

IOWA ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE

1032 NORTH FOURTH STREET
BURLINGTON, IOWA

August 13th, 1917.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

Imperative demands upon my time have prevented me from acknowledging earlier your very courteous letter of March 29th.

Will you extend your courtesy a little farther and allow me to thrust upon you unasked an answer to your statement of your position on the suffrage question?

If I were an artist, I would draw for you a pair of scales, with "logic" in one balance, and in the other all those practical reasons which you have for thinking woman suffrage a mistake.

Why must we allow woman suffrage, with all these objections, to come to us simply because it is logical? It seems to me that year by year I realize more strongly the wisdom of moderation. Granting that a Democratic form of government is good, why carry it to such an extreme that its bad points out-weigh its good ones? Is it not a little like taking a whole bottle of medicine at once because a teaspoonful is beneficial? And any way, isn't it the spirit rather than the letter that we want? Even if a thing seems democratic, is it really so if it is not what the people want? The majority of men and women believe that they are safer under male suffrage than under double suffrage; is it truly democratic to force woman suffrage upon them against their wishes?

At this time, when the weaknesses of democracy are so obvious in our inability to meet as we should this crisis, it would seem that we

ought to see more plainly than ever that a government of the people must be so framed as to guard against extremes.

The people who formed your Chautauqua audiences; who gave you a "deepened respect and confidence in the average people of the country"; these people are anti-suffragists. It is they who vote down woman suffrage year after year when it devolves upon ^{them} to settle the question. But they ^{are} not, as you say, the "excited chattering kind who peddle opinions" and thereby influence weak legislators. They are mostly inarticulate; they are not accustomed to putting their thoughts and opinions into words. We owe them our championship. They need the active help of women- and men- like you, who see the defects in a system of double suffrage. If we do not use our influence to oppose it- if we allow things to drift along without making any strong protest- our legislators will believe that they can with impunity ignore the wishes of the people (as they did in Ohio). If we remain silent, the politician, listening for something to guide him, hears only the din of the suffrage catch-words, and accepts them as the voice of the oracle.

Woman suffrage will never come in America by the popular vote. The only gains it has made in four years were by means of state legislatures, where, as one of our suffragists said (in Iowa last winter), they "can see where every man stands." The people voted it down in Iowa in 1916, and they will vote it down again whenever it comes before them. Is it not ~~not~~ the essence of Democracy to let the people have their will?

With apologies for forcing my opinions upon you, I am

Very sincerely yours,

Wendell G. Hillard