

EDITORIAL

IS WOMAN SUFFRAGE A FAD?

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**A** FAD and a hysteria will not coalesce into a political movement.” With these words *The Philadelphia Record* dismisses the question of Woman Suffrage. By their light the *Record's* reliability as an authority on sociological questions may be gauged.

The movement for Woman Suffrage is far from being a fad in any sense of that term. If it is a “fad,” then the movement for the “Rights of Man” was also a “fad.”

The movement for the Rights of Woman is one of a great awakening to the fact that certain chains have held women in economic and political bondage, and that movement promises to burst those bonds—that is why the agitation and organization is not desirable to the so-called public press. The nature of woman's bondage will show why her present efforts are decried.

Woman has from time immemorial been considered the “inferior” of man, and forthwith been enslaved by him. It was the savage man who profited by convincing his women that they were such “inferiors” to him that they tended the lands, sheared the sheep, built the huts, tended the children and did a score of other things, while he was the “lord.” He followed the hunt, and smoked the pipe at the intervals when he felt like it. He got the best parts of the “roast” when the venison was ready for eating—the woman came after. Such is the origin of the notion of inferiority. It is a savage notion.

Trickling down the ages this notion has been transmitted from epoch to epoch. We have it flourishing, along with a mass of other hocus pocus, in our present era. And it is a very profitable notion for “our” employing class, as we shall show.

There are nearly 6,000,000 women employed in gainful occupations in the United States. In the over 300 different occupations noted in the Census Report we find women engaged in all but about a score. What does it signify? It would probably

not signify so much were it not for the well-known fact that the fable of “inferiority” works estimably well in the competition of woman with man in the workshop, in the store, or in the professions. There she is told by her employer that because she is a woman and, of course, “inferior,” she must not expect the same wage as a man, and she doesn’t get the same wage, either. Turn in what direction she may, she is compelled to suffer more exploitation than her brother. We need only mention one little instance—the demand of our women public school teachers for EQUAL PAY with the men. This degradation of her exists throughout industry, and she is compelled to endure it without having a say, a vote, in creating such intolerable conditions.

The problem of woman suffrage ends not here—it extends to the home, and affects the wife and the mother. The income of the husband and father is a matter of domestic concern. The matter of protecting and rearing her offspring is a matter of the same concern. Yet neither the wife or the mother has any voice at the ballot box. In all vicissitudes of life woman is affected, but while she is granted the right to “bear up” under all the suffering, she is not “equal” to the task of determining whether conditions are good or bad. Such a “fad” would be “burdensome” to her, and therefore the *Philadelphia Record* is little concerned about the matter.

Little concerned? Say rather much concerned. That newspaper, as all capitalist newspapers, is much alarmed that the “fad” will grow into permanent institution, and using the same weapons that oppressors of yore used at such stages of the game, it is now trying to ridicule the movement out of existence. But the same as in other days the oppressors failed, so will present opposition be made to undergo the same experience.

The Woman Suffrage question leads direct to the Socialist Question. Woman’s emancipation cannot be, without Man’s emancipation. And neither can be, without the overthrow of Capitalism and the inauguration of Socialism.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

Uploaded January 2010

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