

**DR. AMELIA R KELLER, INDIANA'S
ABLE SUFFRAGE LEADER HEARD HERE**



The address of Dr. Amelia R Keller, president of the Woman's Franchise League of Indiana, delivered before the league organized in Peru Thursday afternoon as follows:

The question of votes for women is far more important than any question before the public today, because it is more fundamental and of wider application. It concerns the well-being of the whole human race. Therefore, we say it transcends all other questions.

Women understand democracy only with the door wide open. What is needed by us is a more popular form of government – a government having in reality this goal, "The People".

When it comes to applying qualifications for suffrage, so many people have their own theories as to where to draw the line and deciding who shall vote, that is extremely confusing. Apparently, each had his hobby; and as the opportunity for applying it to men has passed by, each wishes to catch at the last remaining chance and apply it to women. One believes in drawing an educational line; another in property qualification; another in distinction of race; another in a new restriction on naturalization; and each wishes to keep women for a time as the only remaining victims for his experiments.

We hear many debates as to the desirability of restricting the suffrage.

At bottom, it is always a woman suffrage discussion.



“I am in favor of Woman suffrage,” says a proud possessor of the ballot, “if you will include the ignorant men and women voters. Intelligence and property qualifications should rule.”

And then follows an argument on the supposedly horrible evils resulting from the masses of ignorant voters. Now, if this proves anything, it is that just some such agitation as votes for women is welcome in order to make a hasty generation take thought unto itself as to just what kind of a government we live under and upon what democratic principles it is builded.

The principal alteration which the women wish to make in the constitution is the extension of the right of suffrage. Our work as present is simply to strike out the word “male” from the statute. The educational and property restrictions may be of value, but wherever they are already removed from the men they must remain removed from the women also.

Enfranchise them equally and then begin afresh, if you please, to legislate for the whole human race, What we would protest against is that you should have let down the bars for one sex and should at once become conscientiously convinced that they should be put up again for the other.

All have heard the story of Jacob, a man in Pennsylvania, who was the owner of a valuable mule; and , being a property owner, he had the right of exercising in Pennsylvania, at that time, the right of voting at elections.

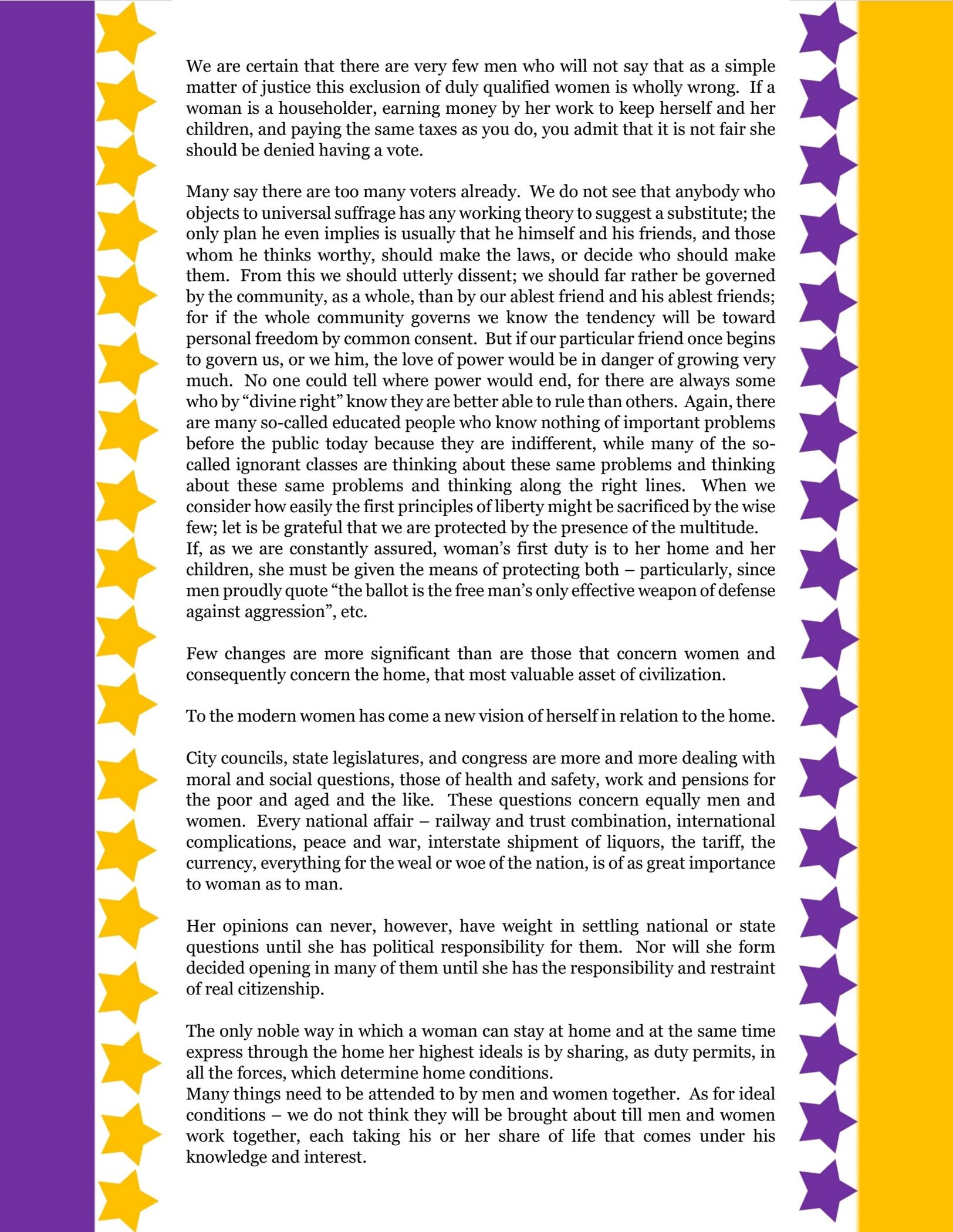
No one who was not a real property owner could vote. One day the mule died; then the man’s name was stricken off the voter’s list. And ever since that day it has been a mooted question, whether it was Jacob or the mule who had been voting.

Today 40,000 unnaturalized foreigners are voting in Indiana. Its women citizens are refused the vote.

Women of Indiana see a ridiculous situation in letting the pauper and illiterate vote, while it is denied women with property, and education.

But the greatest injustice of all, that which hurts the most, is the fact that although women are declared to be citizens of the state, they are denied the right of suffrage; while the foreigner who is not yet a citizen may vote simply by declaring his intention of becoming a citizen. There may have been a time when we could say we owe much to the immigrants who have aided so tremendously in building up our nation and developing its magnificent resources. But the immigrant coming to Indiana today is a different proposition. Indiana no longer needs these men to till the soil etc. In the new constitution, if we have one, would it not be wise to extend the time of residence to five years instead of one year, as at present, and limit the voters to citizens of the United States?

But votes for women is not merely a question which is of greater importance than any other, it is also a question which comes nearer home to you. The question is whether women who bear the same responsibilities, which you bear, and fulfill the same duties of citizenship which you fulfill, shall be any longer debarred from having a vote solely because of her sex.



We are certain that there are very few men who will not say that as a simple matter of justice this exclusion of duly qualified women is wholly wrong. If a woman is a householder, earning money by her work to keep herself and her children, and paying the same taxes as you do, you admit that it is not fair she should be denied having a vote.

Many say there are too many voters already. We do not see that anybody who objects to universal suffrage has any working theory to suggest a substitute; the only plan he even implies is usually that he himself and his friends, and those whom he thinks worthy, should make the laws, or decide who should make them. From this we should utterly dissent; we should far rather be governed by the community, as a whole, than by our ablest friend and his ablest friends; for if the whole community governs we know the tendency will be toward personal freedom by common consent. But if our particular friend once begins to govern us, or we him, the love of power would be in danger of growing very much. No one could tell where power would end, for there are always some who by "divine right" know they are better able to rule than others. Again, there are many so-called educated people who know nothing of important problems before the public today because they are indifferent, while many of the so-called ignorant classes are thinking about these same problems and thinking about these same problems and thinking along the right lines. When we consider how easily the first principles of liberty might be sacrificed by the wise few; let us be grateful that we are protected by the presence of the multitude. If, as we are constantly assured, woman's first duty is to her home and her children, she must be given the means of protecting both – particularly, since men proudly quote "the ballot is the free man's only effective weapon of defense against aggression", etc.

Few changes are more significant than are those that concern women and consequently concern the home, that most valuable asset of civilization.

To the modern woman has come a new vision of herself in relation to the home.

City councils, state legislatures, and congress are more and more dealing with moral and social questions, those of health and safety, work and pensions for the poor and aged and the like. These questions concern equally men and women. Every national affair – railway and trust combination, international complications, peace and war, interstate shipment of liquors, the tariff, the currency, everything for the weal or woe of the nation, is of as great importance to woman as to man.

Her opinions can never, however, have weight in settling national or state questions until she has political responsibility for them. Nor will she form decided opinions in many of them until she has the responsibility and restraint of real citizenship.

The only noble way in which a woman can stay at home and at the same time express through the home her highest ideals is by sharing, as duty permits, in all the forces, which determine home conditions.

Many things need to be attended to by men and women together. As for ideal conditions – we do not think they will be brought about till men and women work together, each taking his or her share of life that comes under his knowledge and interest.



We surely cannot expect one-half of the nation to carry the responsibility satisfactorily for the whole.

In Indiana and other conservative states the conservatives think it is all right for women to serve on boards of education and charity but they prophesy that if women get the vote then society will surely disintegrate. More and more women are being asked to work for and support all manner of reform and welfare movements and more and more women are realizing that it is time to stop being a “ladies’ aid,” or a “woman’s auxiliary,” so long as they lack the one necessary tool with which to produce civic reform.

It is in almost every case by legislation only that the roots of great evils can be touched at all, and that the social disease of pauperism and vice and crime can be brought within the hope of cure. Women with the tenderest hearts and the best intentions go on laboring all their life time often in merely pruning the offshoots of these evil roots, in striving to allay and abate the symptoms of the disease. But the nobler and more philanthropic work of plucking up the roots, or curing the disease they have been forced to leave to men.

The most important thing we have are our children, because they are our future. Our children inherit all we leave behind us, without exception. They not only inherit our money and land and homes – they inherit every one of our social conditions, as well; the bad schools, the social evil, the unhappiness of inflicted ill health, unsanitary city conditions, bad labor laws, dissatisfaction of the laboring group, ill-trained workmen, etc They inherit the entire social life that we leave behind, either as a problem that they must fight, battle with and solve – or as illness, unhappiness and degeneration. All Indiana citizens are interested in leaving a good inheritance to their children, and in making conditions such as they will get it. Men and women will have to do it together.

Today women firmly believe in the theory that there is no defense life self-defense; no protection like self-protection. If our theory of government is worth anything, woman has the same right to the ballot that man has. She certainly needs it as much for self-defense. How she will use it when she gets it is her own affair. It may be she may not use it more wisely than her brother; but we are satisfied that she will use it as well. Let us not attribute infallible wisdom and virtue, even to women; for as Mrs. Poyse says in Adam Bede, “God Almighty made some of ‘em foolish to match the men.”

If some insensate militarist ruler, in a mad lust of brutality, set out to wage war upon another nation by the wholesale butchery of that nation’s babies, a cry of horror and execration would go up from the whole civilized world. Yet, that is exactly what is being done now in every battle fought; for twenty years makes little difference to a mother’s heart, except to draw it closer and more fondle to her child. We are told that this squadron has been flung against that squadron, with the loss of so many men; or that some ship of war has gone down with a certain number on board. But what it means is that scores of women are crying. Oh, my baby, my baby!” and thinking of all the care and love that went to making him such a strong, beautiful boy, such a fine young man, And so fit food for power whenever his country’s statesmen chanced to lose their heads or their tempers, or to make a few blunders in diplomacy.

This present was must be the last.



Give us even a little power, and I think it will be the last. For there is little use in preaching the divine beauties of maternity, the joys of the domestic hearth, the happiness which every true woman should find in her motherhood, if this is all you want her children for. It was the Emperor William himself.

Who once showed the women of this country their rightful place, first in the nursery, then in the kitchen, then in the church. And now they cannot bear to go into the room that was their nursery; and there is little food in the kitchen, and the churches mock them with their futile prayers.

I do not think they will be caught that way again. I do not think there is any one of us who will let herself be caught that way again. If you cry upon the rising generation of women to bear more sons to replace these pitiful heaps of slain, there must be some guarantee that they too are not merely required as the cheapest sort of ammunition.

Dr. Keller gave statistics showing that ten states including Alaska, have full suffrage, six countries having the same. Many other states and cities have municipal and other limited suffrage.

The states of Indiana and Ohio are the only ones north of the Ohio River, which have no form or suffrage for women.

That votes for women is blazing its way, all but the willfully blind must see. Inspired by the growing sense of social equality, and at the same moment, ancient prejudices torn asunder by the introduction of machinery, quickened transportation, etc. suffrage has kept on its mighty march of progress. No blindness in courts, no reluctance in legislatures, no antagonism of the selfish and unseeing elements in society, have dismayed suffrage. The final arbiter of institutions is the prevalent sense of right. To this prevalent sense of right. [To this prevalent sense of right, votes for women has already directed the suit]

The history of the Franchise league in Indiana was traced, showing it to have been the outcome of the fight made by Dr. Keller and other Indianapolis women to have a woman placed on the school board. They won. The League has seventy-three branches in the state, with 4,500 members. Yearly dues are 50 cents.

An explanation was made of Indiana's need of a new constitution, the question to be voted upon November 4pm.

Almost all concede that the present constitution of Indiana has outlived its day – that we are trying to make an undemocratic constitution the instrument of democratic rule.

The times are progressive while the constitution is not. The times demands new measures for new conditions, while the constitution binds both the measures and the conditions. The present constitution will not let the people rule. For years we have been talking about ruling ourselves – is it not about time we cease talking and proceed to make a constitution that will allow us to rule ourselves? The people of all classes are demanding this right.

Present day democracy seems to bear upon its banner the words. No admittance". It would seem its aim and purpose is not to secure a larger



measure of democracy, but to eliminate, as far as possible, the direct influence of the people on legislation and public policy.

With the date near at hand to decide for a constitutional convention the women hope to bring Indiana to the highest type of just government.

To do this, requires the directing hand of both men and women, and will take the best energies of all, the best intelligence of all.

The duty confronting the men of this state is to change our state constitution to reflect modern ideals; to square them up to the modern conception of woman and her demonstrated ability and needs.

Let the people decide.