

( MINUTES )

OF

509th.  
Conv.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NINETY-SECOND

GENERAL (ASSEMBLY)

OF THE

STATE OF NEW JERSEY,

CONVENED JANUARY 14th, 1868.



CAPE ISLAND, N. J.:

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1868.

Also,

Assembly bill No. 382, entitled

An act to limit an act of the Legislature entitled "An act authorizing the planting of oysters in Barnegat Bay, in the county of Ocean, and protecting the same," approved March twenty-ninth, eighteen hundred and sixty-six.

Mr. Christie, from the Committee on Judiciary, to whom the petition of Lucy Stone and Antoinette B. Blackwell was referred, made the following report :

The Committee on Judiciary, to whom was referred the petition and communication of Lucy Stone and Antoinette B. Blackwell, do respectfully report,

The gallant urging of the House as well as their own reverence for woman, have induced the Committee to give the matter their earliest and most respectful consideration.

The fair petitioners pray for such amendment of our State Constitution as will give to women the right to vote, and for such amendment of our statutes as will give to a married woman the full right of disposal of her property by will, and to a widow the same rights in the property of her deceased husband that a man now has in the property of his deceased wife.

In this day of agitation and experiment, it is natural, nay, inevitable, that all parties and classes should seek to know and strive to attain their just rights and relations in society and government. And it is neither right nor wise summarily to condemn such a spirit simply because the particular privilege claimed may seem at first absurd or wrong. But when woman is the party who agitates the question of her rights, it becomes a matter of peculiar delicacy and difficulty. It hath been said,

"When women sue  
Men give like gods."

And the Committee feel almost bound to apologize while they proceed, in obedience to duty, to consider the propriety of the present petition.

The demand for suffrage is undoubtedly the chief concern of the petitioners, and to this the Committee will confine their report.

Should women vote? Viewing this question in one light, it



would seem to be conclusively settled by this consideration: When legislation is claimed for any class of citizens, it is always natural and fair to ask if the majority of that class favor the claim. Now the majority of the women of the State do not desire suffrage. If they did, it would be easy for them unmistakably to manifest it. But the petitioners are only two, while the women of the State are many thousands. And the Committee confidently assert that the silence of the women who do not petition, is an indication, not so much of their indifference, as of their aversion to the claim made in their behalf. In other words, a great majority of the women of the State would disclaim any desire to vote.

Viewing this question in another light, it does not seem any question at all. If the women of the State either unanimously or by a majority, or even in considerable numbers desire this right they will have it. There is an old couplet that reads of woman,

"When she will she will, you may depend on't,  
When she won't she won't, and there's an end on't."

And there is at least as much truth in it as this, even in politics, that if these women in such numbers were to press their claim for suffrage with earnestness, the ordinary considerations that control parties and legislatures would make their claim successful. Besides, the women of the State are in an actual majority over the men of several thousand, so that if there be of right no political distinction between them, the simple determination of the women to assume the right of suffrage, should of itself be effectual. Why not?

But, granting what the petitioners seem to intimate, that there is an actual desire for suffrage by the women of the State, who are yet willing to abide by the determination of this Legislature, would it be wise for the Legislature to gratify that desire? Would it elevate suffrage? Men and women differ in many important respects, but under the same circumstances they are morally equal. If women were invested with suffrage, though at first they might purify the ballot box, ultimately, when they came to feel the full force of all the influences that bear upon men, they would manifest the same tendencies. Thus it would result in a simple increase of numbers in those who exercise suffrage. It is of course a duty to protect suffrage in every way from the danger of degradation, but would mere numbers serve

more to lessen or enhance this peril. Would the extension of suffrage improve the condition of woman? It may be said that it would enable her to enforce all her demands, and thus ultimately gain for her full equality of rights with man. And evidently the right of suffrage is not sought for itself, but for these general ends. But the same rights imply the same duties, responsibilities and capacity. In other words, women would be entitled to no relief from the burdens now exclusively borne by man, on the plea of any inferiority or peculiarity of organization or character, while man would be relieved from all duties to her founded upon such distinction. When it is remembered what many of those duties are, and the unquestionable unfitness of woman to discharge them, and then that she already enjoys, with rare exceptions, if any, all the rights essential to her happiness or consistent with the marriage relation, it would seem that the burdens that would be imposed on her would more than counterbalance the benefit gained.

But would it consist with the true sphere and true mission of woman? Not if any regard be had to the teachings of the Bible, either as to the original purpose of her creation, or as to the proper duties and character of a model woman. There it is taught that woman was made to be an help-meet for man, that she is properly subject to her husband, that her duty is to learn in silence (not to teach or usurp authority over man), to love her husband and children; that her true ornaments are a meek and quiet spirit, diligence, modesty, sobriety and virtue, and that her true sphere is home. So the highest uninspired authorities accord with these sentiments. The great poets of our own tongue have sung the praises of woman in the highest strains, and with the intuition of genius have caught and fixed the true elements of her power and worth, her grace and gentleness, her love and dignity—elements that have their origin and gain their strength only in the domestic sphere, and are the peculiar property of woman. In her true sphere of home, and in her highest charm, woman hath been thus most happily portrayed:

"Here woman reigns; the mother, daughter, wife,  
Strews with fresh flowers the narrow way of life;  
In the clear heaven of her delightful eye  
An angel guard of love and graces lie;  
Around her knees domestic duties meet,  
And fireside pleasures gambol at her feet."

Surely, woman never fulfills her true mission or fills her true



sphere if not when, as wife and mother, by her wise provision and rule she brings happiness and honor to her husband and household, and shapes the character of her children to the highest ends of life. Of such an one the wisest of men said: "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." And another has well said: "In her a thousand claims to reverence close." But woman, mingling in the angry strife of politics, and dragging her shining skirts in its polluting mire, is not consistent with such a conception as this.

In view of all these considerations, the Committee do report adversely to the prayer of the petitioners for suffrage. And if it be proper for them to make any suggestion for the benefit of the petitioners and those who sympathize with them, they would say, with all respect, with the stern old King of the ambitious Princess—

"A lusty brace  
Of twins may weed her of her folly. By  
The bearing and the training of a child  
Is woman's wisdom."

All of which is respectfully submitted.

C. CHRISTIE, *Chairman*,  
CHAS. E. HENDRICKSON,  
GEORGE GAGE.

Mr. Whelan moved that five hundred copies of the report be ordered printed for the use of the members of the House of Assembly.

Which motion was agreed to.

Senate bill No. 247, entitled

A further supplement to the act entitled "An act to incorporate the Newark and Irvington Horse Car Railroad Company," approved March seventh, eighteen hundred and sixty-one.

Was read a second time and ordered to have a third reading, and under a suspension of the rules was read a third time and passed by the following vote:

In the affirmative,

Messrs. Allen, Atwater, Baldwin, J. R., Brown, Christie, Clark, H. F., Coghlan, Collins, Corlies, Gage, Henry, Hering, Huff, A. T., Hunt, Keim, Kennedy, Lanning, Lippin-