

MINUTES
OF
VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
EIGHTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
STATE OF NEW JERSEY,
CONVENED AT TRENTON
JANUARY 13, 1857.



FLEMINGTON, N. J.
ADAM BELLIS, PRINTER.
1857.

An act to prevent accidents from the use of Locomotive Engines on the New Jersey Central Railroad.

Without amendments.

C. L. C. GIFFORD,
Chairman of the Committee
on Judiciary.

Trenton, Feb. 25, 1857.

Which was read.

And, on motion, was accepted.

Mr. Gifford from the Special Committee on the equality of Women's rights,

Reported as follows :

R E P O R T.

The majority of the Special Committee, to whom was referred the petition of Harriet M. Lafetra and others, inhabitants of the county of Monmouth, stating that they, said petitioners, believe "that men and women alike suffer many evils," and requesting a revision of the statutes of New Jersey, so as to remove "the various and grievous legal disabilities under which the *latter* are placed, and thereby establish the legal equality of women with men," beg leave to report :

That the prayer of the petition embraces a subject of such great and momentous importance, that your Committee have had some hesitancy in entering upon the investigation of the same.

We fully agree with the petitioners that "both men and women alike suffer many evils," but we are not fully prepared to adopt, in its fullest extent, the reason assigned by said petitioners, that they are caused by "the grievous legal disabilities under which the *latter* are placed."

We find that, from the beginning of the world to the present day, woman, whether under the laws of the Creator—the

Patriarchal government, the Mosaic and Levitical law, or the more benign influences of the christian dispensation, has ever, in the affairs of government, been assigned a position subordinate to that of man.

That from that day when Eve, the mother of us all, first tempted our great progenitor, and thereby introduced sin into the world, she has been considered as entitled to our sympathy, kindness, and tenderest regard; and its civilization has advanced, her rights have been respected, and her privileges extended.

We acknowledge that in intellectual capacities, moral worth, and excellencies, she is often found to be our superior, and that in beauty and loveliness, and charms, we all are compelled to bow before her and acknowledge our inferiority.

But man (of and from whom woman came forth) has ever stood at the head of human government. The first was placed upon the earth—to him was given the government of all created things—to him was entrusted the weightier matter of the law; and whatever may have been the equality before the fall, yet when the fiat went forth, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," that equality in government forever ceased, the woman again became merged in and part of man, for "they twain became one flesh." Her personal identity was lost—lost forever.

Your committee are convinced that great trouble and inconvenience would necessarily arise, not only in the domestic circle, but in all the relations of life, by the legal re-establishment of such equality; and whilst willing and desirous of doing all in their power to facilitate and encourage matrimony, and make a more perfect union between men and women, are most decidedly of the opinion that the world is not yet sufficiently advanced to warrant the extension of the area of "woman's rights," as contemplated in said petition.

If the legislature should attempt to change the laws and re-

move all the legal liabilities and restrictions, it would not only require a complete renovation of the statute book, but of the constitution also, and opens a prospect anything but encouraging to a deliberative body, whose time is as short as that before us. It would be a task in comparison of which the labors of Hercules sink into insignificance. We would have to open the door to all offices, and permit women to be elected governors, members of legislature, secretaries and treasurers of state, sheriffs, constables, members of corporate bodies, presidents, cashiers and directors of banks, (whether under general or special laws)—in fact, to all and every office, directly or indirectly, in the gift of the people.

“Is the House ready for the question?”

Your committee, therefore, whilst entertaining the highest respect and expressing the greatest confidence in lovely woman, and being now, as ever, ready to extend to them love, honor, respect, comfort, and protection, and believing that it is the duty of every man, married or in the state of single blessedness, (?) to make woman happy, and her home a paradise; and also believing that this can only be accomplished by the preservation of the laws as they are respecting legal equality, are compelled, painful though it may be to the petitioners, to report adversely to the prayer of their petition.

All which is respectfully submitted.

C. L. C. GIFFORD,
JOHN P. HARKER.

Which was read, and

Mr. White moved

That the report be accepted, and that five hundred copies be printed for the use of this House.

Mr. McDonald moved

To lay the report of the special committee on the table.

Which motion was agreed to.