

WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN OKLAHOMA

1890-1918

By

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PREFACE

Woman suffrage is now taken for granted by most individuals. Forgotten is the long struggle by women for political privileges. Today the woman's rights movement has changed emphasis to economic and status equality, but when Oklahoma was a territory and even during the first decades of statehood, its women sought political equality. This thesis is an exploration of their quest.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When the first woman suffrage appeal was made in Oklahoma Territory in 1890 only one state, Wyoming, had admitted women to political equality. That first suffrage plea was part of the testimony given by Mrs. Alice Williams of Missouri, spokesman for the Oklahoma Territorial Women's Christian Temperance Union to the first Legislature supporting laws on temperance, gambling, and woman suffrage.¹ Undoubtedly, many of the legislators suppressed smiles as they listened, and they most definitely made a joke of the hearing after the departure of the ladies.² They did make one concession; they gave the women the privilege of voting in school elections.

¹Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, eds., The History of Woman Suffrage, IV (6 vols.; Rochester, New York, 1902) pp. 886. Hereafter cited as: Anthony.

²Abbie B. Hillerman, History of Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Indian Territory, Oklahoma Territory, State of Oklahoma, (Sapulpa, Oklahoma 1925), p. 38. Hereafter cited as Hillerman. The women returned to the chamber just in time to see some legislative horse-play, as one of the gentlemen was presenting a stand-in for Mrs. Williams a bouquet of vegetables.

All the women who entered the Territory brought with them their experiences and interests; they obviously did not abandon their past but added new ties and interests. They shared in the building of homes, farms, and businesses. Overnight communities sprang into being with many of the accouterments of older towns; however, the frontier was ever with them. Newspapers were on sale the morning after the land run of April 22, 1889, but the early settlers had no local government. Faced with this problem, the pioneer Oklahomans improvised, and they, both men and women, formed temporary governments of consent. The women of Guthrie and Oklahoma City participated in the election of the first town officers; no one apparently thought to deny them the right.³ Yet the achievement of the right to vote based in law was slow in coming.

The woman suffrage movement in Oklahoma can be divided into five periods. These periods can be categorized by studying the means by which the women sought enfranchisement. From 1895 to 1899 the women sought their goal through the Territorial Legislature. However, the basic interests of legislators and territorial society in general involved the ever-present concerns with new land openings and the new

³Ira D. Mullinax, "Woman Suffrage in Oklahoma," Sturm's Statehood Magazine, VII (November, 1910), p. 59. Cited hereafter as Mullinax.

settlers arriving in the Territory. It seemed almost impossible to generate any extensive support for a drive for votes for women. By the time Colorado, Idaho and Utah had joined Wyoming in giving their women political equality the Oklahoma suffragists⁴ had been defeated a second time by their opponents in the legislature of 1899.

The coming of statehood provided the women with their next opportunity. Preparations were begun in 1904 to obtain the inclusion of woman suffrage in the constitution; however, the women again met defeat at the hands of the Constitutional Convention in 1907. Though bitterly disappointed, they did not entirely lose hope. Several leaders expressed the belief that if the question were submitted to the voters of Oklahoma, they would be accorded justice, and the vote.

During the third period, from 1908 to 1910, the women placed principal emphasis on having the legislature submit an amendment for popular approval, but to no avail. They then turned to the use of the initiative petition, but on

⁴Webster's New World Dictionary of American Language. College ed. (New York, 1960), p. 1457, defines suffragist as a person who believes in extending political suffrage, especially to women. Suffragist as used in this paper will refer to men and women who advocated woman suffrage. This group used conservative methods.

Suffragette is defined as a woman who militantly advocated female suffrage. The term will be used in reference to those women who were willing to use more extreme means to gain the franchise.

November 8, 1910, when an initiative measure was finally submitted to the electorate the men denied them the vote.

As a result of these defeats, only a remnant of the Oklahoma suffrage movement remained after 1910, but as the local movement faded, suffrage action expanded throughout the rest of the nation. Women of note everywhere began to join the suffrage movement, thereby making woman suffrage almost fashionable. There followed a re-awakening of interest in Oklahoma; the Oklahoma Suffrage Association, joined by the Federation of Women's Clubs and the politicians who were jumping on the bandwagon, pushed through an amendment proposal in March of 1917. The vote on the question came at the next general election, November 5, 1918, at which time the women were enfranchised by an amendment to the state constitution.

This, however, was not the last suffrage campaign in Oklahoma; there remained the fight for a special session of the legislature to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Governor James Brooks Adrian Robertson hesitated to call a special session because of the expense involved and the fear of possible additional actions of the Legislature in areas not related to the woman suffrage problem. The suffragists won their point, and Oklahoma ratified the amendment in February, 1920.

This paper will encompass the first four phases of the

woman suffrage movement in Oklahoma. The objective was to determine if suffrage was imposed on the women of the State by the successful propaganda activity of the national organizers or whether suffrage was basically the result of the desire and hard work of the women of Oklahoma. The Secretary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and chairman of campaigns and surveys, Mrs. Frank Shuler's report of the Oklahoma suffrage campaign of 1918 to the Board of NAWSA was bitter. Her account related a general lack of enthusiasm and cooperation by Oklahoma women, and stated that the burden of the campaign, both work and cost, fell on the national workers.⁵ Did the Oklahoma suffrage organization disintegrate? A full answer to this question perhaps could be found if papers of Oklahoma suffragists were available and if the Shuler papers in the Sophia Smith Collection could have been studied. No definitive answer can be given here.

Another complaint of the national suffrage workers about Oklahoma was its "Southern-ness." This made the campaign especially difficult. Was the Negro question in any way the key to the suffrage defeats of 1907 and 1910? Why was victory possible in 1918?

⁵Ida Husted Harper, ed., The History of Woman Suffrage, VI (New York, 1922), pp. 529-535. Hereafter cited as: Harper.

The arguments used for and against woman suffrage in Oklahoma newspapers throughout the period presented an area of interest. Did the emphasis of the arguments change? Did the editorial opinion change over the period of the suffrage movement? In particular the editorial comments of the Daily Oklahoman were followed in an effort to find answers to such questions.

The Oklahoma suffrage movement cannot be separated from the national movement nor from the circumstances under which it grew. It was a normal aspect of the society of the day that the first woman's organization in Oklahoma should have been a temperance union. So it was in 1890, just months after the opening of the Territory, that the women gathered in Guthrie to form a Territorial Association. Simultaneously the First Territorial Legislature was in session. Mrs. Williams' appeal for woman suffrage was but the first whisper of what was to come.

CHAPTER II

SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGNS 1895-1910;

THOSE WHICH FAILED

Requests from a few Oklahoma women interested in political equality brought the National American Woman Suffrage Organizer, Miss Laura Gregg, of Garnett, Kansas, into the Oklahoma Territory in 1895. It was both the beginning of her career as a suffrage organizer and the beginning of a formal suffrage movement in Oklahoma. She followed the routes of the Santa Fe and Rock Island Railroads in visiting various local communities.¹ Miss Gregg did not enter a vacuum; sentiment for woman suffrage was already present in Oklahoma. Mrs. Margaret Olive Rhodes, Misses Margaret and Rachel Rees of Guthrie, Mrs. Julia Woodworth and Mrs. Anna Laskey of Oklahoma City were willing pioneers for the cause in Oklahoma.

Miss Gregg located the advocates of woman suffrage through her lectures to various groups in the communities. The local Women's Christian Temperance Union most often pro-

¹Anthony, p. 886-887.

vided her with an entry. Church groups welcomed her as a speaker.² In her addresses she emphasized the importance of woman suffrage and other reforms, such as child labor laws and temperance. Following her appearances, she attempted to organize the interested members of her audience into local clubs. It was by following this procedure that Miss Gregg founded clubs at El Reno, Perry, Perkins, Enid, Kingfisher, Oklahoma City, and Guthrie.³ A typical announcement of such success appeared in the Daily Oklahoman on October 27, 1895, noting that an Equal Suffrage Association had been formed in Oklahoma City headed by a Dr. Wilson, president; Dr. Delos Walker, vice-president; Mr. L. B. Treadwell, secretary, and Mrs. R. A. Davis, treasurer.⁴ Also typical in Oklahoma of the first suffrage association was the fact that membership was composed of both men and women.

Miss Gregg brought her suffrage work of 1895 to culmination in a Territorial Convention called by Margaret Rees and the officers of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. In the call Miss Rees stressed that Wyoming's

²Kingfisher Weekly Free Press, October 24, 1895, p. 2. Miss Gregg was so closely associated with the W.C.T.U. that she was called a temperance lecturer touring the territory.

³The Woman's Journal, XXVI (November 30, 1895), p. 384.

⁴Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), October 27, 1895, p. 1. Dr. Wilson's first name was not recorded.

action of giving women the ballot had made suffrage of greater interest in the West. "The progressive spirit of Oklahoma will not permit her to lag behind her neighbors in this line of march."⁵ Here, as it would be in all future calls for the cause, resounded the faith in the sense of justice of men. The suffragists met in convention on November 11 and 12 at the Methodist Church in Guthrie with Miss Rees acting as chairman of the committee for local arrangements.

The delegates turned to the business of forming a permanent association. Laura Gregg acted as principal speaker, delivering such addresses as "The Need of the Hour," "A Reply to the Wrongs and Perils of Woman Suffrage," and "My Country Tis of Thee." Oklahomans also spoke. Mrs. M. E. Hensley of El Reno read a paper, "Woman and the Press." Dr. Minerva Lewis of Oklahoma City responded to the greeting given the delegates, and various Oklahoma women participated in a symposium on why particular groups of women workers, mothers and professionals need the ballot.⁶ A constitution for the Territorial Association was prepared, officers were

⁵El Reno Democrat, October 24, 1895, p. 2. The notice was signed Susan B. Anthony, president, Rachel Avery, corresponding secretary, Carrie Chapman Catt, chairman of committee of organization, Margaret Rees, 1014 Cleveland Avenue, Guthrie, chairman of committee of local arrangements. ;

⁶Oklahoma State Capital (Guthrie), November 4, 1895, p. 1.

elected, and a series of resolutions was passed by the delegates.⁷ Elected to office were Margaret Rees, president; Mrs. M. E. Hensley of El Reno, vice-president; Mrs. R. L. Keaton of Guthrie, corresponding secretary; Mr. J. P. Hinkel of Perkins, recording secretary; Mr. L. B. Treadwell of Oklahoma City, treasurer; Mrs. W. H. Keeney of Enid and Mrs. B. D. Garbell of Kingfisher, auditors; and Mrs. R. W. Southard of Perry, representative to the national convention.⁸ The resolutions passed by the suffragists reflected their determination to persuade the Territorial Legislature to extend equal suffrage to women. They even proposed [though they failed to do so] to drop their political and religious differences in working for the cause. Despite this failure the suffrage movement continued to expand.

The Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and El Reno Suffrage Clubs actively sought to advance the suffrage movement by organizing clubs in other communities. At one point the Guthrie suffragists adopted the goal of establishing a club in each town and township of Oklahoma as a means of creating the climate of opinion necessary to secure the desired legisla-

⁷Ibid., November 12, 1895, p. 1. The spelling was Hinkle in the article, though Hinkel is correct. J. P. Hinkel was the editor of the Perkins Journal.

⁸Guthrie Daily Leader, November 14, 1895, p. 4.

tion.⁹

The NAWSA did not leave the Oklahoma suffragists to their own devices; they continued to send speakers and organizers into the territory. In 1896 the most important of the suffrage organizers to visit the territory was Mrs. Julia B. Nelson of Red Wing, Minnesota. She arrived in late May. Her speaking tour began with a series of appearances in Canadian County, followed by a tour of Logan County. She finished her work in Oklahoma with a mass meeting of the suffragists of Logan County at Guthrie in July, at which time a county organization affiliated with NAWSA was established.¹⁰

Suffrage activity continued in Oklahoma. Margaret Rees, of Guthrie, led the way by preparing a suffrage bill for introduction in the Territorial Legislature in 1897. Representative Cassius M. Barnes introduced by request House Bill 36

⁹Ibid., May 5, 1896, p. 4; May 9, 1896, p. 2. The women became involved in current politics as evidenced by the Perry women organizing a McKinley-Flynn Club.

¹⁰Ibid., July 7, 1896, p. 1; July 8, 1896, p. 4. The officers selected for the county organization were: Mrs. Mary Herod, president; Mrs. A. H. Meal, corresponding secretary, Mrs. Jane Kelso, recording secretary. Other suffrage workers also were in the territory in 1896, but not always under the sponsorship of the NAWSA. Ibid., March 8, 1896, p. 3. Mrs. Julia M. Puritan spoke to the Guthrie Suffrage Club. Ibid., February 18, 1896, p. 4. In this paper there was an announcement that suffrage worker Emma Smith Devoe was to come but there was no further notice.

which proposed a change in election laws to allow woman suffrage. Similar bills, differing slightly in detail were subsequently introduced by other members of the Legislature. The suffragists collected and presented to the Legislature petitions from Noble, Canadian, Payne, Oklahoma, Lincoln, Blaine, Logan, Kay, Garfield, and Pawnee Counties.¹¹ The Legislature granted the suffragists hearings: Mrs. Laura M. Johns of Kansas appeared as one of the principal witnesses before the Council.¹²

A heated debate occurred in the House. After the completion of the suffrage hearings D. S. Rose, the arch foe of woman suffrage, proposed that the question should be postponed indefinitely. His motion was intended to shut off debate, since he felt that the suffrage cause had been fully presented by Mrs. Johns. Moreover, he claimed that women would not elevate politics to a new moral height; they were governed by the same ambitions and feelings as men. The

¹¹ Oklahoma, Journal of the Council Proceedings of the Fourth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma (Guthrie, 1897), pp. 768, 784. Hereafter cited as Council Journal 1897.

¹² El Reno News, May 28, 1897, p. 4; April 2, 1897, p. 4. Mrs. Johns was referred to as Mrs. Eugenie St. Johns of Kansas. The NAWSA organizer from Kansas was Mrs. Laura M. Johns. Apparently Mrs. St. Johns was in El Reno in 1896 and it was to this same Mrs. Johns they refer to as swooping down on the legislature of 1897.

debate was filled with heat and the bitterness which came from conflicting personalities.¹³ Suffrage was defeated in the House, the Populist members fighting for the idea all the way.¹⁴

The suffragists did not give up. They held their annual convention in Perry in November of 1897. Laura Johns of Kansas was again the main speaker. It was a quiet convention. The only notice appeared in the Perry newspaper as a call for the interested to come and select their delegates to the convention.¹⁵ The officers elected at the meeting were Mrs. Celia Z. Titus of Perry, president; Margaret Rees of Guthrie, corresponding secretary; Sarah L. Bosworth, recording secretary; Eva A. Crosby, treasurer.¹⁶

The following year was a far busier one for the suffragists. They were joined in their work by Miss Mary G. Hay, a national suffrage organizer from Indiana, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, chairman of organization of NAWSA, and Laura

¹³Oklahoma State Capital, February 18, 1897, p. 1; February 19, 1897, p. 1. The resolution was indefinitely postponed.

¹⁴Mullinax, p. 59. In the article was a statement that woman suffrage was passed by the House in 1897 and buried in the Council. No support was found for this statement.

¹⁵Perry Enterprise-Times, November 9, 1897, p. 1.

¹⁶Anthony, p. 887.

Gregg who returned at the end of the year. Miss Hay did the ground work in reviving interest in suffrage in September and October of 1898. It was late in October when she was joined by Mrs. Catt, who toured the territory in the interest of suffrage. This activity ended in a Territorial Suffrage Convention during which plans were laid for a new onslaught on the legislature.

In October Margaret Rees, as corresponding secretary, called the annual meeting of the Territorial Association for November 9 and 10 in Oklahoma City at the Probate Court Room of the Post Office Building.¹⁷ The suffrage clubs of Hennessey, Guthrie, Perry, Yukon, Edmond, El Reno, and Oklahoma City were represented. The convention was dominated by Mrs. Catt, who delivered the major addresses. Mary Hays presided at the meetings; there was no explanation in the newspaper accounts of why Mrs. Titus, the president elected at the previous suffrage convention did not chair the convention. A new constitution was discussed and adopted which possibly suggests a break in the movement since a constitution had been written in 1895; yet individuals who had been present at the convention of 1895 were also present at this one. The officers elected were Mrs. Margaret Olive Rhodes, a long time member of the movement, president; Mrs. Jenkins

¹⁷Daily Oklahoman, October 27, 1898, p. 3.

of Guthrie, vice-president; Margaret Rees, a pioneer of the Oklahoma movement, corresponding secretary; Mrs. W. M. Newby of Yukon, recording secretary; Mrs. Minnie Storm of Oklahoma City, treasurer; and continuing in her position as member of the national committee, Mrs. Southard of Perry.¹⁸

Among the speakers at the convention were Mrs. Anna Laskey, Oklahoma City, whose topic was "Taxation without Representation" and Mrs. Jenkins, Guthrie, who spoke on the "Women and the Church." The high point of the convention came during the concluding evening when the delegates heard Mrs. Catt and Sidney Clarke, prominent civic leader of Oklahoma City. Sidney Clarke (of the Fusion ticket) promised to use his influence as a member of the legislature to establish suffrage in Oklahoma.¹⁹ He had worked with Miss Susan B. Anthony in the Kansas campaign and pledged that he would continue to work for the cause in Oklahoma.

Laura Gregg remained in Oklahoma to assist in opening a suffrage headquarters in Guthrie. Both Miss Hay and Mrs. Catt departed after the convention to return when the Territorial Legislature convened.²⁰ Suffrage work in the terri-

¹⁸Ibid., November 10, 1898, p. 3; November 11, 1898, p. 3.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Anthony, p. 888.

tory did not stop with the organization of a suffrage lobby, for again the suffragists throughout the territory prepared petitions to influence legislators. The number of petitions submitted did not inundate the assembly, but certainly did prove there was an active interest in woman suffrage in Oklahoma. The woman suffrage lobby, which at times numbered some thirty women, was the most active interest group during the session. There was a fear expressed on the part of the opponents that suffrage might slip through since there was no organized opposition.²¹

Suffrage measures were introduced in the House by Jesse C. Wails, Populist, of Cleveland County and Charles F. McElrath, Republican of Garfield County.²² James P. Gandy of Woods County was a principal advocate of suffrage in the Council. Councilor Frank A. Hutto, Republican, arranged for a joint session of the suffrage committees to hear the suffragists. Mrs. Jenkins, president of the Guthrie club, introduced Mrs. Catt who spoke for two hours for their cause. However, the vote on the suffrage question did not come until the final week of the session at which time it took no more than fifteen minutes to be approved in the House by a

²¹Enid Weekly Republican, November 2, 1905, p. 7. †

²²House Journal, Oklahoma Territorial Legislature, 1899, pp. 26, 41.

vote of fifteen to nine.²³

In the Council the story was completely different. To expedite legislation a Sifting Committee, composed of Abram H. Houston, Harrison E. Haven, and Felix L. Winkler, was established to determine which bills were to come before the chamber. Two of the three were opponents of woman suffrage, but Councilor Houston of Guthrie offered a minority report of the committee which placed woman suffrage at the head of the list of bills to be considered.²⁴ His report was defeated when Councilor A. J. Biddison of Pawnee raised a point of order. The suffragists were further harmed by the failure of Sidney Clarke, their friend, to champion their cause. Instead, he condemned the Sifting Committee for its failure to include legislation of vital interest to his constituents.²⁵ Councilor Gandy and other advocates of woman suffrage made a number of attempts to bring the bill to the floor. At one point the advocates attached woman suffrage to a request to change the boundaries of Payne and Noble counties. Grandy further tried to establish woman suffrage by striking out the word male in the election laws. His

²³Oklahoma State Capital, March 4, 1899, p. 1; March 5, 1899, p. 1.

²⁴Daily Oklahoman, March 9, 1899, p. 2.

²⁵El Reno Democrat, March 16, 1899, p. 4.

proposal was rejected. The suffrage bill could not be taken out of the hands of the Sifting Committee, so it did not come up for a final vote in the Council. Many observed that the suffrage proposal would have been passed had it been brought out of committee.²⁶

Mrs. Catt attributed defeat to betrayal by a friend, [Sidney Clarke] and the combined efforts of the anti-suffragists and the Saloonkeepers League. After the suffrage bill had passed the House a telegram was sent to the members of the Council by the anti-suffragists of Massachusetts asking what could be done to defeat suffrage. It was also at this time, according to Mrs. Catt, that an agent of the Saloonkeeper League appeared. Mrs. Catt concluded her account of the campaign with, "There was no defeat, but a glorious victory. Woman suffrage is a live, burning question in Oklahoma today."²⁷

It was not a live, burning question, and the suffragists of Oklahoma were demoralized by the defeat. The minutes of the annual conventions of the NAWSA contain records of contributions by individuals of Oklahoma, so a core of interest-

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Carrie Chapman Catt, "Oklahoma," The Woman's Journal, XXVI (May 13, 1899), pp. 150-151.

ed individuals remained, but hardly a united movement.²⁸

Laura Gregg returned to the territory five years later, in +
 March, 1904, to aid those interested in organizing an assoc-
 iation to put woman suffrage in the constitution when
 statehood came. She found few remnants of the old organi-
 zation since many of the members had moved away. Again, as
 in 1895, the WCTU proved a good medium through which to lo-
 cate suffragists. Mrs. Julia Woodworth and Mrs. Katie Pat-
 terson arranged speaking engagements for Miss Gregg in Okla-
 homa City. She lectured before the WCTU, church groups, and
 the Federation of Women's Clubs. At the end of eight months
 of work she was joined by Dr. Anna Shaw, NAWSA's president,
 for a lecture tour of the territory.²⁹ A suffrage conven-
 tion was held in Oklahoma City on December 15 and 16 at the
 completion of the lecture tour.

Dr. Shaw presided at the first session of the conven-
 tion which opened with a number of greetings from prominent
 individuals. A stand-in offered greetings from the mayor.

²⁸ National American Woman Suffrage Association, Pro-
 ceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual Convention of the
 National American Woman Suffrage Association (Philadelphia,
 1900), pp. 85, 97; Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Annual
 Convention of the National American Suffrage Association
 (Warren, Ohio, 1901), p. 127. The reports from Oklahoma
 Territory show Margaret Rhodes of Guthrie, president and
 Margaret Rees, corresponding secretary in 1900 and 1901.

²⁹ Daily Oklahoman, November 20, 1904, p. 5.

Mrs. Cora Hammett welcomed the ladies for the WCTU; Roy E. Stafford, editor of the Daily Oklahoman, spoke for the press, and Mrs. Katie Patterson welcomed the suffragists on behalf of the Oklahoma City Suffrage Club. Dr. Shaw had scheduled a discussion of the Hamilton Bill, the proposed enabling act which included a provision limiting suffrage on account of sex, for a session of the Convention. Just prior to the meeting word was received that the disliked suffrage provision had been removed. Instead of the Hamilton Bill as the topic, Dr. Shaw compared Oklahoma and Wyoming men on the issue of woman suffrage. At the final session she delivered her standard lecture, "The Fate of the Republic."³⁰

A new territorial organization was constituted with many of the old advocates of the suffrage in Oklahoma again elected to office: Mrs. Kate Biggers of Chickasha, president; Julia Woodworth of Oklahoma City, first vice-president; Mrs. Anna Laskey of Oklahoma City, corresponding secretary; and Miss Margaret Rees of Guthrie, treasurer. Among the goals established at the last session of the convention was a resolution to work for an enabling act uniting the Oklahoma and Indian territories as a single state, a state in which the laws would not restrict suffrage on account of

³⁰Ibid., December 16, 1904, p. 5; December 17, 1904, p. 2. The provision of the Hamilton Bill which denied suffrage because of sex had been a major topic of Gregg's lectures.

sex, race, color or previous condition of servitude. Another of their goals was to have laws which provided both parents with equal custody of the children.

Even though Congress did not pass the enabling act in 1904, several measures were introduced in the Territorial Legislature calling for a constitutional convention. Each of these proposals included provisions for limited suffrage; which excluded women. Mrs. Laskey reported to NAWSA that it required the cooperative action of the Territorial Suffrage Association and WCTU to defeat the measures.³¹

Dr. Frances Woods of South Dakota joined Laura Gregg in April of 1905 in organizing a suffrage pressure group which hopefully might influence the Constitutional Convention when it was convened. Dr. Woods and Miss Gregg appeared before as many organizations as possible. Miss Gregg spoke to the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Grand Army of the Republic encampment at Lawton, and various meetings arranged through the WCTU.³² Dr. Woods addressed the Press Association and a meeting of the Twin-Territorial Labor Federation and the Farmer's Union. They succeeded in organizing new suffrage clubs at Tecumseh, Durant, McCloud, and Muskogee.

³¹National American Woman Suffrage Association, Proceeding of the Thirty-Seventh Annual National Woman Suffrage Association, p. 125.

³²Ibid., pp. 126-127.

Support for woman suffrage spread in 1905. The Socialist Party included it in its platform.³³ This was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until the collapse of the Oklahoma Socialist Party during World War I. The WCTU devoted one issue of its official newspaper, The Oklahoma Messenger, to woman suffrage.³⁴ The primary interest of the WCTU was prohibition, and the reason it supported woman suffrage was because of the belief that women with the ballot would vote for prohibition.

The Oklahoma suffragists met in convention on October 26 and 27, 1905, at Chickasha. The meeting was attended not only by suffragists but by representatives of civic clubs, which swelled the number at the meeting to two hundred.³⁵ The major speeches were given by Dr. Frances Woods. Judge J. L. Brown discussed whether the initiative and referendum should be in the constitution. In addition to the resolutions for equal rights passed by the delegates, there was a vote of approval for President Roosevelt's actions in mediating a settlement between Russia and Japan. Mrs. Kate Biggers was retained as president of the association as were a

³³ Daily Oklahoman, February 22, 1905, p. 5.

³⁴ Ibid., April 16, 1905, p. 6. The edition of the Oklahoma Messenger was referred to in the Daily Oklahoman and the Minutes of NAWSA's Convention of 1905.

³⁵ Lawton-News Republican, November 2, 1905, p. 7.

number of the other officers.³⁶

The women redoubled their work for suffrage in 1906 in anticipation of the Constitutional Convention. Dr. Woods was recalled from Oklahoma but she was replaced by another national worker, Mrs. Ida Porter Boyer, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.³⁷ The Oklahoma Suffrage Association again opened a suffrage headquarters in Guthrie, and Mrs. Boyer was placed in charge. She proved to be a most able ally of Mrs. Biggers in organizing the suffrage lobby. As part of their activities, they organized speakers' bureaus and arranged for distributing suffrage articles to the state press.

After the enabling act was passed, the political tempo in the territory picked up. The Twin Territorial Labor Federation and Farmers Union sent out a questionnaire to the prospective members of the Constitutional Convention soliciting their views on a number of proposals, one of which was

³⁶Chickasha Daily Express, October 27, 1905. The officers of the Oklahoma Suffrage Association were Mrs. Kate Biggers, Chickasha, president; Mrs. Julia Woodworth, Oklahoma City, 1st vice-president; Mrs. Minnie Kemp Bailey, Enid, 2nd vice-president; Mrs. Ina Moore, Wynnewood, recording secretary; Mrs. Cleo Harris, Chickasha, corresponding secretary; Miss Margaret Rees, Guthrie, treasurer; Mrs. Mary B. Green, Chandler, Mrs. Jessie Parks, Enid and Mrs. Hattie Sherman, McCloud, auditors. Representatives of the WCTU, Federation of Women's Clubs, etc. were present.

³⁷Daily Oklahoman, November 3, 1906, p. 5.

for universal suffrage.³⁸ A majority of those answering the questionnaire replied favorably.³⁹

The election results for the delegates to the Convention were twelve Republicans, ninety-nine Democrats, and one Independent. The Charles N. Haskell-William H. Murray faction controlled the Democrats; the Republicans were led by Henry Asp of Guthrie. The Haskell-Murray group strategy for the convention included the decision that Murray would chair the convention.⁴⁰

Two days after the Constitutional Convention opened the annual Suffrage Association Convention convened in Oklahoma City with Kate Biggers presiding. Perry, Norman, Enid, Stillwater, Chickasha, and Oklahoma City were represented. The suffragists selected officers for the Association and prepared to push their cause at the Constitutional Convention then in session.⁴¹ The situation would be made diffi-

³⁸ Ibid., August 3, 1906, p. 2.

³⁹ Irvin Hurst, The Forty-Sixth Star: A History of Oklahoma's Constitutional Convention and Early Statehood (Oklahoma City, 1957), p. 14. Hereafter cited as Hurst.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹ Daily Oklahoman, November 23, 1906, p. 7. Officers elected were: Kate Biggers, president; Mrs. Minnie K. Bailey, Enid, first vice-president; Mrs. Francis Carter, Guthrie, second vice-president, Mrs. Ida Ward Norwell, Wynnewood, recording secretary; Mrs. Jessie Livingston Parks, Enid, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Anna Laskey, Oklahoma City treasurer.

cult for them by the leadership of the Convention.

Both Charles N. Haskell, floor leader of the Democratic majority, and William H. Murray, presiding officer of the Convention, were opposed to woman suffrage. Murray recounted in his memoirs that it was Mrs. Haskell who determined her husband's stand on suffrage. Peter Hanraty, labor union leader from McAlester was one of the defenders of woman suffrage; Robert L. Owen, Muskogee, was the most prestigious advocate; and Henry Asp, the leading Republican, sided with the pro-suffragists. The suffragists believed at the outset of the convention that a majority of the delegates were pledged to their cause.

The first suffrage hearing before the Constitution Convention was on December 11, 1906, when the Suffrage Committee devoted an entire afternoon to hear the women. Mrs. Biggers directed the women in their presentations. Among those who spoke were Mrs. R. W. Southard of Perry, Mrs. Anna Laskey of Oklahoma City, Mrs. Frances Woods of Chickasha, Mrs. Ida Porter Boyer, and Maggie Rhodes of Guthrie, Mrs. Minnie Bailey of Enid, and a paper was read for Rachel Rees.⁴² Delegate Robert L. Owen also spoke, basing his argument for

⁴²Oklahoma State Capital, December 12, 1906, p. 1, 3.
Mrs. Dr. Francis Woods was not the national suffrage organizer.

suffrage as to its being an abstract right.⁴³ Kate Biggers stressed that the ballot in the hands of women would improve the state and would provide self-protection for women workers. She also pointed to the Kansas suffrage experience as one from which Oklahoma could learn much. She declared that if the native born Kansans could do so, they now would give woman the ballot, but they had lost control of the state politics because of the influx of immigrants. Mrs. Southard asked for suffrage on the grounds that it would increase children's respect for their mothers. During the hearing, Republican delegate Rev. J. H. N. Cobb proposed that the rights of suffrage should not be denied women of twenty-one years of age despite their previous condition of political servitude. His proposal was pushed aside.⁴⁴

The women continued to work. Arrangements were made for people from outside the state to appear for the cause. Woman suffrage became an issue debated throughout the Territory. At the Oklahoma Territorial Teachers' Association meeting in Shawnee, there was an attempt to pass a suffrage resolution, but the advocates failed.⁴⁵ The Socialists

⁴³Daily Oklahoman, December 12, 1906, p. 1.

⁴⁴Oklahoma State Capital, December 13, 1906, p. 3.

⁴⁵Shawnee Daily Herald, December 29, 1906, p. 1.

again endorsed woman suffrage.

On January 8, 1907, the Convention acted as a committee of the whole to hear a second body of testimony for woman suffrage. Alva Adams, former Governor of Colorado, and Laura Clay appeared.⁴⁶ Adams declared that woman suffrage was a success in Colorado, and that it had bettered the political conditions. He claimed suffrage for women was a matter of justice. When Murray proposed a rising vote of thanks to Adams, the women who packed the galleries stood as one. Robert L. Owen continued his argument that the extension of suffrage was an expansion of democracy. Laura Clay followed him with a brief appeal for suffrage on behalf of Southern Women's Suffrage Association, claiming that woman suffrage was a solution to the race problem.⁴⁷ She also stressed that suffrage was essential for the working woman.

So the battle went in December and January while the Convention was in session. Woman suffrage petitions flowed into the convention along with a deluge of prohibition petitions. In January a memorial pamphlet was presented to the members of the Convention. The Guthrie Leader commented

⁴⁶Oklahoma, Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of Oklahoma, November 20, 1906 to November 16, 1907. (Guthrie, Oklahoma, 1907), p. 147. Hereafter cited as Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention.

⁴⁷Oklahoma State Register, January 10, 1907, p. 4. †

that "the memorial was an impressive document, but despite its logic and legal principles, the two sexes were created and united in one common destiny with man the champion and protector of women."⁴⁸ With the financial assistance of lawyer, banker, and politician, Robert L. Owen, the suffragists held a public meeting in the Brooks Opera House to promote their cause.

The suffrage debate reached its high point February 5, 6 and 7 in the Constitutional Convention. Suffrage was the special order of business. On the 5th Peter Hanraty presented petitions with some 24,000 signatures of Oklahoma labor union members asking for woman suffrage.⁴⁹ Hanraty proposed to amend the report of the suffrage committee to include woman suffrage. His proposal was laid on the table by a vote of 37 to 54. Timothy J. Leahy of Pawhuska then proposed to amend the suffrage report to insure the vote for Indian men, and to his amendment Walter Ledbetter of Ardmore added the words "citizens of the United States." At that point the pro-suffragists went into action. Hanraty proposed to strike out the word "male" in the Leahy amendment. David S. Rose of Blackwell obtained the floor and vehemently argued

⁴⁸ Guthrie Daily Leader, January 16, 1907, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention, pp. 206-211. The Convention resolved itself into a Committee of the whole and debated the suffrage report on February 5, 6, and 7.

against woman suffrage, stating that it was against the law of nature. Rev. Henry Cloud answered Rose's arguments, saying that women should have the vote because they would represent a force to purify politics. Hanraty, E. O. McCance and F. E. Herring also argued in favor of the amendment.⁵⁰

The afternoon session opened with the opponents holding the floor. Haskell quoted at length from the Bible in his argument against woman suffrage. George Henshaw, chairman of the Suffrage Committee, declared that woman suffrage was a socialist plot which would lead to the doctrine of free love. Charles Pittman and David Hogg, along with others, also spoke against woman suffrage. On the completion of their arguments they proposed that the committee's report be accepted with only the Leahy amendment. The advocates of woman suffrage resisted the move with William Dalton of Broken Arrow gaining the floor to try to delay a final vote by holding the floor until the Convention adjourned. Work on the suffrage report was not completed and so was continued until the following day, though it seemed that woman suffrage was dead.

Woman suffrage suffered two more defeats the following day. The committee of the whole accepted the section of the

⁵⁰Guthrie Daily Leader, February 5, 6, 7, 1907. The suffrage debate of the Convention was recorded in these issues.

suffrage report which denied the Legislature the power to extend suffrage but gave it the power to further limit suffrage. Matthew Kane, Democrat and later Oklahoma Supreme Court Judge, proposed that woman suffrage should be submitted to the voters as a separate item at the time of the vote on the constitution. This proposal was defeated by a 50-37 vote.⁵¹

Despite this, Kate Biggers let it be known that the women had not given up their fight for political equality and that Oklahoma would lead the southern states on this issue.⁵² Suffrage was not dead in the Convention. In March a committee was instructed to prepare a provision which would give women the ballot in school elections. After the measure was ready, the Convention alternately tabled it and called it back for discussion. It was during this period that the southern delegates were aroused by the number of Negro women registering to vote in the April school election in Guthrie. Murray took this occasion to state that only bad women and Negroes would vote, while the good women would stay home.⁵³

⁵¹Weekly Oklahoma State Capital, February 16, 1907, p. 1; Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 7, 1907, p. 1.

⁵²Guthrie Daily Leader, February 11, 1907, p. 4.

⁵³Daily Oklahoman, March 13, 1907, p. 1.

Finally the Convention decided by a narrow margin to give women the right to vote in school elections.

The suffragists were disappointed in the work of the Convention, but they did not quit. They closed their headquarters in Guthrie and opened one in Oklahoma City where they planned to work for the election of those candidates who had befriended them. They wished to demonstrate that to favor woman suffrage was not a political liability.⁵⁴ A number of their friends were elected. On his own initiative, Perry A. Ballard, a member of the First State Legislature, introduced a proposal for woman suffrage which was quickly buried in committee.⁵⁵

Suffrage activity was sparse during the remainder of 1907 and early 1908. The Oklahoma Suffrage Association held its annual convention at which time Kate Biggers was re-elected president. Mrs. Biggers during this period wrote a suffrage column for the Marlow Review. However, most of the suffrage activity was in the Oklahoma City Club under the

⁵⁴ National American Woman Suffrage Association, Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association. pp. 133-35. Hereafter cited as Fortieth Annual Convention.

⁵⁵ Oklahoma, Journal of the House of Representatives Regular Session. First Legislature of Oklahoma, 1907-1908 (Guthrie, Oklahoma), pp. 99-102, 165. The bill proposed by P. A. Ballard was an act to give women the right to vote for the presidential electors.

leadership of Mrs. Adelia Stephens. The Association not only encouraged the women of the city to vote in school elections, it also worked to include a clause in the city charter for women to be on the library board. It was the Oklahoma City Suffrage Club that sent questionnaires to all the candidates for office in 1908 to determine their position on suffrage. They believed the answers to their inquiries were favorable. A new headquarters was opened in Oklahoma City to start the agitation for the legislature to submit a suffrage amendment to the people.⁵⁶

When the state Legislature convened in 1909, a woman suffrage lobby was present. Separate suffrage measures were introduced in the House and Senate. Representative W. B. Anthony introduced by request an amendment to section two of the constitution on January 27, which provided that no one would be denied the vote on account of sex.⁵⁷ Senator P. J. Yeager of Tulsa had introduced a suffrage proposal earlier in the Senate.⁵⁸ Hearings were granted the suffragists, and

⁵⁶ Fortieth Annual Convention, pp. 133-35.

⁵⁷ Oklahoma, Journal of the House of the Regular Session of the Second Legislature of Oklahoma, January 5, 1909 through March 12, 1909. (Tulsa: 1909) p. 191. Hereafter cited as Journal of the House 1909.

⁵⁸ Oklahoma, Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the Second Legislature of the State of Oklahoma. January 5, 1909 through March 12, 1909. (Tulsa: 1909) p. 41. Hereafter cited as: Proceedings of Senate 1909.

Kate Gordon of Louisiana was the chief spokesman for the suffragists in the Senate hearing. The suffrage petitions were not well received in the Legislature. In the House a petition was torn by one of the members who removed the pages with the names of his constituents and then the Speaker referred the petition to the Committee on Geological Survey. The House bill was reported unfavorably by committee, and Senator Yeager's measure fell by the wayside when he moved to amend the report of the suffrage committee to do pass. Following this, a debate erupted in the Senate which led to a vote of 21-15 against the motion with Senator Reuban Roddie of Ada leading the opponents.⁵⁹

As a result of this defeat, the women turned to the preparation of an initiative petition. In the middle of April they began to circulate the petitions. In her suffrage column, Mrs. Biggers asked for volunteers to assist in her work. Anna Laskey was charged with the collection of signatures in Oklahoma City, while Dr. Ruth Gay, Oklahoma City, worked in fund raising to finance the work. Mrs. Adelia Stephens traveled throughout the state carrying suffrage petitions to the most unfriendly areas. The suffragists worked under the trying conditions of having no money

⁵⁹Oklahoma State Capital, February 19, 1909, p. 5.

and insufficient workers.⁶⁰ Some of the women were forced to abandon the work because of home responsibilities while others quit because of bad experiences in collecting signatures. During this time, the Socialists aided the suffragists in circulating the petitions. The suffragists originally planned that the petition should have the required number of signatures by June 12; however, they missed that day by almost six months.

Finally, the petition with 38,586 signatures was ready to file with the Secretary of State, Bill Cross, on January 6, 1910. He refused to accept the petition from the suffrage delegation because the women had no political existence.⁶¹ The ladies were rescued by the Secretary of the State Federation of Labor, J. Luther Langston, who submitted it and accepted the receipt for the petition. Shortly after the petition was filed, Senator Roddie of Ada challenged the validity of it on the grounds there were several fraudulent signatures on it. Thereupon, three prominent lawyers, Judge J. L. Brown, Republican, J. B. A. Robertson, Democrat, and

⁶⁰Daily Oklahoman, April 18, 1909, p. 9; April 18, 1909, pp. 1, 5; Harper, p. 525. Dr. Ruth Gay raised \$900 and to it Miss Laura Clay contributed \$300, Henry and Alice Blackwell \$400 to finance the initiative petition.

⁶¹Oklahoma State Capital, January 7, 1910, p. 3. The committee was composed of Mrs. Kate Biggers, Dr. Ruth Gay, Mrs. Jence Feuquay.

Patrick Nagle, Socialist, volunteered their legal services to the suffragists. A hearing was held by Secretary Cross on January 25, at the end of which Cross declared the petition valid. Senator Roddie served notice that he would appeal the decision to the State Supreme Court.⁶² He declared that the court would uphold him and if it did not, he was certain that there would be no special election on woman suffrage. He went on to state that his actions were to protect the good women of Oklahoma who did not want to vote nor would vote. The suffragists and Socialists attacked Roddie for this statement. The women should have taken note of his statement that there would be no special election. It was true, Governor Haskell was no friend of suffrage, and when the favorable decision of the court was handed down in June, he did not call a special election, for woman suffrage, though there were special elections called for the purpose of the "grandfather clause" and the capitol location. Woman suffrage was but one of the several state questions on the ballot at the general election in November, 1910. The local option measure offered as a modification of the state's prohibition policies probably divided the energies of the women, many directing their primary effort to defeating this meas-

⁶²Guthrie Daily Leader, January 11, 1910, p. 1; Oklahoma State Capital, January 26, 1910, p. 5.

ure. Another factor which perhaps weakened the suffrage campaign was the announced candidacy of Mrs. Biggers for the position of Commissioner of Charities and Corrections on the Republican ticket.⁶³

The suffragists were certain that the State Supreme Court would uphold their petition, so they opened headquarters at the Lee Huckins Hotel in Oklahoma City. Ida Porter Boyer acted as secretary. An executive committee meeting was called to plot the campaign, they sought to organize the Suffrage Association on the pattern of a political party. However, their ambition was not achieved because their efforts were sporadic. Street meetings were planned to arouse interest in suffrage; suffragists were to speak on street corners, from soap boxes, wagons, and cars to all who would listen. There were a few such meetings but not the number they planned. Some of the ardent Oklahoma suffragists along with Ida Porter Boyer, Adelia Stephens and Mary Barber toured the state. These women spoke to civic groups, at farm picnics, and at county fairs. Mrs. Bailey and Miss Nourse of Enid tried to expand their suffrage organization and educate the voters of the danger of the silent vote. In the last month of the campaign Miss Kate Gordon of the Southern

⁶³Daily Oklahoman, June 24, 1910, p. 15.

Women Suffrage Association stumped the state for suffrage. She was aided in her speaking tour by C. L. Daugherty, Commissioner of Labor and J. Luther Langston, Secretary of the State Federation of Labor. On the completion of some sixty appearances, Miss Gordon said that there would have been no question of victory if the prohibitionists had been as much aid to woman suffrage as the labor unions.⁶⁴ *

On November 8, the women were at the polls handing out literature against local option and for woman suffrage. When the results came in the women found they had lost 128,928 to 88,808. Only three counties, Major, Dewey, and Ellis had voted for woman suffrage.⁶⁵ No leader of the Oklahoma suffrage movement was from that area, and no evidence was found to show there was an active suffrage movement in that region of the state. In Garfield, Logan, Oklahoma, and Canadian Counties, where there had been a strong movement,

⁶⁴Ibid., December 25, 1910, p. 15.

⁶⁵Oklahoma, Oklahoma Votes, 1907-1962. Bureau of Government Research. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1964), p. 8. Dewey, Major and Ellis cast Republican majorities in the Congressional election of 1910. There was also a sizable Socialist vote in those counties. Perhaps it was Republican and Socialist sentiment which caused them to vote for woman suffrage in 1910.

the question was soundly defeated.⁶⁶

The Oklahoma suffragists faded into the background for a period of years, with only the most ardent maintaining ties with the local and national movement. A few women succeeded in bringing the issue forward again because of changed conditions in 1917-1918.

⁶⁶Oklahoma, Returns of General Election Held in the State of Oklahoma, November 8, 1910. Initiative Petition No. 3. State Question No. 8.

CHAPTER III

WOMAN SUFFRAGE 1911-1918;

VICTORY IN OKLAHOMA

If 1896 to 1910 can be referred to as the years of the doldrums of the national suffrage movement, the period 1911 to 1914 certainly represented the doldrums of the Oklahoma movement.¹ However, a few of the suffragists, desiring to keep the Association alive formed a suffrage board. Mrs. Biggers, weary after seven years in office, refused the presidency but accepted the position of treasurer.² No activities of the local suffrage board were reported in the Daily Oklahoman during this period, although it did contain a wide coverage of the more colorful actions of suffragists and suffragettes throughout the nation.

Oklahoma women became more active in public affairs;

¹Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle ; The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge, 1959), p. 248-252. Hereafter cited as Flexner.

²Harper, p. 527. Presidents of the Oklahoma Suffrage Board were: 1911-12 Dr. Ruth A. Gay; 1913 Mrs. Cora B. Gotchy; 1914 Mrs. Jence Feuguay; 1915-19 Mrs. Adelia Stephens.

they could hold certain public office, but they could not vote. Women served as county superintendents of schools, court clerks, and registrars of deeds. In 1911 one of the most hotly contested campaigns was in Hominy where a Mother's Club decided that a woman should be on the school board; Mrs. Alf Brown, their choice, was narrowly defeated.³

Certainly not all Oklahoma women were suffrage supporters. In 1912 when women had the vote in six western states, Mrs. C. W. Hunnington of Luther, Oklahoma, stated in a letter to the editor of the Daily Oklahoman, that it was man's prerogative to rule.⁴ As late as 1913 Mrs. Fred Sutton of Oklahoma City refused the Progressive Party's nomination for the school board because she was not a suffragette.⁵ In 1909 the Federation of Women's Clubs had refused to debate woman suffrage because it was too controversial, but in 1913 they devoted their column in the Daily Oklahoman to presenting the two sides of the issue.⁶ The division of opinion

³Daily Oklahoman, June 8, 1911, p. 8. Mrs. Alf Brown was the wife of an Osage Chief. She opposed Oscar Petty in the election. The women turned out in force on election day, however, Mrs. Brown was defeated by forty-three votes.

⁴Ibid., January 7, 1912, p. 16.

⁵Ibid., February 19, 1913, p. 5.

⁶Ibid., September 12, 1909, p. 5; August 17, 1913.

and the changing of opinion were true not only of Oklahoma but also of the nation.

There were signs of new interest in suffrage in Oklahoma in 1914. Many of the people of Oklahoma agreed with President Woodrow Wilson's stand that woman suffrage was a matter for the states to decide.⁷ The Progressive Party of Oklahoma included a proposal for an initiative petition for equal suffrage in its platform that year, but nothing came of it.⁸

The most interesting suffrage proposal was by state senator elect William M. Bickel of Alva. Through a tortuous process he would have initiated woman suffrage through a constitutional amendment. The amendment, if approved by the men, would do nothing more than permit women to vote on whether they wanted suffrage. An added catch to this proposal was that a majority of all women citizens must vote for suffrage, not merely a majority of those voting.⁹ He demonstrated his earnestness by submitting his proposal to the Senate on January 16, 1915. Mrs. Jence Feuguay, President of the State Suffrage Board, protested Bickel's proposal

⁷Ibid., February 6, 1914, p. 6.

⁸Harlow's Weekly, VI (March 21, 1914), p. 5.

⁹Daily Oklahoman, December 13, 1914, p. 1, January 17, 1915, p. 1.

and with the assistance of Democratic State Senators Clarence Davis of Sapulpa and C. L. Edmondson of Chandler introduced a more acceptable proposal for suffrage.¹⁰ In addition to the Davis-Edmondson amendment Oklahoma's Secretary of State J. L. Lyon also suggested a new election law which included woman suffrage. It must also be noted that his wife was a suffragist.¹¹

Nothing came of Bickel's amendment. He did not originate the concept of let the women decide the issue of the franchise. William H. Murray had made a similar proposal during the Constitutional Convention. They were but two of the number that proposed to let the women decide.¹²

In 1916, after five years of dormancy there were signs of life in the Oklahoma Suffrage Association. Mrs. Adelia Stephens, the current president of the Oklahoma Suffrage Association, announced that it would act to provide more than moral support for suffragists, that it was to be a "died-in-the-wool-votes-for-women-organization."¹³ Mrs. Stephens called a meeting at which all women interested in woman suffrage were to organize and to prepare to receive

¹⁰Ibid., January 26, 1915, p. 1.

¹¹Daily Oklahoman, October 10, 1915, p. 10A.

¹²Murray, p. 30.

¹³Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1916, p. 1.

the worker to be sent by NAWSA. While the women awaited the arrival of the national organizer, they began training themselves for the work by taking a refresher course on woman suffrage.¹⁴ Mrs. Julia Woodworth conducted the first lesson. Finally the national worker, Miss Josephine Miller of Little Rock, Arkansas, came in December, but she remained only briefly within the state.

At this time the climate of opinion on woman suffrage began to change in Oklahoma. Even Reuben Roddie, arch foe in 1910, announced his conversion to the suffrage cause in 1916. Newspapers commented that its coming was inevitable. Politicians also saw suffrage in that light, particularly after the election of 1916, when there was speculation among them and the newspapermen that it had been the votes of women which had won the suffrage states for Wilson.¹⁵ Mrs. Woodworth sensibly commented that it was impossible to tell how the women had voted since no separate records had been kept; nevertheless, pro-suffrage comments by Democratic politicians increased.¹⁶

State Senator O. J. Logan of Hobart announced that he

¹⁴Ibid., November 20, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁵Harlow's Weekly, XI (November 22, 1916), pp. 7-9.

¹⁶Daily Oklahoman, November 16, 1916, p. 1.

would introduce a suffrage measure in the next legislature, and invited the suffragists to prepare the bill.¹⁷ Mrs. Aletha Barr Taft, president of the Oklahoma City Suffrage Club, accepted him at his word and stated that she planned to appoint a committee to prepare the bill. However, when the time came for the women to present their work, it had not been done. Mrs. Taft explained that a bill written by women would be an offense to the men who supported the suffrage cause, and they, the men, were far more capable of preparing the measure.¹⁸

Shortly after the session opened, the Suffrage Association held a reception for the legislators and the Press Association. In the receiving line were Mrs. Adelia Stephens, president of the State Suffrage Association, Mrs. Frank Lucas of the Federation of Women's Clubs, Mrs. Abbie Hillerman of the WCTU, Mrs. Aletha Barr Taft, of the Oklahoma City Suffrage Club, and other suffrage advocates.¹⁹ The bachelor governor, a known opponent of woman suffrage, Robert L. Williams, was in the reception line. But still a broader base of support for suffrage was evidenced by those in attendance; clubwomen, reformers, editors, and legislators.

¹⁷Ibid., November 21, 1916, p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., January 2, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid., January 14, 1917, p. 7B.

When the Legislature convened in January of 1917, several woman suffrage measures were introduced; however only one received serious consideration, the concurrent resolution by Senator Fred Tucker of Ardmore and Representative Bert Hodges of Okmulgee.²⁰ When the Senate passed the measure, it incorporated a substitute for the "grandfather clause," which had been declared unconstitutional. The debate in the Senate was not on woman suffrage, but on the tying of the literacy test to suffrage. Republican Senators John Golobie and Walter Ferguson, although advocates of woman suffrage, refused to vote for the measure with the inclusion of the literacy test. Golobie drew fire when he asked if the bill had a "grandmother clause" which would pass the inspection of the Supreme Court. Ferguson said the bill was a betrayal of the suffragists, that it was unjust to include a partisan issue, the literacy test, with a non-partisan measure, woman suffrage.²¹ The bill passed the Senate with a vote of thirty-four Democrats for, and five Republicans

²⁰Oklahoma, Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Sixth Legislature of the State of Oklahoma. January 2, 1917 to March 16, 1917 (Oklahoma City, 1917), p. 379; Journal of the Senate of the Regular Session Sixth Legislature of the State of Oklahoma. January 2, 1917 to March 16, 1917 (Oklahoma City, 1917), p. 146.

²¹Daily Oklahoman, February 2, 1917, p. 1.

and one Socialist against.²²

The House had passed the resolution as a straight suffrage measure; when the time came to reconcile the differences in the two versions passed, the House refused to compromise on the literacy test.²³ Representatives William Powell of Temple and Paul Nesbit of McAlester led the fight against its inclusion. When the report of the conference committee was not accepted in the House, it had to go back into session in the last hours of the Legislature. At this time the literacy clause was dropped, but the time for the vote on the amendment was changed from the primary election to the next general election.²⁴ The bill passed the Senate by a unanimous vote and the House by a vote of seventy-five to twelve.²⁵

During the legislative session the women were not at rest, for they were well aware they had to keep the suffrage measure before the members. There was no influx of petitions but a suffrage lobby kept close watch on the legisla-

²²Ibid.

²³Oklahoma News, (Oklahoma City) March 8, 1917, p. 1; March 12, 1917, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., March 17, 1917, p. 4.

²⁵Harlow's Weekly XII (March 21, 1917), p. 7. House Journal, 1917, p. 1721; Senate Journal, 1917, p. 1705.

ture. Aiding the Suffrage Association in promoting the amendment was the Legislative Committee on the Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. A. S. Heany used the Federation column in the Daily Oklahoman to remind the members to do all they could for the cause of woman suffrage.²⁶

Mrs. Frank Lucas of the Oklahoma Federation of Women Clubs and Mrs. Julia Woodworth of the Oklahoma Suffrage Board were the principal lobbyists for suffrage.²⁷ When a suffrage debate was underway, the suffragists were in the galleries. The women were confident that a "referendum" would be theirs. In the final debate on the suffrage question in the House, Mrs. Lucas was accorded the privilege of sitting at the press table on the main floor, a position from which she could send instructions to her allies.²⁸

A splinter wing of the national suffrage movement, the Congressional Union (which later became known as the Women's Party) was also active. This organization unlike NAWSA was not open to male membership and also unlike NAWSA had the

²⁶Daily Oklahoman, January 28, 1917, p. 150.

²⁷Harper, p. 528.

²⁸Oklahoma News, March 12, 1917, p. 1.

single goal of woman suffrage by a federal amendment.²⁹ In December of 1916 they sent Miss Iris Calderhead, St. Mary's, Kansas, into Oklahoma to drum up support for their association.³⁰ She opened a headquarters at the Skirvin Hotel, while the Lee Huckins Hotel was the stronghold of NAWSA. She held a series of meetings to explain the Congressional Union's objectives. Her aim was to obtain the cooperation of Oklahoma women to pressure their Congressmen to support the Federal Amendment. At one point in her work there was to have been a combined meeting of the Congressional Union and the Oklahoma Suffrage Association. It did not materialize because the officers of the Oklahoma Association could not attend. A comment in Harlow's Weekly implied that Oklahoma suffragists were resentful of the Congressional Union's actions which were an affront to the states rights sentiment of Oklahoma.³¹

The entry of the United States into World War I temporarily pushed the woman suffrage movement into the background. The suffrage amendment became entangled with the war effort,

²⁹ Flexner, pp. 263-268. A description of the break between NAWSA and the Congressional Union.

³⁰ Daily Oklahoman, December 10, 1916, p. 8A.

³¹ Harlow's Weekly, XI (December, fourth week, 1916), p. 12.

many individuals claimed that it should be abandoned until the time of national crisis was passed. Before the United States entered the War the Congressional Union had begun picketing the White House because of the inaction on the Federal Suffrage Amendment. The women pickets were first viewed as objects of ridicule, but when they persisted in their picketing after the declaration of war they were denounced by some as traitors.³² The Congressional Union, unlike the NAWSA, did not enlist in the war effort as a unit. Dr. Shaw and Mrs. Catt, NAWSA leaders, assumed administrative positions in the mobilization of women for war work; the Congressional Union leaders did not.³³ The women of the Union made their contributions to the war efforts as individuals.

Therefore, it was natural that in 1917 the agents of the Congressional Union were received coolly in Oklahoma. Mabel Vernon, secretary of the Union, renewed the campaign to have Oklahoma women bring pressure on their Congressmen to favor the Federal Amendment. To one of the meetings Governor Williams and Mayor Overholser were invited and were asked to introduce Miss Vernon. Both the Mayor and the Gov-

³²Daily Oklahoman, August 16, 1917, p. 6. Edith Johnson quoted Julia Woodworth's views of the Congressional Union.

³³Flexner, p. 283-293.

ernor declined the invitation, an action applauded by the Daily Oklahoman.³⁴ So it was that Mrs. T. J. Bonnell of the Housewives League introduced Miss Vernon. It was at this particular session that Mrs. Lucas opposed Miss Vernon's proposal of sending a telegram to President Wilson demanding immediate action on the suffrage amendment. The telegram was sent, and despite opposition, a Woman's Party was formed in Oklahoma.³⁵ Among the officers elected was Mrs. Anna Laskey, fifth vice-chairman and a long-time advocate of woman suffrage. The most vocal of the officers was Mrs. Kate Stafford, secretary, who was not present at the time of her election since she was in jail in Washington, D. C., for picketing the White House.³⁶ It was she who later sought to influence Governor Williams to bring pressure on Oklahoma Congressmen. He refused again because he said

³⁴Daily Oklahoman, November 16, 1917, p. 6.

³⁵Oklahoma News, November 15, 1917, p. 5.

³⁶Harlow's Weekly, XIII (November 21, 1917) pp. 7-8. Officers of the Woman's Party formed at this time were: Miss Ida Halsley, chairman; Mrs. George Browning, first vice-chairman; Mrs. Miriam Blackley, second vice-chairman; Miss Minnie G. Lyons, third vice-chairman; Mrs. J. A. Nice, fourth vice-chairman; Mrs. Anna Laskey, fifth vice-chairman; Mrs. W. W. Phelan, sixth vice-chairman; Miss Ella Harrison, seventh vice-chairman; Mrs. Kate Stafford, secretary; Mrs. Ada C. Wallace, acting secretary. Mrs. Stafford was the sister-in-law of R. E. Stafford, Editor of the Daily Oklahoman.

suffrage was a matter of state policy.³⁷

The leaders of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association arrived in late January of 1918 only to quickly become disillusioned with the structure of the Oklahoma Suffrage Association and its financial resources. Mrs. Nettie Rogers Shuler, found that a tight state organization did not exist and that membership was on an individual basis, not by clubs. She soon discovered the local Association had no financial resources, whereupon she assured the women they must raise a campaign fund of \$25,000. Mrs. Lucas accepted the chairmanship of the finance committee, but resigned after two months, having succeeded in collecting only a little more than \$2000.³⁸ Mrs. Shuler also found that none of the women could devote full time to the suffrage campaign, and that the leadership had to be subsidized.³⁹ In addition to these difficulties there was a continuing problem of maintaining a campaign committee; a committee which had to be reorganized several times before the general election. Mrs. John Threadgill accepted the chairmanship in April and resigned in June. Mrs. Clarence L. Henley then took the

³⁷ Daily Oklahoman, January 8, 1918, p. 1.

³⁸ Harper, p. 530.

³⁹ Ibid.

position after a unanimous vote of the campaign committee. She became discouraged when she could not solve the financial difficulties of the organization by distributing financial responsibility among the county chairman. Many of them refused to cooperate, and in fact resigned on receipt of her request for funds. Mrs. Henley, in turn, sent her resignation to NAWSA, but was persuaded to remain as chairman by the promise of both financial and organizational assistance.⁴⁰

There was a noticeable absence of the experienced suffrage leaders of Oklahoma in the campaign of 1918. Mrs. Stephens who had been so active in 1910, moved into, or was shuttled into the background. She certainly had proved her sincerity and courage in the 1910 campaign. She had collected some 10,000 signatures for the initiative petition. Even after defeat she had remained a member of the group who worked to keep the movement alive. Julia Woodworth was an exception; she had been active in previous suffrage work in the state and was active in this campaign also. Anna Laskey chose the militant wing working for the federal amendment rather than the plans of the conservative NAWSA. Mrs. Biggers played an insignificant role in 1918; she was vice-chairman of the Marlow Suffrage Club.⁴¹ Mrs. Threadgill,

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 532.

⁴¹Marlow Review, February 28, 1918, p. 1.

the first chairman of the campaign committee, had not always been a hearty advocate of woman suffrage, for in a 1909 interview with the Daily Oklahoman, as president of the Federation of Women's Clubs, she declared woman suffrage too controversial for its discussion.⁴² Finance, leadership, and organization were a few of the problems to be faced by the National Organizers when they met in 1918.

Mrs. Shuler with Mrs. Florence Cotnam, Jonesboro, Arkansas, Mrs. C. H. Brooks, Wichita, Kansas, Mrs. N. B. Mahoney, Texas, opened the way with a tour of the state to arouse suffrage enthusiasm in January 1918.⁴³ Preparations for their appearance were made by Mrs. Lucas or other members of the Association. Before they left Oklahoma City, they were the principal speakers at a suffrage rally in the First Baptist Church. When they departed they visited, among others, the cities of Muskogee, Tulsa, and Shawnee. Mrs. Shuler remained in Oklahoma until the first of April trying to perfect a suffrage organization.

During this first stay she visited twenty-seven counties, in twenty-two of which suffrage committees were organ-

⁴²Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1909, p. 5.

⁴³Oklahoma News, January 18, 1918, p. 5.

ized.⁴⁴ More than a dozen national suffrage workers came to Oklahoma during the year to assist in the work for the suffrage amendment. Marjorie Shuler, Mrs. Nettie Shuler's daughter, arrived in May to assume charge of press releases of the Association, and she remained until after the November election. When NAWSA totaled its expenses for the Oklahoma referendum campaign, they found they had spent well over \$18,000.⁴⁵

Suffrage activity was not confined to the national workers; one of the most active areas was Tulsa, under the guidance of Mrs. Frank Haskell.⁴⁶ The suffragists of Tulsa held mass meetings, canvassed voters on woman suffrage, and publicized their cause through a suffrage column in the Tulsa Democrat. There were also active clubs in Sapulpa and Shawnee. Mrs. Walter Ferguson devoted many of her columns in the Cherokee Republican to woman suffrage. The height of suffrage activity came just before the influenza epidemic which struck the nation in October of 1918. But even with the restrictions brought on by the epidemic, suffrage work continued.

⁴⁴Harper, p. 430.

⁴⁵Rose Young, The Record of the Leslie Woman Suffrage Commission Inc., 1917-1929 (New York, 1929), pp. 70, 93.

⁴⁶Tulsa Democrat, April 17, 1918, p. 1.

Beginning in June, 1918, Oklahoma suffragists circulated petitions to be signed by women who wanted the vote.⁴⁷ The motive behind the petitions was to arouse the interest of the men so they would vote on the question. According to Oklahoma law an amendment required approval of a majority of all voters participating in the election. The suffragists were determined to overcome the danger of the silent, indifferent vote which might not vote on this issue. In Oklahoma City the petitions were circulated under the direction of Julia Woodworth, she and her workers had them signed following church services, while others carried their petitions with them as they went about their war work. All the women teachers of Oklahoma City signed the petitions. In Shawnee, the suffragists carried their petitions with them when they conducted a health survey. By such efforts more than fifty thousand signatures were collected by the women. The week beginning October 18, 1918, was "Suffrage Week" in Oklahoma City; many of the merchants decorated their windows with yellow, the suffrage color, and suffrage posters.⁴⁸ The petitions signed by the women wanting the ballot were displayed in the window of the Kerr's Department Store. Mrs.

⁴⁷Oklahoma News, June 3, 1918, p. 1.

⁴⁸Ibid., October 18, 1918, p. 5; Daily Oklahoman, October 19, 1918, p. 3.

Henley, still the campaign committee chairman, presented the petition to Governor Williams in a ceremony on the Capitol steps.⁴⁹

However, the suffragists were not the only ones agitating in the state about the suffrage amendment. When it became apparent that suffrage might be won in Oklahoma, the National Association of Women Opposed to Suffrage sent speakers into the state. In April, Mrs. Henry Preston White, of the Boston "antis", began a speaking tour to create anti-suffrage sentiment. She found adherents to her cause. The suffragists were accused by the anti-suffrage forces of being advocates of socialism, free love, and being pro-German in sentiment. Miss Charlotte Rowe, another "anti" arrived in May to organize an Anti-Suffrage League in Oklahoma. In the process of organizing the "antis", she became involved in a dispute with the suffrage leader, Mrs. Rutherford Beecher Butler of Muskogee.⁵⁰ Mrs. Butler claimed Miss Rowe was the highest paid professional anti-suffrage speaker in the nation. Miss Rowe threatened to sue her unless an apology was extended; however, no suit was brought.

Miss Rowe succeeded in forming an anti-suffrage associ-

⁴⁹Harlow's Weekly, XV (October 23, 1918), p. 16-18. There were 55,739 signatures!

⁵⁰Tulsa Democrat, May 31, 1918, p. 3.

ation in June, 1918. It was led by Mrs. T. H. Sturgeon of Oklahoma City, president; Miss Alice Robertson of Muskogee, vice-president; Mrs. Lorton of Tulsa, secretary and Miss Maybelle Stuard, press chairman and speaker of Oklahoma City. Miss Stuard did most of the public relation work for the Association. When she completed a tour of the state, she stated that most men would vote against woman suffrage, and further that the women of Oklahoma did not want the vote.⁵¹ The "antis" had their newspaper ally in Tulsa as did the suffragists. The Tulsa Daily World carried numerous anti-suffrage arguments, some written by Miss Rowe. The anti-suffrage campaign reached its peak just prior to the election.

The suffragists had to be constantly on their guard against the accusation that suffrage work interfered with the war effort; therefore, much publicity was devoted by the suffragists to their work to offset the anti-suffrage accusations. An example of this involved Tulsa suffragists who followed their luncheon meetings with work in the Red Cross rooms. The suffrage headquarters in Oklahoma City was used for the Fourth Liberty Loan drive. They not only gave the use of their headquarters for this purpose, but the suff-

⁵¹Harper, pp. 528-529; Tulsa Daily World, October 6, 1918, p. 8.

rage speakers also donated their time and talents to sell the bonds. In Tulsa Mrs. Haskell was reputed to have sold more bonds than anyone else. Miss Aloysius Larch-Miller, one of the most effective of the Oklahoma suffrage speakers, also spoke on behalf of the bond drive.⁵² Other suffrage leaders served on various defense committees. When Mrs. Shuler returned to the state in September, she also became closely connected with war work.

Mrs. Shuler criss-crossed the state on behalf of suffrage, speaking in many communities, among them Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Hobart, and Elk City. A high point of the suffrage campaign was to have been the appearance of Mrs. Catt and Dr. Shaw in October; however, the influenza epidemic prevented their appearance.

Political opinions which had veered in favor of woman suffrage in 1916 continued along that path in 1918. In the state conventions of the Democratic and Republican Parties, woman suffrage was endorsed. However, according to Harlow's Weekly, it was necessary for J. B. A. Robertson, the Democratic nominee for Governor, to bring pressure on the plat-

⁵²The Woman Citizen, II (October 26, 1918) p. 432; (October 12, 1918), p. 393. Miss Larch-Miller was called Oklahoma's suffrage martyr; she rose from a sick-bed to appeal to the Democratic Convention of 1919 to use their influence to call a special session of the Legislature for ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

form committee to have it included since a majority were anti-suffragists.⁵³ Mrs. Shuler and other suffrage leaders were invited to the Democratic convention and some of them to the platform. After the endorsement by the Democratic Party in September, the suffragists held an enthusiastic street meeting. The Socialists also continued their support of unrestricted and equal suffrage, although their advocacy counted for little since they in 1918 supposedly were tainted by disloyalty. Robert L. Owen and the other members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation sent a telegram just prior to the election, encouraging the men of Oklahoma to vote for woman suffrage.

The suffragists were plagued with numerous problems created by their opponents. The center of their problem according to Mrs. Shuler was the "Capitol Ring" composed of Governor Williams, Lt. Governor Edward Trapp, Attorney General S. P. Freeling and the Secretary of the Election Board, W. C. McAlister.⁵⁴ First the women heard that the suffrage amendment would not appear on the ballot because the proper wording of the amendment had not been given to the Secretary

⁵³ Harlow's Weekly, XV (September 25, 1918), pp. 9-14.

⁵⁴ Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, Woman Suffrage and Politics the Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement (New York, 1923), pp. 307-309. Hereafter cited as: Catt, Woman Suffrage.

of the Election Board. The suffragists solved this with the aid of Oklahoma City attorney W. H. Ledbetter and Secretary of State Lyon. The next problem to arise was that the question was scheduled to appear on a separate ballot, and this called for added work educating the voting public to remember to vote on the separate ballot. In October, absentee ballots were sent to Oklahoma soldiers in seven camps minus the suffrage ballot. Only the soldiers at Fort Sill had not received their absentee ballots when the suffragist discovered the discrepancy. They protested to the Governor who assured them it would not happen again. The ladies were determined that the suffrage ballot would be given to the soldiers at Fort Sill. They were suspicious of the election board, so they prepared themselves for possible omissions of the suffrage ballot. The suffragists had four hundred ballots ready in case this contingency occurred. The night before soldiers were to receive their ballots the ladies discovered that the Democrat sent by the election board had no suffrage ballot. A group of suffragists took their ballots to Fort Sill only to be hampered in their aim by the switching of the polling place. The ladies tramped from place to place in the rain but the soldiers did not receive their suffrage ballot. As a result of such maneuvers involving the absentee votes, over four thousand silent votes were

created against the amendment.⁵⁵

With these experiences behind them, the suffragists were even more determined to be prepared for election day. When November 5 dawned, women took their places as watchers at each polling place. If one political party denied them the privilege; they asked the other. Each suffrage watcher received instructions to keep an accurate tally of the ballots and not to leave their post until the count was completed. The results were then to be telephoned to suffrage headquarters. Mrs. Shuler stated that it was due to these precautions that the suffrage victory was preserved.⁵⁶

The delay in final returns on the suffrage questions supported the suspicions of suffrage leaders that there was an attempt to count out suffrage. Two days after the election, returns were known for only twenty-three counties. The suffrage leaders then compiled the suffrage returns kept by the suffrage watchers and publicized them. On the Monday following the election the suffragists had what they believed was complete count on the suffrage ballot of sixty-three

⁵⁵"Oklahoma Victory," The Woman Citizen, II (November 30, 1918), p. 1.

⁵⁶Catt, Woman Suffrage, p. 310; Harper, p. 335.

counties. Of these only six had voted against suffrage.⁵⁷

Mrs. Shuler placed the blame for the delay in election returns on a conspiracy of the "Capitol Ring." Mrs. Stephens commented on the attitude of these men as making the campaign most difficult.⁵⁸ Mrs. Ferguson was more direct in stating her fear of an attempt to count out woman suffrage.

The men who voted "yes" on this question numbered 25,000 more than those who voted "no." The silent vote was silenced more, by a majority of 9,000. To us, who are not familiar with the intricacies of political ethics, and do not understand the minds of those who sit in the inner circle, it appears that the amendment won, but such may not be the case. The women of this country should not count on going to the polls, until they actually find themselves walking there; for every sort of effort is being made to knock out the amendment, and it may yet be accomplished.⁵⁹

Election officials according to the Shuler's report planned to open the voting records and count the ballot stubs to determine the total vote cast. This would have included the spoiled ballots and thereby increased the "silent vote."

Governor Williams and members of the Election Board on November 14, 1918 [nine days after the election] said that according to returns that were available then, it looked as

⁵⁷Catt, Woman Suffrage, p. 311; Daily Oklahoman, November 7, 1918, p. 1.

⁵⁸Harper, p. 528.

⁵⁹Cherokee Republican, December 6, 1918, p. 3.

though suffrage had carried.⁶⁰ The suffragists had little reason to relax because this was a signal for action by the anti-suffragists. They filed a protest against the certification of the election returns.

November passed and still the suffrage question was not settled. There was speculation that the silent vote would overcome the suffrage lead. Returns published by Harlow's Weekly on November 27 were 106,909 for woman suffrage and 81,481 against, but these returns were not complete.⁶¹ W. C. McAlister, Secretary of the Election Board explained the delay of suffrage returns in a published letter to Governor Williams.⁶² He was unable to determine the total vote because the records of the County Election Boards were incomplete. Forms, which had included a provision for certifying the total vote, had been sent to all counties and precincts of the state, but only thirty-four counties had certified their total vote and on investigation not one of these was found to be correct. He used the returns of Canadian, Bryan and Pottawatomie Counties as examples of the type errors encountered. Of Bryan he said:

⁶⁰Daily Oklahoman, November 15, 1918, p. 18.

⁶¹Harlow's Weekly, XV (November 27, 1918), p. 7.

⁶²Ibid., (December 4, 1918), p. 4.

...the vote for governor represents the highest vote cast for any state officer, yet there are eight precincts, in each one of which the total vote on suffrage was more than the total vote for governor. In two precincts the vote for governor was more than the number certified as the total, and in many of the precincts the vote on suffrage was the same as the total vote certified.⁶³

If such discrepancies as these were true of all the returns then it would seem that the validity of the election of all the state officers would be questions. However, this was not done.

Mr. McAlister believed the situation was confused in the state by the publication of news items saying that suffrage had carried by a large vote. As a citizen he felt that it had carried by a small majority but as Secretary of the Election Board, he could not issue a certification of the total number of votes.⁶⁴ So in reality when suffrage was proclaimed there remained a doubt as to whether it had actually passed.

Finally on December 3, 1918, Governor Williams declared woman suffrage had carried.⁶⁵ He did so without certification of the total vote by the Election Board. Prior to the proclamation the Governor and the lawyers of the suffrage

⁶³Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Daily Oklahoman, December 4, 1918, p. 8; December 6, 1918, p. 1.

and anti-suffrage forces had agreed to a three-day period following the announcement in which protests could be filed. None were filed. Therefore on December 6 the Governor's proclamation became a part of the official records.

The election returns show that the center of suffrage opposition was in eastern Oklahoma.⁶⁶ In some counties suffrage lost by one or two votes. Again the results show that suffrage did not win by overwhelming majorities in the areas of greatest suffrage activity--Tulsa County was carried by a vote of 3,923 to 3,540; Oklahoma County the margin of victory was larger but again considering suffrage activity it would seem they should have been greater.

In 1918 the suffragists won despite the efforts of an organized opposition. The vote was 106,909 to 81,481.⁶⁷ But why did they win in 1918--what conditions made possible their victory? Mary Crangle, a former vice president of the Okla-

⁶⁶Return of General Election Held in State of Oklahoma November 5, 1918. Oklahoma County vote 5,175 to 4,277 for woman suffrage. Suffrage lost by one vote in McIntosh, three votes in Rogers and six votes in McCurtain County. The counties in which suffrage was defeated were: McCurtain, McIntosh, Mayes, Rogers, Sequoyah, Adair, Atoka, Cherokee, Delaware, Haskell, Hughes, Latimer, Pushmataha.

⁶⁷Oklahoma, Directory of Oklahoma 1919-1929. (State Election Board, 1919), p. 129. The total of votes which appears in the returns of the 1918 election is the same as the incomplete total appearing the Harlow's Weekly.

homa Suffrage Association, wrote:

Our battle for the ballot in this state has been fought and won, yet the small band of suffragists in the state hardly realize it. It was so hard to work for; if the National had not taken hold we would not have gotten the vote....⁶⁸

Mrs. Crangle's evaluation of the NAWSA's work cannot be completely accepted. It had been Oklahoma suffragists who had pushed the amendment through the Legislature. They did so without the approval of the National organization as is evidenced in Mrs. Shuler's report.

Against the advice of the National Board with conditions adverse as they were in Oklahoma the legislative committee of the State Federation of Women's Clubs and some members of the State Suffrage Board secured the submission of an amendment to the voters in 1917 and appealed for help to the National Association.⁶⁹

The tenor of the report was that the Oklahoma suffragists were irresponsible. They started a suffrage campaign but then abandoned the work.

Almost from the beginning of 1918 there seemed to have been a lack of rapport between NAWSA organizers and the suffragists of Oklahoma. In previous suffrage campaigns the leading National Organizers had been welcomed and their work praised by the Oklahoma suffragists. There was plenti-

⁶⁸The Woman Citizen, III (January 11, 1919), p. 675.

⁶⁹Harper, p. 529.

ful praise for Laura Gregg, Dr. Frances Wood and Ida Porter Boyer; these women devoted months to suffrage work in Oklahoma. Other national organizers had come for brief periods to conduct "revival like" suffrage tours. They to were often mentioned favorably. The near silence about the work of Mrs. Shuler and her team is a sharp contrast. There are bits of praises--as from Mary Crangle, but not the generous comments of the suffrage leadership. Mrs. Stephens does not detail the 1918 campaign in her portion of the history of Oklahoma suffrage. She does not mention Mrs. Shuler.⁷⁰ Perhaps this was at the design of the compiler who had Mrs. Shuler's report. But add to this void the failure of Mrs. Woodworth in her review of the history of Oklahoma woman suffrage in 1920 to refer to the work of the National Association in 1918, and division becomes more certain. In fact, Mrs. Woodworth goes back to 1910 to praise Mrs. Ida Porter Boyer as the best suffrage worker sent to Oklahoma.⁷¹

Despite this apparent break between the National Association and the old suffrage leadership of Oklahoma, victory was achieved. In fairness, credit must be given to the national workers who came to serve the cause under the disagreeable circumstance of being accused of disloyalty be-

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 520-529.

⁷¹Daily Oklahoman, August 22, 1920, p. 11A.

cause they divided their energies between woman suffrage and war work.

Opposition had not disappeared but public opinion had changed sufficiently to make possible effective suffrage work. Women were involved in civic affairs, more were economically independent, and greater numbers of women were openly stating their opinions. Oklahoma was ready soil for suffrage work in the period 1916 to 1918.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUFFRAGE DEBATE

No new arguments appeared in the Oklahoma suffrage debate, they were the same as those used throughout the nation and in every phase of the woman's rights movement. Occasionally a new twist was added to an old argument. Among the major issues of the debate were: Was the franchise essential to woman's political and economic well-being? Of what value would the enfranchisement of women be? Would social political reforms follow? What effect would political equality have on the nature of woman? How would it effect the home? Was woman mentally capable of voting and did she have the sufficient moral strength to withstand the strain of political responsibility? Always re-occurring was the question, did woman want the right to vote? Individuals in the movement, newspaper editors and opponents might change but opinions expressed remained the same.

The anti-suffragists and many of those with little interest in the question doubted that the women of Oklahoma wanted the ballot, and in fact they asserted suffrage agitation was the work of an insignificant minority. The editor-

ial theme of the Daily Oklahoman was such:

There is no immediate prospect of woman suffrage in Oklahoma, not that it generally is regarded as a political evil but for no other reason than women¹ have never signified that they desired the ballot.

In 1905 the Oklahoman concurred with the opinion of the Shawnee Herald that there was no adequate argument against woman suffrage except that nine-tenths of the women did not want it.² During the Constitutional Convention the Oklahoman's position should have been somewhat shaken; it was not. It commiserated with the delegates who had to undergo the pressure of interest groups, the suffrage organization being one of the most active. The Oklahoman admitted that the extension of suffrage was perhaps a matter of political justice but asserted that it would be of little or no practical value. However if a majority of women wanted it; they should receive the ballot.³

A new tack was taken by the suffragists in 1909 after the Second Legislature refused to submit a suffrage amendment to the electorate. They decided to use the initiative provision of the Constitution to propose their amendment.⁴

¹Daily Oklahoman, November 22, 1904, p. 4. Roy E. Stafford was editor.

²Ibid., November 24, 1905, p. 4.

³Ibid., January 9, 1907, p. 4.

⁴Ibid., April 15, 1909, p. 6.

It would prove a fruitless effort, according to the Oklahoman, the petition would not be signed by any great number of men not even those who ordinarily would do so out of courtesy to the sex. After the ladies collected the necessary signatures the Oklahoman came back with the assertion that the petition did not reflect the true opinion of Oklahoma, but if it should happen that the women were enfranchised no tears would be shed. It also hastened to warn that no one should expect a revolution in morals and politics to follow such an eventuality.⁵ The Oklahoman had been impatient with the suffragists because they persisted in their effort to win men to their cause; they should direct their campaign toward the conversion of women. The amendment was rejected and the Oklahoman commented that it was to be expected since a majority of women did not want political equality; in fact the only true barrier to woman suffrage was woman.⁶ The Oklahoman proposed a female referendum as being the only fair way to determine the wishes of women; it would not be legally binding but would act as a determinative for the men.

Maybelle Stuard,⁷ spokesman of the anti-suffrage assoc-

⁵Ibid., January 24, 1910, p. 5.

⁶Ibid., November 11, 1910, p. 6; February 6, 1914, p. 6.

⁷Ibid., November 12, 1916, p. 6C. Maybelle Stuard was the financial secretary in Republican campaign headquarters in 1916.

iation, claimed that eighty percent of the women of Oklahoma were indifferent or against woman suffrage.⁸ This opinion did not go unanswered in 1918. The suffragists claimed that all the women who were interested in the franchise were not making speeches, but when given the opportunity they would vote. This was evident from the number of women who voted in states which had granted suffrage. Also, they pointed out that Oklahoma women were subjected to the concept that politics was a man's sphere; but the extension of the ballot would bring this fallacious opinion to an end.

One of the major arguments of the suffragists was their insistence that because laws were applied without regard to sex, women had an equal interest in government. Therefore, they should have the vote. Mrs. R. J. Moore, suffragist of 1895, requested the extension of woman suffrage as a mother who wanted equal opportunity for her children. She believed women were both morally and mentally competent to fulfill the obligations of citizenship. The ballot was a necessity if her daughter was to have equality under the law.⁹ The El Reno Democrat used the argument of equal interest to defend Republican C. F. McElrath's advocacy of woman suff-

⁸Tulsa Daily World, October 6, 1918, p. 8.

⁹Payne County Populist (Stillwater), October 31, 1895, p. 1.

rage in the territorial legislature of 1899.¹⁰ It noted that all fair minded men supported woman suffrage because women were admitted to the gallows, the jail and the tax list; therefore they should not be denied the ballot.

Mrs. Anna Laskey, Oklahoma pioneer and suffragette, continued the argument of equal interest in her demand for equal rights. She felt justified in her endeavor to vote for a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

I told my husband several weeks prior to the election that as I had been a pioneer in Oklahoma, a taxpayer, and school teacher, that by all the laws of justice I should be entitled to vote for the delegates who were to draft the constitution under which I must live. No man could have a greater interest at stake than I had.¹¹

Equal interest in the affairs of government did not stop with the personal demands of individuals but appeared again and again as a general claim of the suffragists. Naturally the "antis" countered this view with the statement that most women were satisfied that their interests were adequately protected by their male relatives.

Political equality was of particular concern to those groups who saw it as essential for improvement of women in the labor force. The "antis" contended that this view was

¹⁰El Reno Democrat, February 2, 1899, p. 1.

¹¹Daily Oklahoman, November 23, 1906, p. 4.

a suffragist illusion. The validity of the claim was debated from the beginning but grew sharper as more women were employed outside the home.

Oklahoma labor unions were among the first groups to support woman suffrage because the ballot was not only an economic necessity for working women but might aid in the protection of laboring man. Technology had freed women from many tasks of the home and had opened for her new employment opportunities. The increase of free time made possible an expanded interest in community affairs for some women, others it freed to become a cheap labor supply for industry --a supply which kept wages low. Labor leaders in Oklahoma such as Pete Hanraty, J. Luther Langston, J. Harvey Lynch and Charles Daughtery supported woman suffrage. The Oklahoma Federation of Labor passed a number of resolutions favoring the extension of the ballot to women.

The Daily Oklahoman in 1899 expressed some sympathy for woman suffrage on the ground that it was an economic necessity.

Who is responsible for woman's cheap labor? Her fellow-workman who refuses her the ballot power which place her economically on an equal footing. If the ballot is not a means of protection, then disfranchise all men, and let property and educational qualifications be the basis of representation.¹²

¹²Ibid., December 14, 1898, p. 2. The editor of the Oklahoman at this time was R. Q. Blakeney.

There was a reply to this editorial. A letter signed "Samantha" pointed out that there were more voters who receive one dollar a day than get five dollars but they all possessed an equally powerful ballot. "Perish the idea that women need ballots to increase their salaries. They need skill and efficiency and fidelity to their work and naught else."¹³ Another reader answered "Samantha" with the assertion that a woman with a ballot would have more influence over legislators and so could bring about equal pay for equal work for government employees. This in turn might carry over into private business.¹⁴ Also implied in the argument was that the female vote could be used in bringing about the protection of labor from foreign competition.

John Golobie, editor of the Oklahoma State Register and Robert L. Owen, delegate to Constitutional Convention and also as a United States Senator, stressed that the modern industrial system made the ballot essential for women. In 1918 Mrs. Treadgill, chairman of the state suffrage campaign committee, claimed suffrage was necessary to protect the women and children employed in war industry.¹⁵ Mrs. Henley

¹³Ibid., December 15, 1898, p. 3.

¹⁴Ibid., December 16, 1898, p. 1.

¹⁵The Oklahoma News, May 11, 1918, p. 5.

also pointed to the increased number of women who had entered industry because of the war, not just to aid the war effort but because they had to support themselves and their children while the men were away. They needed the protection of the ballot.¹⁶

Not only was suffrage sought because it was an economic necessity and women had an equal interest in government, but it was solicited on the basis that it was an inherent right of citizenship. Robert L. Owen pleaded for woman suffrage because it was just, and a means of furthering our democratic system.¹⁷ Kate Gordon, on her speaking tour for enfranchisement in 1910, also maintained that the vote was an inherent right under the constitution.¹⁸ Others who defended the cause of women compared their efforts to the colonials during the American Revolution. To deny women the ballot was to repudiate our heritage of a government founded on the consent of the governed. "Women should be allowed to vote regardless of the arguments, for it is her right to enjoy all the privileges conferred on men."¹⁹

¹⁶ Shawnee Daily News Herald, October 25, 1918, p. 2.

¹⁷ Daily Oklahoman, December 12, 1906, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., October 7, 1910, p. 10.

¹⁹ Oklahoma State Register, June 16, 1910, p. 4.

In 1916 many more people were echoing the argument that woman must be given the ballot because it was just. With the increased popularity of the suffrage movement in Oklahoma after 1916 woman suffrage was endorsed by members of all political parties.²⁰ Republican E. E. Woods felt compelled to write a letter to the editor of the Oklahoman explaining that woman suffrage was too big an issue to be absorbed by any one political party.²¹ Moreover, woman suffrage would be promoted by both Republicans and Democrats at the next legislature. There was a tinge of political expediency in the belated endorsements of woman suffrage.

Parallel to the preceding arguments was the concern of some as to what effect suffrage would have on the character and personality of woman. Some viewed woman suffrage as a human disaster.

Upon her taking a little slip of paper and dropping through a slot in a box, hang all the dire calamities of civilization. Heaven and Hell change places. Sex is destroyed. Femininity becomes masculinity...Women will no longer²² desire to be loved, nor man to love her.

²⁰ Harlow's Weekly, XII (November 22, 1916), p. 11

²¹ Daily Oklahoman, December 17, 1916, p. 14B.

²² Oklahoma State Capital, February 19, 1897, p. 1. An 1890 article of the State Capital appealed to the vanity of women: the reason women kept their hair was because they were less involved in the intellectual warfare, business and political life.

Such were the dire predictions of what would come from woman's voting. Of course, others saw the ballot as no danger to femininity, and that to walk to the polls with a lady was no different from walking to church with your wife or friend.

Normally newspapers found it newsworthy to report that a suffragist had not lost her femininity. The Oklahoman in 1904 noted that Miss Gregg's appearance would be a disappointment:

to all those who imagine all lecturers on the suffrage question to be short-haired, loud voiced, rasping kind...A former school teacher, refined, sweet voiced and attractive....²³

Similar was the tone of the description of Mrs. Boyer. Not only was it important to report her presence but also let it be known that she did not fit the suffrage stereotype. She was attractive, tastefully dressed and a mother. The latter was noted by the comment that only ornament she wore was a college pin given to her by her son.²⁴

After suffrage hopes were crushed at the Constitutional Convention John Golobie wrote an editorial in which he claimed that Mrs. Haskell, who had attended the Convention with her husband, and had aided him at every turn, was proof

²³Daily Oklahoman, April 1, 1904, p. 3.

²⁴Ibid., November 3, 1906, p. 5.

that public life did not destroy womanliness. Rumor had it that she had determined her husband's opposition to woman suffrage. No woman could have led a more public life than she had, if she had the vote. The men of the Convention he asserted had not been offended by her presence. Masculine dignity and decency would not have been any more invaded by the "gracious women" who asked for equal citizenship. He concluded with, "We are born in the same cradle, buried in the same grave, and should walk all the paths of life together."²⁵ It was necessary to refute the belief that political equality would destroy femininity in 1918. Perhaps with tongue in cheek Mrs. Walter Ferguson of the Cherokee Republican reported after the suffrage victory that she had not noticed any loss of womanliness on the part of the suffragists.²⁶

Tied to the question of femineity was the concern of how political equality would affect woman's role as mothers. When the suffragist petitioned the Second State Legislature for a suffrage amendment, the Tulsa Democrat editorialized on the old-fashion woman. She was the epitome of goodness:

The old-fashion woman does not make much noise in the world. She does not storm the entrance to the

²⁵ Oklahoma State Register, March 14, 1907, p. 4.

²⁶ Cherokee Republican, November 22, 1918, p. 3.

houses of parliament or the Houses of Congress, she does not make speeches on the street corners and in the lobbies of the hotels, she is not insisting in the papers and out of them for her rights. The old-fashioned woman again God bless her, is too busy with taking care of babies, singing and playing with and teaching the young those truths which are ever true....²⁷

It was such women who had the respect of mankind.

The Oklahoman was also concerned with the suffrage demands of the year. The editorial effort was to eliminate the impression that a voteless woman was a martyr and further that the suffragists were not the women who were associated with home and family; they were women of certain classes too busy pampering themselves rather than meet the obligations of their sex. In 1918 the "antis" were still using the argument that it was not the mothers who wanted suffrage. They stated that the women who led the NAWSA were childless, and if suffrage were given it would not be the mothers who would vote; they were too busy to engage in politics.²⁹

In contrast in 1907 Robert L. Owen cited his mother as an example of why women should have the vote. He said it

²⁷ Tulsa Democrat, February 4, 1909, p. 4.

²⁸ Daily Oklahoman, November 14, 1909, p. 4C.

²⁹ Tulsa Daily World, November 3, 1918, p. 9. The article was titled: "Discrimination Against Mothers."

with deliberate conviction that he advocated the cause of suffrage.

The noblest human being I have ever known was the woman who gave me birth. It was due to her that I had the opportunity of becoming an educated man....Every principle of worth which I possessed, I drew from her. ³⁰

The ballot in the hands of women would bring about a better government, and new life and hope for the nation. The concept that the noble mother deserves the ballot was not limited to Robert L. Owen, but was repeatedly used by the suffragists and members of the WCTU.

A prominent anti-suffrage premise was that woman's place was in the home. Civilization would not be advanced by taking her from it but by returning her to it. This argument was so frequently advanced that the suffragists let it be known that some of them won ribbons at county fairs for such feminine arts as cooking and needlework. Kate Biggers in her suffrage column quoted Ida Porter Boyer as saying that the individual home was but a fraction of a woman's responsibility. She must be concerned with the collective home.³¹ A woman's protection of her children did not stop at the door.

³⁰The People's Voice, February 1, 1907, p. 1.

³¹Marlow Review, July 3, 1908, p. 8.

In 1910 Walter Ferguson, editor of the Cherokee Republican, expressed the fear that woman suffrage would end domestic tranquility.³² He even went on to suggest, rather humorously, that suffrage might necessitate special legislation, such as not issuing marriage licenses to prospective partners of different political parties.

Essential to the question of the effect of woman suffrage on woman's position in the home was how would it affect her moral character. Many saw suffrage as an invitation to moral decay; a clear route to easy divorce laws and free love. Mrs. Walter Ferguson replied to "antis'" accusations of free love in 1918 by referring to the existing double standard of morality. If there was a danger that the ballot would affect the character of women so, perhaps there would be cause for hesitation, but if it did so, then would not turn about be fair play? She argued that woman's good sense would not allow her moral collapse, because she was first a mother.³³

Suffragists and anti-suffragists debated woman's moral status. Moral superiority was trumpeted by both advocates and

³²Cherokee Republican, September 23, 1910, p. 4.; October 7, 1910, p. 4.

³³Mrs. Walter Ferguson, "Woman's Column," Cherokee Republican, May 24, 1918, p. 2a.

opponents of woman suffrage. The opponents sought to protect pure woman from dirty politics. To the members of the Constitutional Convention W. C. Hughes passionately declared:

So far as this life is concerned my most earnest prayer is that no change may ever come which will drag her (his wife) and our girls out into that sea of life where we alone now struggle to keep the state away from the breakers. I would to God that I might find a way to render it unnecessary for women and children to go into the business strife of the world and battle for bread and to meet the stare of the libertine. ³⁴

Robert L. Owen answered Hughes' plea with all women were not so protected that many had to provide for themselves and their children. He also stated that Hughes, a good man, was in bad company in his opposition to suffrage.³⁵ The bad company was a reference to liquor interests which opposed woman suffrage. Others advocated bringing woman into politics because of her sensitivity to human needs. Samuel Crocker in an open letter to Margaret Rees explained his satisfaction in signing a suffrage petition in these terms:

Woman's moral condition has always been far in advance of man hence by denying to woman the political rights guaranteed to man is to prevent the best system of government emanating from the highest moral source. ³⁶

³⁴ Guthrie Daily Leader, January 14, 1907, p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Oklahoma State Capital, February 17, 1897, p. 3.

Woman would bring about needed reforms. Labor supported suffrage not only on grounds of justice but also because she would correct the wrongs of the industrial system. The prohibitionists argued for suffrage because they believed woman would vote for prohibition. It was also argued woman would use her influence to improve schools, to pass child labor laws, and to vote for conditions favorable to human life. Some suffragists claimed that home and government could only reach its highest level through the mother's influence.³⁷ Therefore, failure to use woman power was a terrible waste.

Moral superiority of women was denied by some of the opponents of suffrage and not claimed by all the suffragists. Mr. Rose in the legislative debate of 1897 and again in 1907, said that woman suffrage was against the laws of nature and the experience of man. Woman was not morally superior to man but instead was governed by the same ambitions.³⁸ In 1899 when woman suffrage passed the House, the Oklahoma State Capital reported that the legislators accepted bribes of the suffrage smiles and beams of approval.³⁹ Fred S.

³⁷ Marlow Review, January 24, 1908, p. 4.

³⁸ Daily Oklahoma State Capital, February 18, 1897, p. 1. Guthrie Daily Leader, February 5, 1907, p. 1.

³⁹ Oklahoma State Capital, March 5, 1899, p. 1.

Barde in an article Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine attributed almost every tragedy and loss of honor in the Oklahoma legislature to the influence of woman.⁴⁰

God and the Bible were used as references to justify both suffrage viewpoints. One "anti" argued that if God intended women to vote He would have revealed it in the past, another claimed after a study of the Bible that God did not intend that women should engage in politics.⁴¹ Charles N. Haskell quoted the Bible at length in his argument against woman suffrage at the Constitutional Convention.⁴² On the other hand a good number of ministers both opened their churches for suffrage meetings and endorsed the cause.

The "antis" used the failure of the women of Utah to end polygamy as proof that women would not reform the state. T. S. Rice in a letter to the editor of the El Reno Democrat said:

If there is place anywhere on the globe where woman's influence would be expected to wipe out an abomination which is the stench in the nostrils of decency, and a blot on our civilization that place in Utah, because she, of all others is the most interested...what has she done? According

⁴⁰Fred S. Barde, "The Oklahoma Legislature," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine (March, 1910), p. 29.

⁴¹Guthrie Daily Leader, January 26, 1899, p. 4; January 27, 1899, p. 4.

⁴²Daily Oklahoman, February 6, 1907, p. 1.

to a protestant authority she has elected to the House of Representatives that prince of polygamy Roberts. 43

Rice admitted woman's influence was increasing and the result of it was one of the most corrupt governments on earth. Again in 1918 the "antis" claimed that the Mormons were aiding woman suffrage.⁴⁴

Charges were brought that political and social radicalism were being enhanced by feminism. Suffrage was labeled a socialist proposal. This argument was used against woman suffrage from the Constitutional Convention on. During the 1918 suffrage campaign in Oklahoma, Charlotte Rowe, anti-suffrage organizer, claimed that the New York suffrage victory was due to aid of the socialist and pro-German element.⁴⁵ They had disguised themselves so they could work to advance their position through woman suffrage. Maybelle Stuard also used the socialist label as her most potent weapon to discredit woman suffrage.

There is too much pure air in Oklahoma and too much sanity among its people for them to ever accept the degenerate theories of feminism.⁴⁶

Feminism could only flourish in cities where the foreign

⁴³El Reno Democrat, February 9, 1899, p. 1.

⁴⁴Tulsa Daily World, October 29, 1918, p. 4.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶Weekly Democrat Chief, Hobart, August 15, 1918, p. 9.

born were numerous. According to the "antis" the enfranchisement of women would increase the number of radical votes by adding wives of socialists, IWW and Negroes to the electorate.

The suffragists were equally determined to prove that the immigrant American opposed their cause. They credited their defeat in a number of state campaigns to his vote.⁴⁷ Kate Biggers warned Oklahoma men that they should vote for woman suffrage now, while they still had political control. She implied that Kansas men had lost their chance and now no longer controlled the politics of their state due to the foreign-vote.⁴⁸ Bird McGuire, advocate of suffrage, on the morning of the 1918 election published a statement listing the opponents of woman suffrage as members of the IWW, anarchists, bootleggers and other disreputable persons. He conceded there were possibly some good people opposed to suffrage but most definitely the bad element opposed it.⁴⁹

White supremacy arguments and views were present in the rationale of both the suffragists and anti-suffragists. Laura Clay used one form of the argument in the testimony

⁴⁷ Catt, Woman Suffrage, pp. 305-314.

⁴⁸ Oklahoma State Capital, December 12, 1906, p. 3. +

⁴⁹ Tulsa Democrat, November 4, 1918, p. 5.

before the Constitutional Convention. The enfranchisement of women would insure Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the South.⁵⁰ Another lady in a letter to the editor of the Daily Leader declared that it was the political superiority of the Negro man which had brought increased danger to the white woman.⁵¹ The editorial reply stated that if the woman's reasoning was valid then women should be given the vote. William H. Murray attributed, in part, the defeat of suffrage at the Constitutional Convention to the registering of Negro women to vote in Guthrie's school election. In his Memoirs he claimed to have made clear that enfranchisement of women would give the balance of power to the Negro woman, unless the white woman would vote.⁵² The Enid News in the 1910 suffrage debate noted that suffrage should be given to women with the same restrictions as existed on male suffrage; the vicious and ignorant did not have a license to vote.⁵³ An abusive letter, opposing woman suffrage in 1910, which appeared in the Daily Oklahoman included this statement:

⁵⁰Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1907, p. 2.

⁵¹Guthrie Daily Leader, January 5, 1907, p. 4.

⁵²Murray, Memoirs, p. 30.

⁵³Enid Morning News, October 11, 1910, p. 2.

It must not be forgotten that the negro vote is quite a factor in Oklahoma politics, and in the event of suffrage, white women and Negresses will rub elbows at the polls. 54

It was signed Order of Daughters of Vashti, Lawton, Okla-⁺homa. Such statements were not exceptional in the state press.

Supposedly during the 1910 campaign Governor Haskell offered to submit the woman suffrage amendment at a special election if the suffragist would endorse the "grandfather clause."⁵⁵ They refused, and as a result the suffrage vote was delayed until the regular election. In 1917 the amendment for suffrage was entangled with a substitute provision for the "grandfather clause." Ultimately, though, woman suffrage was presented as a separate item to Oklahoma electorate.

White supremacy, a Southern issue, cannot be separated from the doctrine of states rights. The Oklahoman applauded Woodrow Wilson when he informed a suffrage delegation that it was a matter for the states to decide. He did not endorse woman suffrage until 1916 and then only if it came about through state action. He did send telegrams in 1918 to the chairmen of the Democratic and Republican committees

⁵⁴ Daily Oklahoman, February 6, 1910.

⁵⁵ Harlow's Weekly, XI (November 29, 1916), pp. 7-9.

urging them and the Oklahoma voters to favor woman suffrage.⁵⁶

Wilson did not justify woman suffrage as a war measure until September, 1918. Suffrage was part of the program of justice which would follow the war. Woman suffrage would be one facet of the expansion of democracy which was a supposed war aim. Certainly the Oklahoma suffrage movement was influenced by our involvement in the First World War.

Suffrage activity declined sharply in Oklahoma immediately after the declaration of war. In the past woman's right to political equality had been challenged by the claim she could not fulfill the military obligations of citizenship. During this period the "antis" questioned the movement because it interfered with the woman's war work. Both the suffragists and anti-suffragists were highly critical of the Congressional Union because it continued picketing the White House for Woman rights. Julia Woodworth's criticism of the Union was but an echo of that of the conservative leadership of NAWSA.⁵⁷

Suffrage activity for many of its supporters became secondary to defense work. The suffragists stressed that in no way did their feminist activities infringe upon the mob-

⁵⁶ Daily Oklahoman, October 26, 1918, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Edith Johnson, "Column," Daily Oklahoman, August 16, 1917, p. 6.

ilization of the national resources for defense. They demonstrated their loyalty by participating in war work and through such announcements as: "Pottawatomie County War Workers are one hundred per cent for woman suffrage."⁵⁸ The Oklahoma News and the Tulsa Democrat reported that the suffragists were conducting their campaign through literature, posters and petitions in such a way that women were not removed from war activities.⁵⁹

The "antis" claimed that the Oklahoma suffragists were demanding the ballot as a reward for their war work; duty should be its own reward:

Mr. Voter, the ballot is not demanded by those doing marvelous war work, but merely by the women who work spasmodically and the rest of the time seek interviews with you and your wives to get you to sign their petitions and then laud it over the silent women.⁶⁰

The Tulsa Democrat replied to the charge that the women were not asking for suffrage as a reward but as an act of justice. Certainly, millions of women were backing the war by their patriotic work and millions were making sacrifices not demanded of them; surely they deserved the ballot.

⁵⁸ Tulsa Democrat, August 3, 1918, p. 4B.

⁵⁹ Ibid., June 9, 1918, p. 4; Oklahoma News, September 23, 1918, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Tulsa Daily World, November 2, 1918, p. 4.

Mrs. Ferguson branded the criticism that the suffragists were asking for a reward as unjust. But if disloyal elements were enfranchised in some states the extension of suffrage to loyal women was a war measure for self preservation. Their votes were needed to fill the gap left by the loyal American men on the battlefields.⁶¹ Bert Hodge, co-author of the suffrage amendment, felt it was unfair to ask the women to bear the burden of war work and at the same time deny them the right to appeal to men for the vote.⁶²

The Tulsa Daily World's editorial on election day warned of the danger which might affect the nation through the enfranchisement of women.

The war in Europe is practically over and out of that great cataclysm already problems are protruding which will require the greatest statesmanship of all periods of the world's history. It appears to us that it is not a good time to add millions of inexperienced voters to the electorate of the nation. ⁶³

Mrs. Ferguson had taken an opposite view in her column. She encouraged the husbands to vote for woman suffrage, reminding them that for every woman who might misuse her ballot there was a man who had done so. No disaster would

⁶¹Cherokee Republican, July 26, 1918, p. 1B.

⁶²The Daily Transcript, October 12, 1918, p. 2.

⁶³Tulsa Daily World, November 5, 1918, p. 4.

follow the establishment of woman suffrage.

Due to circumstances the war issue received special emphasis during the 1918 suffrage referendum but it was not new.

The suffrage debate reached its climatic moments in the final days before the election. In Tulsa the rival suffrage and anti-suffrage papers devoted pages to their propaganda. A very limited coverage of the suffrage amendment appeared in the state press following election day; this was probably due to preoccupation with the events in Europe. However predictions of both suffrage victory and defeat were found in the state press. The Daily World had at first hopeful comments of suffrage defeat which changed to bitter statements about the methods used to achieve the suffrage victory.

The truth was suffrage had been won in Oklahoma but not by an overwhelming majority. In fact woman suffrage had not only been gained in Oklahoma but also in Michigan and South Dakota. A suffrage referendum had been defeated in Louisiana.⁶⁴ The Oklahoma victory was a part of the favorable tide of opinion which had grown throughout the nation.

⁶⁴ The Woman Citizen, III (January 8, 1919) p. 753.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A special election in Chickasha gave some Oklahoma women their first opportunity to exercise their newly acquired right to vote. On the snowy morning of January 5, 1919, Mrs. O. T. Gray and her husband made their way to the poll at five-thirty A. M. so she might cast her ballot on the stroke of six. She was the first woman to exercise the right of full suffrage in Oklahoma. Mrs. Gray, a pioneer of southwestern Oklahoma, had arrived in 1874 when it was Indian Territory. When questioned about her vote she said:

I always knew that some day the women would get the vote. I have waited and worked for forty years for woman suffrage. There are two things I am mighty proud to have lived to see. One is woman getting¹ their rights and the other is the end of the war.

More women were reputed to have cast votes on that blizzardy day in Chickasha than men.² If the actions of the women of Chickasha were representative then the women of Oklahoma wanted the vote.

¹Daily Oklahoman, January 15, 1919, p. 6.

²Ibid., January 15, 1919, p. 6.

The suffrage victory was the fruition of the work of at first a few--then more--and finally many women which spanned a period of nearly thirty years. Some of the suffragists believed that political equality was the solution to their many problems. They would be disappointed. Equality for women had not arrived, nor did the women assume the full political rights which had been opened to them. The legal obstacle had been removed but the structure of society had not been transformed. Women had a role within that structure, a role beyond which few women were willing to venture.

The women who first sought political equality in Oklahoma Territory were viewed as peculiar individuals rather than as a group truly representative of the womanhood of the territory. No incongruity was seen in the existing claim that women were finer creatures and needed the protection of man from the unsavory affairs of government--a claim maintained at a time when the women worked beside the men in the building of homes, farms and businesses. They shared fully the hardships of the Oklahoma frontier. Despite the competency a woman might display within the family enterprise, public business was usually not within her sphere. By 1918 a great change had occurred in public opinion. Women would be admitted to the polling places but of course with unstated restrictions. They were free to

exercise their franchise within the scope of the female role in society. Neither at this time nor at any moment in the suffrage movement nor in any phase of the feminist movement can the issues be separated from the emotional factor of status.

In 1899 it might have been possible for the Oklahoma women to have repeated the triumph of Mrs. Esther Morris of Wyoming.³ Instead of using the dining room and parlor as the scene to serve up their feminist arguments; they prepared petition for the legislature, held pressure meetings to win adherents to their cause, and sought to present logical reasons why women should be enfranchised. Instead of tea for the legislators, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt delivered a two hour lecture to the Legislature on why women should have political equality. They were defeated in part by the activities of the Saloon-keepers League, by the betrayal of a friend of woman suffrage as claimed by Mrs. Catt, but perhaps also in part by faulty tactics.

Technological and economic changes had not sufficiently modified woman's image within the socio-economic structure to bring success to the movement for political equality,

³Flexner, pp. 159-162. Mrs. Morris invited the men who might serve in the Wyoming Territorial Legislature to dinner (some say tea) and presented her plea for woman suffrage.

however greater numbers of women had the wealth and leisure time which freed them for suffrage agitation. Women did not succeed in having political equality incorporated in the constitution at the Constitutional Convention nor to have the constitution amended in 1910, but conditions had changed by 1918. More women were employed outside the home and greater numbers were participating in community affairs, and as a result, the casting of a ballot would no longer be viewed as a radical innovation.

What was happening in Oklahoma was also true throughout the nation--the suffrage movement was becoming respectable and among some groups a fashionable cause. It was a middle class movement with support of both women of society and women of the laboring class. Politicians who had opposed woman suffrage began to join the pro-suffrage ranks. Rueban Roddie of Ada had vehemently opposed woman suffrage in 1910 announced his support of it in 1916. Other politicians--Democrats--attributed Wilson's victory in those states with woman suffrage to women's votes. The enfranchisement of women had become politically expedient and men of all political parties became its advocates. Under these circumstances the Oklahoma State Suffrage Board and the Oklahoma Federation of Women Clubs with the aid of various political leaders prepared a suffrage amendment which the state legislature submitted to the people. The change in opinion was

so great that legislative debate was not concerned with whether woman suffrage should be submitted to the people but how it should be presented. When the differences were resolved the suffrage bill was passed by a unanimous vote in the Senate and a vote of seventy-five to twelve in the House.

In an intervening period Oklahoma women were swept into the war effort, and it was to this cause they devoted their time outside the home. NAWSA sent suffrage organizers into Oklahoma in 1918 to revitalize the campaign at the request of some Oklahoma suffragists. It was also in this year that the first organized opposition to suffrage appeared in Oklahoma. Again all the arguments for and against woman suffrage were marshalled and brought into view but the circumstances had changed. The War had rapidly pushed women into employment outside the home and into civic activities. Women had participated in the war work, they had spoken in public, sold bonds, rolled bandages and also had increasingly become economically independent.

However opposition had not disappeared. The victory was no foregone conclusion, woman suffrage was a hard won battle. The character of the difficulty was well expressed in 1904 in the Chickasha Express.

Men who are opposed to woman suffrage are somewhat like women are reputed to be on some questions. Convince them against their will and they are of

the same opinion still.⁴

The emotional barrier had to be overcome. The extension of suffrage was not the generous act of grateful men for the work women had done during the war. That work was woman's duty. The franchise was a concession to reality.

The legal barrier was over, but what role would women now assume in Oklahoma politics? They were not transformed by the amendment, few of them aspired to become professional politicians or to even seek public office. There were exceptions. In 1920 two women were elected to the State Legislature, Mrs. Lamar Looney, Democrat won a Senate seat and Bessie McCoglin, Republican, was elected to the House. The suffragette, Mrs. Anna Laskey was not far behind, in 1923, 25 and 27 she represented District 2 in the State House of Representatives. Ironically in 1920 Oklahoma voters sent Alice Robertson, vice-president of the Oklahoma Anti-suffrage Association, to Congress. The suffrage amendment had not brought about a social revolution; these women were exceptions. Woman suffrage was a matter of justice; its denial had been a contradiction of the democratic system we claimed. The legal barrier to woman's political equality was gone--only the mental barriers remained.

⁴Chickasha Express, December 15, 1904, p. 2.

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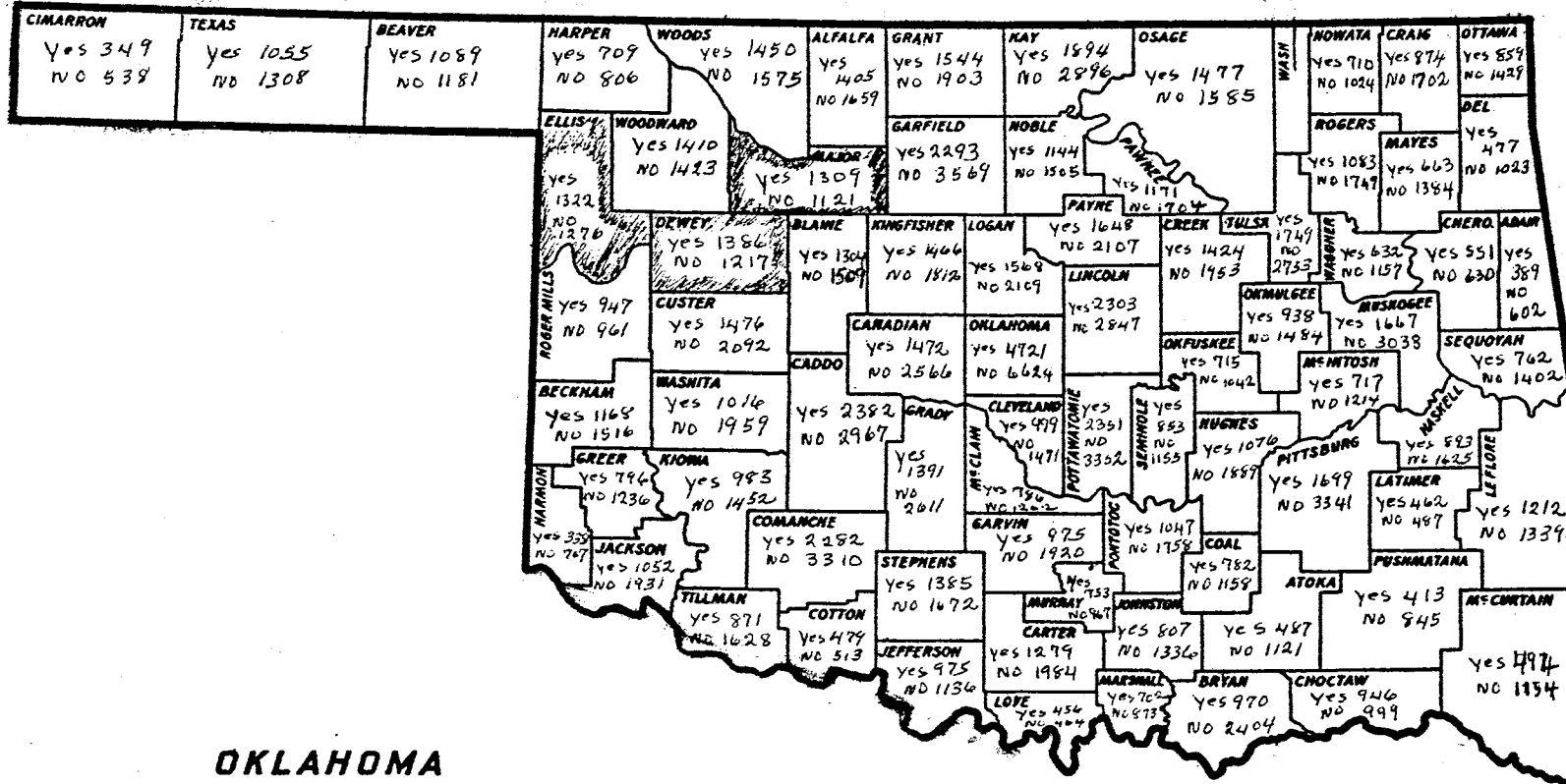
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APPENDIXES

Yes 1126
NO 1666



OKLAHOMA

SCALE - STATUTE MILES



Oklahoma. Returns of General Election Held in the State of Oklahoma November 8, 1910. Initiative Petition No. 3, State Question 8. (Common Suffrage)

VITA

Mattie Louise Ivie

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN OKLAHOMA 1890-1918

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Hobart, Oklahoma, November 19, 1935, the daughter of George Warran and Laura Leona Ivie.

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