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# A Bit of History

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A Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and Assembly, proposing an amendment to Section one of Article two of the Constitution is pending in the New York Legislature. It was introduced on January 20, by Hon. S. Percy Hooker, of LeRoy (Genesee Co.) in the Senate; and on January 16, by Hon. Warren I. Lee of Brooklyn, in the Assembly. It has been referred to the Judiciary Committee in each house, of which Hon. George Allen Davis of Lancaster (Erie Co.) is Chairman in the Senate, and Hon. Jesse S. Phillips, of Andover (Alleghany Co.) is chairman in the Assembly. The proposed amendment makes no change in the Constitution except to strike out the word "male," thus giving to all citizens, men and women alike, the rights and privileges of citizenship.

New York, more than any other State, has been the battle ground for the rights of women. In this State the first convention was held and the first declaration of protest was framed against the injustices visited upon women by the law of the land. For more than half a century, no Legislature has met which has not received appeals, memorials and petitions, urging changes in the law. It is not necessary to review the history of those early years.

In 1884 a Constitutional Convention was held in the State. As early as 1887, Gov. David B. Hill, at the request of the State Woman Suffrage Association recommended that women should be represented in the convention. Gov. Roswell P. Flower in 1892 made a similar recommendation. A bill allowing three delegates passed the Assembly, but was defeated in the Senate. The act which was finally passed granted two representatives to the Prohibition, Labor

and Socialist parties but none to the Suffragists. The law however declared any citizen of the State above 21 years to be eligible to election. An effort was then made to secure the nomination of women delegates by the different political parties, but without avail. A campaign was next instituted to secure a clause in the proposed constitution. A petition of 332,148 individual signatures, and memorials from labor organizations, Granges, and women's organizations, bringing the total number up to 600,000, was secured. The petitions presented by one organization alone were so large that a porter carried them down the aisle of the convention hall on a wheelbarrow, and when all the petitions were piled upon the secretary's desk, the array furnished powerful evidence of the strength and numbers which had made the demand. Yet the convention refused by a vote of fifty-eight to ninety-eight to submit a vote to the people upon the question. Appeals to the Legislature have been without surcease from that date, yet each Judiciary Committee to which the bills are invariably referred has persistently declined to report favorably upon the submission.

The Legislature of New York has no power to enfranchise women. It has only the power to submit the question to the voters of the State and woman suffrage can only be established when two successive legislatures and a majority of male voters agree to it.

No where else in the world are there so many women possessed of large fortunes; no where else is there such an army of women workers. No where are there so many well educated women. No where are women more intelligent, individualized and law abiding. Yet a small committee of men stand a seeming

insuperable barrier to the establishment of voting rights for such women.

Meanwhile, since the Constitutional Convention of our supposedly democratic State, autocratically declined to submit the question to vote, the so-called autocracies of the world have been more liberal to their women. Since 1894, all the states of Australia except one, have extended full suffrage to women, and the Federal Government has granted national suffrage. Finland and Norway have bestowed full suffrage and eligibility to office to women. Ireland has given women municipal suffrage, and in England and Scotland the municipal suffrage, long in practice, has been extended to include county suffrage. Utah and Idaho have enfranchised women and a number of our United States have given various kinds of minor suffrage. Denmark has just given women municipal suffrage. Sweden and Iceland had municipal suffrage, and New Zealand and the Isle of Man had full suffrage even before 1894.

Are not the women of New York as intelligent, as responsible, as law abiding as these women of foreign lands? Are not the women of a Republic as worthy of the privileges of democracy as the women of monarchies? No American will deny it. Then why does the cause lag behind that of other lands? Because Judiciary Committees and Legislatures utterly refuse to consider the matter.

If you do not approve this record of the State of New York, let your Representative and Senator know it. Let the protest against the conspiracy of inaction rise so high and clear and strong, that each member will realize that women really do mean to "foment a rebellion" as Abigail Adams predicted so many years ago. This call to duty means you and YOU and YOU! Write letters and letters and LETTERS. A long protest, a strong protest and a protest altogether, will persuade even a New York Legislature to hear, and hearing to heed.