said Mr. Pollock in an interview, "and I am confident that this law will hold in the supreme court. The constitution of the United States has given the legislature full power to prescribe how presidential electors shall be chosen and the legislature of any state can give the right of suffrage on that point to any person or withhold it if they see fit." In support of this contention Mr. Pollock read from the constitution of the United States as follows:

"Art. 2, Sec. 1.—Each state shall appoint, in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct, a number of senators and representatives to which the state may be entitled in the congress, etc."

"A reading of this section of the federal constitution makes it clear," continued Mr. Pollock, "that the state legislature has complete power to prescribe how presidential electors shall be chosen, including who may vote for them in case they prescribe an election as the mode for choosing them. No other powers in state or nation can say how presidential electors shall be selected but the state legislature, as the federal constitution has invested that body with that power.

"The only way that this can be changed would be to amend the constitution of the United States, as when the choice of United States senators was taken from the state legislatures and vested in the people of the states.

"This completely disposes of the matter of the women of North Dakota having right to vote on presidential electors since the suffrage bill was passed by the legislature.

"I am just as confident that their right to vote on the other officers and propositions enumerated in the law just enacted is just as valid. I base

this contention on the rulings made by courts in the states where similar statutes have been enacted. In all these cases these courts have held that the provision of the state constitutions as to the right of suffrage are applicable only to officers and offices named or contemplated in said constitutions."

Here Mr. Pollock cited a large number of cases in which this ruling had been made and upheld as to the right of women to vote. Illinois was one of the first states in which this was tried out and this ruling was made there. Florida and several other decisions were cited by Mr. Pollock, all going to show that courts hold legislatures can prescribe how officers created by such legislature and not covered by the constitution of the state, can be chosen.

Reading a copy of the law Attorney Pollock pointed out that no officer or office were enumerated therein that the state constitution provided for. "Under the law just passed the women can vote only for such officers or offices that have been created by legislative enactments and none created by the state constitution," Mr. Pollock concluded. Following is a copy of the limited woman's suffrage bill that has been made the law of the state:

A BILL

For an act granting women the

right to vote for presidential electors and certain other officers, and to participate and vote in certain matters and elections.

Be it enacted by the legislative assembly of the state of North Dakota:

Section 1.—All women, citizens of the United States of the age of 21 years or upwards, who shall have resided in the state one year and in the county six months, and in the precinct 90 days next preceding any election, shall be allowed to vote at such election for presidential electors, county surveyors, county constables, and for all officers of cities, villages and towns, (except police magistrates and city justices of the peace) and upon all questions or propositions submitted to a vote of the electors of such municipalities or other political divisions of this state.

Section 2.—All such women may also vote for the following township officers: Township clerk, assessor, treasurer, overseer of highways and constables, and may also participate and vote in all annual and special township meetings in the township in which such election shall be.

Section 3.—Separate ballot boxes and ballots shall be provided for women, which ballots shall, to the extent to which such women may vote, as aforesaid, be the same as those provided for male voters, both as to candidates and special questions submitted. At any such election where registration is required women shall register in the same manner as male voters.

Document 11, Transcription: Jamestown Alert, March 3, 1917

Suffrage Law
Will Prove
Constitutional

Opinion of Author of Limited
Franchise Law Recently
Passed

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"I gave this matter close study before I drew up the bill," said Mr. Pollock in an interview, "and I am confident that this law will hold up in the supreme court. The constitution of the United States has given the legislature full power to prescribe how presidential electors will be chosen and the legislature of any state can give the right of suffrage on that point to any person or withhold it if they see fit." In support of this contention Mr. Pollock read from the constitution of the United States as follows:

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"This completely disposes of the matter of the women of North Dakota having right to vote on presidential electors since the suffrage bill was passed by the legislature.

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