

CATT, Carrie Chapman SPEECH, ARTICLE, BOOK FILE. Article: "College Women As Citizens"

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Colleges Women as Citizens

By Dr. Carrie Chapman Catt, Iowa

(Dr. Carrie Chapman Catt, assisted by Miss Mary Garrett Hay, recently [\*February 4 / 1922 at 404 Riverside Drive\*] entertained

150 members of the New York Alumnae Club of Pi Beta Phi, at her home on Riverside Drive. Dr. Catt gave a very logical and convincing talk on "College Women as Citizens" which was reported for The Arrow by Olive Rathbun, Wyoming A, private secretary to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the explorer. At the conclusion of Dr. Catt's talk, her guests presented to her a large bouquet of wine carnations tied with silver blue gauze ribbon. -- The Editor.)

The women of nearly thirty different nations now have the vote. To me it will always be a matter of very great humiliation that so many countries extended this act of inevitable justice before our own. The vote is no longer a question to talk about - it is here. Not only is it here in our own country but in most of the countries of Europe-- in Burma and India, in portions of China, in the islands of the Pacific, in Australia and New Zealand, and practically all over Europe. It is strange, indeed, that in some of those countries women enjoy privileges not attained here.

The last time I was in Germany, which was before the war, I had an experience, which was not new to me. I recall it because it is now a landmark showing where the women stood at that particular moment.

In Austria and in Germany (it began in Prussia) the law forbade women to become member of any political society or to attend political meetings. So when in Germany the women desired to organize a suffrage movement, it was an illegal thing to do; women did not have that much personal freedom. But there was one very clever woman who had studied law and although she was not permitted to be admitted to the bar in Germany she said it was something to know how to evade the law. So they organized in the free city of Hamburg and had individual members all over Germany. If Berlin or Dresden wanted to have a meeting the members of this Hamburg society called it. They had to go to the police and explain all this -- that it was not a society in Berlin, it was in Hamburg. They announced when it was to be held, the hall it was to be held in and

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who would speak and preside and they usually got consent to their meeting in this way. When the time for the meeting came, there arrived two policemen with what I call tin hats, and they sat behind a little table, one carrying a book and the other a billy. They took off their hats and put them under the table and one opened his book and took the name and address of the chairman, who answered any questions he chose to ask. She introduced the first speaker who stepped over to the police with the book, and gave him the lady's or gentlemen's address, and a full account of the speaker's life had to be given also. If anything were done contrary to the law or the judgment of the man with the book, he closed his book, the two men took their hats from under the table and put them on their heads, whereupon the audience was expected to arise and depart immediately. If they should not go fast enough, then the policeman with the billy was expected to drive them out.

Being a timid person, I inquired beforehand what I ought not to say. I was informed that I must not mention the Kaiser nor any

of his family, nor German history, nor anything about the military. If I would avoid these, I probably would not get into trouble. And I didn't.

Now let us jump over the war period. Today the women of Germany are not only voting but the remarkable thing is that there are thirty-seven women in the Reichstag, women in each of the provincial parliaments or what would correspond to our state legislatures, and women in many of the town councils. On the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Board there are two German members, one is a member of the Reichstag and one of them holds a cabinet position in her state. In these ways they seem to have travelled far ahead of this country.

The thing that interests me particularly with reference to college women at this time is the remarkable tests made in war camps. When the young men were conscripted and put into camps and experts made psychological examinations, it was found that ten per cent were too weak in mentality to be entrusted with the humblest duties of the soldier and it was not considered good sense to send them to France. It was found that of the young men between the ages that were in those camps twenty-five per cent were illiterate, too illiterate to read a newspaper or the signs around camp, too illiterate to read their little books of directions. Before that we had

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always had the idea that we had an illiteracy of about eight per cent. That was because when the census man goes to a house, he says, "How many members are there in your family?" "Five." "Are they able to read and write?" "Yes." That might mean they know their A, B, C's but not in any sense reading as we understand it.

Dr. Goddard, who conducted these examinations and who had largely worked out the tests and who is one of the greatest authorities on the feeble-minded, in an address before the Charities Association in Atlantic City made this arresting statement. I don't suppose that he would really swear that the figures were positively correct, but we all know that they are approximately true. He said that there are ten per cent of our population who are supermen and women; that is, people who are capable of doing thinking for themselves-- they can analyze a proposition; they can see through a difficult situation and analyze complexity and confusion. There are twenty per cent of our population not intelligent enough to do that but they can understand the analysis when one of the supermen has carefully explained it to them. They can repeat it but they could not think it out for themselves. Then there come seventy per cent no one of whom is able mentally to go beyond the eighth grade in the public school. Consider that for a moment and what it means.

Approach it from another point of view. A writer on political parties, not knowing anything about this new phase of psychology because he wrote before the discovery of our human weaknesses was known, made the statement that seventy-five per cent of men (that was before women were enfranchised) followed their parties without knowing why. That is, they are born Republicans or Democrats, as the case might be, without ever asking why they are in that party. Now put the two things together and, granting that the figures may not be quite reliable since not all of us have been tested, calculate the results.

You belong certainly to either what is called the A minds or super-minds, or at least to the twenty per cent which are the B minds. You could not belong to the seventy per cent or you never would have been admitted to college. You belong, then, to the thirty per cent of

superior-minded people of this country. Therefore it becomes as clear as any mathematical proposition that if the thirty per cent who have brains enough to understand the intricacies of politics are to be indifferent about it, the unscrupulous people who manipulate and

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control the seventy-five per cent will control the country. That seems to me so plain a proposition that it needs no further demonstration than the simple statement with which you are all more or less familiar.

What are we going to do about it? Perhaps some of you say you wish we didn't have the vote. Then you would disenfranchise half the supermen. One thing that has never been done is to see whether there are more supermen than women. There might be more superwomen than men.

Political work is not altogether pleasing work. Training in colleges has usually been devoted to giving students a book knowledge in political science but has not connected it with the practical experiment. One must know something of constitutions to understand the fundamentals, but after all that knowledge has far less to do with the actual work of practical politics than it would seem to have. Voting is to many people merely selecting a man whom one does not know to fill an office whose duties are as unknown. It doesn't really matter whether John Smith or John Jones fills an office, providing they are both honest and fairly capable.

If the women had been enfranchised twenty years ago they would have come into a fairly standardized political condition. Some time before the war there arose dissatisfaction about many of the present methods. Men did not like the way nominations were conducted, they did not like the way conventions were held, they did not like the way platforms were written, nor the way patronage was distributed, with the result that reforms of various kinds designed to correct those things were growing up, each with a little movement or organization behind it. All movements of this nature were stopped by the war. When the war was over they began just where they left off. So we find all this commotion about whether we are going to nominate in conventions or primaries, whether we are going to go on electing men on a ballot forty feet long or whether we shall have a short one. These are matters that demand serious consideration, whether we are interested in them or not, because if the voice of the people is not correctly recorded and if voters do not rightly understand the issues before them, we shall not have a progressive nor safe government.

Behind all this debate lies psychology. There is mass psychology, herd or mob psychology, that is, the influences that make masses think

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alike. It is curious how that tendency can be played upon. There was an instance in the city of New York during the last New York mayoralty campaign. One of the public school teachers permitted her school to take a vote on the candidates for mayor. Every child in the room, boys and girls, voted for Mr. Hylan. The teacher thought that very interesting and so she had a discussion afterward and asked, "Why did you vote as you did?" The children said, "Because Mr. Hylan is the friend of the poor man." Then she said, "Tell me why Mr. Hylan is the friend of the poor man." Not a child knew.

That is an example. It was a slogan that passed through the city

and it elected Mr. Hylan. Nearly always a tangled situation results in a simple maxim which passes for thinking and brings election results. The Republicans said after 1916 that Mr. Wilson was elected on the slogan "He kept us out of war." I think it was true and if you had been working in Congress as we were at that time and had talked with the Senators and Representatives as they returned from their states, I think you would have admitted that that slogan elected Mr. Wilson. Last year the Democrats said that Mr. Wilson was defeated on the slogan, "Mr. Wilson sold us out." It was a slogan of the same sort. The women would have had the vote fifty years ago if it had not been for a slogan. The whole country united in repeating after the Civil War, "Women must wait; this is the negroes' hour."

Some years ago Mr. Johnson was running for governor in the state of California. He was at that time very unpopular. Every speech he made, no matter where it was, whether at a mass meeting or a dinner, ended with the words, "I am going to be elected Governor of California and when I am elected Governor of California I am going to kick George Herron and the Southern Pacific out into the Pacific Ocean. Good night." The people laughed but by degrees they came to say, "He says he is going to be elected Governor, and after all the Southern Pacific does run politics in this state." And Johnson was elected. The onlookers said it was his little slogan that did it.

The manner in which the public mind is controlled, mobilized and millions brought up the ballot box to vote one way or another by a simple slogan presents a whole field for study. That means that there is much to think about in politics besides merely electing men.

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It is important to study the effects of campaigns upon the masses of the people and when these masses go against things that are right it becomes the duty of people who know and understand to set them on the right track.

Platforms are supposed to represent the principles of a party; they sometimes represent only the absence of them. Not infrequently parties get into power or are defeated upon an issue that is not in the platform at all. One politician told this story on himself. He was standing upon the rear platform of a train when a negro porter came out and told him that none of the passengers were permitted to stand there. "But," said the politician, "platforms are to stand on, aren't they?" "No, suh. You are a politician and you ought to know platforms are to get in on."

In the midst of the study to find how the people's vote should be taken so as really to get the opinion of all the people, there arises this strange thing that we call partisanship. There isn't to my mind anything in all the world like it. It is more nearly like the religious fanaticism of the middle centuries which fairly deluged the world with blood. It is like a superstition. People are born to their parties and before the little ones can toddle away from their cradles they know that they are going to be Republicans or Democrats, and they know that theirs is the party that possesses nearly all the wisdom and virtue and statesmanship of the country. These are the seventy-five per cent. It is the twenty and thirty per cent that are responsible for the thinking and the leading that makes the world go forward. If any of you think you don't like politics and you don't want to have anything to do with it, then let me quote a saying they have over at

Vineland where there is a laboratory for the study of feeble-mindedness. I am told that the faculty there have developed a slogan and their slogan is, "Why not be feeble-minded and happy?"

We live in a world of progress and perhaps we might act like the feeble-minded and be happy with nothing to do with the world and its problems, but have we any right to this ease of mind? For some reason you have been born into the superior thirty per cent. One man has figured out that each one of us has had, going back to certain time, two million grandfathers and grandmothers. (He must have had a very little to do when he figured it out.) Each one of these millions has contributed something to our make-up and there was something in the combination that made each of you a superior mind.

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There was something in your environment that gave you the desire to go to college, where you got the best training our country offers. You are what you are through the incident of birth and environment and you have no right to neglect the obligations for which those grandfathers and grandmothers prepared you.

I don't mean to say that all the people who work with parties are bound to the kind of partisanship of which I have been speaking. One may choose a party because he believes that that party stands for the best principles and is most likely to secure the progress in which he believes. That is one way to work - inside the party. Another way is to work outside the party, working for the things you want to have accomplished. The greatest thing today, internationally, is to find a way to end war. The greatest American question is how to end illiteracy. Our settlement school is helping solve that problem. It is one of the most important questions in the world. You can work in your party or out, or both ways at once, but you will be expected to make this a better world than it was when you came.

Many of us have thought it necessary for women to continue their women's organizations for a time until women are thoroughly in politics and understand their places and duty there. We thought so before the women had the vote; we think so more completely now than then. The Democrats and Republicans appealed to women to come into the parties and work immediately after the vote was won, but directly the Republican women and the Democratic women came back and said, "They won't let us do anything. They want us to vote the party ticket but we don't get on the inside, we don't get near the making of the platform of the ticket." Such women say, "I am through with it." Then the Republican and Democratic women talked it over together and concluded that it was nobody's fault; only a condition. Men had not been accustomed to working with women and women were not accustomed to working with men, and a big adjustment must be made.

Inside of the League of Women Voters, as we have called it, there is that opportunity in which to talk things over and to work forward to the time when the women will be in politics because they are thoroughly trained for it. The woman's movement has not come to an end yet. You are asked, in your party or out of it, still to help the woman's movement; that is, help emancipate and train women for the great duties that are to come to them in the time that has not

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yet arrived. I invite you to be a member of the League of Women Voters. At any rate, I urge you not to turn your back upon the political duty that has come to you, because it is a call from all the years of the past as it is a call also from the future. Let American

women be at least as alert and alive and public-spirited as those of other countries. Don't forget that we are not the only ones that have the vote but that the women of thirty other countries are straining forward to attain the ideals fixed in the vision of their minds. Study politics, love politics for the good it can do, respect politics for it represents the progress of our nation, be a part of politics that you may bring a better say.

#### HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN ENGLAND

BY FRANCES ELMA GILLESPIE, Columbia A  
Pi Beta Phi Fellow, 1921-22

(By special request Miss Gillespie has written of her life and work as the Pi Beta Phi Fellow in England. - THE EDITOR.)

A year spent in historical investigation in England affords the American student the greatest satisfaction and delight; satisfaction, because of the unrivalled facilities offered for research, and delight because of England. The zeal for discovery of historical truth that is the inspiration of all who would be historical scholars, here finds the utmost of gratification in the knowledge that the vast stored of original materials, for English history of course primarily, are at least accessible. Nobody except one who has pursued investigation can understand the sense

[\*FRANCES ELMA GILLESPIE\*]

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